

Development funding of £102,400 has been secured by the local charity Newground Together to progress plans for a £1.4million bid by Newground, the Friends of Rhyddings Park, Hyndburn BC and Lancashire CC.

The project aims to restore the park, protect its heritage and encourage more local people to use the restored buildings and facilities and to access community activities in and around the park.

The initial funding will be used to further develop the business plan and heritage opportunities for the park and ensure that the project delivers sustainable long-term benefit for the park and the community it serves. At the conclusion of the development phase, a further application will be submitted to the HLF for a further £1,359,500 to carry out the project over 3 years.

Rhyddings Park was originally the grounds of Rhyddings Hall, built as home for the mill owning family responsible for many of the local mills and for the surrounding housing, which was built to house their employees. The park has retained many of its original features and still bears a strong resemblance to the ordnance survey map of the area from 1851.

The project aims to make a real and lasting difference to how the park is viewed and used by local people and will ensure that the changes can be maintained by creating new income sources for the Friends Group to reinvest in the heritage of the park. The practical changes proposed include:

- restore existing walls and refurbish the Coach House as a community venue;
- improve derelict spaces and return the walled garden to its traditional use of food growing, including the construction of Victorian style greenhouses;
- improve footpaths, access points and signage in and around the park;
- develop a social enterprise based in the restored former Coach House, generating income for the park from meeting rooms, a cafe and a training kitchen;
- establish a training and volunteering programme linked to park management, community engagement and healthy eating ensuring that social as well as heritage benefits are secured;
- deliver intergenerational activities to bring together people from different backgrounds and generations;
- develop programmes of guided walks and family fun activities.

Peter Jordan, Director of Newground (formerly known as Groundwork Pennine Lancashire), said: "We're delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund has given us this support. Rhyddings Park is a fantastic green space that has enormous potential for the local people. If the project is successful in the next stage, the park will become a real focal point for a wide range of activities that will provide recreational and training opportunities and be a real asset to the town."

Neil Mooney, Chair of the Friends of Rhyddings Park, commented that: "The Friends have experience of delivering activities in the park and are looking forward to working with Newground and the local authorities to develop a long term plan for the park and to play a key role in enhancing its future."

Explaining the importance of the HLF/BIG support, Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "Eighteen years of Lottery investment in our public parks has transformed tired and in some cases under used green spaces across the UK into thriving community hubs. This investment will help unlock the potential of Rhyddings Park so it can be restored and opened up for local people to enjoy."

Notes to editors

- Initial support means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and they believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so the decision 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.
- **Big Lottery Fund (BIG)**
  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.
- **Newground**
  Newground is a social enterprise operating throughout the North of England and is a wholly owned subsidiary of the charity Newground Together. Formerly known as Groundwork Pennine Lancashire, the company has been delivering environmental and community projects for over 20 years. Their aim is to help people and organisations make changes in order to create better neighbourhoods, to build skills and job prospects, and to live and work in a greener way. They achieve this through a team of health, safety and environmental consultants, landscape architects and contractors, community and youth engagement team and sustainable education work.

- Newground is accredited to ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001, ensuring quality service delivery in a safe and environmentally responsible way. The company was winner of the Social Enterprise category at the Finance for the Future Awards 2013.
- Newground and Newground Together are members of the Together Housing Group.

Further information

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