Major Autumn lottery boost confirmed for Mote Park

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The 180-hectare park, originally a country estate and now one of the largest public parks in Kent, was converted into a landscaped park at the end of the 18th-century and now serves the surrounding residential areas and nearby Maidstone town centre.

The award has been made as part of a £10.6million funding package to six of the UK's much-loved parks by the HLF and BIG.**

Stuart McLeod, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for the South East region, said: "Autumn is one of the most beautiful times of the year for the South East's parks. Stunning oranges and reds everywhere and crunchy leaves underfoot make it the perfect time to get out and enjoy our wonderful open spaces. This joint investment from HLF and BIG will ensure our much-loved parks such as Mote Park continue to be looked after and have a major role to play at the very heart of their local communities."

Fiona Dempsie, Big Lottery Fund's Head of the South East region, added: "As time takes its toll on our wonderful parks significant investment is needed to bring them back to their former glory. Today's funding will play a major role in making Mote Park an ever more popular and valued place both for local residents and for visitors, and we're so pleased that we can help make this happen."

The grant will enable the restoration of the Grade II listed park - whose name Mote Park comes from the old English word 'moot', meaning 'a place of assembly' -
to return to its 1870's appearance by re-establishing lost vistas and replacing haphazard 20th-century tree planting with historically appropriate species.

HLF/BIG's investment will complete improvements as part of a wider restoration programme including rejuvenating the 19th-century pavilion and historic waterfall back to their former glory.

Other improvements will include better facilities for visitors with refurbished toilets and three visitors' hubs with improved parking and provision for catering. Vehicle access will be controlled to avoid a dangerous mix of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The grant will permit the employment of an audience development officer to encourage activities and wider use of the restored park.

The popular park already receives an estimated 660,000 visitors per year and there is an active local Friends group. A programme of volunteer activities will now be enhanced covering such topics as landscape and wildlife maintenance.

Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture, Cllr Richard Ash, said: "This is fantastic news and what a promising future Mote Park has. There are exciting times ahead for the park and the residents and visitors of Maidstone. Both Maidstone council and the HLF/BIG have spent a lot of time securing this funding, which we all owe big thanks to."

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.

** The six parks receiving funding in this round are:

Telford Town Park, Shropshire - £2.1m
Mote Park, Maidstone, Kent - £1.8m
Whaley Bridge Memorial Park, Derbyshire - £478,000
Lordship Recreation Ground, Tottenham, London - £3.8m
Mesnes Park, Wigan - £1.9m
Cambuslang Park, South Lanarkshire, Scotland - £551,500 (HLF funded only)

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 28 February 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 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

Mote Park and Lordship Lane Recreation Ground are Green Flag winners 2010. Green Flags are a quality standard for public parks. As a condition of Parks for People Lotteries' grant the parks will have to enter for Green Flag status and maintain it for 6 years. www.keepbritaintidy.org/GreenFlag

Further information

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