New Year brings rejuvenation to Scottish Parks with



An artist's impression of the proposed Cafe at Saughton Park

Today the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) awarded grants amounting to £6.1million to Saughton Park in Edinburgh, venue for the 1908 National Exhibition, and Hermitage Park in Helensburgh, which has links to the largest military base in the UK.

Both parks are outstanding examples of designed landscape with walkers, joggers and families using them daily. They are also popular in providing education and training in horticulture, biodiversity and maintenance to school groups, volunteers and apprentices. HLF's grants will transform both, reinstating plants and trees, repairing paths, restoring historic features and introducing new facilities. Visitors will be able to learn about the parks' histories, which in the case of Saughton, dates back to 1639, with new information displays.

To date, HLF has helped turn round the fortunes of 45 parks in Scotland with an investment of over £58m. Commenting, Head of HLF in Scotland, Lucy Casot, said: "Parks, and the historic features in them, are a wonderful legacy from our ancestors. Parks, and the historic features in them, are a wonderful legacy from our ancestors. They are enjoyed by all ages and are often a community's only green space in which to relax away from the pressures of daily life. Using funds raised through the National Lottery, HLF is able to protect and transform these precious places helping make a difference to the quality of life for millions of Scots."

Saughton Park

HLF grant award: £3,799,100

A key feature along the Water of Leith Walkway, Saughton Park has a fascinating history.

In 1908 the park hosted the National Exhibition attracting over 3.5v million people through its gates. The ethos of showcasing the latest designs and innovations continues today as the park explores the possibility of using its expanse of playing fields to install a ground source heating system which could supply power to local public buildings.

Records show that Saughton Park was used for horticultural therapy as far back as 1824 when Saughton Hall was an asylum. Today, as home to the Royal Caledonian Horticulture Society, pioneering therapeutic horticulture continues with regular groups benefiting from working closely with nature. This work will be expanded as part of the project.

Pam Whittle CBE, President of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society, said: “Addressing the gaps in the educational and training systems for people with complex learning needs has been a key priority for the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society. Craighall Resource Centre, which bases its gardening activities at Saughton, has played a key part in the programme. The development of Saughton Park provides an unprecedented opportunity to showcase and support therapeutic gardening as well as encouraging and sharing gardening skills.”

Physical works to the park will include the reinstatement of the bandstand, restoration of the Walled Garden, and a new plaza and café for outdoor markets and events.

Hermitage Park

HLF grant award: £2,333,300

The only urban park in Argyll and Bute, Helensburgh’s Hermitage Park has declined since its heyday when tourists streamed off the steamship to relax and play in its beautifully cultivated gardens. It is thanks to the vision and efforts of the Friends of Hermitage Park, a group of community volunteers, that the park will be transformed so that it can again be a lively centre for recreation and learning.

A new pavilion will be built and historic features such as the A-listed war memorial, Japanese garden and Victorian wishing well will be restored. A multi-use sports facility will be introduced and the children’s play area will be moved and upgraded. The park’s heritage which includes the remains of Millings Mill which led to the founding of the town, will be celebrated with activities and events. Guided walks, storytelling, heritage trails and a demonstration garden will also be established to encourage more visitors through the gates.

Chris Packard, Chairman of the Friends of Hermitage Park, said: “It is just over five years since the Friends of Hermitage Park was created in order to raise money for the restoration of the much neglected Hermitage Park. From the outset we worked closely with Argyll and Bute Council and this award from HLF has been largely thanks to the strength of this partnership and the support of many people.”

Notes to Editors

Commenting on the award, Environment Convener Councillor, City of Edinburgh Council, Lesley Hinds said: "I am thrilled that HLF has given us this support. Saughton Park is a hidden gem in the south west of the city and this funding will help restore and improve this historically important park.

“In 2013, at the early stages of the bid, I had said this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get the funding to put this park back at the centre of outdoor living in Edinburgh and also at the centre of horticultural activities in Scotland and I am delighted that it is coming true."

Policy Lead for Infrastructure at Argyll and Bute Council, Helensburgh-based Councillor Ellen Morton, welcomed the news, saying: "We are delighted with this news. The money from HLF will pay for around three-quarters of the cost of the project, with the council contributing £280,000 directly and the remaining money coming from other funders such as the War Memorial Trust.

"Following on from the completion of the town centre regeneration project last year, which has given the town a real boost, this is yet more good news.

"This has been a real partnership project between the council and the local community, by way of the Friends of Hermitage Park Association and is a great example of Argyll and Bute Council’s commitment to engaging with our local communities.

"While this is, of course, happy news and is to be warmly welcomed, it is tinged with sadness following the untimely death of our project architect, local man Gareth Hoskins. Aged just 48, Gareth was one of the country’s most respected architects and has been involved in Argyll and Bute Council projects for a number of years. Our thoughts go out to his family at this difficult time and we can only hope that the redeveloped park will stand as a testament to him."

Further information

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