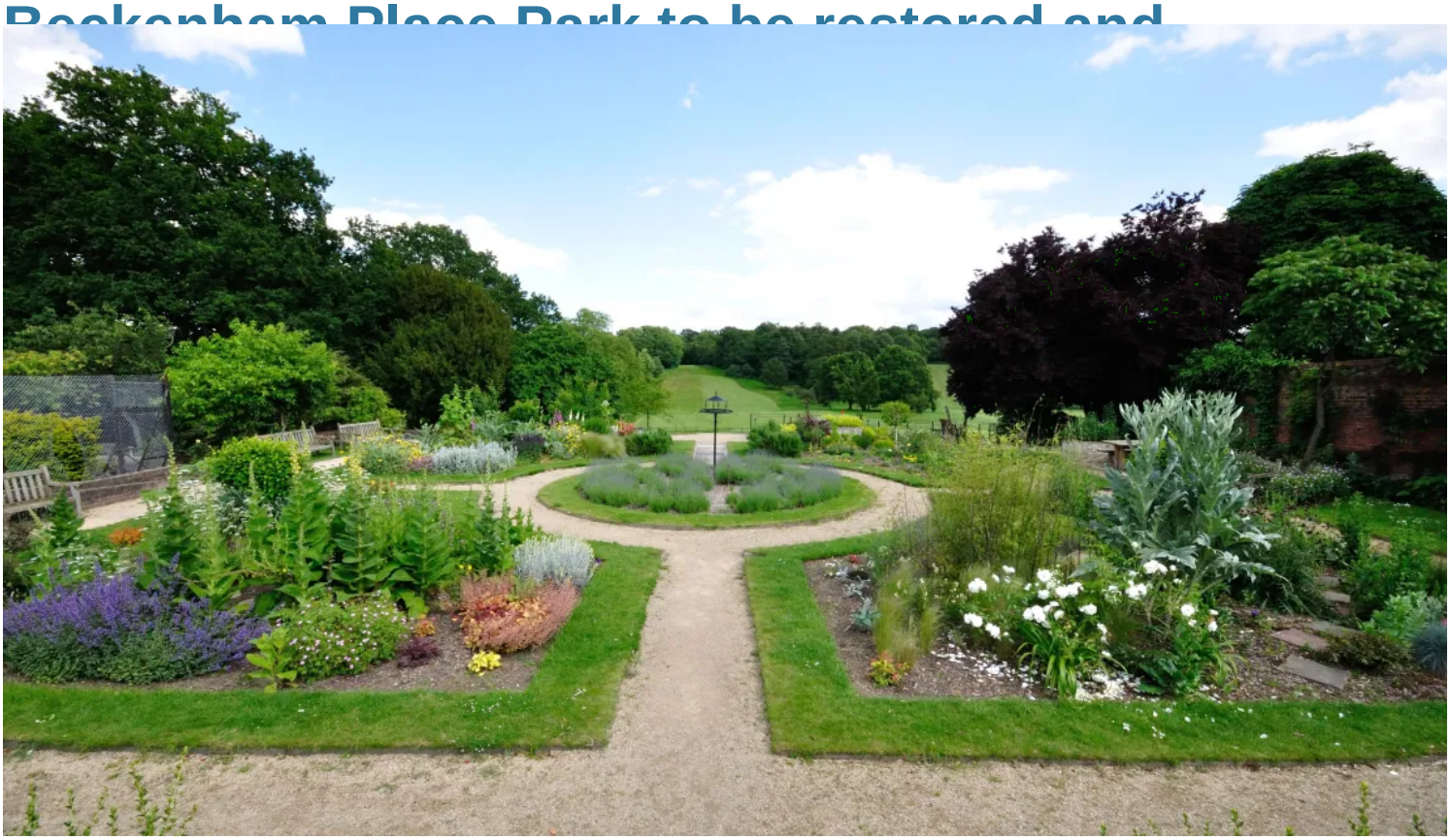
Beckenham Place Park to be restored and



The 18th-century pleasure grounds will be reinstated with contemporary design

Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Big Lottery Fund have confirmed a grant of £4.7m to the London Borough of Lewisham to deliver a major regeneration project that will restore and revitalise Beckenham Place Park, opening it up for greater use by the local community.

Originally an impressive 18th-century family estate with a lake, kitchen gardens and arboretum, today the 95-hectare park is situated on the edge of one of the UK's most deprived areas and is in decline. Visitor numbers have dropped to a critical low and its historic buildings are in a serious state of disrepair.

The investment announced today will halt that decline and provide a long-term future for this vital community green space.

The project

The historic parkland will be restored and the lake reinstated with wet woodland at the eastern end. The 18th-century derelict Homestead, currently propped up with scaffolding, will be revived as a visitor hub with café, toilets, courtyard, historical interpretation and an education centre.

The 18th-century pleasure grounds will be reinstated with contemporary design and include seasonal ornamental planting and improved access. A derelict gardener's cottage will be refurbished to form a base for volunteering.

The new park will also include a timber and natural play area; reed beds and boardwalks; a BMX track; a skate park; public toilets and provision for refreshments.

In addition to the physical changes that will attract a wide range of people to the park, the project will also provide local people with training, employment and education opportunities.

HLF's Chief Executive Ros Kerslake, said, on behalf of HLF and Big Lottery Fund: "It's well-known that public parks play a vital role in our health and well-being. With this investment from National Lottery players combined with strong local engagement and support, there is real opportunity for Beckenham Place Park to deliver huge benefits to the whole community."

Beckenham Place Park: a brief history

The park was originally the grounds of the Grade II* listed Palladian-style Mansion House, home to John Cator (1728-1806). A wealthy timber wharf merchant, he was also Member of Parliament for Wallingford, Ipswich and Stockbridge constituencies between 1772 and 1793.

The house remained with the Cator family until the 20th century, although largely uninhabited in the 19th century.

In the early 20th century it was used both as a boys school and sanatorium. It was purchased by London County Council in 1927. During the Second World War, the park was a prisoner of war camp.

A 9-hole golf course was first established at the site in 1907. In 1929 it became the first municipally owned course in England and the mansion was retained as a club house. The course evolved and grew in size in subsequent years and was an 18-hole course by the time management transferred to the London Borough of Lewisham in 1972. Lewisham Council closed the course in 2016.

Notes to editors

More than £850m of money raised by National Lottery players has been invested in parks since 1996.

State of the UK Parks

In September 2016, HLF published State of UK Public Parks 2016 , a follow-up to its 2014 report.

This second report revealed there is a growing deficit between the rising use of parks and the declining resources that are available to manage them. Without urgent action the continuing downward trend in the condition of many of our most treasured parks and green spaces is set to continue.

While new ways of working and generating income are showing potential, more support, shared learning and collaboration is needed to support those that manage public parks. Therefore, this research calls for collaborative action to deliver new ways of funding and managing public parks to avert a crisis.

Further information

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State of UK Public Parks 2016