Summer Lottery boost for Middleton Park

05/07/2010

The park, which covers a huge 630 acres is rich in wildlife, includes ancient woodland dating back to the 1600s and is also known for its mining heritage. Thanks to the grant boost, which totals 66% of the project costs, Leeds City Council are now set to begin major restoration work.

The award has been made as part of a £6million funding package to four parks across England by HLF and BIG.**

Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for Yorkshire and the Humber, said on behalf of HLF and BIG: “Summer is finally here, and it’s the perfect time to enjoy our public parks. It’s important everyone in our towns and cities has somewhere free, green and open to enjoy in their leisure time. This joint investment from HLF and BIG is helping to do exactly that by ensuring parks such as our much-loved Middleton Park continue to be looked after and have a major role to play at the very heart of their local communities.”

The HLF/BIG grant to Middleton Park, situated in one of the most deprived areas of the city, will restore the main Victorian features and go towards attracting more visitors through a new visitor centre, education centre and cafe facilities making the park more user friendly. The project will also engage the local community and provide opportunities for training staff and volunteers in park management, ecological surveying and conservation skills.

Councillor Judith Blake, Elected Member for Middleton Park, said: “I am absolutely thrilled that our bid for money from the Heritage Lottery Fund to refurbish Middleton Park has been agreed. This is wonderful news and a great reward for all the hard work done by local residents and the Members of the Friends of Middleton Park who worked on the improvement plan. The planned improvements will breathe new life into the park and will mean that this historic area can realise its huge potential.

Councillor Adam Ogilvie, Executive Board Member for Leisure, said: “These ambitious plans will make a huge difference to Middleton Park and mean it is put on the same footing as its more famous neighbours Roundhay and Golden Acre. Once all the improvements are finished I am sure the park will become one of South Leeds’ major attractions.”

Chris Packham, environmentalist and broadcaster and supporter of the Parks for People programme, said: “Public parks are places that really give back in spades to local communities and they're in pretty good shape at the moment thanks to the massive investment - £600million in total across the UK - from the Heritage Lottery Fund and BIG Lottery Fund. We're so lucky in this country to have so many green spaces to enjoy nature, especially in our towns and cities, but we must not take them for granted. I’m passionate about them and see them as one of this country's great heritage traditions so I believe it’s essential that investing in them remains a priority.”

Initial HLF/BIG support (a first-round pass***) and development funding of just over £1million was also announced today for 11 parks across the UK from as far apart as Newcastle to Brighton.

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 Leeds City Council for works to Middleton Park.

** The other three parks receiving confirmed funding announced today are:

- Wallsend Parks, Wallsend, North East - £2,446,500.
- Priory Park, Dudley, West Midlands - £1,786,000.
- Burnham-on-Sea, Marine Cove Gardens, South West - £344,200 (HLF funding only).

*** 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, soound 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.

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 past three years, the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) has 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 2010 with an investment of £20m each year. The next closing date for applications is 31st August 2010. 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 has allocated £10 million in its grant budget for 2010/11 towards the programme in England.

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.

HLF has invested £527m in over 530 historic public parks, gardens, squares and promenades right across the UK.

Big Lottery Fund (BIG) rolls out close to £2million in Lottery good cause money every 24 hours, which together with other Lottery distributors means that across the UK most people are within a few miles of a Lottery-funded project. BIG, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004. The Big Lottery Fund and its predecessor bodies have invested more than £1.3billion in environmental initiatives. www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

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