

PRESS RELEASE - For immediate release

UNESCO grants patronage to the 2012 Jurassic Coast Earth Festival

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has announced its patronage of the 2012 Jurassic Coast Earth Festival, including the Lyme Regis Fossil Festivals. “This is a rare accolade, and we are thrilled” says Marcus Dixon, CEO of the Lyme Regis Development Trust”

The Jurassic Coast is England’s only Natural World Heritage Site and the Development Trust and Jurassic Coast Team has been in discussions with UNESCO for some time about the initiatives being developed in Lyme Regis, such as the Fossil Festivals and Studies Centre.

In 2009, the UNESCO Assistant Director General for Natural Sciences opened the Fossil Festival, ‘Evolution Rocks’, and the Jurassic Coast Team, with the UK National Commission for UNESCO, hosted a Youth Summit in Lyme Regis

The patronage is recognition of the work being done in Lyme and the Jurassic Coast more broadly in promoting and building sustainable development through education, the sciences and culture. In particular, the success of the Fossil Festivals in bringing science, education and the arts together to further an understanding of our natural heritage has been particularly important in demonstrating what is possible. In granting patronage, the UNESCO Director General said “I have noted that these impressive annual events... are intended to raise awareness among the general public about the extraordinary aesthetic and scientific value of the Jurassic Coast.’

Sam Rose, the Jurassic Coast Team Leader said: “UNESCO are the organisation that designate World Heritage Sites, so they are inextricably linked to the Jurassic Coast, but to get their patronage for specific events that celebrate the globally important heritage is rare and a privilege. It means that the work has been recognised internationally as an example of good practice, and will raise its profile significantly. We will continue to work closely with the Development Trust and other partners in Lyme to see these ambitious plans realised”.

“Partnership with UNESCO is hugely important for the development of the 2012 Jurassic Coast Earth Festival”, says Candida Blaker, Earth Festival Director. “We plan to make links between communities along the coast and other World Heritage Sites abroad, and hope it will be a catalyst for discussion around environmental issues. We hope young people will show us the way through a sense of pride in our extraordinary geological heritage and our need for stewardship of the natural environment.”

Next year’s Fossil Festival will take place 29 April to 1 May and will have a marine theme. Our key partners, such as the Natural History Museum, Jurassic Coast team and Natural England will all return, while others such as the National Oceanography Centre will play a bigger role. We also hope to welcome several new partners that will enable us to explore better the Jurassic Coast’s marine world.

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Notes to Editor:

1. The Jurassic Coast is England's only UNESCO-designated Natural World Heritage Site. See www.jurassiccoast.com
2. UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
3. There have been five Lyme Regis Fossil Festivals since 2005. These are run by the Lyme Regis Development Trust, with funding from statutory bodies and some local sponsorship, as well as massive in-kind support from natural science partners.
4. The United Nations has designated 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) to celebrate the importance of biodiversity and highlight the different threats facing this irreplaceable natural wealth across the globe. The International Year is an opportunity to celebrate progress made so far in protecting biodiversity, but also to recognise that we need to do more to promote creative solutions to reduce threats to biodiversity.
5. The 2012 Jurassic Coast Earth Festival will be an umbrella for many events taking place along the Jurassic Coast throughout the Olympic summer, and will make community links to other World Heritage Sites around the world.
6. The Festivals are keystones in the Lyme Regis Development Trust's plans to establish a 'Jurassic Coast Field Studies Centre' in Lyme Regis. The Centre will make Lyme Regis a year-round natural classroom, bringing scientists, teachers, and students from all walks of life to Lyme, and providing sustainable local jobs.
7. Donors to the Festivals include RELAYS (Regional Educational Legacy in Arts and Youth Sport) , the Jurassic Coast World Heritage team, the Arts Council of England, the Jurassic Coast Trust, Natural England, West Dorset District Council, Lyme Bay Holidays, the Fine Family Foundation, Creative Dorset, Dorset County Council, and Newlands Holidays. Other partners provide substantial in-kind support, not least the Natural History Museum, Jurassic Coast World Heritage Team and local volunteers. Other natural science partners bring a wealth of displays and exhibits.
8. RELAYS (Regional Educational Legacy in Arts and Youth Sport) is a £3.1million project which will deliver an ambitious, flexible programme of linked cultural and sporting events. The project is grounded in education and seeks to inspire a generation of young people throughout South West England. RELAYS is run by Universities South West in conjunction with its partners Lyme Regis Development Trust, The Works and Watershed. The project is funded by Legacy Trust UK and HEFCE. www.universitiessouthwest.ac.uk/relays .
9. Legacy Trust UK's mission is to support a wide range of innovative cultural and sporting activities for all, which celebrate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and leave a lasting legacy in communities throughout the United Kingdom. Legacy Trust UK has been established as a charitable trust to use funding endowed by the Big Lottery Fund, Arts Council England and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Website: www.legacytrustuk.org