



LOTTERY FUNDED

Media Release; embargoed until 17/03/2017

Spring flowers mark launch of free plant-id courses for local verge management project

As the snowdrops seed-heads begin to form, and the daffodils and primroses are in full splendour, the Life on the Verge – Biosphere project, made possible by National Lottery players through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), has been busy finalising the dates for its summer programme of free plant identification courses. These courses are a key part of the project's ambition to coordinate a network of volunteers to identify/restore and manage species-rich verges across the North Devon Biosphere.

A number of 'special verges' along roads or other public right of way have already been identified by Devon County Council and require resurveying as most haven't been surveyed for several years. Elsewhere there are likely to be many other verges known to local people for their summer displays or particular species of interest which could also be included in the project or a less interesting but prominent parish verge which could benefit from 'livening-up'. In addition to a splendid display of flowers and enhanced provision for native pollinators under threat, species-rich verges need cutting only once or twice per year – which may help reduce maintenance costs for verges managed by parish or town councils.

Coordinator Clare Manning said *'After ensuring all volunteers are aware of necessary Highways Safety provisions to keep them safe, the first step in our project is to get out and survey verges to identify which are already in wildlife rich and in good condition and which will need more significant practical management to restore or create wildlife interest. Verge surveying will form an ongoing part of the project in order to assess the impact of practical management we undertake. Whilst our current focus is to establish our survey programme this summer, we have exciting plans developing for practical activities later in the year. I would encourage people to get in touch if they know of a verge that could benefit from the project, or are simply interested in volunteering with the project.'*

The **free plant identification and survey training sessions** are located across the Biosphere Reserve to minimise travel distances for volunteers as far as possible. Training dates are: May 30th 5.30-8.30pm at Fremington Quay, June 3rd 2-5pm at Meeth Quarry Nature Reserve, June 10th Winsford Bridge East (meet at Arlington Court carpark) 2pm-5pm, July 1st at Marsland Nature Reserve 2pm-5pm and July 12th Meshaw Nature Reserve (near Rackenford) 5.30-8.30pm.

To book or express interest in the project contact Project Coordinator Clare Manning on 07392 239719 or email verges@tarkacountrytrust.org.uk

Adrian Culley, manager of Marsdens Devon Cottages which is raising money for the project by asking anyone who books a holiday through the agency to donate £1 said *'Though it can sometimes be easy to take floral displays on our roadside verges for granted, they have a positive impact on our lives; whether you are local person or tourist, it's hard not to feel uplifted when you walk, cycle or drive past a verge bursting with life and colour during spring, summer and early autumn.'*





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Dave Edgcombe from North Devon Coast AONB said *'Having lost 97% of our species-rich grassland since the 1930s, verges along our roads and other public rights of way are one of the few remaining places where our native wildlife can thrive. But species-rich verges do need to be managed to prevent dominant species and scrub from outcompeting our wildflowers and that's where Life on the Verge- Biosphere Project comes in, supported by a grant from our Sustainable Development Fund'*

Other project supporters are Devon County Council Highways, The Devon Biodiversity Records Centre and The North Devon Biosphere Service and Biosphere Foundation.

Ends.

Notes to editors

1. Tarka Country Trust was set up in March 1999. Following a successful application to the Millennium Commission, the Trust ran the Tarka Country Millennium Awards from 2000 to 2004. The Objectives of the Trust are:

- To preserve for the benefit of the public the natural features of northern Devon whilst respecting any historical features.
- To advance the education of the public about conservation and the protection of the environment in northern Devon.

2. North Devon's Biosphere Service is a partnership organisation based in Barnstaple and hosted by Devon County Council. It is core funded by Devon County Council, North Devon Council and Torridge District Council. The Service co-ordinates and delivers activities set out in the North Devon's Biosphere Reserve Strategy and works with a wide range of local, regional, national and international partners. More information about the work of the service can be found at www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/

3. North Devon's Biosphere Reserve is the first new-style UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the UK. It exists to inspire a positive future by connecting people and nature. The Biosphere in north Devon is a special place with wonderful wildlife and landscapes, and an economy and social structure still strongly linked to the environment but it is more than that. It is a community of people working together to champion life and the environment, empower people to get involved and explore new ways of living that address local and global challenges. www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/

4. North Devon AONB - This spectacular coastal area, which covers some 66 square miles from the boundary of Exmoor National Park at Combe Martin to Marsland Mouth on the Cornish border, was designated as an AONB in 1959. Further information about the North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty can be found on www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk or www.explorethecoast.org





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The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) supports projects that bring environmental, social and economic benefits to the North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The fund aims to support projects which develop and test new methods of achieving a more sustainable way of life in this area of great beauty and diversity. North Devon Coast AONB receive this money from Defra because this area is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), along with National Parks, are considered to be the most special landscapes in the country and belong to an international family of protected areas. There are 38 AONBs in England and Wales, and a further eight in Northern Ireland. For further details, visit: www.landscapesforlife.org.uk

The work of the North Devon Coast AONB staff unit is guided by the AONB Partnership, which includes representatives from: Devon County Council, North Devon Council and Torridge District Council, Coastwise North Devon, Country, Land and Business Association, Devon Wildlife Trust, Historic England (English Heritage), Environment Agency, Exmoor National Park, Forestry Commission, National Farmers Union, National Trust, Natural England, North Devon Biosphere Reserve Partnership, North Devon Plus, Tarka Country Trust, Taw Torridge Estuary Forum. The North Devon AONB is a stunning coastal area which is nationally protected for the beauty of its landscape. It is made up of several distinct landscapes, each with their own special habitats and geology with many of them receiving extra protection in their own right. The AONB contains many Sites of Special Scientific Interest including Braunton Burrows, which is the core of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk

5. Marsdens Cottage Holidays have an extensive portfolio of over 340 Visit England graded holiday cottages ranging from quaint old fishing cottages for two, to larger properties ideal for families and large groups. Great pride is taken in the quality of the accommodation. Marsdens have been providing holiday cottages in Devon for over 40 years. <https://www.marsdens.co.uk/>

6. About the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife.

www.hlf.org.uk. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #HLFsupported.

