Kent communities charged with protecting their

Dungeness, one of the largest shingle ridges in the UK, will receive funding thanks to National Lottery players Jim Higham

Three projects across much of Kent are set to involve thousands of people in protecting their natural heritage, thanks to National Lottery players.

Awarded just over £3.65million between them, they will together raise awareness of Kent’s marine habitats, coastal areas of the Romney Marshes and threatened inland chalk grasslands, with a common aim to give local communities the knowledge and power to make a difference in protecting and celebrating what makes these unique landscapes special.

Tracey Crouch, Heritage Minister, said: "I am delighted that, thanks to the National Lottery, these local wildlife habitats in the Garden of England will be protected and allow both residents of Kent and visitors to connect with this stunning natural landscape."

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Guardians of the Deep

Almost the entire Kent coast falls within a Marine Protected Area and is at threat from the fishing industry, invasive species, pollutants and regression of coastal defences. This three-year project, awarded a £446,100 Heritage Grant, hopes to engage communities, businesses and visitors by raising awareness of marine habitats and promoting an active role to protect them for the future.

The project divides the coastline into three – the White Cliffs of Dover (from Folkestone to Deal), North East Kent (from Deal to Whitstable) and Medway and Swale, while five key activities will involve 60,000 people in marine awareness activities. These will include marine events and identification surveys, young people's workshops on water safety, a schools programme covering geology, biology, social history and the value of marine heritage, a digital campaign aimed at 150,000 members of the public and volunteering opportunities in surveying and species recognition.

The Fifth Continent – Romney Marsh Landscape Partnership

This project, awarded a £1.76m Landscape Partnership grant, covers 242 sq km of low-lying coastal land in South Kent, nationally important for biodiversity and built heritage and characterised by flat, windswept marsh. It contains the historic settlements of Winchelsea, Rye and Hythe and the shingle ridges of Dungeness – which themselves support over 600 plant species – one third of the national flora.

Distinctive Norman churches built on the back of the medieval wool industry dot the landscape, yet, despite this rich heritage the area is subject to poor transport links, rural isolation and the decline of local industries.

The project aims to address these challenges and put people back in touch will the landscape around them. Key activities include: restoration of shingle habitats, guidance for landowners to protect environmental assets, a community archeology project to uncover the lost port of Romney, 55 accredited apprenticeships in land and livestock management and sustainable tourism, creative workshops for young people and activities designed to put churches back into the heart of daily life.

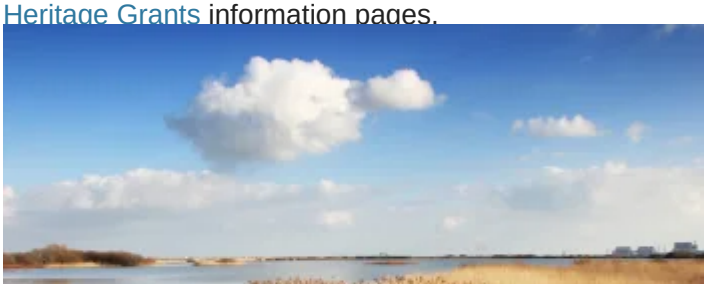
Old Chalk New Downs

Covering almost 10,000 hectares from Kemsing Down to Detling Hill, this project will improve, restore and reconnect threatened chalk grassland habitats in and around the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – home to rare orchid species and black veined and straw belle moths, found only within the North Downs.

Capital works and land management support for landowners will be complemented by a host of community engagement activities including volunteering opportunities, learning and skills development, surveying and monitoring, public access improvements, a programme for schools and digital and interactive resources.

Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: "Thanks to National Lottery players, local communities and organisations in Kent will be able to discover, care for and protect these environments, and carry out vitally important work that may otherwise not be possible"

For more information on funding available to protect natural heritage, take a look at our Landscape Partnerships and Heritage Grants information pages.



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Fantastic news for Kent’s natural heritage