**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01 28th JULY**

**Groundwork North East & Cumbria receives grant of £800,000 from the Government’s Green Recovery Challenge Fund**

* Revitalising our Estuaries responds to North East coastal and estuaries crisis by delivering a blue/green recovery. Our coastal environments and communities have been significantly, disproportionally affected by health, economic, environmental crises of Covid, the recession and climate change. Our estuaries and coastal communities also suffer from the highest deprivation nationally and have been largely overlooked. They are in serious need of environmental/economic support to restore habitats, protect priority species and create more green jobs putting young people at the front of our Green Recovery.
* Revitalising our Estuaries will support **nature restoration** at North East estuaries/coastal towns including:
	+ Wansbeck: Ashington/Choppington area
	+ Blyth: Blyth Harbour
	+ Tyne: Newcastle Quayside/Gateshead/South Tyneside areas
	+ Wear: Sunderland
	+ Tees: Hartlepool/Stockton/Middlesbrough/Redcar & Cleveland
	+ Esk: Whitby
* 90 projects awarded grants to accelerate the implementation of nature-based projects, from new ‘insect pathways’ in our countryside and towns, to tree planting projects in deprived urban areas
* Second funding round of Green Recovery Challenge Fund backed by £40 million, with over 1,000 jobs to be created or retained in England

Groundwork NE & Cumbria’s Revitalising Our Estuaries project has been awarded a grant from the Government’s £40 million second round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, a multi-million pound boost for green jobs and nature recovery

Ninety nature projects across England have been awarded grants from £68,100 to £1,950,000 to create and retain over 1,000 green jobs, backed by the Government’s £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

Work will be carried out on over 600 sites from North Northumberland to the tip of Cornwall, and combined with the first round, almost a million trees will be planted, contributing towards the Government’s commitment to treble tree planting rates across England by the end of this Parliament.

* Revitalising our Estuaries focusses on **employment and skills** for young people in the region enabling them to deliver the nature restoration across the region.
	+ 30.5 FTE new/retained jobs will be created or sustained
	+ 38 New Kickstart roles with accredited training/sustainable employability skills for people aged 18 – 24
	+ Conservation training, employability skills and careers talks for new employees
	+ 0.8FTE jobs secured within Groundwork NE and Cumbria.
* Revitalising our Estuaries will
	+ Restore 321 Ha **estuary habitat**
	+ Improve 143 Ha riparian blue/green habitat
	+ Create innovative in 6 channel/bankside estuary priority habitats
	+ Provide for priority mammals, birds, fish, molluscs
	+ Enhance 6 riverside nature corridors
* This will help:
	+ **Mitigate the impacts of climate change** by providing carbon storage and scope for climate change adaptation
	+ Provide environmental net gain in the North East
	+ Promote biodiversity and species recovery
	+ Deliver wider ecosystem services benefitting the community, the economy and the environment.
* Revitalising our Estuary will also **connect people to nature**
	+ Engage 6000 local residents in our educational visits, events, volunteering and citizen science activities
	+ Support access to nature and environmental careers for under-represented groups
	+ Deliver volunteering activities across the six estuaries
	+ Provide improved access to nature for 85,000 (10% population).

Groundwork NE and Cumbria would like to extend special thanks to:

* The National Lottery Heritage Fund
* Environment Agency
* South Tyneside Council
* NE1
* River Tees Rediscovered
* Tees Valley Combined Authority
* Blyth, Tyne, Wear and Esk Port Authorities
* Newcastle, Northumbria and Hull Universities
* Northumberland County Council
* Blyth Town Council
* Choppington Parish Council
* Ashington Town Council
* Newcastle Council
* North of Tyne Combined Authority
* Urban Green Newcastle
* Gateshead Council
* Sunderland City Council
* Sunmac - Sunderland Marina
* Hartlepool Borough Council
* Middlesbrough Council
* Stockton Council
* Redcar and Cleveland Council
* Whitby Town Council
* Scarborough Borough Council
* Teesworks
* Anglo American

**Head of Business Development, Lisa Stephenson, said:**

“Groundwork is delighted to be successful with this exciting funding. Not only does it provide opportunity to enhance the natural environment in/around our North East River Estuaries but also, support broader economic enhancement, creates much need new 'Green Jobs' and helps in our fight for climate change mitigation”

**Programme Development Manager, Hellen Hornby, said:**

“This funding will enable Groundwork North East & Cumbria to really build on our current estuaries' projects across the north east. Delivering nature-based solutions to provide important habitats for wildlife, increase biodiversity, store carbon whilst recruiting young people on potentially their first step on the employment ladder.”

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is a key part of the Prime Minister’s 10 Point Plan to kick-start nature recovery and tackle climate change. Connecting people with nature is another priority theme: by increasing access to nature and greenspaces, projects will support both physical and mental wellbeing. The Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund was developed by Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies. The fund is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission.

**Environment Minister, Rebecca Pow, said:**

“The diverse and ambitious projects being awarded funding today will help environmental organisations employ more people to work on tree-planting, nature restoration and crucially, help more of the public to access and enjoy the outdoors.

“Through our £80 million Fund, we are on track to support over 2,500 jobs, plant almost a million trees and increase nature recovery at a huge scale across the country, which will help us deliver against our 25 Year Environment Plan.”

**Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive, National Lottery Heritage Fund, said:**

“From wetland restoration, to creating wildlife-rich habitat for bees, it is vital that we value, protect and rebuild our natural heritage. This new funding will not only allow projects to carry out direct conservation which is essential in protecting our biodiversity, but it will increase awareness of how and why we need to change our behaviours in order to protect our future.”

**Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:**

“By supporting jobs from Northumberland to Somerset, the Green Recovery Challenge Fund will help deliver a nature positive future. The fund supports young people to develop skills needed to protect nature, build back greener and prepare for climate impacts, like floods and heatwaves.”

 **Natural England Chair Tony Juniper said:**

“Our environmental and conservation charity sector does an incredible job in protecting, improving and restoring the natural environment for the benefit of communities and the economy.”

**Forestry Commission Chair Sir William Worsley said:**

“This funding will help deliver thousands more trees and help us achieve our target of trebling tree planting rates in England by the end of the Parliament. We need to work towards net zero emissions by 2050; to address biodiversity loss; to better connect people with nature; and to create more green jobs in doing so. Trees are central to this and the projects being awarded these grants will have a hugely important role in helping us realise these objectives.”

**A full list of awards is available to view at: https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/publications/green-recovery-challenge-fund-second-round-decisions-july-2021**

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

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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](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk/)