

Froglife's Scottish Dragon Finder Project wins Heritage Lottery Fund support

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The project aims to engage people across mainland Scotland in conservation action for amphibians and reptiles, surveying and recording the animals and host a range of creative outreach events to encourage interest in the animals.

Development funding of £20,500 has also been awarded to help Froglife progress their plans to apply for a full grant at a later date. Dragon Finder will operate across mainland Scotland, home to three species of reptiles and five species of amphibians. Grass snakes *Natrix natrix* are also a species spotted in the country in the last few years and the rare Natterjack toad *Bufo calamita* is found only on the Solway Firth. Dragon Finder will help to tackle a severe lack of records on where the animals are located and how their populations are fairing. The project will directly improve around 50 habitats through practical conservation work, and train volunteers in identifying, recording and conserving amphibians and reptiles through workshops and events.

Some of the exciting new activities planned for the project include:

- Urban Tails exhibitions created by local primary schools and community groups demonstrating what amphibians and reptiles can be found in the local area
- Dragons on the Move road shows travelling around mainland Scotland to deliver fun sessions on how to identify and record different 'dragons'
- Dragons in the Hills events with outdoor pursuit enthusiasts to improve recording in more remote areas of the country
- Creation of a Living Atlas, mapping sightings and stories about amphibians and reptiles.

It is estimated that over 40% of all amphibian species are threatened worldwide, with the main threats being habitat loss and disease. Over the past 50 years, one third of ponds have disappeared, and a recent report published by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and Pond Conservation (Feb 2010) shows that 80% of ponds in England & Wales and in a 'poor' or 'very poor' condition. There are more species of amphibians and reptiles known to be in danger of extinction than mammals or birds.

Kathy Wormald, Froglife's CEO, said: "It's wonderful to receive funding from HLF to develop this high-impact project, the natural history of Scotland's 'dragons' is fascinating and hugely important for conservation, as well as from a social point of view. We are looking forward to making new partnerships and finding diverse groups of people to involve in the project to protect these dragons and their habitats."

Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: "We have wonderful native wildlife in Scotland and collectively we have a responsibility for its survival. This project gives us all the opportunity to learn more about our amphibians and reptiles and the role they play in Scotland's

biodiversity, while also helping safeguard their existence. The Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted to give the Dragon Finder project its support at this stage.”

Notes to editors

About Froglife

Froglife is a wildlife conservation charity focussed on protecting amphibians, reptiles and their habitats. Froglife Scotland has transformed habitats in Glasgow and North Lanarkshire through the Living Water project and supports Toads on Roads patrols across the UK. An inclusive approach is taken to involving people from diverse backgrounds in practical and fun educational activities conserving and celebrating frogs, toads, newts, snakes, lizards and other species.

Further information

For images and interviews, please contact: Samantha Taylor, Communications Coordinator at Froglife

01733 558 844

07966 396 329

sam.taylor@froglife.org