UK’s oldest mainland amusement park shares in



Wicksteed Park in Kettering – the birthplace of the modern playground - has been awarded £1.78m to create the world’s first ‘Heritage Play Area’.

The amusement park is one of six successful projects to receive a share of over £5.1m awarded by the newly formed Midlands and East committee. All six projects are united in a drive to boost diversity, inclusion and wellbeing across the area.

The Midlands and East committee now boasts decision making powers up to £5m per project, which means that our funding decisions are now in the hands of the people who live and work in the area, and will directly benefit from these projects.

Inventor, engineer and founder of Wicksteed Park, Charles Wicksteed was responsible for creating many of the first playground rides we remember from our childhood, such as swings, slides and roundabouts.



The Witch's Hat

One of his lesser known inventions is the Ocean Wave, also known as The Witch’s Hat, due to its distinct cone-like appearance. It disappeared from the UK’s playgrounds in the mid-1980s with the introduction of more stringent health and safety restrictions, until now.

In celebration of their National Lottery funding, the park has unveiled a 12ft replica of the Witch’s Hat, so children can enjoy the same thrills and spills experienced by their parents and grandparents.

The @play project at the park will also see the restoration of its Rose Garden and the Captain’s Lounge, and the introduction of an annual Festival of Play.



The gatehouse at Oxburgh Hall

A collection of great projects

Other successful projects to receive funding from the Midlands and East committee are:

- The Leaves of Southwell: Where medieval stone meets living nature - £1.9m to conserve and celebrate the 13th-century naturalistic carvings in the Chapter House of Southwell Minster
- Spencer's Mill – using a rare heritage survivor to stimulate sustainable economic development - £608,200 to convert a derelict Edwardian Mill in Soham into a vibrant community space
- The Transformation of St Wilfrid's - £562,700 to save the much-loved Anglo-Saxon parish church in Barrow-upon-Trent
- Oxburgh Hall Endurance - £132,900 to bring the conservation and heritage of the moated country house in Norfolk to life
- Reviving Tong's Golden Age: Fulfilling the Tong 2020 Vision Project - £120,800 for a programme of essential repairs and conservation to the 'Westminster Abbey of the West Midlands'.