Park Life: ‘Rollerbladers’ photo wins Lottery competition

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Today, Mat Ricardo’s eye-catching photo taken in Battersea Park, London, has been chosen as the winner of the UK-wide ‘Postcards from the Park’ photo competition. The competition has been organised by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) in partnership with parks charity GreenSpace.

The photo, entitled, ‘Rollerbladers’, hugely impressed the judges who included celebrated photographer Mike McCartney (brother of Sir Paul), Angela Nicholson of Amateur Photographer Magazine and Tim Kerr from the Press Association.

Mat Ricardo, a comedy performer from London, travels around the world putting on shows at theatres and comedy festivals and has a passion for photography. His success was announced today by environmentalist and wildlife photographer Chris Packham at the Southwark Park Café Gallery. Mat’s picture has taken pride of place amongst other winning photos of public parks in the exhibition.

Mat Ricardo, said: “I’m so thrilled to have won the ‘Postcards from the Park’ competition. My job means I spend much of my life travelling and performing abroad. I love coming home and walking around London’s many wonderful parks, trying to capture interesting and imaginative shots while I’m there. These rollerbladers inspired me as they were clearly having so much fun together. It’s great that, largely thanks to Lottery investment, so many of us have a park nearby that we can escape to and enjoy.”

Professional photographer and chief judge, Mike McCartney, said: "Mat’s photo is really impressive, full of energy and surprise. It’s wonderful to see people out and about loving and using their parks and this photo captures the spirit of that perfectly. This winning shot is just one of many great photos in the exhibition that demonstrate the huge popularity and versatility of our parks.”

Postcards from the Park highlights the unique part that parks play in community life and promotes HLF and BIG’s joint funding which has to date invested £600m in improving and transforming the UK’s public parks.

Chris Packham, said: “Public parks are places that really give back in spades to local communities and they're in pretty good shape at the moment thanks to the massive investment - £600m in total - from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund.

“We're so lucky in this country to have so many green spaces to enjoy nature, especially in our towns and cities, but we must not take them for granted. I’m passionate about them and see them as one of this country's great heritage traditions.”

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said on behalf of HLF and BIG and GreenSpace: “The ’Postcards from the Park’ competition is a great way of demonstrating the importance of public parks to communities and people’s quality of life. Parks need constant care and attention, often relying heavily on community support, volunteers and on-going investment to keep them in good condition. We recognise this and are proud to play a key role in supporting such an important part of our country’s cultural heritage.”

Mat has won the chance to see his photo professionally displayed at the London gallery as well £1,000 of Jessops vouchers. All winning photos have been produced as postcards and will be distributed at Lottery-funded venues and parks across the UK.

London's success stories

Battersea Park was one of the first fully designed urban parks in the country. An HLF investment of £7.5m has helped to restore this iconic park. Its Victorian character has been retained and it continues to provide an extensive range of fun activities for generations of Londoners.

Southwark Park first opened its gates to the public in 1869. In 2001, an HLF grant of £2.5m restored this Victorian gem to its former glory. The lake was restored and a new bandstand, bowling pavilion and children's play area were built.

Bushy Park has a history stretching back at least 4,000 years, firstly as a settlement and farming land, then as a park for hunting deer. Today, Bushy Park offers a unique open space for the local community. The park reopened earlier this year after a £4.5m HLF-funded restoration of the formal gardens, buildings and famous Diana Fountain.

Victoria Park in Tower Hamlets was opened in 1845 after Queen Victoria received a petition from East Enders requesting a local park. Known as the 'people's park', Victoria Park hosted the 'Rock against Racism' concert in the 1970s and has seen a wide range of public speaking spectacles, campaigning and events in its long history. A recent grant of £4.5m from HLF and BIG will go towards restoring the park's historical features and will provide volunteering opportunities and the chance for people to learn horticultural and conservation skills.

Notes to editors

The competition categories included wildlife, heritage and people at play. To view all the winning entries. The exhibition in Southwark Park is open to the public between 12pm and 6pm every day from 3 – 12 Sept 2010.

Other winning photos include:

Wildlife winner - 'Whiskers and Fur' by Geoffrey Hill (Hardwick Park, Sedgefield)

England winner - 'Autumnal Tree' by Emma Goulder (Rufford Abbey Country Park, Ollerton)

Scotland winner – 'Bubbles' by Morag Macritchie (Whin Park, Inverness)

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, public parks and historic places to archaeology, species and skills, HLF invests in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

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 £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 Big Lottery Fund (BIG) has allocated £10 m for 2010/11 towards the programme in England.

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) rolls out close to £2m 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.

GreenSpace is a registered charity which works to improve parks and green spaces by raising awareness, involving communities and creating skilled professionals.

Further information

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