Fleetwood's Memorial Park secures £2.4m investment

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The funding will be used to carry out a comprehensive restoration of the Grade II listed park and create a five year programme of community activities to celebrate its heritage and the unique history of the town.

Designed and built in 1925 by renowned town planner Sir Patrick Abercrombie, Memorial Park is unique in that the entire grounds were created in commemoration of the First World War, unlike most conventional architectural memorials, and is one of only four listed war memorial parks and gardens in the country.

Councillor Lynne Bowen, Cabinet member with responsibility for parks at Wyre Council, said: "I'm absolutely delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund have backed our vision for Memorial Park. The decision reflects the historical significance of the park, both locally and nationally, and it is fitting that we will be undertaking this work during the First World War centenary.

"Local people have played a big part in shaping our restoration plans, which have wide-reaching aspirations to improve lives in terms of health and wellbeing, and I want to thank them for their enthusiasm. Memorial Park has been at the heart of Fleetwood's community for almost one hundred years and we can now safeguard its future for the enjoyment of generations to come."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said on behalf of HLF and BIG: “We’re delighted to be able to provide this much needed support for Memorial Park when it could not be more needed. Many public parks are really suffering in the current economic climate so this is particularly good news for the North West. Parks are important to all of us and add so much to our quality of life. Memorial Park in Fleetwood, which has hugely important First World War links, will help to bring the already passionate local community together and now, we can help them secure its future.

Wyre Council has worked closely with local veterans and the Friends of Memorial Park Group to develop the project and was assisted by a team of volunteers that carried out extensive research into the park's origins.

Les Fletcher, Chairman of the Friends of Memorial Park, said: "I'm thrilled with this decision and the benefits it will bring for the people of Fleetwood. I remember how lovely and well used the park was when I was a child, 60 years ago, but I've seen it change over the years to become a thoroughfare rather than a destination. I'll be delighted to see it restored to its former glory and reaching its full potential. I hope more people from all parts of the community will be encouraged to use and enjoy it in the future."

The project will see essential conservation work carried out including restoration of the war memorial, entrances, pond, pathways and pavilion; a greater range of sports and play facilities including construction of a multi-use games area; and a programme of community activities aimed at exploring the park's history, the stories of those commemorated on the war memorial and Fleetwood's maritime past.

Work is due to start in January 2014 with the restoration of the park's pavilion, which will become a community hub. It is hoped that the project will be complete by spring 2015.

Notes to editors

Restoration plans include:

- restore and improve the memorial and surround
- restore Wolsley entrance
- create a pavilion and demonstration garden for community use
- restore pond and stream and create more public space
- improve Percy Street garden
- create a multi-use games area and restore two tennis courts
- restore Warrenhurst entrance and Remembrance Avenue
- restore walling to bowling greens
- restore Nelson Road entrance and create a new path
- improve Highbury Avenue entrance and introduce arrival point
- formalise woodland walk and link to restored rockery and pond
- improve Welbeck Avenue entrance and create arrival point.

Planned community activities include:

Wilfred Owen - the famous First World War poet was based in Fleetwood from June to December 1916, in charge of the shooting range which was located on the site of the current golf course. A programme of celebratory activities will coincide with the centenary of his stay.

The Pharos Project - continuation of a pilot six-week project led by volunteer veterans who teach young people, particularly young offenders, about the reality of conflict and the nature of commemoration. Using the park to explore attitudes to vandalism and loyalty to friends, they aim to guide youngsters towards positive activities.

Fit for heroes - regular guided nature and history walks plus themed events including Everyone A Hero Dash, a fun run around the park and town's historic monuments and Tea Dance in the Park, themed music and dancing from both World Wars.

Remembrance Way - young people will research the history of the park's Remembrance Avenue, lined with trees planted by children, and undertake future planting.

Living Names - animated stories tracing the lives of those commemorated on the war memorial.

Fleetwood Live - Once restored, the tennis pavilion will provide a focal point for family activities to reaffirm the park's position at the heart of the community.

Fleetwood demonstration garden - in both world wars, food shortages caused people to grow their own food and eat healthily. Volunteers will plant a demonstration garden to encourage the current generation to grow their own food.

Over There - following the journeys of men who enlisted using local trams and the ferry to tell the stories to travellers.

Volunteering: £60,400 of volunteering time is committed to the park from people in the local community over the next five years which builds on £17,500 during the development of the project (August 2012 – June 2013).

The designer, Sir Patrick Abercrombie, a renowned civic designer and town planner, created a central war memorial with five avenues radiating from it, each with its own entrance to the park, and a triumphal archway at the main entrance on Park Ave.

Memorial Park is one of Britain's earliest inter-generational and youth engagement projects; local schoolchildren were involved in its creation, from fundraising to planting the trees that line Remembrance Avenue within the park.

The Big Lottery Fund, 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 website.

Further information

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