Hands of Hope gets green light to connect communities to nature thanks to National Lottery players

Monday 14 November, 2022

Environmental charity, Hands of Hope, are celebrating today after their project to improve the health and wellbeing of people and planet was given the green light after securing funding from The National Lottery Community Fund and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Hands of Hope is a community charity that was set up in 2016 to deliver programmes and activities aimed at tackling rural isolation, loneliness, and food poverty. As well as this, they look to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of communities throughout Rother, Hastings, and west Kent by connecting them with nature and each other. Currently preserving Hope Farm Community Garden – a 22-acre AONB site with Soil Association Accreditation in Hawkhurst, located on the Kent and East Sussex Border – which is home to an Edwardian walled market garden, a heritage orchard, a small gill wood and two large wildflower meadows.

Thanks to National Lottery players, Hands of Hope have been awarded a £165,000 grant by the Heritage Fund to deliver “The Living History Programme” a 2-year project that will engage with communities to uncover the hidden, but vibrant, natural, cultural and community heritage of Hope Farm Community Garden. Alongside this, £248,000 from The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK, will provide 3-years core funding to enable more people to access the benefits of growing, cooking, and connecting to nature.

The funding will:

- Create employment opportunities supporting three new roles
- Reconnect communities to nature and each other so they can better understand, learn about, and appreciate their local heritage
- Increase the skills base amongst people by providing access to and training in organic food growing, environmental heritage & nature-based activities, heritage rural crafts and nutrition and cooking
- Enable people to grow their own food and eat seasonally and locally, sharing their surplus and therefore reducing food waste whilst tackling food poverty
- Improve accessibility to the site’s natural assets, ensuring everyone is included
- Restore, maintain, and promote the natural, rural and community heritage of Hope Farm Community Garden, for future generations

The CPRE report *2021: Beauty Betrayed – the state of our AONBs* cites those in the south east of England are under considerable and growing pressure from large scale housing development. Additionally, only 3% of Britain’s ancient meadows remain and Hope Farm Community Garden is unique, being home to two impressive wildflower meadows, providing an ecosystem that is fast disappearing as well as supporting a huge range of wildlife. *The State of Nature 2019 (RSPB)* report highlights the urgency of impacts of changes in agriculture, pollution, and climate in the last 50 years on our biodiversity and concludes that without conservation and action at a local level, our natural heritage will continue to erode until it is lost forever.

James Doran, Founder and Chair of Hands of Hope “We are absolutely thrilled to receive this funding support thanks to National Lottery players. This is affirmation that our work is truly making a difference. By the end of the funding period, we will have transformed Hope Farm Community Garden into a beacon of how heritage, nature and horticulture can work together to create stronger, healthier, and better-informed communities who are more connected to the places where they live and to each other.”

Helen Bushell, Senior Head of Regional Funding for London, the South East and East of England at The National Lottery Community Fund, said: “We are proud to be supporting Hands of Hope to deliver this vital work, supporting communities to prosper and thrive. Thanks to National Lottery players, this will bring people together, where they can learn new skills and connect with nature, whilst reducing food waste and benefiting the environment.”

Stuart McLeod, Director England - London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: “Landscapes and nature form the bedrock of our culture and heritage, improving wellbeing, sparking curiosity, and protecting and providing for the community’s surrounding and inhabiting them. National Lottery players have highlighted natural heritage as especially important, which is why we are proud to

Media:











award Hands of Hope a grant to reconnect the community to nature and showcase the importance of nature for health and wellbeing, all set within their unique landscape."

The National Lottery Heritage Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund distribute money raised by National Lottery players, who raise £30 million each week for good causes across the UK.

Notes to editors





Hands of Hope are restoring & developing a neglected walled kitchen garden and 22 acres of AONB land in Hawkhurst, located on the Kent and East Sussex Border – "Hope Farm Community Garden" - whilst conserving the sites natural heritage. Since securing planning in January 2019, we have been delivering programmes aimed at tackling food poverty, rural isolation and loneliness as well as improving mental, physical & environmental health for communities throughout Rother, Hastings, & West Kent. Projects include Get Growing, Great British Brick Off (GBBO) Bee in Company, Helping Hands Lunch Clubs, Men in Sheds and Holiday Hunger; additionally, we offer, free, rural crafts training & Volunteering sessions. We have a no-dig, productive, organic, market garden, with Soil Association Accreditation & in June 2022 received The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

About The National Lottery Community Fund

The National Lottery Community Fund is the largest funder of community activity in the UK – we support people and communities to prosper and thrive.

We're proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to work closely with Government to distribute vital grants and funding from key Government programmes and initiatives.

Our funding has a positive impact and makes a difference to people's lives. We support projects focussed on things that matter, including economic prosperity, employment, young people, mental health, loneliness and helping the UK reach NET Zero by 2050.

Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, our funding is open to everyone. We're privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.

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About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future. www.heritagefund.org.uk.

Follow @HeritageFundUK on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund

Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £43 billion for projects and more than 635,000 grants have been awarded across the UK.

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For further information, images and interviews please contact Mandy Doran at Hands of Hope on 07968 333 097 or email info@hohcharity.co.uk

Company Contact:

Hands of Hope Charity

T. 07968333097
E. info@hohcharity.co.uk
W. https://www.hohcharity.co.uk

Additional Contact(s):
07770 566 200

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