Much-loved parks across UK to be restored

02/07/2013

Eleven parks in England are celebrating today thanks to joint investment of £23m from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Big Lottery Fund, including Alexandra Road Park in London, Lightwoods Park near Birmingham and Holywells Park in Ipswich. Nearly a million pounds worth of volunteering time is being committed to these parks from people in the local community.

This Lottery money comes at a pivotal time for public parks many of which are struggling in the current economic climate. The situation is of such concern that HLF has commissioned a major new report aiming to provide a thorough insight into the challenging situation faced by the sector. A team of industry experts will deliver the *State of the UK's Public Parks' Report* in Spring 2014.

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said on behalf of HLF and the Big Lottery Fund: "This investment in our public parks could not be more timely. We know how much people value their parks. With the National Lottery's continued funding we can help make sure that they remain at the heart of community life.

"However, we also know that parks, like many local services, are at risk of reductions in funding at present, which is why we're announcing research today which will provide the evidence to show how important parks are to quality of life and so help them survive and thrive in these difficult times."

Alan Titchmarsh, gardener and broadcaster, commented: "Public parks are so important to people's well-being but – like all landscapes and gardens – they need continuous love and care to keep them in good condition. With sources of funding increasingly hard to find, failure to invest properly in maintenance in particular means that our much-loved parks are at risk of becoming places that are no longer safe or fit for purpose. We must not take our public parks for granted. I'm delighted to hear that HLF and Big Lottery Fund continue to invest Lottery money into parks and that the new research will highlight the serious issues our parks are facing so that more can be done to help safeguard these precious green places."

The 11 funded parks are:

HLF/Big Lottery Fund joint confirmed grants - England

- Boultham Park, Lincoln – £2.7m
- Holywells Park, Ipswich, Suffolk - £2.9m
- Alexandra Road Park, London - £1.5m
- West Hackney Recreation Ground, London - £690,700
- Eastcote House Gardens, London - £1.3m
- Langton Gardens, London - £1.9m
- Memorial Park, Fleetwood, Lancashire - £2m
- Westgate Gardens and Landscape, Canterbury, Kent - £766,800
- Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge, Dudley - £2.6m
- Lightwoods Park, Smethwick, near Birmingham - £3.6m
- Cliffe Castle Park, Keighley, West Yorkshire - £3.5m

Projects in the pipeline

In addition, initial support plus £1,169,900 of development funding has been awarded to six parks projects:

Joint initial HLF/Big Lottery Fund support – England

- Highfields Park, Nottingham – for a £3.1m HLF/BIG bid, including £280,500 development funding
- Houghton Hall Park, Dunstable, Bedfordshire – for a £2.1m HLF/BIG bid, including £215,100 development funding
- Avenue House Trust, Finchley, London – for a £2m HLF/BIG bid, including £101,600 development funding
- Rivington Terraced Gardens, Rivington, Bolton – for a £3.4m HLF/BIG bid, including £63,700 development funding
- Page Park, South Gloucestershire – for a £1.7m HLF/BIG bid, including £117,000 development funding

HLF only initial support – Scotland

- Saughton Park, Edinburgh, Lothian – for a £4.1m HLF bid, including £392,000 development funding

The State of the UK's Public Parks Report – following a competitive procurement process, HLF has recently appointed a team of parks experts to deliver the *State of the UK's Public Parks' Report*. The team is being led by parks consultant Peter Neal and Director of Community First Partnership Ian Baggott, and includes Public Parks Research Specialist Dr Edward Hobson, Peter Harnik from the Centre for City Park Excellence in Washington DC, parks communications specialist Ben Hurley and research company Ipsos Mori.

The team is priming park managers across the UK to be prepared to respond to an online survey that will be launched later this summer. The team has launched an immediate call for evidence and case studies that highlight the challenges and opportunities currently facing the sector. These should be sent to ukparksstudy@cfpuk.co.uk.

Notes to editors

This announcement can be followed on Twitter #parksmatter.

Love Parks Week is taking place this year from 27 July to 4 August 2013. Visit the Love Parks Week website for further details.

Further information

HLF press office: James Steward or Katie Owen on 020 7591 6056 / 6036, mobile: 07973 613 820.

BIG press office: Lauren Connors on 020 7211 1962

State of the UK's Public Parks' Report: Peter Neal on 07717 695 290, email: peter@peternealconsulting.co.uk.