

Over £190,000 boost to community and nature projects in Essex thanks to Veolia Environmental Trust

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Veolia Environmental Trust has funded Essex Wildlife Trust to enable them to drastically improve Langdon Nature Discovery Park through conservation, new pond dipping stations and mixed herd grazing.

Langdon Nature Discovery Park in Essex comprises just over 460 acres of land including woodland, meadows, lakes, former plotland gardens and is the largest inland reserve managed by Essex Wildlife Trust. This project aims to introduce a new pond dipping station for the 80,000 annual visitors to experience, as well as significant nature conservation and improvements that moves the reserve away from mechanical grassland management.

The current pond dipping station at Langdon was created in the early 1990s but is fenced off to the public, having rotted and become unsafe. The £190,000 Landfill Communities Fund grant from the Veolia Environmental Trust will see a brand new state of the art structure put in place, allowing over 40 supervised pond-dipping sessions each summer for over 850 people. A core value of the Veolia Environmental Trust is to connect people and wildlife through community projects and the new platform will allow visitors to have memorable and meaningful engagements with a range of aquatic wildlife that would normally be hidden from view.

The second part of this project focuses on reintroducing natural grazing practices to over 33 hectares of land, where a small mixed herd of cattle and sheep will be given free rein. Instead of fencing off areas for grazing, livestock will be given collars to track their movements and the GPS heatmap data will complement ecological monitoring and feed into management plans. The grant

moves Essex Wildlife Trust away from mechanical grassland management, which requires fossil fuels, and could damage soil health and invertebrate populations. It will now mean that structurally and floristically diverse meadows can be created, contributing to an increase in biodiversity.

Caroline Schwaller MBE, Chair of the Veolia Environmental Trust said: “The Veolia Environmental Trust is thrilled to be a part of the Langdon Nature Discovery Park project and is looking forward to seeing the vast improvements made across the landscape. A core focus of the Trust’s work is giving people the opportunity to come together with nature on a daily basis, for social and environmental benefits. We are now looking forward to seeing the positive impact that Langdon Nature Discovery Park will have in and around Essex.”

James Astley, Grants and Trusts Officer at Essex Wildlife Trust said: “Thanks to this generous donation, we can transform our conservation management of Willow Park at Langdon Nature Discovery Park. Through this project, we can reinstate lost, dynamic, natural processes that will boost biodiversity. A huge part of the trust’s work is engaging with the public, especially young people, and we look forward to using the new pond dipping platform to encourage more children to connect with nature.”