Cassiobury Park secures £4.5million of Lottery



Celebrating the Cassiobury Park Lottery award

The news has been welcomed by Elected Mayor of Watford, Dorothy Thornhill: “We worked hard on the bid for external funding as we know Cassiobury Park is a much loved park. These are exciting plans that will see Cassiobury Park up there among the very best in the country.”

Added to the council financial commitment, the overall £6.6million project to improve and restore Cassiobury Park includes:

- a new sustainable park hub building with café, community and exhibition room, education facilities, toilets and changing facilities
- extending and improving the Cha Cha Cha tea pavilion
- revamped and improved pools
- returning the historic bandstand to the park
- improved entrances to the park
- improved management of Whippendell Wood and the local nature reserve
- restoration of the historic 18th century Lime Avenue
- providing an on site park manager, community park ranger and education officer

Mayor Dorothy Thornhill added: “We now have the opportunity to make a real difference to restore much of this historic landscape and improve the facilities. The new park hub building will be a real focus for park activities, as well as providing an opportunity for visitors to discover the rich history of the park.

“I want to thank all the residents and local groups that helped shape our proposals, and also the small team at the council who have worked hard to get this external funding. This is fantastic news for Watford, benefitting local people and future generations.”

Back in June 2012, the council was successful in bidding for £418,600 of first-round funding from HLF/BIG to develop plans for the final second-round funding bid. Since then park visitors, local residents and Cassiobury Park Friends Group have been asked their views on possible designs for the park and have played a vital role in helping to shape the final approved proposals. The second-round submission from Watford Borough Council was submitted in February 2014.

This new second-round grant is part of a wider investment of £34.5million of Lottery money to 13 parks across the UK being announced today by HLF and Big Lottery Fund. This new funding follows the publication of the HLF’s recent report (26 June) which revealed the UK’s public parks are at serious risk of decline unless innovative new ways of funding and maintaining them are found.

Alongside restoration of important historic features including bandstands and gatehouses, and the installation of new community facilities, this new funding will also deliver a range of activities designed to help parks across the UK to be more sustainable.

Two decades of public and Lottery investment has ensured that the majority of UK parks are in better condition. However, the State of UK Public Parks 2014: Renaissance to Risk? Report has revealed they are now at serious risk of rapid decline and even being sold off and lost to the public forever.

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said on behalf of HLF and the Big Lottery Fund: “Our report revealed how valued public parks are by people and communities and how essential they are to our physical and emotional well-being. That’s why HLF and the Big Lottery fund have invested over £700million in parks since 1996. But the report makes clear that our parks face an uncertain future and so it’s exciting to see how this new investment is going some way towards helping parks like Cassiobury Park find new ways of funding and maintaining them so they are still here to be enjoyed long into the future.”

Cassiobury Park is the most significant and most popular green space in Watford, and twice the size of London’s Hyde Park, forming part of a wide network of green spaces stretching from Watford town centre west towards the wider countryside. It is a landscape of significant historical interest comprising part of the former Cassiobury Estate, significantly researched by Watford Museum over many years and soon to be captured in a new book called *Cassiobury – The Ancient Seat of the Earl’s of Essex* out in October 2014.

Cassiobury Park has won and retained Green Flag awards for the last seven years. In recent years, the historic park was voted the nation’s third favourite park in the People’s Choice Award public poll.

Over 2.1m visits are made to the park each year from local residents and from people outside the area. For more information on the park, visit: Watford Borough Council's Cassiobury Park page.

Notes to editors

This announcement can be followed on Twitter #parksmatter.

State of UK Public Parks 2014: Renaissance to risk?
To establish a national picture of the state of UK parks HLF commissioned three new UK-wide surveys: a survey of local authority park managers, a survey of park friends and user groups, and a public opinion survey undertaken by Ipsos MORI. The research has also drawn on other pre-existing data to assess how the condition of parks has changed over time, and to cross-check our results. Details of the report findings can be found at State of UK Public Parks (needs to link to this page on site, not loaded yet).

The Parks for People programme uses Lottery funds to support the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of public parks and cemeteries. 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. Find out more about how to apply at our Parks for People programme page.

Big Lottery Fund
The Big Lottery Fund is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery. The Fund is committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need and has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in 2004. It has awarded close to £6bn.