

Our 25-year love affair with public parks

12/07/2019



In 2019, we celebrate 25 years of supporting heritage good causes around the country.

In that time, The National Lottery Heritage Fund has invested £1.6billion of National Lottery money in landscapes and nature.

That includes more than £950m in public parks and cemeteries.

We recognised early on the value of investing in public parks, and over 25 years our funding has reached every corner of the UK, providing benefit to the 37m people that use public parks every year.

In 2006 we were joined in our support of parks by The National Lottery Community Fund*, helping us to expand our work in transforming public parks.

With the weather warming up, we thought it timely to take a look back at some of our favourite park projects over the past quarter-century.

Award winning

Antrim Castle Gardens, an 8th-century Anglo-Dutch water garden, was transformed thanks to our investment. It has been an amazing success since receiving funding in 2006. This year it won a Tourism Northern Ireland award for Authentic Northern Ireland Experience of the Year.

Our funding also helped to shine a light on the miniature masterpiece of design that is **York Gate Gardens**. Tucked away in the village of Adel on the outskirts of Leeds, it's a magnificent example of the Arts and Crafts movement in garden form. In 2017 it was named by *The Times* as "the seventh best garden to visit in the UK".



York Gate Gardens

Accessible

Dean Castle Country Park in East Ayrshire, **Saughton Park** in Edinburgh, and **Holywells** in Ipswich are leading the way on the accessibility front with Changing Places toilets. These extra-large bathrooms meet the

needs of all people with a disability and ensure equal access to an enjoyable day out.

There are more than 1,300 Changing Places toilets around the UK – find your nearest on [the Changing Places map](#).

Brooke Park is another lovely example from Northern Ireland. Conservation volunteers help manage the park, which features wheelchair-friendly play equipment, and is one of the few large green spaces in Derry City.



Small and (formerly) forgotten

Marine Cove Gardens in Burnham-On-Sea in Somerset is possibly one of the smallest green spaces we've ever funded. The tiny but perfectly formed 0.17 hectare of formal gardens was originally part of an old vicarage site. Almost a decade on from our award, it is still going strong, and the much-loved lion head fountain remains in use.



Marine Cove Gardens in Burnham-On-Sea

We're also proud to have helped the Friends of **Zion Graveyard**, in Attercliffe, revitalise the very small and forgotten graveyard, located in the middle of a Sheffield industrial estate. The graveyard is the resting place of Mary Anne Rawson, one of the leading anti-slavery campaigners of the 19th century.

Dead Space to Living Place* is another great cemetery project, in Berkhamsted. It's a small green space with a committed volunteer group. They inspire wonderful community involvement through activities ranging from the recent book festival to adopt-a-grave gardening scheme and volunteer social events. [Sign up to their newsletter](#) to find out more.

Grottos, caves and pigeon towers

One of the very first park project awards in Wales, back in 1995, was £30,000 towards the restoration of the **Shell Grotto** in Pontypool Park in South Wales. A subsequent award helped restore the surrounding park – the only public park in the town – a decade later. In 2017 a pair of shell grotto experts proclaimed Pontypool’s version as “[one of the best examples we have discovered](#)”.



The Shell Grotto in Pontypool Park

Rivington Terraced Gardens* covers 45 acres of hillside, incorporating hidden paths, caves and lakes, designed by Thomas Mawson in 1905 for the soap magnate Lord Leverhulme. As well as repairing and protecting the gardens, our funding has helped restore the Pigeon Tower. One of Chorley’s most recognised and intriguing structures, it is now open for public visits for the first time in decades.

Art and hardy water lilies

The beautiful **Whitworth Art Garden**, part of The Whitworth Gallery (which was transformed with £15m of National Lottery funding), takes the exhibition space beyond the gallery walls. It houses outdoor sculptures, as well as an orchard garden and wildflower area for relaxation and reflection.



The Whitworth Art Gallery Gardens. Credit: Michael Pollard

Burnby Hall Gardens is home to one of the best collections of hardy water lilies in a natural setting in Europe and attracts around 50,000 visitors a year. Our 2016 funding helped renovate the park's lakes – revitalising the lilies and improving conditions for the ornamental fish that live in them.

More information

[Find out more about our commitment to parks, nature and landscapes](#) – some of our oldest forms of heritage – and why helping people to understand the importance of nature has never been more important.

25 years of funding for heritage

[Over the past 25 years](#), The National Lottery Heritage Fund has been the largest dedicated grant funder of the UK's heritage. We've awarded £8bn to more than 44,000 projects across the UK.