

Grant Aided Landscapes in Devon

Kim Auston, landscape architect,
Historic England

If you take a journey of more than, say, thirty miles in Devon, you will almost certainly pass a designed landscape that has received some form of grant aid. It is easy to be seduced by the wow factor of a beautiful border, an elegant bandstand or an imposing temple, but generally we do not trouble ourselves too much about how they come to be in such good condition.

Anyone who has ever opened their garden to the public will know what hard work is involved, even if the garden is relatively modest. Keeping a major designed landscape maintained takes time and a very great deal of money. For those who possess, or perhaps simply manage, a park, garden, cemetery or other designed landscape, the availability of grant aid can make all the difference. Many owners, be they private individuals, local authorities or charitable trusts, have benefitted from grant aid and it is the purpose of this article to review a few examples of where such grant aid has made a difference in Devon.

There are those who question the whole notion of grant aid, especially where the grant has come not from a private foundation but from a government agency. Why should

taxpayers' money be spent on designed landscapes? Well, to look at it the other way, why shouldn't it? The designed landscapes of this country are a very visible expression of what it means to be British. We are the originators of the English Landscape Movement, which Kenneth Clark described as 'the most pervasive influence that England has ever had on the look of things in Europe'.¹ We have a great tradition of landscape parks, urban parks, Arts and Crafts gardens and Victorian cemeteries which resonate on the international stage. Additionally, the great majority of parks and gardens that have been grant aided are open to the public, so public money is being spent on public benefit.

Two of the biggest sources of grant aid in Devon in recent years have been Defra's Higher Level Stewardship scheme administered by Natural England and the various grant streams operated by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Environmental Stewardship

A strand of the Europe-wide Common Agricultural Policy, Stewardship targets landscapes that are distinctive, vulnerable and rare. One of the landscape types included in Stewardship is historic parkland. Parkland not only constitutes a unique habitat arising from continuity of management over hundreds of years but is a unique social and aesthetic construct, embodying the creation of an Arcadian ideal. Fortunately for those of us whose interest in landscape parks lies primarily in their cultural significance, Stewardship has been designed not only to assist in promoting their biodiversity but to repair and restore



Figure 1. Holwell Temple at Castle Hill, repaired with help from Stewardship grant aid. A ruinous classical temple hidden by trees has been revealed – a dramatic addition to the landscape of North Devon.

*Above and top right: Courtesy Jonathan Rhind, Architects
Bottom right: Courtesy Fortescue Estate*



features of the historic design, like ice houses, ha-has and even temples.

The landscape parks in Devon that have benefited from Stewardship are a roll call of some of the finest and best loved parks in the county including Arlington, Buckland Abbey, Castle Hill, Clovelly, Dartington, Greenway, Hartland, Killerton, Knightshayes, Saltram, Sharpham, Shobrooke, Spriddlestone, Stancombe, Stover, Tetcott, Tracey. In some cases the objectives of the Stewardship agreement have been relatively modest and confined to improved management through, for example, reducing applications of chemical fertiliser and adjusting stocking levels. In other cases the agreement can include quite dramatic transformations of built structures (figures 1 and 2).

Most Stewardship agreements for designed parklands – particularly those included on Historic England's *Register of Parks and Gardens* – start life with the commissioning of a parkland plan. This will typically include research and survey, the setting of a vision and objectives, followed by detailed proposals. All kinds of specialists may be involved in a plan such as archaeologists, arboriculturists, hydrologists, garden historians, landscape architects and architects. Plans are sometimes criticised for directing funds to consultants instead of to work on the ground, but without understanding what you've got, what's important about it and what the priorities should be, you risk a scatter gun approach to managing and restoring a landscape.² The best plans can really enthuse an owner and/or manager, and play a role far beyond what was originally envisaged, as Jon Avon, Stover Country Park Manager, points out:

The parkland plan delivery couldn't have been more well timed. The joint partnership approach facilitated by Stewardship funding has set the scene and given us a vision for the park. Development pressure, which wasn't what the plan was commissioned for, can nevertheless take account of this as the ground work has been done to protect and enhance the landscape. The Scale of Development in the Newton Abbot area will have huge consequences for local green space so even more reason to have the plan in place.³

The figures involved in Stewardship are impressive: it is estimated that spending on special projects (items like repairs to ice houses, desilting lakes and so on) will have been around £1.8 million in Devon 2010–2018 and this figure

excludes standard land management payments. Because of the way that agreements are set up it is difficult to translate what this figure of £1.8m means on the ground, but one telling statistic is that around 1200 individual parkland trees will have been planted in Devon by the time the current Stewardship scheme comes to an end.⁴ Stewardship, in the form it has operated for more than ten years, has now come to an end. An internal review of the effectiveness of the scheme concluded that 'without it successful parkland conservation would in most instances not be possible'.⁵

At Castle Hill Stewardship grant aided the repair of Holwell Temple. Listed grade II, it was built as an eye catcher 1770–1772, taking the form of a classical temple with a portico and pediment. In 2010 the floors and roof no longer survived and only the stubs of the columns remained. You could be forgiven for not knowing of its existence because the trees around it, apparently originally intended to be shredded to give some semblance of ships' masts, had been allowed to grow up and hide the building in wider views. Intended to cost £100 the eventual expenditure is said to have been £700.⁶ Considerably more than that was expended in a partnership between the Fortescue Estate and Natural England to repair the building. It remains a shell but a watertight shell and, thanks to the felling of a swathe of the commercial forestry plantation in front of it, it now reconnects with the house and can be seen by passers-by on its imposing bluff.

Heritage Lottery Funding

It is the big multi-million pound grants awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) that receive most attention but in fact, on a day-to-day basis, the HLF is far more involved in smaller-scale projects. The headline figure is that since the Lottery's inception, HLF has spent over £12.5 million on Parks and Gardens projects in Devon.⁷

For a whole park approach, *Parks for People* is the relevant scheme, with grants ranging from £100,000 to £5 million. This is, in fact, the only programme operated by HLF (in conjunction with the Big Lottery Fund) with a specific remit for parks and gardens. The focus is on existing designed parks (this includes urban parks, country parks, cemeteries, gardens, squares and seaside promenade gardens), with a strong emphasis on free access to informal recreation and enjoyment, and public heritage activities. *Parks for People*



Figure 2. Left: the wall to this enclosure at Greenway was in a state of collapse. Right: following repair with Stewardship grant aid.

Courtesy National Trust/James Wallace



Figure 3. The Lower Lodge at Devonport Park: before (above) and after (right), repaired with grant aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund and now used by the Park Warden.

Courtesy Chris Coldwell, Plymouth City Council



scale projects to be delivered under these schemes.

For example, individual features such as memorials, bandstands and monuments in cemeteries could be funded under *Our Heritage*, together with activity-based projects in parks and gardens that might include interpretation and a range of activities to help communities

and individuals learn about and engage with that heritage.

An example of a *Heritage Grants* project is Cockington Country Park in Torbay, which was awarded £957,500. The award was made as recently as November 2014 so works have not yet (April 2015) started on site. However the project's overall aim is to get the green heart of Cockington working better through repairing and making use of key buildings, enhancing the visitor experience through improved learning and access, and opening up the park to a wider audience. In practice this means repairing and converting The Linhay (listed grade II) into a visitor centre, repairing and converting The Gamekeeper's Cottage (also listed grade II) to create accommodation for six trainees, undertaking work to the lakes and establishing a new educational programme for schools to include activities linked to the curriculum and learning outside the classroom.

An example of a more modest grant is the *Our Heritage* grant awarded to the Decoy Country Park and Local Nature Reserve in Teignbridge. When ball clay mining ceased the worked out pit was filled with water. In 1988 Decoy Country Park was created and now supports a variety of ponds, streams, woodlands, woodland trails and a lake used for water sports. The HLF project engaged local schools in learning about their neighbourhood mining history, and enabled a series of events and an oral history project to be run. The grant awarded in this case was £11,700.

It is not possible to end this brief review of HLF grants in Devon without raising that old chestnut: will HLF fund private owners? Under their current Strategic Framework 2013-2018, there is the possibility of HLF funding towards private owners (or 'for profit' organisations) but only under the *Our Heritage* grant scheme (£10,000–£100,000) and an application must also: incorporate a step-change in terms of public access and public engagement with heritage; demonstrate clear public enthusiasm and support for the project; show a clear need for Lottery investment. In essence, private owners of heritage can only be funded if there is no clear private gain, and public access and engagement is core to the project.

The examples described here are just a snapshot. Other 'grantees' have included Ford Park Cemetery, Freedom Fields and Mount Wise Park, all in Plymouth and Simmonds Park

is a two-stage scheme where a Development Stage must be completed to HLF's satisfaction before a grant can be awarded for Stage Two, the stage when works actually take place on the ground.

Most *Parks for People* projects are predominately local authority led, but other groups can apply if ownership requirements are demonstrated to the HLF's satisfaction. Not surprisingly in this era of local authority cutbacks, HLF has seen a drop in the number of applications. Match funding is required for *Parks for People*, together with plans and resource allocation for future management and maintenance. In the current climate some local authorities simply do not feel they can make such a commitment.

An example of one of the big *Parks for People* projects in Devon is Devonport Park, included on English Heritage's Register at grade II. A Victorian park from 1858 but considerably improved 1894–5 by F.W. Meyer of Veitch & Son, it is a fundamental part of the history of the dockyard and the development of the town of Devonport. The park boasts its own 'Friends' group with over 150 active members. The HLF project resulted in the conservation and restoration of all the key historic features, including war memorials, fountains and monuments, and the historic remains of the Devonport Lines. The project also saw the restoration and reinstatement of historic railings and entrances, some of the historic path network, shrubberies and historic flowerbeds, and the restoration of the Lower Lodge for use by the Park Warden (figure 3). Interpretation was created and the existing mish-mash of park furniture was replaced with a more appropriate and unified design, based on the design of benches photographed in the park in 1898. The amount of grant awarded by the HLF was £3,294,000.

It is not always feasible to develop a whole park approach as envisaged by the *Parks for People* grant stream and so the HLF also operates a series of simpler, single round programmes that are available for all types of heritage – *Our Heritage*, *Sharing Heritage*, *Heritage Grants*, *Young Roots*, *First World War: Then and Now*. There are clear opportunities for smaller-

in Okehampton. A web-link to the current range of funding streams operated by the HLF is given at the end of this article.

Lesser known grants

Although Environmental Stewardship and the Heritage Lottery Fund appear to be the biggest players in terms of grant aid to parks and gardens in Devon, there are a great many other, smaller grant-giving organisations that target the historic environment. Chief among them is Historic England, formerly English Heritage. However, successive cutbacks mean that grant aid is tightly constrained. In Devon the only landscape to be awarded a grant in recent years has been Lupton near Brixham, where during 2014 Historic England helped fund research and survey of the Italianate Garden and associated structures. The existence of a watercolour of the garden in the RIBA library (figure 4a) was already known through research carried out by Dr Todd Gray.⁸ This led other researchers to the same archive where they found a drawing of a building that had perplexed generations of garden and building historians.⁹ The drawing was helpfully labelled to indicate its original purpose as a fowl house, possibly one of only a handful to survive in the country (figure 4b).

Another potentially significant source of funding is the Landfill Communities Fund. This is an innovative tax credit scheme enabling operators of landfill sites to contribute money to environmental organisations, but comparatively little has been spent in historic parks and gardens and in the course of writing this article only a single example has been uncovered in Devon, that of funding for Homeyards Botanical Gardens in Shaldon.¹⁰ If this truly reflects the state of affairs then the county may be missing a trick. Just ten miles over the county boundary, Philip White MBE,

Chief Executive of the Hestercombe Gardens Trust, secured landfill tax funding in 2009 of £400,000 for the repair and conversion of the Mill Building. Proximity to an active landfill site triggers this form of grant aid; unfortunately Hestercombe is no longer eligible because the local landfill site has closed.¹¹ Clearly this is a factor to be borne in mind by anyone in Devon pursuing this particular source of grant aid.

There are a myriad of smaller bodies, particularly charities, which will consider applications for projects which will benefit the historic environment. One such is, of course, the Devon Gardens Trust itself, which has grant aided the glasshouses at Flete, the Palmer gazebo at RHS Rosemoor and the Newton St Cyres arboretum. Other charities with a more national focus include the Ernest Cooke Trust, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Country Houses Foundation. The latter have grant aided Torre Abbey (repair of the east wall of the medieval cloisters), Castle Drogo (south window restoration) and Powderham Castle (organ restoration in music room) to a total of around £200,000; but there have been no grants to date from this source towards the conservation of a historic park and garden in Devon.¹²

The Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust shows what can be achieved if there is enough determination to plug away at these smaller charities. The Trust eventually accumulated a pot of around £50,000, sufficient to restore an island (believed to be by Repton) in the lake in the grade II* registered park at Hewell Grange, and the delicate cast iron bridge leading to it. More recently this indefatigable county gardens trust applied for and was offered a grant from the Cleary Fund, operated by the Georgian Group, to help with the production of a Statement of Significance for a ruinous building at Hewell. The Trust's ambition is to apply for a substantial grant from the HLF.¹³

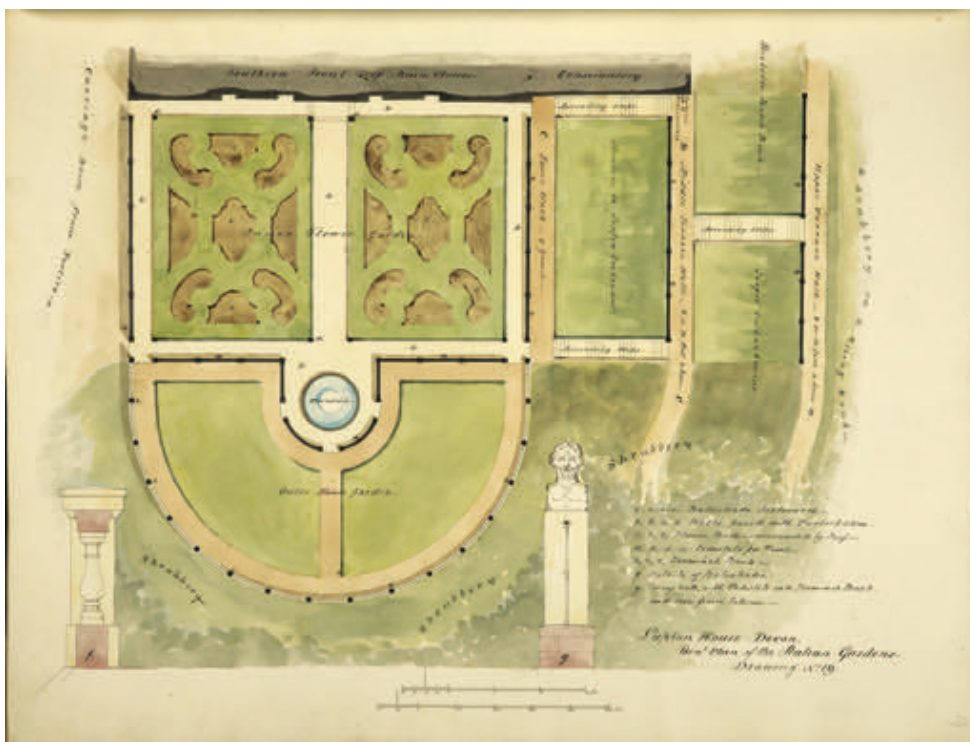


Figure 4a. Plan for the Italianate Garden at Lupton Park, designed by George Wightwick; image informing the 'development stage' of restoration, grant aided by English Heritage.

Copyright: RIBA Library Drawings & Archives Collections

Pump priming: the cumulative effect

The example of the Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust thinking longer-term exemplifies the fact that in some cases the award of a grant may not be the end of the story: its most important function may actually be to draw in other funding streams. A commitment shown by one grant-giving body can often act as a reassurance to other funders about joining the party. So at Stover, the parkland plan grant aided by Natural England has highlighted a number of worthwhile but potentially costly projects for which a bid is now being prepared to the Heritage Lottery Fund's *Parks for People* scheme. Similarly the Lupton Trust is hoping that the development work funded by Historic England will help them secure a Heritage Lottery Fund grant. Although not a Devon example, the £400,000

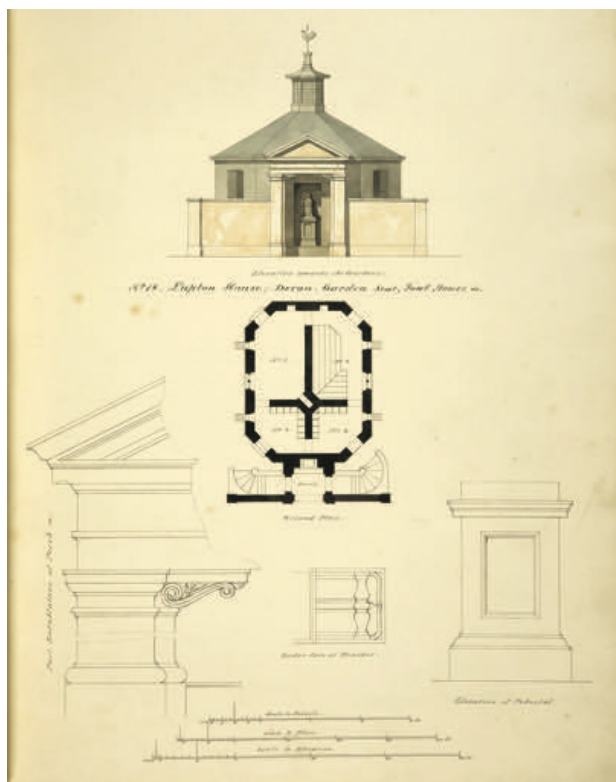


Figure 4b: (left) *The Fowl House at Lupton Park, designed by George Wightwick; image discovered during research grant aided by English Heritage*

Copyright: RIBA Library Drawings & Archives Collections

Figure 4b (above) *The Fowl House today*
 Courtesy Albert Palmer Photography

secured by Hestercombe for its Mill Building helped to unlock a further £800,000 of Heritage Lottery Fund grant to make the scheme viable.

Conclusions

Throughout the county examples can be found of grant aided landscapes. The HLF and Natural England's Stewardship have made the biggest contribution. However, Stewardship is now entering a new phase: re-named Countryside Stewardship, it is already clear that the amount of budget available for historic parklands will be smaller than before. Meanwhile local authorities, often the catalyst for applications to the various grant streams operated by the HLF, may be starting to pull back because of the uncertainty about being able to provide the 'match funding' and resources required in the longer-term. It is possible we may look back on the early 2000s as a golden era of grant aid to designed landscapes. Another great era may come but it looks as if we will have to wait a little time for it to arrive.

Some useful websites

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/our-grant-programmes>

www.countryhousesfoundation.org.uk

www.entrust.org.uk/landfill-community-fund

www.historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/grants

www.charitychoice.co.uk (this lists many of the smaller grant-giving charities)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/cap-reform-december-2014-update

www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/events-and-training/events (offers guidance and training on fundraising)

References

1. Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation: A Personal View* (BBC and John Murray, 1969), p. 271.
2. Natural England has its own internal guidance on producing a parkland plan; the best guidance on producing a Conservation Management Plan for designed landscapes of all kinds is probably that produced by the Heritage Lottery Fund: www.hlf.org.uk/conservation-plan-guidance.
3. Personal communication, Jon Avon, Stover Country Park Manager, by email, February 2015.
4. I am grateful to Jon Grimes of Natural England's Exeter office for researching these statistics for me, February 2015.
5. In 2013, as one of its science and research projects, Defra commissioned a review of how effective Stewardship has been. The results were published under the title: *Evaluating the effectiveness of Environmental Stewardship agreements for the conservation and enhancement of historic parklands and developing a method of prioritisation for funding* – LM0428, (2013).
6. Taken from the National Heritage List: <http://list.historicengland.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1258315>.
7. Personal communication, Kelly Spry-Phare, HLF (Exeter), February 2015.
8. Todd Gray, *The Art of the Devon Garden*, (Mint Press and Devon Gardens Trust, 2013).
9. Kay Ross, *Historic Building & Garden Assessment on Lupton House*, Brixham Road, Devon, McLaughlin Ross 11 pp, (2014) (report commissioned by The Lupton Trust, 2014).
10. Homeyards Botanical Gardens were awarded £40,000 from Viridor Credits Environmental Company in August 2015 through the Landfill Communities Fund. See www.teignbrige.gov.uk.
11. Personal communication, Philip White MBE, Chief Executive, Hestercombe Gardens Trust, February 2015.
12. Personal communication, David Price, Country Houses Foundation, February 2015.
13. Personal communication, John Comins, Hereford & Worcester Gardens Trust, February 2015.