£9million summer splash for parks

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Four popular parks in London, Bracknell, Bedfordshire and Preston are celebrating today following confirmed grants totalling £9.47million* from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Big Lottery Fund (BIG). This money from the two Lottery distributors' joint Parks for People programme will transform and revitalise these much-loved green spaces.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: "This is wonderful news for park lovers. The Heritage Lottery Fund's money has already done so much to revitalise over 500 of the country's parks. This new investment means that many more people will enjoy using a park which has been transformed by Lottery-players' money."

Sir Clive Booth, Chair of the Big Lottery Fund, added: "These historic parks require a lot of maintenance, modernisation and care, and today's investment will ensure that people of all ages can enjoy them and reap the benefits to their mental and physical well-being. Regeneration will help to protect the environment on our doorsteps and safeguard these precious green spaces for future generations."

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities, Ian Austin MP, said: "Having access to a top quality local park can really transform people's lives, giving them somewhere to exercise and play as well as relax and socialise.

"I am delighted that this new funding will enable four of our historic parks to be restored and rejuvenated to become places that everyone can enjoy."

Clissold Park, London – £4.46million
This 19th-century park has a fascinating history as its grounds and the adjacent Newington Common were threatened with building development. Following a public campaign, the Metropolitan Board of Works was persuaded to buy the land and create a public park which opened in 1889. The two lakes of the park are named Beckmere and Runtzmere in honour of the two principal founders.

Clissold Mansion, a Grade II listed building, dates back to the 1790s, when it was built for Jonathan Hoare, a local Quaker. The short stretch of water in front of Clissold House was once part of the New River, which supplied the capital with its drinking water.

HLF and BIG's grant of £4.46million will be part of the £8.9million restoration of Clissold Park and House, to return them to their former glory and introduce modern visitor facilities. As well as restoring the house itself, a section of the New River will be improved. Plans also include extensive maintenance to the two park lakes, improving the landscaping in the animal enclosure, creating a new play and wheels park area and conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the park.

South Hill Park, Bracknell – £2.3million
The Grade II registered South Hill Park is the remains of a 17th-century enclosure of Windsor Forest. During the 18th century the park's stream was dammed to form a series of serpentine lakes winding through the parkland which was planted with clumps of trees and enclosed by a belt of woodland. The park is home to a mansion which is now an important arts centre. Originally built in 1760 as the retirement home for a senior official of the Bengal government, it passed through numerous hands and was totally rebuilt into the building we see today towards the end of the 19th

century. It also has a reputation as one of the most haunted houses in Berkshire.

The park provides a valuable wildlife habitat. It contains a woodland with exotic species and birch woodland, parkland areas with formal lawns, two lakes and wetland areas. Over 130 plant species have been recorded at South Hill Park, whilst the lakes are home to frogs, newts and waterfowl. A range of events and activities for schools and the public take place at South Hill Park, ranging from pond dipping to bat watching.

A grant of £2.3million will help to fund extensive works to South Hill Park. Plans include restoring the terrace garden, conserving the woodland areas and de-silting the southern lake. New paths and access points will be added and there are number of smaller projects to restore the amphitheatre, improve habitats for wildlife and provide better facilities for young people.

Avenham and Miller Parks, Preston - £1.75million
Lying side by side on the north bank of the River Ribble just south of Preston City Centre, Avenham & Miller Parks are among the finest examples of traditional Victorian parkland in the North West. Linked through ornate railway arches both parks were designed and created by the renowned landscape architect Edward Milner during the 1860s and are Grade II registered. The parks were built as a public works project to keep cotton workers employed during the cotton famine created by the American Civil War.

Avenham Park was created from a natural amphitheatre and contains Avenham Walk, listed buildings such as the Belvedere pavilion and Swiss Chalet, and the Boer War Memorial. Later additions to the park include the 1930s Japanese Rock Garden. Miller Park is more formal in appearance and contains Derby Walk, an Italianate Terrace, a listed fountain and the Derby Memorial Statue.

A grant of £1.75million will transform these Victorian gems often described as among Lancashire’s most beautiful places, improving drainage, footpaths, event infrastructure and renovating the natural landscape including the trees, shrubs, beds, lawns and the Rock Garden. The grant will fund phase two of the park restoration following the successful completion of the HLF funded phase one which restored many of the parks' heritage features and commissioned an award-winning pavilion.

Moggerhanger Park, Bedfordshire - £960,000
The Grade II registered Moggerhanger Park is in the middle of the beautiful Bedfordshire countryside and contains historic woodlands, walled gardens, the Bothy (a shelter) and an Ice House. It was originally designed by Humphry Repton as the grounds for Grade I listed Moggerhanger House which is recognised as one of the most complete surviving houses designed by Sir John Soane. With the contribution of these two great designers Moggerhanger represents the very best in landscape and architectural design at the end of the 18th century. An HLF grant of £3million has already funded extensive restoration of the house.

A £960,000 grant will revitalise the landscape of this beautiful park by reinstating the original design and restoring the walled gardens, Bothy and Ice House. The grazing of sheep in the park will also be reintroduced.

Notes to editors

* Today’s Stage Two 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 Stage Two applications from these parks.

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 two Lottery Funds have been working in partnership from 2006 to 2009 to deliver a multi-million pound investment in public parks of £150million. Over the three years, the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) is investing up to £80million (in England only) with £70million coming from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the UK.

HLF is continuing to fund public park projects from 2009 with an investment of £20million each year. The next closing date for applications is 31 August 2009.

Parks for People programme grants range from £250,000 to £5million with two rounds of funding each year.

Every completed park project will be expected to achieve the annual prestigious Green Flag Award and in doing so demonstrate quality standards of care and upkeep.

Big Lottery Fund has invested more than £700million on environmental initiatives to date. www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

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. The Big Lottery Fund, 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.

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. There are 12 other organisations responsible for distributing lottery money to good causes. www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk