

Japanese visitors praised for voluntary green contribution

A Japanese tour group visiting Beatrix Potter's former home, Hill Top, has this week become the first to give a "green gift" to the Lake District as part of a scheme to raise funding for conservation projects in the area.

The new initiative led by Cumbrian Staveley-based Nurture Lakeland, allows Japanese visitors to choose to book onto specially-arranged tours of the area, offered by six of the major Japanese tour operators, of making a £5 donation towards conservation in the Lake District.

Visitors can either choose one of the special eco-tours, with the added £5 donation and receive an exclusive souvenir Peter Rabbit pin badge and personal certificate, or choose the similar tour but without the donation.

The project was devised following the Japanese Travel Trade's request to become involved in Lake District conservation due to the demand for eco-holidays. As a response to this request Japanese tour operators were invited to join the existing fundraising scheme, which has been running in the Lake District for the last 18 years. This scheme invites all visitors, of any nationality, to make a donation through accommodation providers who are members of Nurture Lakeland.

It is hoped that overseas tour companies arranging visits to the Lakes for other international visitors may follow the Japanese lead and be inspired to join the fundraising scheme so that travellers wanting ethical or eco-friendly holidays, can also make a contribution.

Nurture Lakeland, based in Staveley near Kendal, is a leading conservation charity in the Lake District and Cumbria.

Keira Holt, of Nurture Lakeland, said: "The Japanese are extremely enthusiastic about conservation and we are delighted that their enthusiasm extends to our own country. Our Japanese visitors are setting a fine example and we certainly hope that other visitors will follow suit in helping us to look after our special places."

Miss Holt said the initiative had already won support from **the Japanese Embassy** in London which believes "many visitors," will want to contribute to the conservation of the area.

Following the launch of the scheme on Wednesday 5th May at Wray Castle, the first Japanese tour group were met at Hill Top, home of Beatrix Potter and Peter Rabbit.

The group of 12 were wearing their Peter Rabbit pin badges proudly, and were delighted at the opportunity to support conservation in the English Lake District. One visitor said "I wish I could find a way to give you more money. If it goes towards conserving this landscape I don't mind how much we give.

I'm so pleased we were able to join a tour that is part of this scheme."

Much to the delight of the tour group, Peter Rabbit himself made a guest appearance and joined Liz Houseman from the National Trust and members of the Japan Forum in thanking our Japanese visitors for their support.

Ends

For more information about the scheme or to make a donation to conservation in the Lake District please contact Keira Holt at Nurture Lakeland on keira@nurturelakeland.org, or visit www.nurturelakeland.org.

Editors notes:

The Lake District Japan Forum is a partnership of both private and public sector organisations which brings together accommodation providers, attractions and transport companies in Cumbria. LDJF has been supported by both South Lakeland District Council and Cumbria Tourism since its inception over 15 years ago. Increased marketing activity has been developed in recent years by match funding from the North West Development Agency.

The LDJF has contracted Japanese consultant marketing specialists based in both Cumbria and in Japan working throughout the year as part of the overall marketing strategy.

Building upon the success the key assets for the Japanese market, Beatrix Potter and William Wordsworth, the group has undertaken to raise the profile of Cumbria the Lake District both in Japan and within the London Offices of the Japanese media and travel trade.