

Stevenage Town Centre Gardens Stevenage Borough Council

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the 1946 New Towns Act and of Stevenage – the first designated New Town.

To celebrate, we're taking a look back at the heritage of Stevenage and of some of the six other New Towns in the East of England – Basildon, Harlow, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, Milton Keynes, Welwyn Garden City and Peterborough (the latter was drastically expanded following the Act).

Why New Towns?

The Act was passed to replace the slums and bombsites of post-war Britain with carefully planned new communities where people would live and work.

Many were built to cope with the overspill of people from London, with most being built between 1946 and 1950.

While some saw the expansion, development and joining of smaller towns and villages, many were entirely new towns complete with shops, schools, leisure facilities and the hope of creating a sense of community.

National Lottery funding for New Towns

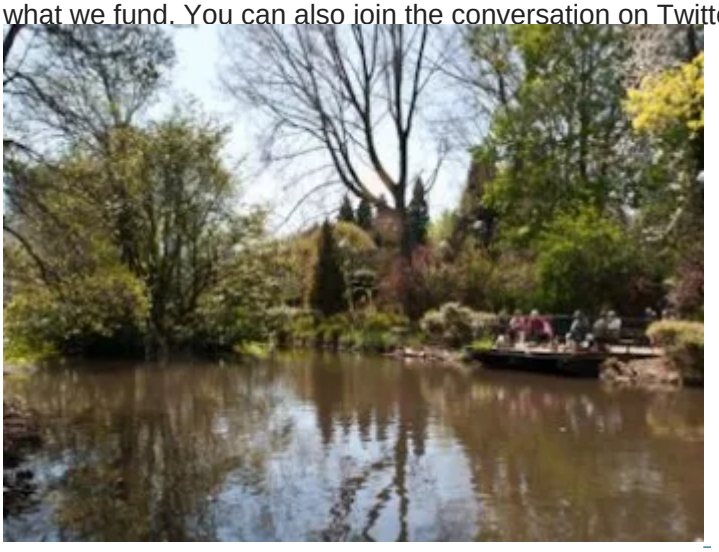
While relatively young compared with other places, New Towns have a wealth of stories to tell, communities to celebrate and heritage to explore.

Projects made possible by National Lottery players have done just that. Here are just a few examples:

- Life in New Towns has been explored in a number of ways. Stevenage Museum explored the lives and legacy of the some of the first families to build lives in the brand new towns. While Welwyn Garden Heritage Trust documented the changing ways we work and play – since its creation as a garden city and later designation as a New Town until the 1970s
- Vital green spaces in the New Towns have also benefited. Harlow Town Park, Stevenage Town Centre Gardens and Jellicoe Water Gardens have all received National Lottery funding for restoration and improvements
- A diverse range of communities have also been able to tell their stories – from a Black History Festival in Harlow and capturing the memories of South Asian theatre Hemel Hempstead to the heritage of the Traveller community in Stevenage

How can you celebrate our New Towns?

If you have an idea for a project to share the heritage of your New Town, visit our Looking for Funding page to find out what we fund. You can also join the conversation on Twitter using #NewTowns.



Hemel Water Gardens

Hemel Water Gardens secures £2.4m of Lottery funding for major restoration

Harlow Town Park secures Lottery investment

Stevenage Town Centre Gardens wins major award