Grand unveiling of People’s Park

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The ambitious £12m regeneration scheme saw the park in Bow restored to its former glory ahead of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Dubbed the People’s Park, the extensive regeneration was funded by Tower Hamlets Council, with additional support of £4.85million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) under the Parks for People programme. This included the restoration of the Burdett-Coutts fountain, the building of a new community facility and café in the east of the park, the recreation of the Chinese pagoda in the West Lake and major improvements to the play areas.

The improvement plans for the park were drawn up in consultation with residents and park users, and include a host of improvements ranging from a new skate park, improved model boating lake, better sports facilities, and much more.

Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Lutfur Rahman, said: “It gives me great pleasure to be here and to officially re-open Victoria Park. I remember visiting the park during my childhood and hope the younger generations will benefit from it now. I am proud of the investment which has been made as it really is the jewel in the crown for the borough.”

Wesley Kerr, Chairman of the Heritage Lottery Fund London Committee, said on behalf of HLF and BIG: "We celebrate the fact that the complex building project to restore historic features, modernise facilities and regenerate Victoria Park is nearing completion as we embark on an historic summer for London. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) are pleased to be investing £4.85million into what may be the world’s oldest purpose designed public park, created through popular demand in Queen Victoria’s reign, and now recreated 170 years later as her great-great granddaughter Queen Elizabeth II celebrates her Diamond Jubilee.

“For HLF and BIG this is one of eight major park regenerations across London due to complete this year, the biggest investment since Victorian times. We will monitor the scheme through this Olympic summer and beyond, and help Tower Hamlets sustain and enhance Victoria Park with good green space maintenance and high horticultural standards. Now it’s over to the people to love and cherish the original People’s Park, to give the new planting time to flourish, to enjoy the beauty of the old trees, to volunteer with the Friends and to enjoy this serene space – one of the most important parks in the country."

Visitors to the launch were treated to a day of entertainment with highlights including a treasure hunt, live music, Punch and Judy and magic show.

Lucy Clark, a regular park user, said: “Victoria Park is an amazing resource and all the improvements are fantastic.” Twin sons Jake and Theo, aged eight, were keen to try out the new wheel park. Theo said: “The park is brilliant and I have had a really good day so far.”

The park will play a crucial role in the Games later this year as it is one of the Live Sites, along with Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square, where people can watch the Games on huge outdoor screens.

BT London Live is an exciting series of events celebrating the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. From 27 July to 12 August BT London Live Victoria Park will show the best of the Olympic Games on two big screens, the largest of which is 60m², plus, there will be a more intimate sports viewing experience in an al-fresco sports café.

Even if you were lucky enough to get Games tickets, BT London Live Victoria Park aims to get you closer to the action. Featuring all the excitement of the 2012 Olympic Games it's not just about watching sport, you can also get involved, and try your hand at a number of Olympic and Paralympic sports. If that's not your style, you can relax in a family festival atmosphere and enjoy top flight entertainment for free including live music, street theatre and kids' zone.

For more details visit the Tower Hamlets website.

Notes to editors

- 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 since 2006 to deliver a £150m investment in public parks.
- The Big Lottery Fund (BIG), the largest distributor of National Lottery good cause funding, is responsible for giving out 46% of the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery. BIG 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 June 2004 BIG has awarded over £4.4bn.

Further information

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