Major boost for much-loved Wharton Park

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) have today announced a grant of £2.45million for a scheme that will transform Durham City's historic Wharton Park and result in the creation of a number of jobs and apprenticeship opportunities.

The funding award is from the Parks for People programme, which uses lottery funding to support the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of public parks and cemeteries.

Ivor Crowther, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund for the North East, said: "Eighteen years of investment in our public parks has transformed tired and in some cases under-used green spaces across the UK into thriving community hubs. This investment will help unlock the potential of Wharton Park so it can be restored and opened up for local people to enjoy."

Additional funding, including funding from Durham County Council and Durham Area Action Partnership, will take the total amount of investment in the park to £3m.

The public was granted use of the park by WL Wharton in 1858 and it was the site of the first Durham Miners' Gala in 1871. The park, which includes a play area, gardens, walks and other recreational activities, is in need of significant investment in order to improve its facilities and increase visitor numbers.

As part of the restoration project a new heritage centre and café will be created, new play areas and outdoor fitness equipment will be installed and improvements to the park's amphitheatre, miniature car track, footpaths, signs and main entrances will be carried out.

A programme of events and activities is planned and the scheme will also bring improvement to the management and maintenance of the park.

New jobs, including a park manager, café manager and assistants, will be created along with a number of apprenticeship opportunities.

Cllr Maria Plews, Cabinet member for libraries, leisure and lifelong learning at Durham County Council, said: "This is fantastic news for Wharton Park, the Friends of Wharton Park and the local community.

"We couldn't do this work without the help and support of lottery funding and we should all celebrate this fantastic investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund."

Cllr Neil Foster, Cabinet member for regeneration and economic development at Durham County Council, added: "The huge groundswell of support from the Friends of Wharton Park, the local community and other partners has been instrumental to the bid's success.

"We will continue to work together to make Wharton Park a heritage asset for Durham and a special place which we can all be proud of."

The Wharton Park project has been developed by Durham County Council working closely with the Friends of Wharton Park, the local community and other partners, including the Durham Area Action Partnership, Durham Agency Against Crime, Southern Green and Mosedale Gillatt architects.

Following the confirmation of the funding plans for the restoration of the park will now be finalised and construction work is expected to begin later this year.

Further information

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£26.5million to restore UK’s cemeteries and parks