Everyone’s a Winner! £18 million to go to UK parks

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This cash injection from the joint Parks for People programme brings the total invested in public parks and the environment by the two Lottery good cause distributors to well over £1billion* - an amazing feat in the National Lottery’s 15th year.

Watch Chis Packham and Carole Souter talk about the Parks for People project (link to YouTube).

Chris Packham, environmentalist and broadcaster, said: “We’re so lucky in the UK to have such wonderful parks which not only offer massive benefits in terms of health, quality of life and well-being, but also brilliant opportunities to get close to nature and escape the stresses of everyday life. We should all celebrate this fantastic £18m investment from HLF and BIG. They understand that every community deserves to be near a great park!”

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said on behalf of HLF and BIG: "Public parks are vital places and HLF and BIG are proud that our continued funding is steadily reversing years of under investment. £18million will go a long way to transform these six parks but further money will always be needed to ensure they are properly maintained.

“These are difficult times. It would be terrible if parks budgets were cut. All the good work of the last 15 years could so easily be undone. So we would urge people to voice their passion for their local park. Write a letter to the council, join a Friends Group or get involved with what’s happening or not happening in your park. We can all help make sure public parks are a priority.”

Six parks celebrate £18million**

The six public parks celebrating awards today are:

- Spinney Hill Park, Leicester
- Stewart Park, Middlesbrough
- St James' Park, Southampton
- Howard Park and Gardens, Letchworth Garden City
- Stamford Park, Tameside
- Queens Park, Bolton

People love parks

Between four and five billion visits are made to parks each year and 50% of the population visit a park at least once a week.

Surveys at HLF-funded parks have revealed:

- 95% of visits are enjoyable, peaceful and relaxing
- 60% of visitors take more physical exercise because they use parks
- 80% say the park helps make their area more attractive and a better place to live.

HLF's funding for historic parks

- HLF has invested over £525 million in conserving more than 500 historic public parks across the UK
- This investment includes work to no less than 84 bandstands, 100 visitor centres, 120 lakes and ponds and 141 playgrounds and play facilities for young people
- This investment has created hundreds of new jobs and training opportunities which address the skills shortage in the management of green spaces.

BIG's investment in our environment

- A further £80 million is being invested into public parks by BIG in partnership with HLF
- BIG has invested more than £700million in wider environmental initiatives.

Celebrating 15 years of making a difference to people and communities

This autumn marks The National Lottery's 15th Anniversary. Since 1994, over £23billion - that's £25million each week - has been raised by Lottery players for the arts, sport, heritage, environment, education, health, charity and voluntary sectors.

Parks for People
* This figure refers to the £525million invested by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in public parks plus the £700million spent on environment initiatives by the Big Lottery Fund (BIG). The two Lottery Funds have been working together in partnership on Parks for People, a joint £150million grants programme over three years to 2009 for public parks. BIG is investing £80 million (in England only) and £70million is coming from HLF (across the UK). This joint programme continues to support projects currently underway, but is closed to new applications. However, HLF continues to fund new parks projects to the tune of £20million a year.

Heritage Lottery Fund
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 more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK.

Big Lottery Fund
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. www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Good Causes
Out of every pound spent on a National Lottery ticket, 28p goes directly to good causes. BIG is responsible for distributing half of the money to improve communities and the lives of people most in need. HLF distributes 16.67% of the money to heritage projects across the UK. www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk

'Postcards from the Park' is an annual photographic competition run by HLF, BIG and parks charity GreenSpace. The competition attracts thousands of entries from across the UK celebrating the very essence of why so many people value their local park. www.postcardsfromthepark.org.uk

**£18million – the parks celebrating today:

Spinney Hill Park, Leicester - £2,578,000

This Victorian park was created over 100 years ago in response to the city authority's concern about the lack of public space in Leicester. It is one of the city's oldest parks and provides a tranquil oasis in a highly-populated and deprived area.

The park consists of 34 acres of sloping parkland, with two popular play areas and an adventure playground. Many of the people who worked on creating this park came from rural communities near the city and the park's design includes many trees and a natural brook to reflect the surrounding countryside. The park retains much of its original layout such as a Grade II listed lodge, woodland walks and carriageways. The granite drinking fountain, one of the park's key features, was donated in 1888 by Samuel Mather, a wealthy marketplace pork and cheese merchant.

The grant will fund the extensive regeneration of the park focusing on restoring the landscape and buildings and improving the natural environment. Facilities for visitors will be upgraded and a new terrace and gardens created.

Stewart Park, Middlesbrough - £4,337,000

This 47-hectare park was opened to the public in 1928. It was originally laid out as a manor house and deer park in the early 1800s by a wealthy army major and the entire village of East Marton was removed to create it. It is famous as the birthplace of Captain Cook and his cottage is marked out by a granite vase in the nearby Captain Cook Museum.

The park now consists of mature woodland, parkland and an arboretum with two lakes providing habitat for water fowl. The pets' corner is home to domesticated animals, fallow deer, highland cattle, llamas and goats. The park holds nature, heritage, orienteering and tree trails which are very popular with local schools and hosts a number of large events, including the Cleveland Show.

This grant will transform the park and plans include the provision of a new visitor centre, education venue, shop, training workshops and two public event spaces. Lakes, paths and woodland areas will all be improved and many of the estate's Victorian buildings will be opened up to the public. A specialist vocational training centre which includes a cafe is also being developed within the Victorian walled gardens to teach horticultural, conservation and catering skills to the community, especially local young people and adults with disabilities.

St James' Park, Southampton - £1,102,000

This park began life as part of the vast Shirley Common which was donated in 1228 by Nicholas of Shirley to the Burgesses of Southampton. By the mid 1800s, as Shirley developed, the area now known as St James' Park was surrounded by Victorian villas, but was spared from development itself as it was considered a pleasant area in which to take a country walk. The council purchased the land in 1907 and formally opened it as a public park in 1911. This small park has a children's play area, ornamental trees, open grassland and tennis courts.

Plans for its redevelopment include the refurbishment of the existing park buildings to provide new facilities. Two new entrances will help to create better links with the local area and the historic features of the surrounding Conservation Area. The project will improve play facilities for children of all ages to enjoy. Visitors will also get the chance to get close to nature with botanical walks and wildflower areas. The community will be encouraged to explore the social heritage of the park and to share their findings in new exhibitions and educational materials.

Howard Park and Gardens, Letchworth Garden City - £1,841,000

The social improver, Ebenezer Howard, was a major force behind this park and hence the park was named after him. It opened in 1911 as part of the world's first garden city. Garden cities were intended to be planned, self-contained, communities surrounded by greenbelt, containing balanced areas of residences, industry and agriculture. This site is divided into two areas. The Gardens have a Bowls Club, Social Club and sunken garden, while the park consists of open areas, a paddling pool, play areas and Mrs Howard Hall, the town's first public building. The park is of national importance and its design illustrates the period's desire to include natural landscapes in the heart of new urban developments.

This grant will help to conserve the historic landscape. Key elements include refurbishing the popular paddling pool, creating new play areas and routes through and around the park. Pix Brook, a stream running alongside the park, will have a new bridge built and a statue of Sappho will also be reinstated. A new kiosk for refreshments and public conveniences will be among the additional visitor facilities provided. A full-time officer based in the park will support volunteers and the Friends Group in providing community activities.

Stamford Park, Tameside - £3,995,000

Designed to serve the cotton towns of Stalybridge and Ashton-under-Lyne, the Grade II listed Stamford Park has played an important community role for over 130 years providing a green oasis for people to enjoy. The lower part of the park is largely formal in character and features include a flower garden, bowling green, 1907 conservatory, and a wooded area known as the Dingle. The upper part of the park is much more naturalistic in character featuring a boating lake which used to be a reservoir serving the cotton mills.

This investment will repair and conserve key historic buildings and monuments, improve park facilities with a new pavilion with a café and meeting rooms, restore historic planting, create a new animal area for children and woodland areas will be opened up and restored. There will be additional volunteering opportunities as well as a programme of walks and talks aimed at the whole community.

Queens Park, Bolton - £4,286,000

Originally named Bolton Park, this park was opened in 1866 by The Earl of Bradford and given its current name in 1887 in honour of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. It is one of four 'cotton famine' parks in the North West constructed by unemployed Lancashire cotton workers during the export blockades of the American Civil War. Highlights include formal flowerbeds, ornamental lakes, a number of statues, including one of Benjamin Disraeli, and wildlife such as kingfishers and herons.

This investment will fund a new community pavilion with café and meeting area for local voluntary groups, new play facility and the restoration of a fountain that was removed 100 years ago. The Grade II listed lodge will be refurbished for use by park staff and community organisations, such as the NHS and police. The sunken garden will be restored and a new formal 'World Garden' created to provide a venue for public art exhibitions, events and small performances. The scheme also includes dredging and cleaning of the ornamental lakes, improved paths, new gates and railings and the restoration of Dobson Bridge.

Case Studies

Health and inspiration for Central Park
Health walks are now an established feature of Birkenhead Park.Walk leaders, trained in partnership with Wirral NHS Trust, help encourage participants to relax and enjoy the beautiful historic park which was the inspiration for New York's Central Park. It is one of the first public parks in the country and funding enabled its extensive restoration including the iconic Grand Entrance Lodge, lakes, cricket pavilions, landscaping and bridges. Award: £7.5million

Promoting green skills
Horticulture and ecology are high on the agenda in the transformation of historic Caversham Court Gardens in Reading. The new dedicated head gardener, assisted by an apprentice, are replanting the herbaceous borders, developing riverside meadows, creating insect habitats, and managing the allotment gardens. Award: £1.1million

Creating quality places
Designed in 1902, Barrow Park was created to provide jobs for unemployed workers following the decline of the town's shipbuilding industry. In an area lacking green spaces, a survey showed that after the project, 94% of local people strongly agreed that their park had improved and that there was more for children to do. Award: £1.7million

Stimulating regeneration
The restoration of Lisburn Castle Gardens in County Antrim is an integral part of a wider regeneration project focussed on the city's Historic Quarter. The park on the site of Lisburn Castle includes fortified walls and terraces overlain by Victorian gardens. The newly restored gardens are at the very heart of the town's social and economic regeneration. Award: £2.7million

Green lungs for the capital
Battersea Park was one of the first fully designed urban parks in the country. It has retained most of its Victorian character as well as providing a range of fun activities for generations of Londoners. Funding ensured a thorough facelift which lovingly restored this home to music, picnics, arts, culture and wildlife. Award: £7.5million

Victorian splendour
Saltwell Park, based in the heart of Gateshead, is one of Britain's finest examples of a Victorian Park. In 2005, it was voted 'Britain's Best Park'. It encompasses 55 acres of woodland and ornamental gardens, as well as public sports facilities, a lake, play areas, bowling greens, animal house, education centre and a maze. Saltwell Park has now been restored to its Victorian splendour with the added benefit of 80,000 new plants and shrubberies. Award: £7million

Southampton's pride
Central Parks in Southampton are divided into five parks by an existing road network first established in the middle of the 19th century. The five parks are West Park (also known as Watts Park), East Park (also known as Andrews Park), Palmerston Park, Houndwell Park and Hoglands Park. HLF's investment of £3.4million funded the extensive redevelopment of these five historic parks. Listed monuments, landscapes, ponds and a bandstand were restored as part of this project.

Confirmed grants from HLF and BIG's Parks for People programme

- Clissold Park, London - £4.46million
- Avenham and Miller Parks, Preston - £1.75million
- War Memorial Park, Coventry - £2.8million
- Barnes Park, Sunderland - £2.4million
- Gyllyngdune Gardens, Falmouth - £939,000