Walsall Arboretum receives £4.7m New Year boost

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The planned refurbishment, to be carried out under the Parks for People programme*, has been widely supported by the Arboretum User Group, the Council and the wider community, and will now become a reality.

Today's award has been made as part of an £9.3m** funding package that has been given to three of the UK's much-loved parks by the HLF and BIG.

Anne Jenkins, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: "The New Year has brought good news for the people of Walsall. People often look to their local public park as a place to get fit, spend more time with family and friends or just take time out for calm reflection. HLF and BIG continue to invest in parks because we know that people really benefit from all these sorts of activities and from having green open spaces to enjoy."

John Taylor, the Big Lottery Fund's Head of Region for the West Midlands, said: "Walsall Arboretum is one of our most popular parks and is a regular stopping place for Walsall residents and visitors alike. It already offers a great number of activities for people of all ages and interests and the multi-million Lottery funding will contribute towards important restoration and further improvements of this much-loved green space that will allow it to live up to its great potential."

Councillor Barry Sanders, Walsall Council Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture, added: "This is fantastic news for the Arboretum, the borough and the many thousands of visitors. It has taken a long time and a lot of hard work to reach this stage of such an important project and the fact that our bid has been approved is testament to the dedication and effort of everyone concerned.

"I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Arboretum project manager Louise Harris and the council's leisure team for their sterling work. We're already tremendously proud of the Arboretum but the improvements that are planned will make it a real jewel in Walsall's crown."

The Arboretum, located on the edge of Walsall town centre, was opened in 1874. It attracts visitors from both Walsall and the rest of the Black Country and has developed over the years to reflect the changing population of the area. The park is particularly important for local schools which have no green space within their grounds and also acts as a substitute garden for many of the 21,000 inhabitants who live nearby. Features that will be restored thanks to HLF/BIG support include the Grade II listed boathouse, two lakes, a bandstand and the clock tower. The project will offer a wide range of activities involving schools and community groups. There will also be volunteering opportunities alongside the expanded ranger service.

Notes to editors

* Today's Stage Two awards are 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 Stage Two applications from these parks.

** Three parks celebrate £9.3m. The three public parks celebrating awards today are: Hillworth Park, Devizes, Wiltshire; Lloyd and Aveling Park, Waltham Forest; Walsall Arboretum, West Midlands.

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 2009 to deliver a multi-million pound investment in public parks of £150m. Over the three years, the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) has invested up to £80million (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 1 March 2010.

Parks for People programme grants range from £250,000 to £5m with two rounds of funding each year.

Every completed park project will be expected to achieve the annual prestigious Green Flag Award and in doing so demonstrate quality standards of care and upkeep.

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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

HLF has invested £525m in 500 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. BIG has invested more than £700million in wider environmental initiatives. www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/

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

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