



Press Release

14.05.09

Let Nature Feed Your Senses!

An exciting new partnership between LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) and The Sensory Trust will connect disengaged groups and individuals with nature and the countryside, through food and farming.

The three and a half year project is funded by Access to Nature, an open grants programme run by Natural England with £25 million funding from Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme. The project will involve a new and exciting programme of activities and events throughout England, aimed at getting young people, disabled groups and older people out onto farms, nature reserves, education centres and city farms, to experience everyday nature and the countryside in their everyday life. Activities will be based around regional networks that will be established throughout England. Innovative learning materials, complementary information, farm visits and nature walks will be developed, specifically designed to help these diverse groups make long lasting connections with the natural world around them.

Speaking on the project, **LEAF Chief Executive, Caroline Drummond** said: "We know that being outdoors is good for mind, body and soul. But people with physical, sensory and learning disabilities, and socially excluded groups, often face barriers that leave them feeling remote from the countryside around them. We are really pleased and excited to have been awarded this grant and we look forward to working in partnership with the Sensory Trust; their strengths in working with diverse groups, together with the enthusiasm and support of LEAF's farm members, will be a winning combination! This work will help to bring these groups closer to the countryside around them, using food as the medium to build a closer relationship with where nature touches our everyday lives. We will develop rich and long lasting connections with nature and take people beyond just visiting the natural world to becoming emotionally connected and actively involved with it."

Jane Stoneham – Director of the Sensory Trust added: "This is a chance for farmers to turn a stereotype on its head and to say 'Get on my Land' to people who are currently excluded from the natural world. Farms are a fantastic gateway to the sights, smells and sounds of the countryside and a perfect way of bringing nature into the lives of people who most need it. We are really excited to be working with LEAF on this ground breaking project and look forward to making the countryside and nature more accessible to many."

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LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) promotes and develops Integrated Farm Management (IFM). It does this by developing practical guidelines and promoting the LEAF Audit.

LEAF also helps create a better public understanding of farming through a nationwide network of demonstration farms and the LEAF Marque.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. **Linking Environment And Farming** (LEAF) is a national charity inspiring and enabling prosperous farming that enriches the environment and engages local communities. LEAF promotes **Integrated Farm Management** (IFM) and links production of wholesome, affordable food with care for the countryside. LEAF aims for a sustainable agriculture – a long-term thriving farming economy providing management tools for farmers and encouraging the public out on to farm through events and Open Farm Sunday. For further information on LEAF please visit www.leafuk.org, tel: 02476413911 or email: enquiries@leafuk.org
2. **Sensory Trust** is a national charity that works to ensure that people can enjoy and engage with outdoor environments regardless of their age, ability or social circumstance, building stronger connections between people and place. Sensory Trust works with greenspace managers, policy makers, care professionals and disengaged communities, to influence policy and inform professional practice in order to remove the barriers that prevent many people from enjoying nature and natural environments. For more information on The Sensory Trust, please visit www.sensorytrust.org.uk, tel: 01726 222900 email: enquiries@sensorytrust.org.uk
3. This three and a half year project is funded by Access to Nature an open grants programme run by Natural England with £25 million funding from Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme. The Access to Nature grant programme was launched in April 2008 and has now been open to applications for a year. During this time, Access to Nature has awarded just over £7 million pounds to 23 projects, including 3 flagship projects and 1 national project.
4. The project will involve the appointment at LEAF of 2 full time members of staff, which will be advertised in the national farming press in the next few weeks.
5. To find out more about the project, please call [Caroline Drummond](#), Chief Executive, LEAF tel: 024 7641 3911 or 07710 886762 or [Jane Stoneham](#), Director of the Sensory Trust, tel: 01726 222900
6. Access to Nature is run by Natural England and is part of the The Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments.
7. It manages this £25 million Lottery-funded programme on behalf of a consortium of twelve national environmental organisations comprising BTCV, British Waterways, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Greenspace, Groundwork UK, Land Restoration Trust, The National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust.
8. Through this programme, it is Natural England's ambition to create opportunities for people from all backgrounds to have greater access to our natural environment and bring a lasting change to their awareness and understanding as well as improved links to the natural world, which many of us can take for granted.
9. For further information about Access to Nature visit www.naturalengland.org.uk/accesstonature
10. For further information about the Big Lottery Fund, its programmes and awards visit www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

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