Grass-roots football boost at World Cup legends’



Hirst Park in Ashington, Northumberland

The childhood park of footballing legends Sir Bobby and Jack Charlton is among 13 parks and cemeteries receiving £40million National Lottery funding.

Hirst Park is situated in the former coalmining town of Ashington, Northumberland. It was where young Bobby and Jack Charlton first began to play football as youngsters before going on to play for Manchester United, Leeds United and England’s national team – both as part of the 1966 World Cup-winning squad.

Sadly, during the decades that followed their success - and like so many parks across the UK - the park fell into decline. Now, thanks to £2.3m from the National Lottery it will be given a new lease of life. Its currently under-used football pitches are being restored and this grant will help revive the parks footballing heritage.

The money has been awarded jointly by the HLF and Big Lottery Fund England, through the Parks for People programme. Alongside Hirst Park, a total of 13 parks and cemeteries across the UK are today receiving grants totalling £40m to regenerate and revitalise these vital community spaces.

The parks include (among others):

Poole Park in Poole, Dorset is constructed on former meadow and marsh land donated by Lord Wimborne and was opened by the Prince of Wales in 1890. Covering 45 hectares, the project will create extensive new landscaping, improve the condition of its lakes and lagoons, repair and enhance heritage features including war memorials and the water fountain.

West Smethwick Park in Sandwell was designed by renowned Birmingham Architect William Henman, who also designed the Birmingham Children's Hospital. It opened in 1895 and although the park is largely intact, it has suffered significant decline in recent decades. This project will reverse that decline by restoring major landscape features and heritage features including the Grade II listed James Change memorials.



Jack Charlton returns to Hirst Park, Northumberland

Football returns to World Cup legends Bobby and Jack Charlton's childhood park