Investment to go towards restoring London’s green spaces

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The cash pot for London will go towards helping local authorities regenerate some of London’s most dilapidated but popular inner city open spaces – West Hackney Recreation Ground, the site of a former burial ground of West Hackney Church and bombed in the 1940s, and Alexandra Road Park in Camden, a tightly packed slot of land integral to the architecture of the progressive Grade II* listed 1970s Alexandra and Ainsworth Housing Estate in Kilburn.

This vital lottery support comes at a pivotal time for public parks, many of which are struggling in the current economic climate. The situation is of such concern that the HLF has commissioned a major new report aiming to provide a thorough insight into the challenging situation faced by the sector. A team of industry experts will deliver the *State of the UK’s Public Parks Report* in spring 2014.

The awards have been made under the Parks for People programme using Lottery funds to support the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of public parks – aiming to improve the local environment and put parks firmly back at the heart of community life.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: “Investing in London’s green spaces is essential to lengthen our lead as the best big city in the world. So I am delighted by today’s announcement. By creating better parks, more street trees and more pocket parks, for local communities to enjoy we can make our already verdant city an even better place to live, work and invest in.”

Wesley Kerr, Chairman of HLF London Committee, said on behalf of HLF and BIG: “This investment in our public parks could not be more needed. The parks we’re supporting today are hugely important to the communities they serve. They are vital to the people and the future of our city, and on each project masses of volunteering time is being committed to ensure their future. Whether it’s inner or outer London, large parks in suburban neighbourhoods or small public gardens providing a green lung in dense inner city housing, parks are an important amenity for all of us and add greatly to our quality of life. I am confident that HLF’s forthcoming State of the UK’s Public Parks Report will help identify how we can best maintain them for the foreseeable future.”

Parks awarded lottery grants today:

West Hackney Recreation Ground – confirmed funding of £690,700: At little over 1 hectare, West Hackney churchyard and recreation ground may not the largest of London’s parks but its continued use as a hub for relaxation, recreation and events – with a weekly farmers' market a highlight in locals calendar – reinforces just how important it is to the people of Hackney. In a dense urban area with little green space the exciting and ambitious plans redevelop the site and integrate three different areas including open space around the current St Paul’s Church and the former cemetery. Restoration and refurbishment will involve a compete make over improving pedestrian access, increasing involvement from an enthusiastic local community, and ongoing management including the appointment of a garden manager and volunteer co-ordinator to work at the site.

Alexandra Road Park, LB Camden – confirmed funding of £1,537,000: Described as 'the most significant landscape of its type in the UK' by the Twentieth Century Society, Alexandra Road Park was designed as an integral part of the 1970s modernist Alexandra and Ainsworth estate in Kilburn. Local residents are taking a leading role to rejuvenate the 1.7 hectare linear park, with a local Friends group already underway with plans to expand an existing band of volunteers. The project will re-equip five badly damaged playgrounds, repair the neglected landscape with new tree and shrub planting, remove graffiti, install new benches and fencing and work with a local youth group to improve a multi-use games area.

Alan Titchmarsh, gardener, broadcaster and novelist, commented: “Public parks are so important to people’s well-being but – like all landscapes and gardens – they need continuous love and care to keep them in good condition. With sources of funding increasingly hard to find in tough times, failure to invest properly in maintenance in particular means that our much-loved parks are at risk of becoming places that are no longer safe or fit for purpose. We must not take our public parks for granted. I’m delighted to hear that HLF and BIG continue to invest lottery money into parks and that the new research will highlight the serious issues our parks are facing so that more can be done to help safeguard these precious green places.”

Confirmed funding has also been allocated for parks in outer boroughs **Eastcote House Gardens**, **LB Hillingdon** (£1.2m) and **Langtons Gardens/Fielders Field, LB Havering** (£1.8m), in addition to initial support for a £1.9million HLF / BIG bid, including £101,600 of development funding for the **Avenue House Restoration project in Finchley.**

Notes to editors

£23million in total has been awarded across the UK to restore and regenerate our parks. HLF / BIG joint confirmed grants in England include:

- Boultham Park, Lincoln – £2.7m
- Holywells Park, Ipswich, Suffolk - £2.9m
- Alexandra Park Road, London - £1.5m
- West Hackney Recreation Ground, London - £690,700
- Eastcote House Gardens, London - £1.3m
- Langton Gardens, London - £1.9m
- Memorial Park, Fleetwood, Lancashire - £1.9m
- Westgate Gardens and Landscape, Canterbury, Kent - £766,800
- Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge, Dudley - £2.6m
- Lightwoods Park, Smethwick - £3.6m
- Cliffe Castle Park, Keighley, West Yorkshire - £3.5m

The State of the UK’s Public Parks Report – following a competitive procurement process, HLF has recently appointed a team of parks experts to deliver the State of the UK’s Public Parks Report. The team is being led by parks consultant Peter Neal and Director of Community First Partnership, Ian Baggott and includes Public Parks Research Specialist Dr Edward Hobson, Peter Harnik from the Centre for City Park Excellence in Washington DC, parks communications specialist Ben Hurley and research company Ipsos Mori.

The team is priming park managers across the UK to be prepared to respond to an online survey that will be launched later this summer. The team has launched an immediate call for evidence and case studies that highlight the challenges and opportunities currently facing the sector, which should be sent to ukparksstudy@cfpuk.co.uk.

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 2006-2013 the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) has committed up to £92m (in England only) and HLF has committed £140m to public parks across the UK.

HLF is continuing to fund public park projects in 2013 / 14 with an investment of £24m each year. The next closing date for applications is 31 August 2013.

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 £10m in 2013/14.

Love Parks Week is taking place this year from 27 July to 4 August 2013. You can support a local park by running your own event. Visit Love Parks Week website for more information.

Since 1994, HLF has awarded a total of £585m to over 560 public parks across the UK.

Big Lottery Fund (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. It was established by Parliament on 1 December 2006. Big Lottery Fund website.

Further information

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BIG press office: Lauren Connors on 020 7211 1962.