

Saughton Park Heritage Lottery Fund bid



A £5.8m project to transform Saughton Park and Gardens into one of Edinburgh's best parks has taken a major step forward with confirmation of initial funding support from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

[The project](#) has passed the first round stage which indicates backing for the outline proposals. Development funding of £392,000 has been awarded to help The City of Edinburgh Council progress their plans to apply for a full grant at a later date.

The Council plans to secure funding to restore the historic park to its former glory, which in its hey-day rivalled the Royal Botanic Gardens and played host to one of the best collection of roses in Scotland.

The park now houses a very popular [skatepark](#) which was being used by at least 100 people today in the bright July sunshine. Some of those were on inline skates, others on scooters and the die-hards were on skateboards.

Being awarded the full grant would allow the Council to extensively renovate the walled garden, footpaths and historic features, and replace the Winter Garden building with a Victorian-style glasshouse. It would also include the creation of a café and community building. There were certainly many people using the park and the gardens today during the good weather, but it is clear that there is a need for more than just a snack van.



Councillor Lesley Hinds, the city's Transport and Environment Convener, said: "This is a fantastic indication of

support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and we now have two years to fully develop our plans. This project has the potential to completely transform this area of the city and put Saughton Park on a level with other premier Edinburgh parks.

“Since we announced our intention to bid for the money earlier in the year, the idea that Saughton Park and Gardens could be restored to its former glory has really captured the public imagination. The history books show that the park was once a leading tourist attraction but over recent years has lost its focus.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get the funding to put this park back at the centre of outdoor living in Edinburgh and at the centre of horticultural activities in Scotland.”

The proposals include working in partnership with the [Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society](#), who would be based at Saughton Gardens. From there they would plan to run a programme of horticultural volunteering, as well as hosting shows, lectures and other events.



Pam Whittle President of The Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society said:- “This is wonderful news – the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society is delighted with the success of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid.

“The award will be an important milestone in the life of the gardens, and will help to re-energise the gardens and will further cement the Society’s long-term relationship with Edinburgh Council. The Society is already re-establishing itself at Saughton after an absence of several years and can see an exciting future ahead.”

The [Heritage Lottery Fund](#) sustains and transforms a wide range

of heritage through innovative investment in projects with a lasting impact on people and places. The [Parks for People](#) programme uses Lottery funds to support the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of public parks. The programme aims to improve the local environment and put parks firmly back at the heart of community life.

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said: "We're delighted to be able to provide this much needed support for Saughton Park, when it could not be more needed. Many public parks are really suffering in the current economic climate so this is particularly good news for Edinburgh. Parks are important to all of us and add so much to our quality of life. Saughton Park will help to bring the local community together and now, we can help to secure its future."

The estimated cost of the project cost is £5.83m, of which £4.09m is sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £233k from third party sources. The Council would also contribute £1.25m, phased over a six year period. This also includes £250k to install a micro-hydro turbine to generate power for the proposed garden café and community facility.

History of Saughton Park and Gardens:

Saughton Hall and grounds were bought by the Council between 1900-1907 to create a large park to accommodate the recreational needs of people moving into the ever-expanding suburbs westwards of Dalry.

Although initially partly laid out as a golf course, the park became the site of the famous 1908 Scottish National Exhibition, which attracted 3.5 million admissions.

There is wonderful black and white footage of the exhibition [here on the Scottish Screen Archive website.](#)

After the Exhibition closed, the gardens created in the Walled Garden were retained for the people of Edinburgh and as a

tourist attraction, the rest of the site being opened as a public park – principally for sports. The gardens included a glass-house which was used as a winter garden, and other buildings – including a stable block, used to accommodate gardening and other parks staff or provide facilities for park users (e.g. public toilets). A bandstand was also erected in 1908.

The gardens once rivalled those of the Royal Botanic Garden, playing host to probably the best collection of roses in Scotland, and being the home of the National Rose Trials. They drew thousands of tourists visiting Edinburgh, and were regularly used for horticultural displays, demonstrations and events.

The gardens would only benefit from this grant, and might become even more of a mecca for sun-worshippers than they proved today, but also a place for horticulturalists to gather and observe the best of flowers at close range.

