Bute Park Education Centre officially opens to the public with celebratory family fun day

27/10/2011

The event will give children and families the opportunity to come along and discover what the new facility has to offer whilst enjoying one of the many activities throughout the day.

There will be interactive ‘meet and greet’ opportunities with some nocturnal friends from the Owl Sanctuary and children can try their hand at becoming a Wildlife Detective.

The Council’s ecology team will be holding a free prize draw for those visitors who complete a Wildlife Garden Survey about the species they have spotted in gardens over the last year. The project is in partnership with the Wildlife Trust and contributors can win prizes such as bird boxes, bird feeders and wildlife books. There will also be a member of the Countryside team present who can offer information about the Taff Trail.

There will also be a story-teller, have-a-go art and crafts, games, stalls and for the grown-ups a gardener’s surgery is planned where Bute Park gardeners and horticultural apprentices will hold question and answer sessions.

The Bute Park Friends Group will also be taking part and providing activities, information and advice on how to join them, as well as information stands from the RSPB and the Cardiff, Vale and Valleys Bee Keeping Association who will also be selling local honey.

The new ‘All Seasons’ catering kiosk will also be open and will be serving up a variety of snacks and refreshments throughout the day.

The brand new facility will be the hub of educational activities within the park and will give people an insight into the Council’s impressive horticultural operation which supplies the whole city with its colourful floral displays.

The centre, set behind a new garden wall, plays on the concept of a ‘secret garden’ and is accessed through a large, beautifully carved oak door. The panels of the door were specially designed by local wood carvers as part of the "People’s Door" competition and help tell the parks’ history through imagery.

Schools, families and special interest groups as well as Cardiff Council’s award-winning horticultural scheme can all use the centre as an educational resource. Members of the public can also drop in to discover more about the park's heritage and wildlife, and pick up a variety of guided trails and activities to go explore for themselves.

The centre boasts excellent learning and conference facilities, which include a classroom and archive room to house a variety of resources on park heritage, natural history and environmental themes. New interpretation panels will be installed along the internal glazed street to lead people through the park’s rich history.

Large windows situated at the back of the centre allow people to look out over the working part of the nursery where plant propagation and distribution takes place.

Other features include a timber exterior, grass roof, solar panels, free WiFi and a quality catering outlet open to both passers-by and centre users.

The building is set sympathetically within its landscape and has characteristics including a new formal planted border, climbing roses, new picnic benches, additional bike stands and a new footpath providing an access route to the centre.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Rodney Berman said: “The public opening of the Education Centre will give members of the public the opportunity to discover this new addition to Bute Park.

“The facility will be an important learning resource, allowing users to engage with a working nursery in the heart of the city.

“The Bute Park restoration project aims to protect and enhance one of Cardiff’s most cherished and popular attractions and the new Education Centre will be a real asset to this beautiful, historic landmark.”

Executive Member for Sport, Leisure and Culture, Cllr Nigel Howells said: “I hope that children and families will come along to the fun day and make themselves familiar with this exciting facility.

“It will be a great resource for schools, community groups and the people of Cardiff where they can learn more about the park and its environment and the fantastic behind-the-scenes work that goes into colouring the city in flowers and shrubs.

“Bute Park plays an important part in the history of Cardiff and is an invaluable recreational space. This new education provision will be the centre of city horticulture and will create many new opportunities.”

Jennifer Stewart, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Wales, said: “Bute Park is used by families, students and local people in the city every day. Thanks to this brilliant new education centre, they’ll be able to discover the full range of the Park’s interesting wildlife and delve deeper into the Park’s fascinating history.”

The Bute Park Education Centre is part of the Bute Park restoration project which is joint-funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Cardiff Council.

Further information

For more information please contact Cardiff Council Press Officer Danni Janssens Tel: 029 2087 2409