Summer Lottery boost for Dudley’s Priory Park

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The park, on the north side of Dudley just outside the town centre, was once part of the town’s vast Norman Castle estate and also houses the remains of the 12th century Cluniac Priory of St James and Priory Hall, once home to the Earls of Dudley. Thanks to the grant boost, which totals 68% of the project costs, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council are now set to begin major restoration work.

The award has been made as part of a £6million funding package to four parks across England by HLF and BIG.**

Anne Jenkins, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for the West Midlands, said on behalf of HLF and BIG: “Summer is finally here, and it’s the perfect time to enjoy our public parks. It’s important everyone in our towns and cities has somewhere free, green and open to enjoy in their leisure time. This joint investment from HLF and BIG is helping to do exactly that by ensuring parks such as our much-loved Priory Park in Dudley continue to be looked after and have a major role to play at the very heart of their local communities.”

The HLF/BIG grant to Priory Park will enable major redevelopment and restoration including repair work to the priory structures, the Italianate rose garden and lily pond, and improvements to the existing park pavilion to include a Green classroom and community facility. The 19th-century parklands will also be refurbished and the project will offer a wide range of volunteering opportunities for the local community including training in parks management, landscaping, horticulture and sports coaching skills.

Councillor David Stanley, Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture, Dudley Metropolitan Council, said: “I’m delighted that our bid has been successful and that we can make improvements to one of Dudley’s most unique parks. The priory ruins are ancient monuments of extreme historical importance and this investment will enable us to show them off in the best possible way.”

Janet Alderman-Rowe, Friends of Priory Park Committee, commented: "The Friends group are thrilled to receive this fabulous news that our lottery bid has been accepted and Priory Park will benefit from the Parks for People Funding award. The Friends aim is to work diligently to restore and enhance this historic parkland to meet the needs of today’s park user. We are delighted that working in partnership with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, this lottery award will enable a varied programme of work all of which will serve to return the park to its former glory and be one of the jewels in Dudley's crown."

Ian Austin MP, keen supporter of the Priory Park restoration project, said: "I'm delighted that the Priory Park bid has won this funding. Janet and her colleagues at the Friends of Priory Park should be really proud that all their work is paying off at last. I have worked hard with the Friends, the council, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund and am really pleased our efforts have paid off.”

“The park and the Priory ruins are famous local landmarks that are steeped in the history of our town. I want to make sure everything is done to draw more people to our town by making sites like this as interesting and as accessible as possible.”

Chris Packham, environmentalist and broadcaster and supporter of the Parks for People programme, said: “Public parks are places that really give back in spades to local communities and they're in pretty good shape at the moment thanks to the massive investment - £600million in total across the UK - from the Heritage Lottery Fund and BIG Lottery Fund. We're so lucky in this country to have so many green spaces to enjoy nature, especially in our towns and cities, but we must not take them for granted. I’m passionate about them and see them as one of this country's great heritage traditions so I believe it’s essential that investing in them remains a priority.”

Initial HLF/BIG support (a first-round pass***) and development funding of just over £1million was also announced today for 11 parks across the UK from as far apart as Newcastle to Brighton.

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 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council for works to Priory Park.

** The other three parks receiving confirmed funding announced today are:

- Wallsend Parks, Wallsend, North East - £2,446,500.
- Middleton Park, Leeds, Yorkshire - £1,465,000.
- Burnham-on-Sea, Marine Cove Gardens, South West - £344,200 (HLF funding only).

*** 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.

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 past 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. 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 has allocated £10 million in its grant budget for 2010/11 towards the programme in England.

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 £527m in over 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. The Big Lottery Fund and its predecessor bodies have invested more than £1.3billion in environmental initiatives. www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Further information

Vicky Wilford, HLF Press Office on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401 937 or vickyw@hlf.org.uk

Julia Sweidan, BIG Press Office on 020 7211 1818 or Julia.sweidan@biglotteryfund.org.uk

Phil Parker, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council on 01384 815219 or phil.parker@dudley.gov.uk