Mary Stevens Park transformation moves closer

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Dudley Council's £1.9m Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the BIG Lottery Fund (BIG) bid has been given a first round pass* and the funding body has granted £116,100 development funding for the authority to draw up detailed plans.

Ambitious plans, which will now be worked up in detail by the council, friends of park group and other stakeholders, include the restoration of the listed park gates, ironwork at the Heath Road entrance and Heath Pool. The vision also includes plans to restore the formal gardens and terrace around Heath House and refurbishment of the iconic bandstand.

Plans to relocate the war memorial into a more prestigious position on Queens Drive will also be worked up in partnership with the British Legion. If successful with the full £1.9m bid at the second round, other plans could include resurfacing of Queens Drive and improvement of pool views from Heath House.

Councillor David Stanley, Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture, said: "We are delighted the bid has been successful and now look forward to working closely with partners to create detailed plans. The proposals will see restoration projects around the park that the local community have been very keen to see so I am sure this news will be welcomed by all."

The first round success will now see detailed conservation, architectural, archaeological, ecological and hydrological work carried out to work up the full plans.

Anne Jenkins, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for the West Midlands, said on behalf of HLF and BIG: "This initial support from HLF and BIG will help Dudley Council to develop plans to ensure Mary Stevens Park continues to be looked after and remain at the heart of the local community. We look forward to working with them over the development phase."

The 10 year vision for the park has been developed in recent years, through numerous consultations, by the council and key stakeholders from around the local community. These have included Friends of Mary Stevens park, Access In Dudley, Stourbridge Township Council, MSP Sons of Rest, British Legion, West Midlands Police, local schools and colleges and local sports clubs and associations.

The news is a double boost to Mary Stevens Park, which also recently became one of five healthy hubs across the Dudley borough, and now features outdoor gym equipment and a new healthy hub building.

Notes to editors

* 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 2011 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.

Since 1994, HLF has awarded a total of £527m to over 550 public parks 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

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