Summer investment boost to North East parks

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Located in North Tyneside, on the edge of Wallsend town centre, the Wallsend Parks project will focus on three connected sites: Prince Road Arboretum; Richardson Dees Park; and The Hall Grounds. All three, originally part of the Wallsend Hall Estate, and home to mining pits dating back to the 1700s. The mine shaft within Richardson Dees Park was used to try and rescue miners trapped in the Wallsend Colliery disaster of 1835 which devastated the Wallsend community at that time.

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the North East, Ivor Crowther, said on behalf of HLF/BIG: “Summer is here and it’s the perfect time to enjoy our public parks. This vital lottery investment will really transform these parks creating a better place for local people and visitors alike. HLF and BIG are dedicated to making sure our parks get the continued investment that they need ensuring they stay at the heart of their local communities.”

Wallsend Parks will undergo major refurbishment work including restoring the Vinery Wall and Fernery in the Hall Grounds. The funding will also go towards training volunteers to be leaders and guides and an education and training plan will be created for people to learn essential horticulture and maintenance skills.

North Tyneside elected mayor, Linda Arkley, said: “This is fantastic news. Wallsend Parks has been enjoyed by residents for generations but has gradually fallen into decline over the years. With this investment we will be able to revitalise Wallsend Parks and make sure it once again meets the needs of the local community.”

Also announced today was initial HLF/BIG support for Northumberland Park and Walker Park who were awarded almost £200k of devleopment funding.

Northumberland Park – first-round pass ** of £2,223,700, including £109,000 development funding
Opened in 1885 by the Duke of Northumberland who dontated the land to provide a park for the people of North Shields. Stretching 12ha the site contains fascinating historical structures including the listed ruins of a medieval leper hospital dating from the 13thcentury and was also used in the Civil War as a burial ground.

Getting the green light today means plans for redevelopment work can get underway, including restoring historical structures and managing woodland and flower beds. Widening the parks audience is also a priortiy and there are plans to this by introducing nature trails, community archaeology projects and heritage guided tours encouraging local people and visitors to learn about the parks history.

Walker Park first-round pass of £1,412,300, including £65,250 development funding
Officially opened in 1891, Walker Park provided a much-needed open space for the local people in a time of mass industrialisation. During the war years, the park underwent major changes in line with the expansion of housing surrounding it. A playground and bandstand were introduced and much of this still remains today. The Dene is of major ecological importance and is one of few areas where woodland still exists in Walker.

This initial support from HLF/BIG means Walker Park can develop plans for refurbishment work including the reinstatement of the Robert Burns memorial, restoration to the ampitheatre and the dry lake restored. Plans are also in place to deliver training opportunities for volunteers.

Cllr Pauline Allen, Executive member for culture, leisure and customer service, said: “The residents of Walker will be delighted with this news and will be actively involved in the development stage of the project to ensure that the park’s rich heritage and community culture that already exists is further enhanced. Work on this project has been a partnership approach between residents, officers, consultants and locally elected members and this good partnership will continue during the project.”

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 these parks.

** 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, so a first-round 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.

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

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