Community celebrates Lottery award for restoration of city landmark

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Plymouth University has been awarded £601,600, from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Big Lottery Fund (BIG), to restore the Drake’s Place Gardens and Reservoir, off North Hill. The University will match fund the £1.4m project.

The money has been awarded from the Parks for People programme following a two-stage bid process, which has seen the University as leaseholder working closely with the local community on proposals.

Professor Wendy Purcell, Vice-Chancellor of Plymouth University, said: "This project has been led by the University on behalf of the entire community, and the huge groundswell of support has been instrumental to the bid's success. We will continue to work together to make Drake's Place a special space of which we can all be proud. As well as being a green place where people can come and unwind, there is huge potential for learning projects relating to the history, biodiversity and architecture of the site."

The story of Drake's Place stretches back to 1592, when Sir Francis Drake oversaw the construction of a 28km channel that brought water from Dartmoor to the townspeople of Plymouth. The reservoir and gardens date back to the 1800s.

The University has carried out some works since taking on the lease from Plymouth City Council in 2007, but this grant will ensure it becomes a well-used green space where people can enjoy leisure time and learn about its history.

A new entrance and level access from North Hill to the reservoir area will be created, and the fountains in the reservoir will be reinstated along with the cascade which runs through the gardens. Listed features, such as the turret house, will be restored, and the gardens replanted in keeping with the 1910 design. Extra seating and improved lighting will also be provided.

A new entrance from North Hill to the reservoir area will be created, as well as level access to the promenade leading to the café. The fountains in the reservoir will be reinstated along with the cascade which runs through the gardens, and listed features, such as the turret house, will be restored. New seating and improved lighting will be introduced, and the gardens replanted to the 1910 design.

Local resident Lynn Fearon, of the Mutley Greenbank Trust and Friends of Drake's Place Association, said: "This is fantastic news. Drake's Place is an important part of Plymouth's heritage and one of the few green spaces in a very busy, built-up area. Along with others, I have been campaigning for many years for improvements to be made so it is exciting to know they can now go ahead."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said on behalf of HLF and BIG: "We're delighted to be bringing a bit of seasonal cheer to a number of popular parks, including Drake's Place Gardens and Reservoir, especially as demand for funding continues to be very high. It's been a tough year for those caring for our public parks but HLF and BIG's commitment to this important part of the UK's heritage is unwavering. Parks enrich millions of people's lives on a daily basis – providing room to relax and reflect – and it's vital that we continue to value and protect them not just for ourselves but for the next generation too."

Notes to editors

The Parks for People programme uses Lottery funds to support the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of public parks and the conservation of cemeteries. The programme aims to improve the local environment and put parks firmly back at the heart of community life. HLF and BIG will continue to fund public park projects from FY 2013 / 2014 to FY 2015 / 2016 with a joint investment of £100m.

HLF is continuing to fund public park projects in 2012 / 13 with an investment of £24m. The next closing date for applications is 28 February 2013. The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) remains committed to working in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in making a success of the Parks for People programme with an allocation of £5m in 2012 / 13.

HLF has awarded a total of £640m to over 700 public parks across the UK.

About the Big Lottery Fund (BIG): the largest of the National Lottery Good Causes distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004. It was established by Parliament on 1 December 2006. Big Lottery Fund's website.

Plymouth University: Consistently ranked as one of the leading universities in the UK, Plymouth has a strong record of excellence, enterprise and innovation across its teaching and research activities and is distinguished by its long-term engagement with business and the community. Celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2012 and this year's recipient of the Queen's Anniversary Prize, the University enjoys outstanding links with employers and plays a key role in civic and regional leadership.

With around 30,000 students, including those studying higher education at its partner colleges throughout the South West, the University is one of largest in the UK. It enjoys a high rate of graduate employment and has recently invested more than £150 million in its estate and facilities to enhance the student experience and support world-class research.

Plymouth has embedded sustainability across its operations, and in 2010 was named by People & Planet as the UK's number one green university. It is a founding partner in the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry and is the leading provider of Higher Education in Cornwall. For more information, please visit Plymouth University's website.

Further information

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Members of the project team are available for interview on request, and filming/recording opportunities can also be arranged.

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