Picture Perfect

24/08/2010

Today, a Country Antrim man's photo taken at Belfast's Victoria Park has been chosen as the Northern Ireland winner of the UK-wide 'Postcards from the Park' photo competition. Terry Cooper, from Carrickfergus, was also awarded a highly commended for a second photograph he submitted which was taken in the Botanic Gardens.

The eye-catching photo, entitled, 'White on Black', hugely impressed the judges who included celebrated photographer Mike McCartney (brother of Paul), Angela Nicholson from Amateur Photographer Magazine and Tim Kerr from the Press Association.

As part of his prize, Terry will enjoy an overnight stay in a 5 star hotel in London and get to see his winning photo exhibited at the Café Gallery in Southwark Park, London. The overall winner of the competition, who will also receive £1,000 worth of vouchers, will be announced at the Café Gallery on **Friday 3 September** at a special opening event where competition judges, celebrity photographer Mike McCartney and environmentalist Chris Packham will be meeting winners and talking about what the future holds for parks funding.

The winning photos will also be turned into postcards and distributed at Lottery-funded venues and parks across the UK.

Terry Cooper, said: "I'm delighted to have won the Northern Ireland category of the 'Postcards from the Park' competition; it's so exciting to have my photo exhibited in a London gallery. I spend a lot of time in Victoria Park mostly to walk and watch the wildlife. I took this photo in October 2009 and what inspired me was the lighting and the detail in the swan's wings."

Professional photographer and main judge, Mike McCartney, said: "It's wonderful to see people out and about enjoying their parks and photography. Terry's photo is just one of many great shots that demonstrate the popular appeal of parks."

Loving our public parks
'Postcards from the Park' highlights the unique part that parks play in community life and promotes HLF and BIG's joint funding programme, 'Parks for People', which has to date invested £600m in improving and transforming the UK's public parks and green spaces.

Environmentalist and presenter, Chris Packham, said: "We're so lucky in the UK to have such wonderful and varied green spaces which not only offer massive benefits in terms of health, quality of life and well-being, but also offer brilliant opportunities to get up close and personal with nature. It's essential we keep on investing in them as there is still plenty of work to be done to look after them all properly. Every community deserves to be near a great park!"

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said on behalf of HLF and BIG: "Parks are vital places that give people an opportunity to escape the daily hustle and bustle and enjoy the fresh air. The huge number of photographs that were entered for this competition shows just how popular they are right across the country. That is why HLF and BIG support parks with such a massive investment of our funding."

Paul Bramhill, CEO of GreenSpace, added: "GreenSpace is delighted to be part of 'Postcards from the Park', as it highlights how beautiful, varied and dynamic the UK's parks and green spaces are. The response and quality of entrants has been outstanding and is a clear demonstration of how important these parks are to people."

Now in its fourth year, this national competition continues to grow with thousands of entries received each year. It encourages everyone to get out and about in their local public park and photograph what they love most about it. Categories include wildlife, heritage and people at play.

People love parks*

- 93% of people say that parks are a high priority for Lottery environment and heritage funds
- 95% of visits to HLF funded parks are enjoyable, peaceful and relaxing
- 86% of parents with young children and 89% of grandparents say that on a nice day their children would prefer to go to the park than watch TV

The Parks for People programme has been hugely successful in Northern Ireland having already provided funding for eight local parks. Local public parks that have been transformed thanks to HLF investment include:

• Castle Gardens, Lisburn which benefited from an HLF grant of £2.75million and Lurgan Park which received an HLF grant of £1.48million. Both parks received the prestigious Green Flag Award, which recognises and rewards the best green spaces in the country, following completion of their Parks for People projects.

• Armagh Palace Demesne, which was awarded a £44,000 HLF grant.

• Dixon Park, Larne, which received an HLF award of £537,300.

Notes to editors

*Information sourced by HLF

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, public parks and historic places to archaeology, species and skills, HLF invests in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

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 £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.

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

The 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

GreenSpace is a registered charity which works to improve parks and green spaces by raising awareness, involving communities and creating skilled professionals.
www.green-space.org.uk

'Biodiversity is Life' - HLF and BIG - helping to safeguard our natural wealth and reduce biodiversity loss.

Further information

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