

## Croome Park – developing tourism in a rural location

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Croome Park is an 18th Century Neo-Palladian mansion surrounded by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown's first complete landscape design. Located near Pershore in South Worcestershire, the Park boasts a man-made lake and river, statues, temples and 'eyecatchers' with Croome Court as the central focus.



Croome Park © Heritage Lottery Fund

Originally owned by the Earls of Coventry, the estate fell into decline during the 20th century. In April 1996 the National Trust, with funding from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Natural England, alongside additional support from Croome Heritage Trust and Malvern Hills District Council, began ten years of major works including:

- Dredging of the ornamental lake
- Restoration of several Grade I listed properties
- Repairing bridges and statues around the park
- Restoring over 400 acres back to wildflower meadow
- Reinstating the original planting schemes which involved planting of thousands of plants and trees.

Since restoration, Croome has enjoyed a resounding success and has boosted the local economy. The number of visitors has continued to grow by as much as 356% since 2006, resulting in a growth in income of 191%. 30-40 staff are employed at the park and there are around 300 volunteers who gain opportunities for all kinds of skills development and social enjoyment as well as work experience. Heritage Lottery funded restoration of the mansion is now ongoing and will open up all four

floors of Croome Court to the public. In addition to these grants, English Heritage have contributed £500,000 to the restoration of the Red Wing. HLF has also recently granted funding for the fit out of the newly restored WWII building to create a Defford Airfield Museum, just one more part of Croome's growing appeal to visitors and creating further volunteering opportunities and work for local people.

Heritage Lottery Fund has invested a total of £6.7 million at Croome enabling the National Trust to create an attraction that currently gets 145,000 visitors a year and provides enjoyment and income for local people.

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