

Tracing Fantastic Mr Fox's long-lost cousin

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Reynard the Fox, long-lost cousin of Fantastic Mr Fox, is to be rediscovered by a new generation
Sjoerd Levelt

The North Sea Crossings Project will use animation to help children discover the Roald Dahl character's Dutch cousin

While most British children are likely to have heard of Roald Dahl's wily hero Fantastic Mr Fox, few adults, let alone children may be aware of Reynard, the Dutch vulpine trickster who inspired the popular children's story.

Thanks to a National Lottery grant of £163,100, Reynard is to be rediscovered by a new generation.

The North Sea Crossings Project run by the University of Bristol, will work with Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) schools and mainstream schools in Bristol and Oxford. Primary and secondary pupils will take part in creative workshops with professionals from the Oscar-winning studio behind Wallace & Gromit and Shaun the Sheep, Aardman, and creative education organisation Flash of Splendour.

Children with a range of needs and abilities will be introduced to Reynard and other literary gems forged by historic Anglo-Dutch relations.

As well as a range of artwork and stories, four stop-frame animations will be created by the students, which will be screened in the Bodleian Library alongside Fantastic Mr. Fox at a fox-themed film festival.

Other outreach activities made possible by this grant include a Reynard the Fox day, to be celebrated by a number of local Oxford museums and shops, and family activities and music celebrating a Dutch Christmas.

Eilish McGuinness, Director of Operations at HLF, said: “The North Sea Crossings Project represents an exciting and imaginative approach to involving children and young people, particularly those with disabilities, in a relatively unexplored corner of heritage. Thanks to National Lottery players, pupils will get the opportunity to pick up some fantastic creative skills, and be welcomed into spaces they may never have thought to explore otherwise.”

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