£9million bumper boost for the people's parks of London

31/03/2010

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) today announced confirmed funding* of just over £9million for three of the capitals best-loved parks through their joint Parks for People scheme.

Victoria Park in Tower Hamlets, widely known as the ‘people’s park’, is scheduled to have its improvement works completed in time for the start of the 2012 Olympic Games. It already attracts around 7.5 million visits every year and this number is expected to grow thanks to its proximity to the Olympic site and the improvement works. Two other well-loved London parks, Bishops Park and Fulham Palace Grounds in Fulham, and Horniman Gardens in Forest Hill, are also set to begin major redevelopment work.

The three parks receiving grants in the region today are:

Victoria Park, LB Tower Hamlets: £4.5m grant
Victoria Park was opened in 1845, after Queen Victoria received a petition of 30,000 signatures from Eastenders requesting a park in the area. Widely known as the ‘people’s park’, Victoria Park hosted the ‘Rock against Racism’ concert in the 1970s and has seen a wide range of public speaking spectacles, campaigning and events in its long history. It's still hugely popular today - 84% of people asked supported the plans for the planned improvements and the local council's visitor analysis study showed the park can expect over 7.5 million visits a year. Now, with the 2012 Olympic Games just around the corner, Victoria Park will have the opportunity to attract more visitors than ever.

Lottery funding will go towards restoring the park’s four most well known features: the Burdett-Coutts Fountain; the Chinese Pagoda; the Dogs of Alcibiades; and the Old English Garden. There will be new volunteering and training opportunities including the chance to learn horticultural and conservation skills.

Tower Hamlets Council Head of Parks and Play, Colin Stuart, said: “We are delighted to receive this funding. Victoria Park is immensely popular with the community and Tower Hamlets residents rallied together to win this financial support. We are looking forward to seeing some of the park’s iconic features restored to their former glory before the Olympic Games displays Victoria Park to the world.

Bishop’s Park and Fulham Palace Grounds, LB Hammersmith & Fulham: £3.64m grant
The gardens of Fulham Palace are amongst the most important in the country and were once surrounded by the longest moat in England. The grounds were made famous in the 17th century when grapes were cultivated there and sent to Queen Elizabeth I by Bishop Grindal**. Bishop’s Park officially opened in 1893 and included land known as Bishop’s Walk, Bishop’s Meadow and West Meadow.

The Parks for People grant will reunite for the first time these two pieces of parkland through the restoration of the existing landscape and buildings. Volunteering opportunities and activity programmes will also help involve the local community in the day-to-day running of the park, which will complement HLF’s previous investment of £3million towards the restoration of Fulham Palace. An apprenticeship scheme will be introduced, providing opportunities for two people at any given time, and the once popular ‘Fulham Beach’ will be reinstated.

Lyn Carpenter, Director of Residents' Services at Hammersmith & Fulham Council, said: "This really is fantastic news and we are all absolutely delighted. Both Bishops Park and Fulham Palace grounds are of huge historic importance to the borough and these plans will see them reaffirmed as jewels in the Hammersmith & Fulham crown. We are extremely grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund for their support."

Horniman Gardens, LB Lewisham: £907,000 grant

Horniman Gardens comprises 16.5 acres of formal and natural landscapes, ranging from sunken rose gardens to ethno-botanical planting. In the heart of South London, the gardens provide a tranquil escape for local residents and visitors alike. The Gardens and the Museum were originally part of Victorian MP, tea trader and philanthropist Frederick Horniman's home and grounds and were donated to the people of London in 1901.

This money from HLF and BIG means the park's historic features such as the bandstand terrace can be restored and picturesque views opened up. The improvements will complement the 2002 Centenary Development at the Horniman Museum, which received an HLF grant of £9.9million. Plans include a world food garden and new learning centre that will let young people learn about and engage with the history of the gardens.

Janet Vitmayer, Director of the Horniman Museum and Gardens, said: "We're thrilled to have the go ahead for our redevelopment scheme which will realise Frederick Horniman's original dream of a truly united Museum and Gardens. The Museum's collections will be reflected within the Gardens through new planting and interpretation including a world food garden, musical play area, and a space for Community and Learning activities. Various species will be housed in a more accessible and improved animal enclosure. The panoramic views of London from the restored bandstand terrace promise to be breathtaking. This award will allow the Horniman, already one of south London's most well-loved and well- used landmarks to provide its growing audience and future generations with rich new opportunities for discovery and enjoyment across a world class Museum and 16.5 acres of beautiful Gardens."

Wesley Kerr, Chairman of the HLF London Committee, said: "Victoria Park, Bishops Park and Horniman Gardens are three serene spaces, each very special for the local community and for the whole of London and these awards will reinstate them and their finest features amongst our most exemplary historic parks. Victoria Park is in effect the East End's royal park, the first to be created and landscaped for the people and soon to be an Olympic centrepiece. Bishops Park and the famous Fulham Palace grounds within it contain a Tudor mansion, remnants of our longest moat and oldest botanical garden and one of the finest Thameside reaches. Horniman Gardens is an outstanding hillside landscape surrounding a unique museum."

"Restored lakes, watercourses and monuments, new visitor and learning facilities, improved horticulture and maintenance, apprentices, volunteers and wider access will ensure these prodigious green spaces are passed on to the next generation in prime condition. It's part of the biggest investment in our parks since Queen Victoria's time."

Debbie Pippard, the Big Lottery Fund's Head of London Region, said: "We're delighted to fund the regeneration of these three historic London parks, each of which represents a different aspect of London's wonderful heritage of green space. Parks require a lot of maintenance, modernisation and care, and today's investment will ensure that people of all ages can enjoy them and reap their benefits. It's a great chance for the community to give something back by helping improve these precious places, preserving them for future generations to enjoy."

This latest batch of confirmed awards takes the total investment into the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of London's public parks to over £108 million. The total investment into parks in the five Olympic Boroughs by HLF and HLF/BIG (Parks for People) is: just under £2million to parks in Greenwich; just under £7million to parks in Hackney; just £2million to parks in Newham; just under £8million to parks in Tower Hamlets; and just over £4 million to

parks in Waltham Forest.

Notes to editors

* Today's Stage Two 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 Stage Two applications from these parks.

** Bishop Edmund Grindal (c. 1519 – 6 July 1583) was an English church leader who successively held the posts of Bishop of London, Archbishop of York and Archbishop of Canterbury.

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 2009 to deliver a multi-million pound investment in public parks of £150m. Over the three years, the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) has 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 2010 with an investment of £20m each year. The next closing date for applications is 31st August 2010. Parks for People programme grants range from £250,000 to £5m with two rounds of funding each year.
- Every completed park project will be expected to achieve the annual prestigious Green Flag Award and in doing so demonstrate quality standards of care and upkeep.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK. HLF has invested £525m in 530 historic public parks, gardens, squares and promenades right across the UK.

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. BIG has invested more than £700million in wider environmental initiatives. www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

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