Initial go-ahead for conservation of Avery Hill Winter Garden at University of Greenwich

19/11/2012

Development funding of £192,100 has also been awarded to help the university to progress its plans to apply for a full grant at a later date.

If the full project goes ahead, the university will be able to restore the winter garden to its full architectural and horticultural splendour. The building's iron structure, which dates back to 1890, could be carefully conserved and filled with lush new planting, recreating the original temperate style which once flourished there.

The proposed funding would also increase access to the building, improving visitor facilities and creating new learning, meeting and exhibition spaces. Plans include an extensive education and outreach programme to promote understanding of the history of this elegant listed building and its gardens as well as the man behind it all, the Victorian entrepreneur Colonel John Thomas North. The project also aims to support the conservation and development of the Avery Hill Mansion House archive.

A heritage skills training programme, where volunteers can become involved in conserving the archive, is one of a range of possible future activities involving local people in the life of the building. There may also be opportunities to act as tour guides, to collect oral histories and to help to develop new exhibition and interpretation materials.

Proposals include a new education programme, to cater for schoolchildren of all ages from primary through to sixth forms and colleges. Two new apprentice gardeners are also envisaged as part of the project, supported by volunteers. It is intended that the winter garden will also host themed talks and cultural events.

Opened in 1890, the winter garden is the second biggest glass house in the UK after the Temperate House at Kew. It was built as part of a grand mansion house for Colonel North which, since 1906 has been a home for higher education, first as Avery Hill College providing teacher training for women and, now, the University of Greenwich.

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Greenwich, Professor David Maguire, says: "The Avery Hill Winter Garden is an outstanding example of Victorian architecture. For more than a century it has played an important part in local community life, as a place for friends and families – as well as students and staff – to meet and wonder at the spectacular gardens.

"Now, thanks to HLF, we have a chance to secure this precious building's future for another century, while bringing it even further into the heart of its community with a wide range of activities for people of all ages. It has involved the efforts of the whole community to get this far and I look forward to continuing to work with the Royal Borough and many other partners as we take the next steps to securing HLF's final approvals."

Sue Bowers, Head of HLF London, said: "Avery Hill Winter Garden is one of Eltham's hidden treasures. The University of Greenwich's initial plans to conserve this magnificent structure, restore the planting and make it a much more integral part of local community life are extremely promising and we look forward to working closely with them as the project progresses."

The Winter Garden is open to the public from 10am to 4pm daily; closed between 1pm and 2pm every day, also all day Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day; early closing on Christmas Eve at midday. Admission is free and paid parking is available.

Location: University of Greenwich, Avery Hill Campus, Mansion Site, Bexley Road, London SE9 2PQ

For more information visit the Avery Hill Winter Garden Facebook page.

Notes to editors

A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

Further information

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