



Press release: Embargoed until 12 pm Wednesday 18 October 2023

Regenerative farming project to connect communities, farmers and wildlife

The *Connecting People and Landscapes in a Changing Climate* project has been awarded a grant by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore and conserve our natural heritage through regenerative farming. A partnership led by The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) has received initial support* from the Heritage Fund for the development phase of the project, it was announced today. Made possible by National Lottery players, the project aims to connect communities, farmers and wildlife.

Connecting People and Landscapes in a Changing Climate focuses on wildlife conservation and habitat restoration on agricultural land, including ecosystem repair and species recovery. The project will analyse the impact of climate change by using wildlife rehabilitation data, understand local adaptation of some Bechstein's bat populations, provide ecological training, and increase landscape resilience to climate change. Nine threatened nocturnal mammal species are being helped directly by the project: seven species of bat, hedgehog, and hazel dormouse. It will also deliver positive actions for all the UK's bat species, farmland birds and a range of other wildlife. Local communities and farmers will be brought together to build a community around nature-friendly food production, through support from existing regenerative farms and the creation of volunteer and paid placements.

Agricultural land management, covering more than 70% of UK land use, is a key driver for species declines along with the continuing impacts of climate change. Through gathering and sharing regenerative farming practice, this project links environmental well-being with human well-being and will result in more people being connected to their natural heritage, as well as future-proofing farms.

Quotes

Kit Stoner, CEO, BCT said: "We're delighted to receive this support thanks to National Lottery players. The UK's 18 resident bat species have suffered massive historical declines, but through conservation action and effective legislation some are showing signs of recovery. With this funding we will show how regenerative farming and conservation can create communities where bats and people thrive together."

Stuart McLeod, Director England, London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "We know how important helping to protect our Natural Heritage is and are pleased to support the Bat Conservation Trust. It's through projects like these that we can make a real difference and gain a better understanding of how we can help nature's recovery. We look forward to working with the project team to progress their plans to apply for a full grant at a later date."

Penny Green, resident Ecologist at Knepp Estate, said "A new regenerative farming venture, sitting alongside our long-running rewilding project, is demonstrating how rewilding and



regenerative agriculture can work together. Insect and bat surveys have been integral baselines to better understand the effects of mob-grazing and restorative hedgerow management for wildlife. We are excited to be part of the Connecting People and Landscapes in a Changing Climate project to share what we're learning in the early phases of our regenerative farming."

Chris Woodruff, Manager, East Devon AONB Partnership said. "Adapting approaches to farming and landscape management is no quick fix. It requires long-term evidence-based approaches and the development of strong partnerships to deliver change. We look forward to playing our part in supporting this exciting partnership project over the coming years to help nature adapt and recover, support land management transformation, and encourage, engage, empower and connect communities and nature."

Dr Orly Razgour, Senior Lecturer in Ecology, University of Exeter said: "This project offers a unique opportunity to use untapped data, through our partnerships with farmers, wildlife rehabilitators and nature conservation organisations, that will help us understand how British wildlife is responding to climate change and the landscape scale implications of these responses."

"Devon Wildlife Trust and its ecological consultancy Devon Wildlife Consultants are delighted to be partners in this exciting new project" said Emma Richardson, Director of Nature Based Solutions at DWT. "Our team will be helping to devise a training and monitoring programme open to young people which will not only lead to new skills and build confidence, but generate important data to feed into a better understanding of habitat restoration on farms for species threatened by climate change."

Nora Corkery, CEO, Devon Communities Together said: "Devon Communities Together is a champion of the county's rural communities and its natural environment. We are delighted to be a Connecting People and Landscapes project partner. As a long-established charity, we are uniquely placed to engage with Devon's rural communities creating links with nature to improve community resilience, health and wellbeing."

Nida Al-Fulaij, Conservation Research Manager, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), said: "Hibernators, such as hazel dormice, hedgehogs and bats, are vulnerable to escalating threats as a result of our increasingly erratic weather patterns. As the changes to our climate continue, it's clear we need to urgently find solutions that halt species decline, such as applying the principles of regenerative farming on a larger and longer scale."

Notes to editors

*National Lottery Heritage Fund grant applications over £250,000 are assessed in two rounds. *Connecting People and Landscapes* has initially been granted round one development funding of £727,000 by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, allowing it to progress with its plans. Detailed proposals are then considered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund at second round, where a final decision is made on the full funding award of £1.5 million.



The Bat Conservation Trust works with volunteers, scientists, industry and government both locally and nationally to achieve our vision of a world rich in wildlife where bats and people thrive together.

Project partnership

Connecting People and Landscapes in a Changing Climate brings together community groups, farmers, regenerative farming experts, wildlife rehabilitators, and nature conservation organisations.

The partnership is made up of: Bat Conservation Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust, Devon Communities Together, East Devon AONB, Knepp Estate, South Devon AONB, People's Trust for Endangered Species and University of Exeter. Funding for the project has come from National Lottery Heritage Fund, John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust and Natural England.

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

As the largest dedicated funder of the UK's heritage, The National Lottery Heritage Fund's vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future as set out in our strategic plan, [Heritage 2033](#).

Over the next ten years, we aim to invest £3.6billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to bring about benefits for people, places and the natural environment.

We help protect, transform and share the things from the past that people care about, from popular museums and historic places, our natural environment and fragile species, to the languages and cultural traditions that celebrate who we are.

We are passionate about heritage and committed to driving innovation and collaboration to make a positive difference to people's lives today, while leaving a lasting legacy for future generations to enjoy.

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Further information

For further information, images and interviews please contact Joe Nunez-Mino at BCT on 0207 820 7168 or email comms@bats.org.uk

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