

Press release: National Lottery backs plan to save 20 species from extinction

In one of the most ambitious conservation projects ever undertaken, 20 UK species facing extinction will be brought back from the brink thanks to £4.6 million from the National Lottery.

The Back from the Brink programme will address the needs of threatened species in 150 key habitats and landscapes across England from the Yorkshire Dales to Cornwall. It will focus on saving some very rare and elusive species from extinction, including the shrill carder bee, chequered skipper butterfly, ladybird spider and northern dune tiger beetle.

The funding will also help a further 200 species that are under threat including the grey long-eared bat, pine martin, willow tit, large garden bumblebee, lesser butterfly orchid and hedgehog. Back from the Brink is the first nationwide coordinated effort to bring a wide range of leading charities and conservation bodies together to save threatened species. Natural England, the government's wildlife advisory body, will work in partnership with Amphibian and Reptile Trust, Bat Conservation Trust, Buglife, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Plantlife and RSPB. They will pool expertise, develop new ways of working and inspire people across the country to discover, value and act for threatened animals, plants and fungi.

This ground-breaking programme will:

- safeguard 20 species from extinction
- directly improve the conservation prospects of a further 200
- recruit and teach more than 5,500 volunteers new skills to study, identify and care for threatened species
- engage with landowners and communities to deliver conservation at 150 different locations across England

Natural England's Chairman, Andrew Sells said:

Back from the Brink represents a groundbreaking approach to nature conservation and we are extremely grateful to HLF for having the vision and generosity to support it.

This is a dynamic partnership which draws on people-power to help save some of our most important species. Natural England strongly supports this approach and is delighted to be part of it.

Bringing these species back from the brink cannot be achieved by one group alone. But by pooling resources and developing new ideas, this project will add vital momentum to all our efforts.

Chief Executive of the Heritage Lottery Fund Ros Kerslake said:

I am delighted we are able to fund this important and groundbreaking project. We're all ultimately dependent on our ecosystem and these creatures are like canaries in the mine. Thanks to a combination of National Lottery funding and expertise from across multiple agencies and conservation charities, we can make a positive and lasting change before it is too late.

Mike Clarke the RSPB's chief executive said:

Our natural world is in trouble, last year's State of Nature report revealed that the population of over half of UK species are in decline, but we believe it is not too late to take action. Today's announcement by the National Lottery will make a big difference to some of our most threatened species that, without action, may soon be lost forever. The Back from the Brink project is bringing together specialists from many of our biggest and most effective conservation organisations to support the governments of the UK in meeting our obligations to the UN and international community to protect our most threatened species from extinction. This funding will be invaluable in our efforts to ensure future generations inherit a thriving and diverse natural environment.

Dr Tony Gent CEO at Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust said:

Different areas of our country are characterised by different habitats and these in turn are made unique by the combination of animal and plant species that live within them. However many of these species are at risk; losing them will change the character of an area and make these areas less special for wildlife and for the people who appreciate them. Conserving these species can be challenging and this Heritage Lottery Fund grant will allow a unique partnership of national conservation bodies, local people and land owners to pool their expertise, enthusiasm and commitment to make some massive gains for our wildlife across England.

Julie Williams, CEO of Butterfly Conservation said:

We are delighted that National Lottery have recognised and rewarded this multi-organisational partnership to deliver something special

for our threatened species. The whole really is greater than the sum of its parts and we look forward to working with our partners to demonstrate that and make an even bigger difference.

Matt Shardlow, Chief Executive of Buglife said:

Bugs, beetles, ants, spiders and other invertebrates make up the majority of species on the brink of extinction. It is fantastic that this pathfinding partnership project will pull back so many species that could otherwise disappear forever. Our natural environment has never been more imperiled; dedicated work to rescue endangered plants and animals is a cornerstone of any sensible broader strategy to restore a thriving country.

Marian Spain, CEO of Plantlife said:

We are delighted to be joining forces with other leading conservation organisations to save some of our very rarest and most threatened wildlife. The dramatically declining lesser butterfly orchid and Cornish path moss, which is now found at only two sites in the world, are an important part of our heritage and it is incumbent on us to preserve them for future generations. They are teetering on the brink of extinction and we must not allow them to fall away.

People are at the heart of this programme and they are vital to its success. We want people to be inspired by their precious local wildlife and, just as importantly, have great fun in the process. Get mud on your boots, pick a few wildflowers, learn the names of lichens, count birds and butterflies, take stunning wildlife photographs and make new friends. Back from the Brink offers endless possibilities for both people and nature. It's very exciting.

Julia Hanmer, Joint CEO of Bat Conservation Trust said:

The scale of delivery and the degree of collaboration makes Back from the Brink an exciting project which offers real hope of creating a world where wildlife and people thrive together. Thank you to National Lottery for sharing our vision.

David Hodd, Programme Manager of the Back from the Brink programme concluded by saying:

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity and is a game changing approach to nature conservation that will have a lasting legacy. It will inspire new working partnerships, and help people to adopt new ways of working. England's species provide us with a rich source of enjoyment, inspiration and creativity. Our collective endeavour to bring our threatened species back from the brink will provide many people with just that. We are living in the last chance saloon for many of these species, but each and every one of them plays a crucial role within our fragile ecosystem. We are all ultimately dependent on them all – they are like the canaries in the mine and our understanding of them is the result of enormous human endeavour.