Heritage Lottery Fund investment in London parks reaches £100million

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Since the mid-1990s there has been a renaissance for many parks, with conservation schemes, refurbishment programmes and community-led restorations springing up across the country thanks to lottery help.

The capital has certainly been no exception in embracing this trend over the past sixteen years. Adding to a high profile list that includes such beauties as Battersea Park, Chiswick House and Gardens, Victoria Park, Russell Square and Bushy Park, the two most recent to benefit from HLF grants join a long list of parks, gardens and open spaces in outer boroughs that are also carrying out restoration works that will widely benefit the communities around them.

Wesley Kerr, Chairman of the Heritage Lottery Fund London Committee, said: “Walpole and Raphael Park are among the best parks in their boroughs and in London. With historic landscapes, towering trees, water, play, sport, and recreation facilities - as with so many of our parks, some of the best features have become tired or emasculated. However with this investment from HLF these will be restored.

“Designed at Walpole by the remarkable architect Sir John Soane and at Raphael by Arts and Crafts pioneers, funding for these parks will improve biodiversity and tree maintenance, regenerate planting and engage the community with better facilities and more activities. They bring HLF’s investment in London’s parks to £100million, in addition to other grants which have made London an even greener city. Our parks make London liveable and breathable, and we’re proud to have helped enable the renaissance of so many open spaces in what is the biggest investment in them since Victorian times.”

Alan Titchmarsh, gardener, television presenter and author, said: "Public parks are so great for local people and also support a wealth of wildlife species, making up an important part of the UK's natural habitat. That's why I welcome this Lottery funding that will improve these parks so they can be enjoyed for many years to come."

In the run-up to Love Parks Week***, Paul Bramhill, Chief Executive of parks charity Greenspace, said: “Parks are essential for healthy, happy and strong communities; the benefits they bring are immense and are now beginning to be acknowledged. Now we must ensure they can continue to contribute so extensively to our environment and this can only be accomplished through continual recognition, reinvestment and sustainable management.”

Walpole Park (awarded £2.4million) and Raphael Park (awarded £1.7million) have been funded by the “Parks for People” scheme which uses Lottery funds to support the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of public parks:

Walpole Park, Ealing, London – confirmed HLF grant of £2.4m
Opened to the public in 1901 and extremely well used lying at the heart of Ealing town centre, Walpole Park’s lawns and gardens form the backdrop to Grade I listed Pitzhanger Manor. The park has a wealth of historic features including a Grade II* listed rustic bridge, Portland stone bench and lodge building. Since it opened it has hosted a wide range of community events and activities, such as the Ealing Summer Music and Comedy Festival, country dancing and bandstand concerts.

Through the scheme the council aim to realise the vision of revealing the site's hidden heritage, and reuniting Sir John Soane's Regency masterpiece within its landscape. The HLF grant will restore the park to its original beauty and improve its visitor facilities. The park will undergo major conservation to recreate the Regency planting and reinstate the kitchen garden. Ealing Council will also provide extensive volunteering opportunities aiming to work with over 150 volunteers a year as well as educational activities for the local community.

Leader of Ealing Council, Councillor Julian Bell, said: "Walpole Park is one of our most loved parks, attracting more than 100,000 visitors every year. The funding will give us an amazing opportunity to reinstate some of the park's original features while conserving its listed architecture and heritage trees. The 10 year project will involve local people, park enthusiasts and experts by providing opportunities for participation, learning and volunteering."

Raphael Park, Romford, Essex – confirmed HLF grant of £1.7m
Raphael Park, Romford's much-loved municipal public park, was officially opened in 1904 and has changed little over the years. The 17.8 hectare park dates back to Saxon times when it formed part of the Royal Manor serving the ancient Saxon palace at Havering. The land then became part of the Gidea Hall Estate from the 12th to the 19th centuries before being sympathetically transformed into Romford's first public park at the turn of the 20th century by Sir Herbert Raphael. It also contains Black's Lake and the Grade II listed Black's Bridge, built in classical Georgian style by James Wyatt.

The Heritage Lottery Fund grant will enable essential conservation work. The Park Lodge will be restored and extended to provide a new cafe, community and education resources and a base for the new Park Manager. Havering Borough Council will also offer a varied range of volunteer activities including the provision of guided walks and talks.

Councillor Andrew Curtin Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns and Communities said: "Raphael Park is one of the great landscapes of Romford, with roots going back to the thirteenth century, and particularly significant landscape developments in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This project will restore fine views and vistas within the park, lift our spirits and have important benefits for quality of life and the visual attractiveness of Romford as a whole. I am greatly looking forward to work commencing on the restoration and to learning more about the historic landscape of the park and Romford as part of it."

Julia Herold, Chairman of The Friends of Raphael Park said: "This is a great opportunity for the park and we have worked with the Council and Heritage Lottery Fund on the application. We feel that the HLF's commitment in preserving the historical and ecological values will ensure all aspects of the regeneration will be done with a great deal of care and attention."

Further good news
In addition to the confirmed money announced today for Walpole Park and Raphael Park, another three London parks are beginning their restoration journeys today. Initial joint HLF/BIG support** totalling just over £200,000 in first-round pass development funding** has been awarded to the following parks so they can develop detailed plans for future major restoration and redevelopment work:

- **West Hackney Recreation Ground, London – initial support for a £639,200 bid, including £45,700 development funding**
  The West Hackney Recreation Ground is a former burial ground in the heart of East London, and one of the first sites to be supported by the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association. The project plans to re-integrate the three key spaces of the site; the recreation ground, St Paul's burial ground and the churchyard. Activities will include stabilising headstones and recreating the original planting designs as well as increasing community involvement

in the site through new volunteering opportunities and local school visits.

- **Alexandra Road Park, Camden, London – initial support for a £1.2m bid, including £90,000 development funding**
  Alexandra Road Park, located within a distinguished Grade II* 1970s housing estate and designed by landscape architect Janet Jack, is a linear park with a series of outdoor rooms with different characters for relaxation and play. It is a visionary example of the landscaping and architecture of post-war London. Camden Council working with the Tenants and Residents Association plans to restore the park and improve wildlife habitats including installing bird and bat boxes and bee hives.
- **Plashet Park, Newham, London – initial support for a £1.7m bid, including £66,000 development funding**
  An example of a 19th-century municipal park, Plashet Park was opened in 1891. The name 'Plashet' means 'enclosure in the wood' and comes from early local history reports from the area. The London Borough of Newham's plans include restoring the wider landscape, introducing new and improved facilities and working with the Friends Group and volunteers who will participate in reinvigorating the park through activities and community events.

Notes to editors

*Today's second-round pass awards are from the Parks for People programme which has a two-stage or two-round application process. The full grant has now been awarded following a successful second-round application from these parks.

**A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

***Love Parks Week (23-31 July 2011) is an annual campaign, organised by parks charity GreenSpace. Founded in 2006, the campaign has grown steadily and is now established as a major event that is celebrated in parks across the country. Each year hundreds of events take place, enabling thousands of people to get out and enjoy their parks and help put forward the case for reinvestment.

The Parks for People programme uses Lottery funds to support the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of public parks. The programme aims to improve the local environment and put parks firmly back at the heart of community life. In England the two Lottery Funds have been working in partnership from 2006 to deliver a multi-million pound investment in public parks of £150m. Over the period 2006-9, the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) invested up to £80m (in England only) with £70m coming from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the UK.

HLF is continuing to fund public park projects in 2011/12 with an investment of £20m each year. The next closing date for applications is 31 August 2011. The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) remains committed to working in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in making a success of the Parks for People programme and will allocate £5million in 2011/12 and another £5m in 2012/13.

Big Lottery Fund
The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) rolls out close to £2million in Lottery good cause money every 24 hours, which together with other Lottery distributors means that across the UK most people are within a few miles of a Lottery-funded project. BIG, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment

and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004. The Big Lottery Fund and its predecessor bodies have invested more than £1.3billion in environmental initiatives.

Further information

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