HLF spreads festive cheer to Wales' much-loved parks

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Margam Country Park in Port Talbot and Wepre Park in Flintshire are set to undergo major redevelopment work to bring the much-loved parks back to their former glory.

Dr. Manon Williams, Chair of the HLF Committee for Wales, said: "Parks enrich millions of people's lives on a daily basis – providing room to relax and reflect – and it's vital that we continue to value and protect them not just for ourselves but for the next generation too.

"We are absolutely committed to supporting historic parks and this award brings our total investment across Wales to well over £31 million."

Margam Country Park, Port Talbot

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) has received £1.6m from HLF for the repair and restoration of Margam Country Park's historic core. Plans include providing better facilities and employing a volunteer co-ordinator to capitalise on the existing strong community involvement with the landscape.

The park, which overlooks Swansea Bay and parts of industrial Port Talbot, has a history spanning over 800 years and attracts over 200,000 visitors each year. The historic core contains a number of important buildings such as the remains of a 12th-century monastery, the 19th-century Margam Castle and the Georgian Orangery. The lowland wood pastures and parkland host a range of plants and wildlife and there is also a walled deer park.

Neath Port Talbot leader Ali Thomas said he is thrilled that Margam Country Park has secured the grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. He said: "Margam Country Park is high on the list of attractions for local people and visitors to Neath Port Talbot," he said. "The gardens have significant, historical importance and I'm delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded the Council this grant to further develop the site.

"Recently, the nineteenth century Citrus House has been restored. This new project will be a big step forward in preserving and enhancing our local heritage for the benefit of residents and visitors alike."

Wepre Park, Connah's Quay in Deeside

Flintshire County Council (FCC) has been awarded £583,400 to restore the Old Hall Gardens and improve interpretation at Wepre Park. It is the backdrop to Ewloe Castle, an 11th century Scheduled Ancient Monument, which was built by the Welsh Princes during the borderland struggles with Edward I.

Plans include the creation of a community garden, improved footpaths and interpretation to help local people and visitors explore the story of the Park, Old Hall Gardens and Ewloe Castle. The grant will also fund a Heritage Project Officer to develop a programme of heritage themed educational activities for school visits and to support the current Friends of Wepre Park volunteer group with training opportunities in conservation and horticultural skills.

Councillor Peter Macfarlane, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Leisure, said: “This is excellent news, and the culmination of four years hard work within Flintshire Countryside Service to reach this point. This began with our successful first round bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which enabled us to employ Sarah Jeffery as the Wepre Park Development Officer. Sarah has spent the last ten months working hard with community groups, including the Friends of Wepre Park, key partners, and local councillors, to develop the proposals for this second round lottery funding submission, and these proposals will now come to fruition.”

Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader of Flintshire County Council, said: “I cannot stress enough how exciting this is for Flintshire. The fact that all the grant money will be spent on improving Wepre Park is fantastic. The park is at the heart of the Connah’s Quay community and already much loved by all, and this funding will ensure that it is improved upon and safeguarded for future generations.”

HLF has made 70 awards in Flintshire amounting to £4,857,903 and 74 awards in Neath Port Talbot amounting to £3,777,260.

Notes to editors

- 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.
- 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. On occasion, an applicant with a first round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.
- The Parks for People programme uses Lottery funds to support the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of public parks and the conservation of cemeteries. The programme aims to improve the local environment and put parks firmly back at the heart of community life. HLF is continuing to fund public park projects in 2012/13 with an investment of £24m. The next closing date for applications is 28 February 2013. Further information can be found on the Parks for the People page.
- Over 170 delegates gathered at the Royal Geographical Society on 25 October for the HLF/Big Lottery Fund UK Public Parks Summit. The day included presentations from park experts from the US and Denmark, as well as the UK, including an address from Communities Minister Don Foster.
- HLF has supported more than 33,000 projects with more than £5bn across the UK, including more than 2,000 projects totalling over £240 million in Wales.
- Since 1994, HLF has awarded a total of £640m to over 700 public parks across the UK. In Wales, we have supported 33 public parks awarding a total of £31,374,671.

Further information

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