Thousands attend re-opening of Croydon’s Wandle Park

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The public event follows Croydon Council’s £3.5million transformation of the 123-year-old park that has returned the River Wandle to the surface for the first time in 40 years, brought the park’s Victorian splendour back to life and created a host of new and improved facilities.

Made possible by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Big Lottery Fund (BIG) Parks for People programme* the three year scheme has also restored the bandstand, water-fountain, ornamental planting and boating lake, plus created a new skate park, ball court, open-air gym, pavilion and community garden, all set against the backdrop of the Wandle.

Hosted by Croydon Council and members of the local community, some 50 stalls and stages provided a wealth of entertainment for the crowds, and local real ale was served up by Croydon’s Cronx Brewery. Talented bands and musicians on the main stage included included local celtic folk favourites Homebrood, and the crowds were delighted by Hipsinc’s bellydancing performance.

During the day three plaques were unveiled at the new bandstand by The Mayor of Croydon, senior Croydon councillors and Wesley Kerr of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), which provided £1.9m towards the project. The scheme was also supported by £400,000 from Mayor of London Boris Johnson’s Help a London Park scheme, Croydon Council’s ‘Parks to be Proud of’ initiative, and Barratt Homes as part of their neighbouring New South Quarter housing development.

Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: “Preserving and improving London’s green spaces is vital to advance London’s position as the greatest big city on earth to live, work and invest in. This fantastic transformation of Croydon’s Wandle Park, with a multitude of new gardens and outdoor facilities, has also resurrected one of London’s lost rivers and returned it to the local community to enjoy.”

Wesley Kerr, Chairman of the Heritage Lottery Fund London Committee, said: “We are delighted restoration has brought the Wandle back above ground in Croydon. Wandle Park’s regeneration - part of £125million worth of investment into London’s Parks and the most since Victorian times - is also just one of a number of urban greening projects changing the face of the environment along the Wandle’s route. From Morden Hall Park’s river powered hydroelectric turbine, to the recently restored Honeywood House sitting proudly at Carshalton Ponds, or the new 5 year Living Wandle Landscape Partnership, which will see Croydon’s Waddon Ponds restored, these projects across Croydon, Sutton, Wandsworth and Merton are transforming the River Wandle for people of all ages to enjoy. This is a great reminder that London really is a city in a wood beside many rivers.”

Councillor Phil Thomas, cabinet member for highways and environmental services, said: “This has been a fantastic day and it’s brilliant to have seen so many people out enjoying themselves. The park now has some excellent facilities, and if you’re a skater, a local musician, or just keen to get away from the town centre for a peaceful lunch then this is the place to come.”

Wandle park has also been made a Queen Elizabeth II ‘field in trust’, and as such is one of about 1,500 other open spaces around the country that has been given additional protection from any future redevelopment.

Notes to editors

Since 1994, HLF has awarded a total of £585m to over 560 public parks across the UK.

The Parks for People programme uses Lottery funds to support the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of public parks and cemeteries. The programme aims to improve the local environment and put parks and cemeteries 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 period 2006-2013 the Big Lottery Fund has committed up to £92m (in England only) and HLF has committed £140m to public parks across the UK. Go to the programme page for more information.

Further information

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