£100million lottery boost to help our public parks under threat

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This vital funding marks a renewed commitment to parks by HLF and BIG, who since 1996 have jointly invested over £640million and transformed over 700 historic public spaces.

The new-look Parks for People programme aims to get local people more involved in the management of their parks and, for the first time, will provide funding to conserve historic cemeteries and offer help and advice about long term park maintenance.

The programme has also been simplified so that local authorities, community trusts and friends groups will be able to access funding in a more streamlined way. Grants will range from £100,000 to £5million, with HLF committing over £70million and BIG giving £30million up to 2016.

As a non-statutory service, public parks are at real risk from reducing local authority revenue budgets. The UK Public Parks Summit being held today has been organised to help take a broader look at the serious issues facing parks and inspire some fresh ideas to prevent a difficult situation becoming a crisis.

Speaking at today's summit, Jenny Abramsky, Chair of HLF, said: "Today's new lottery funding in our public parks could not be more needed. We know parks are under threat from reducing revenue budgets and, as money becomes tighter, the risk of entering a cycle of boom and bust for our parks is very real. Park managers have serious concerns about their ability to maintain standards and many maintenance budgets have already been reduced to a bare minimum. Further cuts result in the closure of toilets and catering services and the loss of security staff. Through today's summit, we want to make sure the wider values of parks are recognised and that the lessons we have already learnt are shared in order to build greater resilience for the very challenging times ahead."

Peter Ainsworth, UK Chair of the BIG Lottery Fund, added: "Following decades of decline and neglect, much has been achieved in returning many of our public parks to their former glory. Now is the right time to take stock, look back at what has been achieved across our communities and also look beyond the severe financial constraints to find cost effective and innovative ways of doing things. We are so pleased to continue our support for the Parks for People programme, so that even more people can enjoy safer and improved facilities at their local parks, bringing whole communities closer together."

Speaking at the summit today, Communities Minister Don Foster welcomed additional Lottery funding to support parks saying: "I am delighted that £100m of extra lottery money will be going to support parks over the next three years, getting local people involved and protecting historic monuments. With the continuing green flags scheme these new measures are a real boost for the country's parks."

UK Public Parks Summit - inspiring new thinking about the future management of parks

Hosted by HLF and BIG, the UK Public Parks Summit brings together key decision makers and international experts to explore innovative ways to support local authorities and Friends groups to generate income in a climate of diminishing budgets and growing concern around the long term future of public parks. The day will explore innovative new models

for raising income, including the launch of an interactive income generation toolkit created by the Land Trust* and funded by HLF and BIG that will provide community groups, park managers, land owners and local authorities with advice about sustainable commercial income for parks.

Speakers include:

- The Rt Hon Don Foster, Parliamentary Undersecretary for the Dept of Communities and Local Government.
- Professor Ken Worpole, writer and social researcher, who will reflect on the changing face of parks since the launch of his seminal Park Life report in 1995. Read his article *Park Life re-visited*.
- Jon Pape, Director of Parks and Nature, City of Copenhagen, who will talk about how modernising parks can enhance quality of life and boost economic sustainability; and
- Peter Harnik, Director, Center for City Park Excellence, US Trust for Public Land, who will talk about innovative funding mechanisms that marry the power of private and public sectors.

Notes to editors

UK Public Parks Summit
Hosted by HLF and BIG, the UK Public Parks Summit aims to discuss the future of our public parks. It will take place on Thursday 25 October 2012 at the Royal Geographic Society.
Twitter #parksmatter

Parks for People
The Parks for People programme uses lottery funds to support the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of public parks and the conservation of cemeteries. The programme aims to improve the local environment and put parks firmly back at the heart of community life. HLF and BIG will continue to fund public park projects from *FY 2013/2014 to FY 2015/2016 with a joint investment of £100m.

BIG Lottery Fund
The Big Lottery Fund (BIG), the largest distributor of National Lottery good cause funding, is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery. BIG is committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need and has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK. Since June 2004 BIG has awarded over £4.4bn.

Land Trust / Prosperous Parks
The Land Trust is a not for profit organisation that provides long term sustainable management of open spaces and green infrastructure across the country. Each of their 50 open spaces across the country is a crucial part of the social landscape, delivering a range of significant benefits for residents and businesses.

At the summit, The Land Trust is launching the Prosperous Parks income toolkit to help save local parks from dereliction. The Land Trust teamed up with HLF and BIG to create a free, interactive online service to provide information about case studies, best practice and practical advice about sponsorship, ecosystem services and renewable energy and will help users find support networks, funding bodies and sustainable business planning resources to help them with planning for future income generation.

Further information

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