

Natural Assets Newsletter

February 2010

Welcome to the first update for Natural Assets funded by Advantage West Midlands and delivered by Natural England. Our aim is to keep you informed about progress and update you on grant awards.

Programme update and application deadlines

Natural Assets is a £2 million capital grant scheme funded by Advantage West Midlands and delivered by Natural England. Natural Assets aims to support initiatives that provide economic benefit to local communities through improving the natural environment.

In December 2009 the Natural Assets Grants Panel considered 11 applications and made 5 grant awards totalling £620,000 to projects aiming to deliver economic benefits through use of the West Midlands region's natural assets.

There are two application deadlines in 2010:

- Monday 15 February
- Friday 21 May

There are no further dates proposed in 2010 at present. Any future dates will be notified on the Natural England website.

For further information about the programme please visit the [Natural Assets section of Natural England website](#).

Useful Contact

Ruth Metcalf, Grants Adviser. Tel: 0300 060 3951, Email: naturalassets@naturalengland.org.uk

Natural Assets in the City, Town and beyond

The projects approved so far...

Oswestry's Town Green

The Town Green in Oswestry (below), close to the centre of the market town and the Cambrian Heritage Railway Centre, is soon to be transformed from an under-used area to multi-functional greenspace.

Shropshire Council took ownership of the Town Green site in April 2009 and plan to landscape the site to create a 'central park' in Oswestry. The landscaping proposals include a formal design at one end, gently blending into wildflower meadows and woodland interspersed with areas for natural imaginative play of mounds and hollows, log and boulder piles and a 50m diameter raised turf labyrinth, one of the largest in the world. The site will be dedicated to World War I war poet Wilfred Owen, born nearby in 1893.

The Town Green will boost the local visitor economy and be part of the Walking for Health programme in the town.

Total grant awarded £80,000



Site of Town Green Oswestry © Shropshire Council

Young People's Window at Westport

Westport Lake Visitor Centre is found near the largest body of water in Stoke on Trent city. The visitor centre is designed with sustainable materials and to the highest eco-standards. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's Natural Assets project is to convert the undercroft of the Visitor Centre into an educational base providing natural asset type activities for children of all ages and young people. The Centre will be the focus of training opportunities for young people and volunteers at Westport Lake and the surroundings.

Total grant awarded: £133,830

Walk in Wyre



The Forestry Commission have plans for the next 3 years to improve access at Wyre Forest, close to Kidderminster, by providing quality facilities to encourage people to visit the Forest. The aim is to attract 50,000 new visitors to the Forest to use new footpaths and trails, create jobs and bring additional potential spend of £140,000 for local businesses. Plans include apprenticeships for young people and mentoring to set up businesses. Visitors will be able to take part in an expanded programme of events and walks.

Total grant awarded £236,885

Tolkien's Nature Reserve

Two south Birmingham Local Nature Reserves-Moseley Bog and Joy's Wood -inspired J.R.R. Tolkien's Old Forest and in the 1980s it inspired another generation to start the Urban Wildlife movement. The Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust has plans to transform the poorly maintained area to provide improved footpaths and access and create a high quality greenspace. The transformed greenspace will bring opportunities for visits by schoolchildren and training programmes. In addition to benefits for the local community Tolkien's Nature Reserve will add to the visitor economy linked to the heritage trail of J.R.R. Tolkien.

Total grant awarded £87,637

Natural Health benefits for the local community at Sandwell

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is to undertake improvements at its nature reserve in Great Barr for visitors and the local community. Plans include an extension to the car park, improvements to footpaths, workshop and a cycle shelter. The links will be made to footpaths and cycle routes across the wider country park.

The new facilities will bring economic benefits such as training opportunities for young people, increased visitor economy in the local area and a local community programme of activities to contribute to an improvement in health and well-being.

Total grant awarded £81,219