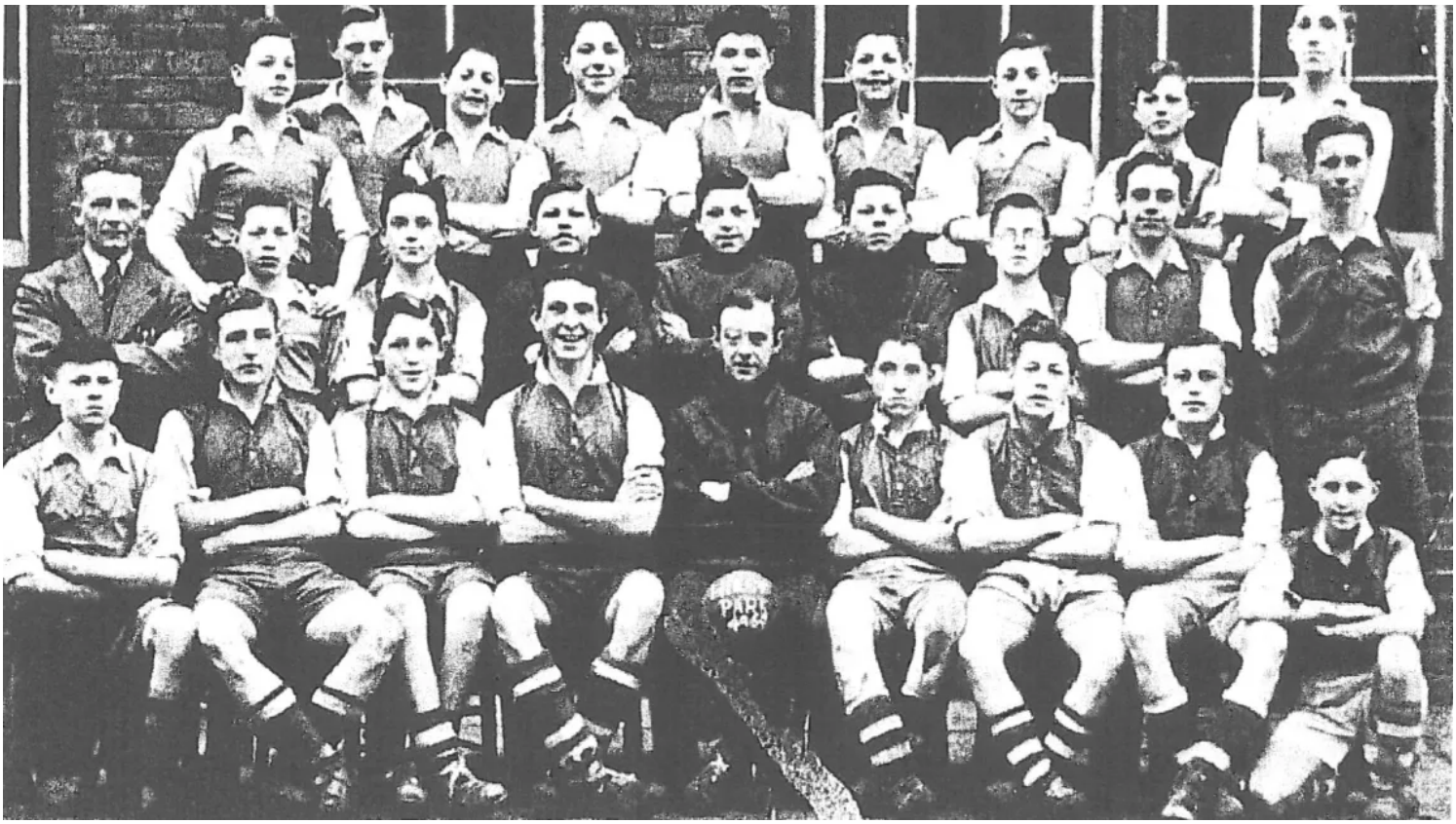


Hirst Park in Ashington is where footballers Sir Bobby Charlton, Jack Charlton OBE and Jackie Milburn first began to play and train

The park where three Ashington youngsters took their first steps towards sporting legend is set to be transformed for a new generation of footballers.

Hirst Park, in the heart of the Northumberland town, was the childhood playground of Sir Bobby Charlton, Jack Charlton OBE and Jackie Milburn.

[quote=Jack Charlton OBE]"The park was a precious place where me and Bobby learned our craft, training and playing for fun." [/quote]

Jack Charlton, scouted at the park by Leeds United in 1950, said: “The park was a precious place where me and Bobby learned our craft, training and playing for fun. Hirst Park made it all possible for us and we would play all day if we could… and we often did.”

Thanks to National Lottery players the fields where they played are set to be restored and an annual Charlton and Milburn Cup tournament set up for local youth groups.

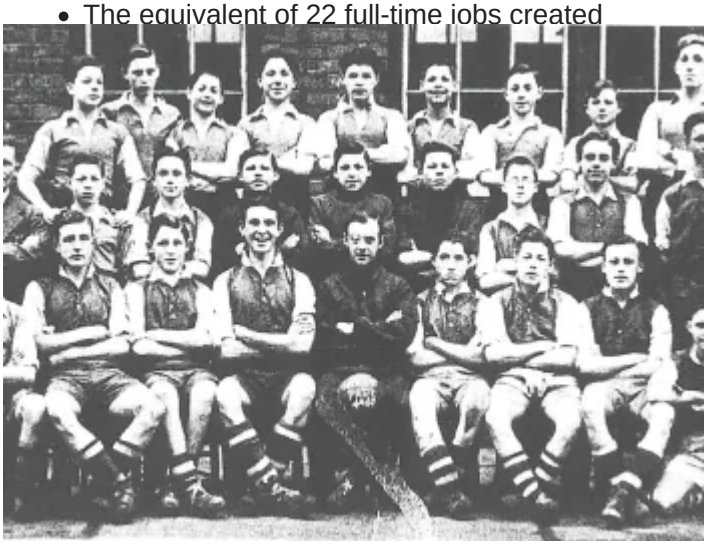
Sir Bobby Charlton also welcomed the news, saying: “Hirst Park is as necessary and valuable to the youth of today as it was for me. Thanks to the generosity of the National Lottery may it continue to flourish for the benefit of the community.”

The project will also set up a horticultural hub including traineeships, beekeeping and therapeutic gardening. Local charities will also be able to use a converted coach house as a centre for the community.

Hirst Park is one of 12 parks and cemeteries across the UK sharing a total of £32m from the National Lottery. From Havant to Helensburgh and from sweeping hillside landscapes to vital urban spaces, these projects will make a huge difference for communities and wildlife.

The projects announced today will see:

- 388 acres of public land revitalised
- 1,589 volunteers involved in everything from gardening to social media
- 2,180 trainees gain practical skills and valuable qualifications
- The equivalent of 22 full-time jobs created



Hirst Park is where the three Ashington youngsters - Bobby and Jack Charlton and Jackie Milburn - began their journey to footballing legend

It’s coming home! Football returns to Charlton brothers’ childhood park