Tidings of Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) good cheer for 11 parks

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has today announced a £1.39m* grant for the restoration of Victoria Gardens in Neath, Wales, plus first-round passes** for 10 other historic parks in London, Chester, St Helens, Clydebank, Aberdeenshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Swansea, Belfast and Wolverhampton.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the HLF, said: “Today’s news brings some seasonal festive cheer to 11 popular local parks. The Heritage Lottery Fund has a track record of providing much-needed support for public parks across the UK; without it many of them would revert back to how they were 20 years ago – run-down, neglected and often unsafe. We continue to champion parks, not just because they are an important part of our heritage, but also because they make a huge difference to the quality of so many people’s daily lives.”

Victoria Gardens, Neath, Port Talbot – confirmed grant of £1.39m

Victoria Gardens is a quintessential Victorian urban public park. Built in 1897 to provide open space for the expanding population of Neath, the Grade II registered park is very much at the heart of the local community. Many original features survive, including a wonderful bandstand, a circle of Gorsedd stones (a group of standing stones constructed for the National Eisteddfod of Wales in 1918) and a bronze statue of one of Neath’s famous residents, Howell Gwyn. HLF’s grant will enable restoration work to go-ahead along with the creation of new visitor facilities.

The 10 parks which have received first-round passes are:

- **Forty Hall Park, Enfield, London - initial support for a £1.3m HLF bid, including £100,000 development funding**
  Forty Hall, one of Enfield’s premier heritage sites, is a rare example of a largely intact 18th-century country estate in Greater London. The landscape includes the magnificent Forty Hall as well as key features such as the site of Elsyng Palace, the medieval fishing ponds and pleasure grounds. Plans include conserving and restoring the grounds and maximising their potential as a wildlife habitat.
- **Walpole Park, Ealing, London – initial support for a £1.98m HLF bid, including £210,100 development funding**
  Walpole Park is in the heart of Ealing’s Heritage Quarter which includes the famous Ealing Studios. The park’s gardens and lawns are a backdrop to Pitzhanger Manor which was designed by Sir John Soane in the early 1800s. Ealing Council’s plan to regenerate this run-down but much-loved park is designed to reveal its early 19th-century beauty.

- **Grosvenor Park, Chester – initial support for £2.26m HLF bid, including £94,300 development funding**
  Grosvenor Park is located in Chester, between the River Dee and the city centre. Originally gifted by Richard Grosvenor, the Second Marquis of Westminster in 1867, it is an important social meeting place for the local community. Plans include restoring the original landscape and creating a Green Flag standard park with

community involvement at its very heart.

- **Victoria Park, St Helens – initial support for £2.79m HLF bid, including £122,200 development funding**
  Victoria Park comprises 14ha of land plus the Grade II listed Mansion House and 1ha of gardens; the mansion and its gardens are owned by Age Concern Mid-Mersey. Opened in 1886 as St Helens' first public park with both a house and gardens, Victoria Park is now in need of urgent repair work. Proposals include restoration of the original features, additional tree and flowerbed planting and the creation of a sensory garden and labyrinth.
- **Dalmuir Park, Clydebank – initial support for £732,600 HLF bid, including £11,700 development funding**
  Dalmuir Park was created in 1906 thanks to a gift of £5,000 from Lord and Lady Overtoun who wanted to provide a recreational area in the industrial town of Clydebank. The park's features are currently in need of restoration; future proposals include revitalising the woodland areas, upgrading existing play facilities and replacing boundary fences and gates. The regeneration of this park will provide Clydebank with a greatly improved and much-needed quality open space.
- **Haddo Country Park, Ellon – initial support for £993,500 HLF bid, including £95,000 development funding**
  Haddo Country Park, 19 miles North of Aberdeen, is an outstanding 18th-century historic designed landscape. It is also home to the A-listed Haddo House which was the creation of William Adam. Encompassing woodland, grassland and open water, the park is visited by over 200,000 people each year. Plans, including conservation and planting work, can now be progressed to return Haddo to its status as one of the finest country parks in the North East of Scotland.
- **Cyfarthfa Park, Merthyr Tydfil – initial support for £1.93m HLF bid, including £100,300 development funding**
  The Grade II* registered Cyfarthfa Park covers 64ha and overlooks the town of Merthyr and the remains of the historic Cyfarthfa Ironworks. It is home to Cyfarthfa Castle as well as ornamental gardens and woodlands. Formerly a reminder of the wealth amassed by the trade aristocracy of South Wales, particularly by the Crawshay family who were 19th-century iron magnates, the parkland is now in poor condition and needs to undergo urgent repairs. Plans for conservation and restoration work are being progressed and a volunteer programme is also in the pipeline.
- **Cwmdonkin Park, Swansea – initial support for £715,600 HLF bid, including £19,400 development funding**
  Cwmdonkin Park was the backdrop to the childhood home of Wales' most famous poet, Dylan Thomas. A popular local attraction, it is home to the drinking fountain that Thomas refers to in his poem entitled 'The Hunchback in the Park' and part of the much-visited Dylan Thomas Trail. Opened in 1874, it is one of the oldest municipal parks in Wales and played an important role in the emergence of the 'Open Parks Movement' that campaigned for more parks for deprived working class areas. Restoration plans are being progressed to protect and build on the unique qualities of this special park.
- **Tullycarnet Park, Belfast – initial support for £844,200 HLF bid, including £21,300 development funding**
  Tullycarnet Park was created in 1965 as an integral part of social housing developments in East Belfast. The park provided an accessible local green space for the surrounding communities of Tullycarnet and Gilnahirk and contained a bowling green, pavilion, rose gardens and shrub areas as well as numerous species of tree. Over the years, the facilities and planting have degraded and in some areas have disappeared completely. HLF's support will give Castlereagh Borough Council the ability to develop proposals for repair and conservation work as well as plans for an imaginative activity programme.
- **East Park, Wolverhampton – initial support for £981,900 HLF bid**
  Landscape designer Thomas Mawson's East Park was opened in the late 19th century and is the largest green space in the area between Wolverhampton and Bilston, providing a vital green 'lung' for local people. Over 12,000 people live within a 20-minute walk of the park making it a popular and essential local amenity. Proposals

are now in place which will see the park returned to the simplicity of its original design whilst also improving recreational facilities and woodland areas.

Notes to Editors

***** A confirmed award means that money had already been earmarked by HLF for the project in question and that the full amount has now been secured.

** 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.

HLF has invested £525m in 500 historic public parks, gardens, squares and promenades right across the UK.

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.

Images available on request.

Further information

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