Victoria Park in St Helens given a new lease of life thanks to £3million Heritage Lottery Fund investment

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The St Helens Council project will preserve the park's historic elements, including conservation of the original entrance gates and the restoration of Grade 2 listed Gate Lodge providing facilities for a range of new activities including a meeting room, ranger office and visitor facilities.

Stabilisation works will be carried out on the folly preventing further deterioration, whilst the pond will be fully restored, reintroducing important wetland habitats.

As well as restoration of the historic park features, a new garden will be introduced, alongside a bowling green and two new tennis courts.

Victoria Park, situated on the outskirts of St. Helens town centre, is a busy local park. Originally a private house and garden, it was sold to St. Helens Corporation who opened it in 1886 as the second public park in the town. It was renamed Victoria Park for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887.

The restoration scheme led by St Helens Council has been developed with Age UK Mid Mersey, who are based in the Mansion House at the heart of the park. As part of the works both the walled garden and the adjoining Orangery will be fully restored and opened for the public to once more enjoy.

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "This project will revitalise the much-loved Victoria Park, restoring important historic elements and providing new facilities for visitors to enjoy. By working with Age UK, who have been instrumental in drawing plans together, the scheme will ensure that people from across the community are involved in transforming their park. We are lucky to have so many public parks within easy reach across the North West, especially in urban areas where they make such a difference to our daily lives"

St Helens Council's Cabinet Member for Environmental Protection Councillor Alison Bacon said: "This is wonderful news – which will be welcomed by everyone in St Helens. Victoria Park is a local institution which, over the years, has been enjoyed by countless local people. Everyone is looking forward to seeing the park restored to its former glory – as well as taking advantage of the new facilities made possible by the Heritage Lottery Fund."

Philip Longworth, Chief Executive of Age UK Mid Mersey, said: "This is fantastic news for our community, more people will be able to benefit from being able to appreciate and learn about the sites heritage and we are delighted to now be able to establish a state of the art dementia cafe within the newly restored orangery."

Local people from across the community will be given the opportunity to get involved with the restoration works. Volunteers will receive a whole host of training including event planning and tree identification, whilst staff will have the opportunity to develop skills including grounds' maintenance and wildflower meadow creation.

Notes to editors

• [1] 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.

• 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 from 2006 to deliver a multi-million pound investment in public parks of £150m. Over the period 2006-9, the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) invested up to £80m (in England only) with £70m coming from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the UK.

• HLF is continuing to fund public park projects in 2011/12 with an investment of £20m each year. The next closing date for applications is 31 August 2011. The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) remains committed to working in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in making a success of the Parks for People programme and will allocate £5million in 2011/12 and another £5m in 2012/13.

Since 1994, HLF has awarded a total of £530m to over 550 public parks across the UK.

Further information

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