

The money has been awarded through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Big Lottery Fund's (BIG) Parks for People programme and will be used to improve facilities and expand a programme of visitor and community activities on the park.

The announcement to return the park to its former glory marks the culmination of a five-year development journey which has included two rounds of public consultation. The views of park users and project partners such as the University of Nottingham, the Environment Agency and the Highfields Park User Group about how the historic park and its facilities could be developed have identified a strong desire to see the park restored and improved.

The University of Nottingham, whose main campus contains the park, is committed to ongoing partnership working with the City Council for the benefit of visitors, staff and students and has pledged its full support to the project. The University will provide financial support for the project and contribute towards site maintenance and an events programme, leaving a lasting and positive legacy for future users.

Support will also come from Nottingham Croquet Club which has been on the site since 1929. Ian Vincent, the club's Honorary Secretary has said how pleased he is that the funding will enable the disused bowling greens to be returned to their original use as croquet lawns.

The Probation Service will contribute to the on-site improvement works and an additional £500,000 funding will come from the Highfields Park Leisure Trust which manages the site as a first class facility for sport, leisure and recreation.

The restoration work which will be completed by the end of summer 2016 will include:

- Restoring buildings, park infrastructure, horticultural landscape and features
- Creating a new adventure golf area
- Improving putting greens
- De-silting the lake and carrying out improvements to the waterside boating area
- Creating new croquet lawns from the existing bowling greens

An ongoing Activity Plan for Highfields Park will also set out how the restoration work and activities will develop the park's audience and celebrate the restoration. Engagement with the current and future park users will ensure that a legacy from the works can be passed down from generation to generation.
The Activity Plan will also strengthen partnerships with the University of Nottingham, Lakeside Arts Centre and Colwick Park Lifeguards by jointly identifying potential new audiences and ways to engage with them.

Hilary Silvester, Chair of the Highfields Park User Group which represents the many and varied groups which use the park, says she is delighted that the park will receive the grant.

She said: "Highfields is very much loved by the people of Nottingham, and its on-going restoration and improvement are important to one of the city's most outstanding and varied open spaces."

Joyce Brown, representing the Beeston Civic Society said how much the park means to people living near it, many of whom have fond memories of playing there as children. She expressed the society's gratitude to Nottingham City Council and the two Lottery funds for preparing and supporting the bid.

Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture, Councillor Dave Trimble, said: "Following the successful use of Lottery funding to develop Nottingham's Forest Recreation Ground, I am delighted to see further investment in Nottingham's open and green spaces. Highfields Park has been an asset to Nottingham for nearly 100 years and this additional funding will allow future generations to re-discover the site as a place for relaxation and recreation within the local community.

"Highfields Park will benefit greatly from trams on the new Chilwell route which will run every seven-and-a-half minutes. A tram stop right outside the park will make it easier for everyone to get there and to make the most of the park's new and improved facilities."

The Grade II* listed park which contains pre-historic rock shelters built into the Nottingham Castle Rock outcrop is registered as a site of Special Geological Interest. It is also included in English Heritage's *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest*. When it was opened by Sir Jesse Boot in 1923, the park was one of the first man-made, large-scale public parks of the 20th century and was given "for the purpose of public recreation and pleasure grounds for the people of the City of Nottingham forever."

Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF East Midlands, said on behalf of HLF and the BIG: "Parks play such an important role in our everyday lives; they boost our health, connect us to nature and are a place to spend time and have fun together. Today's investment ensures Highfield's historic features will be preserved for people to use well into the future and also brings to life several exciting plans that will see the park used for training, events and activities."

Notes to editors

The restoration project has been designed to align with the targets of HLF and BIG's Parks for People programme and therefore has the following key aims:

Achieve Green Flag status from 2016

- Existing buildings and infrastructure restored
- Horticultural features restored
- Historic landscape (e.g. views) restored
- The heritage of the park will be better interpreted and explained
- Restoration works present an opportunity to educate people about the park
- Park Ranger and Lakeside led activities to educate users
- History of site identified, recorded and valued via the restoration project
- Activity Plan proposals to capture people's memories and photographs of the site
- Consultation on the restoration proposals has provided an opportunity to ask people about their knowledge of the site's history
- Park Ranger led volunteer activities to support site maintenance including engagement with University of Nottingham, students and businesses
- Local areas /communities will be a better place to live, work or visit
- The park will be restored to its former glory and will engage and involve more people than ever before - resulting in more people enjoying the benefits, both socially and physically, of the green space that the site provides
- Environmental impacts will be reduced
- Lake to be de-silted, contaminated silt removed and biodiversity potential thereby improved
- New access to the park by tram will bring visitors from a wider area
- Focus on new tram lines as sustainable and environmentally friendly way of visitors accessing the park
- More people and a wider range of audiences will have engaged with heritage sites

Further information

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