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PRESS RELEASE

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Three-year project aims to help communities connect with nature

A scheme enabling people to enjoy the benefits of getting outside has been launched in the Forest of Bowland and its urban fringes.

Connecting People & Nature (CPAN) is a three-year collaboration between national education charity The Ernest Cook Trust and the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), supported by Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust and a £227,488 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The project's focus is on promoting nature, wellbeing and Outdoor Learning. It has three elements: engaging with communities to get people involved; helping schools with Outdoor Learning; and training community leaders in how to plan and run their own outdoor activities.

“The Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is not just stunning landscapes, it is about the people who live, work and visit the area and those who live nearby,” said Emily Crawley, Head of Learning Strategy & Delivery at The Ernest Cook Trust. “This project seeks to enable a wider range of people to benefit from the wellbeing that nature brings.”

The Ernest Cook Trust's Alison Cross, along with Deborah Woods, from Forest of Bowland AONB working in partnership with Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust, will work together on the project. Joining them will be an Outdoor Learning trainee, currently being recruited by The Ernest Cook Trust.

CPAN is a successor to, and builds on, the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership, the four-year programme of activity based around the heritage and landscape of Pendle Hill, which has now come to an end. All CPAN activities will be free, with free transport offered, and the scope of the project will reach areas from Preston to Lancaster.

Already, work is underway to get communities outdoors. Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme sessions ran over Easter in Burnley and Pendle, for children who qualify for free school meals. The Little Saplings outdoor toddler group, which Alison set up as part of the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership, will continue during the summer, geared towards families who need more support, confidence building and opportunities to get outside.

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To involve schoolchildren in CPAN, initially Alison be working with schools in Pendle and Burnley, and following on will be Blackburn, Preston and Lancaster.

Deborah added: "I am delighted to have the opportunity share my passion, knowledge and enthusiasm for the beautiful and dynamic AONB landscape though this exciting new project, utilising my experience of the pathways to nature and wellbeing for the benefits of greater physical health, wellbeing and community connectivity, which in turn fosters a deep sense of place, community and connectivity to the natural world."

Helen Featherstone, Director, England, North at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "We are thrilled to be supporting this project that will build on the important work of the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership Scheme to safeguard our natural heritage. Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, local people will have the chance to learn, explore and connect with the wonderful nature and wildlife that is on their doorsteps."

The Ernest Cook Trust devises and delivers programmes that promote Outdoor Learning for young people, families and communities. Through grant-giving, it supports other organisations in the field of Outdoor Learning, and awards some £2m in grants each year. The Trust prioritises working with young people from underserved communities.

For more information about CPAN, visit [Connecting People and Nature | Forest of Bowland AONB](#)

For more about the Outdoor Learning Trainee role, visit <https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk/jobs/>. Open afternoons for anyone interested in applying, are being held on June 20 (2-4pm, The Pavilion, Burnley, B11 3QW) and June 21 (4-7pm, Beacon Fell Visitor Centre, Goosnargh, PR3 2NL).

Notes to editors

The Ernest Cook Trust

[The Ernest Cook Trust](#) offers children and young people, their families and communities, the chance to learn from the land through hands-on Outdoor Learning activities.

The Ernest Cook Trust is a charity limited by guarantee with the sole charitable objective of education.

The Trust places education at its very heart by offering children and young people a chance to connect with nature and to take action on the environment in a meaningful and positive way.

The Trust awards around £2m per year in grants based on relevance and impact against organisational objectives. Grants are given to schools or charitable organisations for activities in the UK with a particular focus on areas where there are fewer opportunities to experience the outdoors.

For more information about The Ernest Cook Trust visit <https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk/> or contact press officer Jo Smyth – email media@ernestcooktrust.org.uk.

The Forest of Bowland AONB

The Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/>

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The Forest of Bowland was designated as an AONB in 1964. The AONB legislation (National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) was designed to protect areas of unspoiled natural beauty for future generations.

13% of the AONB is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its extensive habitats of wet and dry heathland, particularly heather moor and blanket bog. A major part of the AONB's fells is designated as a Special Protection Area under the European Birds Directive.

The Connecting People & Nature project is one of the ways in which the AONB Partnership enables people to enjoy, learn, and give back to the outstanding landscape and heritage on their doorstep.

For more information please contact cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk or visit www.forestofBowland.com.

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

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Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £43 billion for projects and more than 635,000 grants have been awarded across the UK. More than £30 million raised each week goes to good causes across the UK.

