



MAKING HISTORIC GARDENS ACCESSIBLE:

FUNDING HELP FROM HLF

The hlf is known for giving grants to restore historic gardens, but it also funds projects to make these gardens and public parks accessible to people with disabilities. *TONY CROSBY, HLF's Policy Advisor - Participation & Learning, writes about this for [accessiblegardens...](#)*

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was set up in 1994 to distribute money raised by the National Lottery to heritage projects throughout the UK. In its first 16 years of operation we had awarded over £4.4 billion to over 30,000 projects. These range from multi-million-pound investments in well-known sites like the British Museum and Hadrian's Wall to small grants making a big difference to local communities. Public parks and gardens are an important part of the local heritage for people, providing places to exercise, socialise, appreciate green spaces and improve health and wellbeing – research demonstrates they are places that are enjoyable, peaceful and relaxing. Up to March 2010 we had awarded over £525m to 554 public parks, public squares and gardens, seaside promenades, historic cemeteries and memorial gardens.

Our third Strategic Plan for the period 2008 – 2013, 'Valuing our heritage: Investing in our future', was launched in April 2008 and sets out our vision as:

'The Heritage Lottery Fund is the UK's leading advocate for the value of heritage to modern life. The Fund sustains and transforms our heritage through innovative investment in projects with a lasting impact on people and places.'

Our Strategic Plan can be found on our website at: http://www.hlf.org.uk/aboutus/howwework/strategy/Documents/HLF_SP3_LOW2.pdf)

It is important to note that we expect all of our projects to have strong impacts on people as well as places.

To get a grant your project must meet at least two of HLF's three strategic aims for 2008 – 2013 which are to:

- enable people to **learn** about their own and others' heritage; and
- **conserve** the UK's diverse heritage for present and future generations to experience and enjoy; and/or
- enable more people and a wider range of people to **take an active part** in and make decisions about their heritage. .

Behind that third aim – our 'participation' aim – is the desire to encourage a wider range of people to be able to access, enjoy and take part in their heritage. This includes disabled people who often experience barriers – physical, sensory and intellectual – to accessing heritage. The Disability Discrimination Act stimulated the heritage sector to make their sites and collections more accessible and we expect the projects we fund to improve access to heritage for disabled people. We have produced guidance for applicants on improving their projects for disabled people, which can be found on the HLF website at: http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/furtherresources/Documents/Thinking_about_Improving_your_project_for_disabled_people.pdf

This expectation applies as much to parks and gardens as for other aspects of our heritage. Parks and gardens are a valued part of the heritage of local communities and the emotional and physical benefits for people and communities of spending time outdoors are now widely recognised

Amongst the large number of gardens HLF has funded over the last 16 years are: the Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh; the Montpellier Gardens in Cheltenham; the gardens at Aberglasney Historic House; Carmarthen; Burton Manor Walled Kitchen Garden, Cheshire; the St. John at Hackney Churchyard Gardens; and Broadstairs Seafront Promenade & Gardens in Kent.

The following more detailed case studies show how the gardens featured have improved access for disabled people and welcomed disabled people as both visitors and as volunteers working in the gardens.

Bridge End Garden – Saffron Walden, Essex

In 2001, Uttlesford District Council applied for a grant of over £380,000 (towards total project costs of over £560,000) for the restoration of Bridge End Garden in Saffron Walden, Essex, a Grade II* registered landscape with several listed structures. The restoration work included improving access for disabled people by providing firm level paths and a new accessible toilet for visitors.



Accessible pathway around Bridge End Garden

A number of volunteers helped with the restoration work and continue to work on maintenance; they include people on Community Service, young offenders and people with mental health problems placed by the local mental health services.

The garden is open to visitors free of charge, opening times being dependent on the season. With the exception of the sunken

garden, all areas are accessible to disabled people and there are plenty of seats available at which to rest and admire the garden.

Website: <http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/main.cfm?Type=BEGFA&MenuId=345>

Burnby Hall Gardens – Pocklington, Yorkshire

This smaller project – our grant was just £43,000 towards a total project cost of £96,000 – was developed to improve physical access for disabled people, provide disabled friendly play facilities and redevelop the Victorian Garden. The Trust which manages the gardens now proudly boasts that the gardens are easily accessible to disabled people, including wheelchair users; in fact they have wheelchairs on site for use by visitors free of charge. The children's play area has been designed to be

used by disabled and non-disabled children.



Play equipment designed for disabled and non-disabled children

There are viewing platforms for wheelchair users to get close to the water to see the lilies and feed the fish, all facilities are fully accessible and assistance dogs are welcome.

Website: <http://www.burnbyhallgardens.com/article.aspx?articleid=123010>

Thornham Walled Garden – Eye, Suffolk



The restoration of Thornham Walled Garden in Suffolk was an early HLF funded project, but despite coming well before the Disability Discrimination Act, the involvement of disabled volunteers was encouraged.

Students working in the orchard at Thornham Walled Garden

This £400,000 project, to which HLF contributed 75% of the project costs, involved the renovation of the glass-houses, improved physical access, the reinstatement of the orchard and horticultural centre, and the subsequent operation of it. This impressive work was undertaken by learning disabled students of a local College with the aim of providing them with experience of gardening and horticulture.

The Beyond the Wall project at Thornham now provides day time occupation for young adult students with mixed and complex disabilities who can undertake nationally accredited courses aimed at learning and maintaining skills, building confidence and creating opportunities for education and employment.

Website: http://thornham.org.uk/pub_ThornhamWalledGarden.htm

We would like to hear from you about your ideas for making gardens more accessible and welcoming for disabled people. Do visit our website at www.hlf.org.uk and if you have a project idea that requires our funding and meets our strategic aims, complete and submit a pre-application form. Our local HLF office will contact you within 10 working days of receipt of the form to discuss your project idea with you.

Tony Crosby
Policy Advisor – Participation & Learning
020 7591 6089
tonyc@hlf.org.uk

www.hlf.org.uk/