Gunnersbury Park gets £4.7m of Lottery funding for major restoration

07/07/2014

Ealing and Hounslow Councils have been awarded a grant of almost £4.7million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Big Lottery Fund's Parks for People programme to radically restore Gunnersbury Park, it was announced today.

The project aims to transform the 186 acre park into a sustainable, high quality public space that will allow everyone in the community to enjoy Gunnersbury's culture, heritage and wildlife; along with events, sports and recreational activities.

Work to restore Gunnersbury Park begins in autumn this year and planned improvements include:

- Building a brand new café to replace the current one
- Re-introducing boating on the Round Pond
- Restoring the Orangery, archways, terrace and other listed structures
- Reinstating lost park features such as the Horseshoe Pond

As well as the physical transformation, a major part of Gunnersbury's restoration project involves introducing new events, services and educational programmes that will allow even more Ealing and Hounslow residents to get involved with the park in the future.

New initiatives; like free horticultural training sessions, a community orchard and planned mini-beast safaris will appeal to local nature lovers of all ages. While guided walks and nature trails throughout the year will mean more people will be able to take advantage of the 186 acre site to improve their health and wellbeing.

Alongside restoration of important historic features, this new funding will also deliver a range of activities designed to help Gunnersbury Park become more sustainable. And it will help to train future generations of gardeners and conservationists by offering three horticultural apprenticeships to Ealing and Hounslow school leavers; in partnership with Capel Manor College; who also share the site.

Visitor numbers to the park are expected to increase from 600,000 to over one million people per year once improvements are completed.

Both councils have also submitted a bid for further funding from the HLF to enable them to restore and remodel Gunnersbury Museum to the same high standard as the rest of the park.

Leader of Ealing Council, Councillor Julian Bell, said: "This generous award from HLF will help us make the kind of radical improvements, Gunnersbury Park desperately needs to bring it back to its former glory. Both Ealing and Hounslow Council can now look forward to transforming this fine house and garden so that even more people will be able to enjoy it in the future."

Councillor Steve Curran, Leader of Hounslow Council, said: "This is wonderful news, and brings us a step closer to restoring the park to its place as a jewel of west London.

“This money will help people to really appreciate the historic landscape of the park, as well as enhancing the environment with new facilities for play, refreshment, events and recreation, for people to enjoy for years to come.”

This 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 2014) which revealed the UK’s public parks are at serious risk of decline unless innovative new ways of funding and maintaining them are found.

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 £700m 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 Gunnersbury find new ways of funding and maintaining them so they are still here to be enjoyed long into the future.”

Further information

Nancy Ludwig, Media and Communications Officer at Ealing Council on 020 8825 9389 or email ludwign@ealing.gov.uk.