Stewart Park

15/10/2009

Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Big Lottery Fund (BIG) have announced that much-loved Stewart Park in central Middlesbrough has been awarded a grant of just under £4.4 million.

The park, which currently attracts 400,000 visitors a year, looks set to become an even more popular community resource with the onset of the exciting refurbishment, additional facilities and events that will now become a reality.

Today's award has been made as part of an £18m* funding package that has been given to six of the UK's much-loved parks by the HLF and BIG.

Councillor Paul Thompson, Middlesbrough Council's Executive Member for Streetscene Services and the Stewart Park Project Champion, said: "This is fantastic news for Stewart Park and for the town as a whole. It is a tribute to the huge amount of hard work that has gone into the bid which will help to develop this hugely important asset for generations to come.

Thank you to everyone for their enthusiastic support for the Park plans including the Friends of Stewart Park and our international visitors following the Captain Cook trail. Major improvements are planned to the lakes, paths and woodland, while many of our Victorian estate buildings will be opened up to the public. Now the Lottery funding is confirmed, these innovative plans can be fully developed and this important work can begin in earnest."

Chris Packham, environmentalist and broadcaster, who is supporting the programme, said: "We're so lucky in the UK to have such wonderful parks which not only offer massive benefits in terms of health, quality of life and well-being, but also brilliant opportunities to get close to nature and escape the stresses of everyday life. We should all celebrate this fantastic investment from HLF and BIG. They understand that every community deserves to be near a great park!"

Stewart Park, Middlesbrough – celebrates £4,337,000 grant
This 47-hectare park was opened to the public in 1928. It was originally laid out as a manor house and deer park in the early 1800s by a wealthy army major, and the entire village of East Marton was removed to create it. It is most famous as the birthplace of Captain Cook. The site of his cottage is marked by a granite vase in the nearby Captain Cook museum.

The park now consists of mature woodland, parkland and an arboretum with two lakes providing habitat for water fowl. The pets' corner is home to domesticated animals, fallow deer, highland cattle, llamas and goats. The park holds nature, heritage, orienteering and tree trails, which are very popular with local schools, and hosts a number of large events, including the Cleveland Show.

This grant will transform the park and plans include the provision of a new visitor centre, education venue, shop, training workshops and two public event spaces. Lakes, paths and woodland areas will all be improved and many of the estate's Victorian buildings will be opened up to the public. A specialist vocational training centre which includes a cafe is also being developed within the Victorian walled gardens to teach horticultural, conservation and catering skills to the community, especially local young people and adults with disabilities.

This cash injection for Stewart Park brings the total invested in public parks and the environment by the two Lottery good cause distributors to well over £1billion** - an amazing feat and to be celebrated in this - the National Lottery's 15th year.

Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF for the North East region, said: "Public parks are vital places and HLF and BIG are proud that our continued funding is steadily reversing years of under investment. But further money will always be needed to ensure they are properly maintained.

"These are difficult times and there is concern that parks budgets could be cut due to overstretched council budgets. We would urge people to voice their passion for their local park. Write the council a letter, join a Friend's Group or get involved with what's happening or not happening in your park. We can all help make sure public parks are a priority."

James Turner, Big Lottery Fund Head of Region for the North East, added: "To get a Lottery award of well over £4 million is fantastic news for Middlesbrough and the North East. We are delighted to be funding a project that will enable residents and visitors to Middlesbrough to get the most out of this wonderful park, and to help protect it for the enjoyment of future generations."

Notes to editors

* Six parks celebrate £18million. The six public parks celebrating awards today are:

• Spinney Hill Park, Leicester
• Stewart Park, Middlesbrough
• St James' Park, Southampton
• Howard Park and Gardens, Letchworth Garden City
• Stamford Park, Tameside
• Queens Park, Bolton

** This autumn marks The National Lottery's 15th Anniversary. Since 1994, over £23billion - that's £25million each week - has been raised by Lottery players for the arts, sport, heritage, environment, education, health, charity and voluntary sectors. The two Lottery Funds have been working together in partnership on Parks for People, a joint £150million grants programme over three years to 2009 for public parks. The Big Lottery Fund is investing £80 million (in England only) and £70million is coming from HLF (across the UK). This joint programme continues to support projects currently underway, but is closed to new applications. However, HLF continues to fund new parks projects to the tune of £20million a year.

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 more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK, including £428million to more than 3,000 projects across the South East England region alone.

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. www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Out of every pound spent on a National Lottery ticket, 28p goes directly to good causes. BIG is responsible for distributing half of the money to improve communities and the lives of people most in need. HLF distributes 16.67% of the money to heritage projects across the UK. www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk

'Postcards from the Park' is an annual photographic competition run by HLF, BIG and parks charity GreenSpace. The competition attracts thousands of entries from across the UK celebrating the very essence of why so many people value their local park. www.postcardsfromthepark.org.uk

Between four and five billion visits are made to parks each year and 50% of the population visit a park at least once a week.

Surveys at HLF-funded parks have revealed that:
• 95% of visits are enjoyable, peaceful and relaxing.
• 60% of visitors take more physical exercise because they use parks.
• 80% say the park helps make their area more attractive and a better place to live.

HLF has invested over £525 million in conserving more than 500 historic public parks across the UK. This investment includes work to no less than 84 bandstands, 100 visitor centres, 120 lakes and ponds and 141 playgrounds and play facilities for young people. This investment has created hundreds of new jobs and training opportunities which address the skills shortage in the management of green spaces.

A further £80 million is being invested into public parks by BIG in partnership with HLF. BIG has invested more than £700million in wider environmental initiatives.

Further information

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