

Press release: Restoring fifty hectares of rare and threatened habitats in Doncaster to benefit all

Almost 50 hectares of nationally-important habitat is being restored in Doncaster as part of an Environment Agency-led project benefiting communities and wildlife.

The work across seven woodland areas, including two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), will help improve water quality, reduce flood risk, and enhance natural habitats for protected species.

Beginning in September last year, the Inspiring Water Action in the Torne project is creating, restoring and improving up to 46.5 hectares of wet-woodland priority habitats – and involving local communities in doing so.

The 46.5 hectares represents 11 per cent of the Environment Agency's national target for habitat creation.

Measures include selectively thinning the woodland, re-wetting areas that have dried out, improving access for visitors, and sowing native plants that will help filter pollutants from the environment.

As well as providing for one of the nation's most threatened bird species – the Willow Tit – the restored wet-woodland will act as a natural aid to reducing flood risk by creating more room for water.

The estimated 4,000 cubic metres of extra storage space will help naturally interrupt and soak up the flow of rising waters, reducing the risk to around 1,000 nearby properties, as well as to agricultural land.

This will lessen the reliance on the Keadby Pumping Station, bringing down the carbon and financial costs of using it to artificially drain excess water from the River Torne into the River Trent.

David Newborough, Environment Agency catchment co-ordinator, said:

Our role is to create better places for people and wildlife. This project is a perfect example of how we can achieve that through simple measures that deliver many benefits.

By restoring wet woodland to a state that's closer to how nature intended, we're protecting vital habitat, providing for threatened species, creating spaces that everyone can enjoy, and reducing the risk of flooding, all in one go.

Communities across the area are involved in making the project a success,

with volunteers and school children taking active roles.

Around 600 children and young people across seven schools, each linked with one of the woodland sites, are using the project to learn first-hand about flood risk, water quality and management, and ecology.

David continued:

Working with school children is one of the most exciting and rewarding aspects of this project.

They are directly involved in understanding and protecting our natural environment, which is essential for its future. And their enthusiasm for the difference they can make is great to see.

Some of the work is being carried out by volunteers, who are learning new skills in the management of woodland habitats. These skills will help them maintain the improvements into the future.

The £100,000 project, which includes work at Potteric Carr Nature Reserve SSSI, Holmes Carr Wood, Tickhill Low Common, Bog Wood, Bessacarr Bank, Sandall Beat Wood SSSI and Rossington Brick Pond, is expected to bring benefits valued at around £1m.

Inspiring Water Action in the Torne is a Torne Catchment Partnership project led by the Environment Agency and involving [Yorkshire Wildlife Trust](#), [Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council](#), [Natural England](#) and local communities.

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[News story: QROPS Online Service](#)

closing in April 2017

From:

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Part of:

The online service for managing qualifying recognised overseas pension schemes (QROPS) will close on 5 April 2017.

Managers and administrators of pension schemes must report information to HM Revenue and Customs about overseas pension schemes, including transfers to and payments from QROPS.

From 6 April 2017, you'll need to use the existing [forms and reference material](#) as the QROPS Online Service will be no longer available.

New National Endowment for Music announced

The National Endowment for Music, a joint initiative between Kirsty Williams and Ken Skates, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, is a new and innovative approach to supporting young people to develop their talents in music.

The initial contribution of £1m will be provided to the Arts Council of Wales to cover the set up costs of the Endowment with a further contribution to be made to the seed fund once it is in place. It is our ambition that the fund will eventually generate at least £1m per year, which will be used to fund additional music activities for young people across the country.

Kirsty Williams said,

“The National Endowment for Music will help ensure that all our young people, from whatever background, can develop their talents and skills through music.

“During my time as Cabinet Secretary visiting schools across the country, I continue to be impressed and inspired by the musical talent of our young people and the schools that promote such opportunities. I want to build on this success and extend these

opportunities throughout Wales.

“Having experiences outside the classroom is a sure way to help children build confidence and discover what inspires them. In time, this Endowment will provide extra chances for young people to access important education experiences.”

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said,

“If you were to ask people around the world to name things they associate with Wales, their list would undoubtedly involve music. From our traditional choirs to musicians who perform across the globe, Wales punches well above its weight. We need to make sure the next generation can carry on this great tradition.

“Local authority music services have been badly affected by the austerity imposed by the Westminster Government. This £1 million contribution is intended as a catalyst, a demonstration to potential donors of our commitment to the arts and to our musical heritage.”

Phil George, Chair of Arts Council of Wales added,

“Challenging times call for determined action. It’s more important than ever that we provide opportunities for young people to enrich their lives through artistic expression. This new fund is an invitation to private and corporate donors to join the Welsh Government in nurturing young musical talents and helping them delight and amaze us all.”

Karl Napieralla who chaired the Music Services Task and Finish Group, which recommended establishing the fund said,

“I am delighted that one of the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group is coming to fruition. Hopefully the funding will help secure the future opportunities for young people in Wales from whatever background to enjoy and participate in music.”

The National Endowment for Music builds on the £20 million Creative Learning through the Arts Plan to support creative teaching and learning in schools.

The Endowment is our long term, sustainable approach to increasing musical opportunities for the young people of Wales.