Mesnes Park: £1.9million of lottery funding announced!

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The two funds' have awarded the money through their joint Parks for People programme which 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.

Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust, in partnership with Wigan Council, has been awarded the grant to transform and regenerate their much-loved Mesnes Park.

The new project marks Phase Two of Mesnes Park's regeneration and will include the restoration of the historic entrance lodge, refurbishment of the bowling pavilion and footpaths, improved park lighting and park furniture.

But it will also see the return and restoration of three of the park's most impressive features.

The Coalbrookdale Fountain will be re-introduced complete with cast iron dolphins and serpents – the fountain is thought to have been removed in the early 1920s.

A new pump will ensure that water once again flows over the magnificent Pulham Rock feature.

While Wigan's luckiest statue – Sir Francis Sharp Powell – will receive a make over as the former MP's statue is re-bronzed and his plinth repointed. Thousands of people visit the statue each year to rub his foot for luck.

Mesnes is a classic example of a Victorian urban park. It is a Grade II listed park and was opened back in 1878 as a 'green lung' for the industrial town. Today it receives around two million visitors a year and plays host to an array of popular events.

Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust (WLCT), manage the park of behalf of Wigan Council.

Lisa Nandy, MP for Wigan, greeted the news saying: "I'm delighted that the Lottery has chosen Mesnes Park for this award. It's an area loved and much used by local people in Wigan, and the size of the grant will make a significant difference to one of our best loved green spaces."

Chief Executive of WLCT, Rodney Hill, said: "We are thrilled with this announcement by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund. As an organisation we are committed to creating leisure and cultural opportunities for the people of Wigan Borough. This is a key site for us and once complete will help us achieve our goal of improving people's lives through leisure and culture."

He added: "I would like to pay tribute, not only to the Lottery for this grant but also, to the Friends of Mesnes Park for all their help and support over many years."

When work on Phase One and Phase Two is completed in 2012 a massive £6.4m will have been invested by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery Fund, Wigan Council and Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust. Work has already started on Phase One of the project.

Wigan Council's cabinet member for leisure, Cllr Brian Baldwin, said: "Mesnes Park has a place in the hearts of most Wigan folk. It is a wonderful place to escape today's hustle and bustle to relax or exercise. This fantastic funding is the icing on the cake for this regeneration project which will ensure this much loved park is conserved for the people of Wigan for another hundred years."

Secretary of volunteer group, The Friends Of Mesnes Park, Sue Turner, said: "This wonderful generosity means a great deal to the people of this town. Wigan will once again have a park at its heart which people can be truly proud of."

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said on behalf of HLF and BIG: "We believe that our public parks are an important part of our country's heritage. Mesnes Park is a wonderful example of this right in the heart of Wigan. This award will complete the restoration of Mesnes Park enabling it to play a full role in the life of the town, both preserving an important part of our local heritage and ensuring it can be enjoyed by many generations to come."

Sara continued: "The Borough of Wigan has a wealth of heritage that deserves to be celebrated, although in the past it has tended to receive less HLF funding than other areas. Our Development Team is working with Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust and Wigan & Leigh CVS to encourage more applications, and any community groups with an idea for a heritage project of any size should contact Rebecca Mason at our local office in Manchester to discuss further."

For further information about the Mesnes Park Restoration Project contact Andrew Bond – Parks Regeneration Manager on 01942 828 232 or email a.bond@wlct.org or visit www.wlct.org/mesnespark.

Notes to editors

Phase One of the Mesnes Park Restoration project is currently underway and includes the regeneration of historic features such as the bandstand, pavilion and shelter.

The restoration and refurbishment work as part of Phase One was made possible following a Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery Fund grant of £1.8m. Match-funding from other sources including Wigan Council, Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust and a contribution from Fredericks Ice Cream ensured the investment in the park during this initial work totalled £3.4m.

Mesnes Park is a Grade II listed Victorian park covering 28 acres of land in the heart of Wigan town centre. It was the first municipal park in Wigan and was opened on 6th August 1878 by local mill owner Nathaniel Eckersley. The park retains the framework and features of the original design, and contains six listed buildings and structures.

The name 'Mesnes' comes from a shortened form of 'Demesnes', which means 'land retained by the lord of the manor' (in this case the Rector of Wigan). By the mid-nineteenth century this land was in a semi-waste condition and was given to the town by the Rector in exchange for the development of other land.

One of the most prominent features within the park, the pavilion, was built in 1880, and in 1910 the statue of Sir Francis Sharpe Powell (MP for Wigan) was unveiled. By 1930 there was a vast array of public recreational facilities within the park.

Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust is a charitable trust working on behalf of Wigan Council to manage and support leisure and cultural facilities, initiatives and events for over 300,000 residents in the Wigan Borough. www.wlct.org.

Getting Wigan Active is Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust's vision to help people across the Wigan Borough to become more physically, mentally and creatively active. It also aims to increase community activity and to encourage good citizenship.

Today's award is 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.

In England the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund 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 £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, 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

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