

£2.85million Heritage Lottery boost helps communities get closer to nature

06/10/2016



Glenlivet and Tomintoul Landscape Partnership - Ben Avon View

Thanks to a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership will use the rich natural heritage of the region to encourage more visitors and so help sustain fragile local communities including Tomintoul, the 'Highest Village in the Highlands'. On Skye, Scotland's first ever Ecomuseum, which is a pioneering community-led initiative, will be extended and improved thanks to funding awarded today.

Cabinet Secretary for the Environment Roseanna Cunningham said: "It's great to see this investment in and support for Scotland's landscapes. Our landscapes are iconic and will provide a magnificent backdrop for these projects that will encourage people to explore Scotland's spectacular outdoors, protect our biodiversity, benefit rural communities and encourage visitors from home and abroad."

This summer HLF celebrated a total investment of £100million in projects which conserve Scotland's landscape and biodiversity, from the Flows of Caithness to the valleys of the Tweed.

Commenting on the awards, Lucy Casot, Head of HLF Scotland, said: "The National Lottery is ensuring that Scotland's spectacular landscape remains one of our greatest national assets,

attracting visitors and making a vital contribution to Scotland's tourist economy."

"However it's not just visitors that benefit. With a bit of clever thinking, we can protect our natural heritage in a way that helps support people and communities. The innovative projects HLF has supported today will give everyone the opportunity to experience the health, learning and social benefits of the great outdoors. I am sure they will also ignite a passion for our natural world and its long-term conservation."

Projects

Glenlivet And Tomintoul Landscape Partnership, Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA): £2.34m

The secluded hills of Glenlivet and Tomintoul were, in the 1800's, the perfect hiding place for as many as 200 illicit whisky stills. Today, they are home to some of the most famous distilleries in the world. The Glenlivet and Tomintoul Landscape Partnership will celebrate the colourful history of this distinct landscape helping its biodiversity and communities to flourish. Twenty projects are planned over a four-year period with the youngest to the oldest members of the communities getting the chance to become involved in learning new skills uncovering hidden history and celebrating their heritage through music and events.

Plans include:

- Tomintoul Museum will become a Discovery Centre and tourist hub
- Blairfindy Castle and Scalan, an 18th-century seminary, will be conserved and made safe for visitors
- Woodlands will be restored along sections of the River Avon
- Wetland habitats for wading birds will be created
- Improvements to paths in the area
- A regional oral history project will collect stories that bring the landscape to life

Eleanor Mackintosh, CNPA Board Member and local resident, said: "This is a massive boost, not just for Tomintoul and Glenlivet but for the wider National Park. Heritage Lottery funding will result in investment in new and improved facilities and infrastructure, new job opportunities and other community driven projects – there are exciting times ahead. I would like to thank and congratulate all those involved in helping to secure this funding."

Skye Ecomuseum, Staffin Community Trust: £522,100

The north-east corner of Skye is leading the way in museum innovation being the first Ecomuseum in Scotland – a museum with no walls or roof. The spectacular coastal cliffs, grassy platforms and lochans of Staffin provide the setting for the exhibits which are themselves features of the landscape across 13 locations. The Ecomuseum, known by its Gaelic name 'Ceumannan' which means footsteps, is this remote community's answer to preserving its fragile natural environment while managing and interpreting it for an ever-increasing number of visitors.

Plans include:

- Creation of a new network of paths adding 5.84km to the trail
- A viewing platform will be installed at Lealt Gorge waterfall
- Visitor welcome gateways with information panels will be built at three key points
- Guided walks, health walks, photography courses, wildlife and archaeology workshops will be developed
- Maps, leaflets, website and schools information pack will be produced

Staffin Community Trust chairman Donald MacDonald said: “The board of Staffin Trust is delighted to have received this award on behalf of our community. This will allow for further development of what is already a very successful project and allow us to create an identity for our region that is specific to us. As a committee we aspire to our theme of climb the Cuillin, walk Trotternish and for the whole of Skye this is a significant investment in our tourism and educational infrastructure. The fact that this funding will also create a new three-year post is also important in a remote fragile area and will help to give people confidence, pride and a sense of place.”

Notes to editors

Highlands and Islands Enterprise works closely with Staffin Community Trust and supports the employment of local development officer, Hugh Ross who works with the community to develop an economic, social and cultural plan for future growth. Hugh is involved in a range of community projects - like the Skye Ecomuseum - which aims to increase local development activity and helps capitalise on its rich cultural heritage.

Further information

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