£2.4m investment boost for North East parks

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Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the North East, Ivor Crowther, said: “We are very lucky in the North East to have so many green spaces in our towns and cities – Exhibition Park is a fantastic example. Alongside the physical changes, it’s great to know that the Friends will continue their active involvement and local people will be given new opportunities to get involved with various aspects of the project. Over the last 17 years, every local uuthority in the North East has had a park in their area revitalised - HLF are dedicated to continuing this support and we hope that today’s investment will make a real difference”.

Located in the heart of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Exhibition Park is popular urban green space. There has been a park on this site for over a century and it was originally created as part of the 1870 Newcastle-upon-Tyne Improvement Act. The park has hosted a range of events including the Royal Jubilee exhibition in 1887 which attracted 2m visitors HLF’s £2.4m investment will be used to conserve the park’s historic Grade II listed bandstand, the boathouse and the croquet pavilion. New wildlife areas surrounding the lake will be created, including reed beds and wetland fens. Local people will play an active role in the project and take part in the design and management of the adventure play areas, horticultural training schemes and ongoing maintenance.

Couns Henri Murison, Cabinet Member for Quality of Life, said: “Green spaces are at the heart of our city, and will only become more important to families social, play and health opportunities.

“I would personally like to thank the council officers for having the vision and seeing it through to fruition, the Friends of the Park for sustaining their enthusiasm and support for the officers and the professionals who were able to provide the historic information and amazing designs to secure this successful grant. I look forward with anticipation to the improvements for local people and visitors we will see on this site."

Initial joint HLF/BIG support[2] and development funding totalling £92,700 has also been awarded to the following parks in Durham and Berwick-upon-Tweed. This money will enable the projects to develop detailed plans for future major restoration and redevelopment work.

Wharton Park, Durham – initial support for £1.5m bid, including £41,800 development funding
Opened in 1858, Wharton Park was originally land that formed part of the Dryburn Hall Gardens owned by W. L. Wharton, Chairman of the North Eastern Railway. Durham City Council plans to restore the park and its historic features, including the amphitheatre dating back to 1896. The park has strong links to the miners’ gala, first held there in 1871, and the project will explore the history of this important event with the local community.

Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park, Berwick-upon-Tweed – initial support for a £1.04m bid, including £53,200 development funding
Coronation Park and Castle Vale Park are located adjacent to the castle in the heart of Berwick-upon-Tweed. Coronation Park was created in 1937 to commemorate the coronation of George VI and Castle Vale Park was built in 1929. Plans will restore both parks’ original 1930s features, including the rose garden, as well as conserving the 19th-century Conqueror's Well in Castle Vale Park.

Over the last 17 years, parks in the North East have benefitted from £51.5m Lottery investment that has seen much

needed redevelopment works to parks across the region.

Notes to editors

• [1] Today's second-round pass 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 second-round application from these parks.

• [2] A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass 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. 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 period 2006-9, the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) invested up to £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 2011/12 with an investment of £20m each year. The next closing date for applications is 31 August 2011. The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) remains committed to working in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in making a success of the Parks for People programme and will allocate £5million in 2011/12 and another £5m in 2012/13.

HLF has supported over 30,000 projects, allocating £4.6billion across the UK including £214million in the North East. HLF has invested £527m in over 530 historic public parks, gardens, squares and promenades right across the UK.

Further information

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