Bute Park Apprenticeships

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Cardiff Council's Park Services is delighted to welcome two new apprentices, Maggie Szczerbnska and Anthony Davies to their team. The apprentices will be based in Bute Park and are funded through the £3.1 million Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant, which is supporting the £5.6 million Bute Park restoration project

The start of the new recruits employment fittingly coincides with National Apprentice week 1st February – 5th February. The two apprentices Maggie Szczerbnska and Anthony Davies were selected from nearly 200 applicants for the Council's award winning apprentice scheme.

Maggie Szczerbnska, age 29, originally from Poland lives in Cardiff and has previously been a seasonal employee with the parks service. Maggie has a keen interest in horticulture and has already achieved a National Certificate in Horticulture from Pencoed College. Anthony Davies, age 17, from Caerphilly helps out on allotments and assists with gardening tasks in the local community. He also helped his former primary school enter the schools Wheelbarrow competition hosted by the RHS Spring Flower show held in Bute Park last year.

Bute Park is one of the six green spaces within the city (the others being Roath Park, Victoria Park, Grange Gardens, Cathays Cemetery and Cardiff Bay Barrage) to hold the prestigious Green Flag Award, which is the national standard for quality parks and green spaces in England and Wales. Bute Park also successfully retained the 'Best Park in Wales' award for a second year which recognises the Council's investment in and its management of the park. The apprentices will ensure that there is a continuation of skilled gardeners which will enable the park to be maintained to the highest standards possible for current and future generations.

The aim of the Council's apprenticeship scheme is to enable the apprentices to learn and develop their skills in order to undertake a wide range of grounds maintenance and horticultural operations through an in-house programme of practical training supplemented by study towards a professional qualification in amenity horticulture.

The Council currently has two apprentices, Alex Sibley, age 24 and Ben Light, age 29 approaching the end of a their three year scheme. During their time they have completed a NCH and are currently working towards a HNC in Horticulture at Pencoed College. As a result of the successful three year apprenticeship scheme both have gained invaluable experience receiving an insight into the many functions provided by Cardiff Parks Services.

Cllr Nigel Howells, Executive Member for Sport, Culture and Leisure, said: "Cardiff Council is pleased to receive funding through the Bute Park Restoration project and to offer the opportunity to provide further opportunities under the Councils apprenticeship scheme. We were very pleased to welcome the new intake of apprentices. These educational opportunities demonstrate the Council's long-term commitment to training and development in a hands-on skills based environment."

Jennifer Stewart, Head of HLF in Wales, said: "There is a severe shortage of skilled people, especially young people, to look after our historic landscapes and buildings, which is why Maggie and Anthony and the Bute Park apprenticeship scheme are so vitally important. Today's young people need to be given the opportunity to learn the skills of the past, so that they can take appropriate care of heritage assets in the future. As well as Bute Park, HLF is investing in people through its Skills for the Future programme which will create work-based training opportunities in a range of heritage

settings throughout the UK. We want to help people of varying ages and abilities to play their part in sustaining heritage and ultimately to give them the chance to make a career out of it."

Maggie Szczerbnska, said: "I've always loved working outdoors and the apprenticeship scheme gives me a great opportunity to increase my knowledge and gain experience in many aspects of gardening."

Anthony Davies, said: "I've always had an interest in gardening and I try to help out in my local community where possible. I'm looking forward to learning new skills and think that the apprenticeship scheme will give me the opportunity."

Further information

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