

Motorway cash helps revitalise West London park

Gunnersbury Park, near the M4 motorway in West London, is a 75-hectare Historic England Registered Park containing 22 listed buildings.

The historic buildings and features at Gunnersbury Park had needed restoration for several years and by 2009, eight of the listed buildings were placed on Historic England's national Heritage At Risk Register. Now, the Highways England cash – taken from a ring fenced fund for reducing the road network's impact on the historic environment – is helping to secure the future of three of the threatened buildings through transforming them into cultural and artistic facilities for the local community.

Highways England Principal Cultural Heritage Advisor Jim Hunter said:

I am delighted that Highways England has been able to contribute to this scheme which will help ensure a sustainable future for this beautiful park and its important buildings for generations to come. We believe in operating and improving our roads in a way that protects and supports people and the things we value for our quality of life, and helping to enhance the historic environment on or close to our road network is what our Designated Fund for Cultural Heritage is all about.

Emily Gee, Historic England's Regional Director for London and the South East, said:

These special historic buildings within Gunnersbury Park have been derelict for decades and it's wonderful that they are set to be transformed into cultural and arts facilities for the local community. We are delighted that Highways England's funding has helped to secure the future of this precious landscape together with the commitment of Ealing and Hounslow councils.

The park and its buildings are jointly owned by Ealing and Hounslow Councils and managed by the not-for-profit Gunnersbury Estate 2026 Community Interest Company.

The London Borough of Hounslow and Ealing Council along with Historic England, formulated the Gunnersbury 2026 Masterplan in 2012, outlining three phases for the regeneration of Gunnersbury Park.

In 2018 work was completed on Phase One of the Masterplan, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which saw the restoration and refurbishment of the Large Mansion and other works, including the transformation of the

museum within the Large Mansion.

Phase Two of the Masterplan focuses on the Small Mansion and Stable buildings along with further works within the park and the parkland. It was after reviewing this part of the masterplan, that the other partners helping to restore these beautiful buildings approached Highways England who were asked to consider providing funding towards this part of the regeneration project.

The mansion at Gunnersbury Park. Image courtesy of Historic England.

In March 2019 Highways England awarded £90,000 from their Environment Designated Fund towards the cost of specialist surveys of the Small Mansion and Stables buildings. This was matched by £280,000 of grant funding from Historic England with the total sum being used to future-proof further investment in the scheme.

Highways England has now allocated an additional £250,000 towards the design cost for the repairs to the buildings. This takes the total sum allocated by Highways England from their Environment Designated Fund to the scheme so far to £340,000. Historic England grant funded an additional £203,000, taking the total sum they have allocated towards this stage of the regeneration programme to £483,000.

Councillor Julian Bell, Leader of Ealing Council, said:

Securing this funding is a really significant step in our ongoing commitment to restore the unique heritage of Gunnersbury Park and ensure local people of all ages benefit from this beautiful and educational historic gem on their doorstep.

A great deal of work has already gone into the painstaking restoration of Gunnersbury Park's buildings, grounds and landscape. This ambitious, multi-million pound project is bringing the park's past and future together with state-of-the-art sports facilities alongside its historically significant buildings.

A multi-million-pound sports hub is also on its way to Gunnersbury Park, offering regular tennis, football, cricket, gym activities and even angling to local people.

Councillor Steve Curran, Leader of Hounslow Council, added:

This is a significant opportunity to continue the restoration of Gunnersbury Park. It's great news for our local communities and for newcomers who can enjoy a whole host of activities and enjoy the wonderful amenities that Gunnersbury park has to offer.

At a time when public finances are under increasing pressure, we

are extremely grateful for the funding received from bodies such as Highways England to help preserve this irreplaceable part of our local heritage for generations to come.

The funding announced by Highways England, together with the Historic England grants, will ensure completion of the design stage of Gunnersbury Phase 2. Highways England will now continue to work with other Gunnersbury Project partners to explore further options to attract funding for the construction phase of the scheme, which is projected to start in 2021-22 and last for several years.

The Environment Designated Fund was created to improve the environmental performance of the Strategic Road Network to include addressing 'at risk' heritage close to the network.

The fund is part of £675 million allocated to Highways England over a five-year period from 2015 for projects which aim to mitigate the strategic road network's impact in areas including air quality, the environment, cycling, safety, integration and innovation.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.