Iconic gateway to the park restored

23/08/2013

In recent years the building had been unoccupied and has fallen into disrepair, becoming a target for vandalism.

Substantial remedial work has taken place over two years to restore and reuse the lodge as an original park building, following significant investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund. This has been with the benefit of specialist advice from English Heritage a number of external partners working together to secure a long term future for the building.

Works to the historic lodge include:

- Extensive removal to take building back to its original design
- New front door to improve access and path, creating a more welcoming entrance
- New roof to make the building watertight and secure
- Sensitive restoration of exterior repairs, matching existing details
- Refurbishment of sash windows and replacement of some internal doors
- Replastering and redecoration of internal walls
- Existing fireplaces restored and refurbished
- Landscaping and refurbishment of railings
- Lifting the crown off nearby trees to encourage usage of new footpath and enable clear views, improving safety
- Remedial work to the exterior stone retaining wall
- Improvement to security including alarms and lighting

The upper floor of the building is soon to be occupied by the Partnership Council as their new office space. The basement will be used by park grounds staff as a mess room facility and drying room area. The two floors, whilst connected, will work independently with separate entrances.

Ruth Greenberg, from the Partnership Council, said: "Having initiated the process to get funding for the Forest, we are really excited to be moving into the beautifully refurbished lodge."

Councillor David Trimble, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Tourism at Nottingham City Council, said: "The lodge is a key part of the Forest restoration; not only will it improve the appearance of the eastern area of the park and make it more welcoming to visitors, it is an important reminder of the city's heritage. It's great see the building returning to its former glory as an iconic gateway into the park and being used for the greater good."

June Perry, Chair of The Friends of the Forest, said: "A decade ago, the Forest was regarded as a piece of wasteland, available for all sorts of misuse, and the semi-derelict lodge was like a symbol of this neglect. The City's determination to bring the Forest back to its proper status has been achieved little by little over the years with one nuisance after another removed and the final achievement of the park's restoration is very much to the credit of the hard-working council officers who have had to do the real planning work.

The lodge now stands proudly as a symbol of this restoration, in itself and in the renewed gateposts and railings, all clearly visible even from a passing bus. Our park is now equal with Nottingham's other fine open spaces."

As well as delivering a fantastic asset back to the city, the restoration project has provided an important opportunity to link local residents to construction training opportunities. As a key investor in the project, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) expects that suitable training for staff will be built into all the projects it funds. The Nottingham LEP, through its construction delivery partner Carillion Building, developed a training plan for the works to engage the community fully in the park's restoration and future maintenance. The results have met or exceeded all targets set. In addition to this, two of the apprentices who worked on the restoration of the lodge with Nottingham based contractor, Bonsers Restoration and Conservation have secured permanent employment with the firm.

David Nield and Kingsley Moore are both carpentry and Joinery apprentices working towards completing their NVQ apprenticeships and will be working with Bonsers in their specialist field of restoration.

Ken Powell, General Manager of Nottingham's LEP, said: "As a partner of Nottingham City Council, Inspiredspaces have been involved with this restoration project since its inception and we are proud to now see the fruits of those labours. Our construction partner, Carillion, has done a great job in restoring the Forest Recreation Ground and providing training opportunities to local people."

Anthony Streeten, Planning and Conservation Director for English Heritage in the East Midlands, said, "English Heritage is very pleased that the Forest Recreation Ground Lodge, a Grade II listed building, has been carefully restored to its original design. It can now enjoy a new lease of life as a viable working building. That is the best way to keep our heritage alive for future generations."

The works which have formed a key part of the Forest restoration project have been commended by the Civic Society. Ken Brand, Vice Chair of the Society, said: "I have been watching the progress on the small but iconic 'Lodge on the Forest'. It now looks splendid on all four sides by day and night. It might even be smarter than when it was unveiled in 1857."

The £5.2m Forest Restoration Project which has now reached completion also includes refurbishment (and restoration) of the pavilion with a new café, office space and public toilets, restoration of the park's historic railings and entrances and improvements to the park's paths, planted areas and visitor information.

The newly restored park will be officially opened and handed over to the community during a family fun day on Saturday 31 August 12pm – 4pm. A ribbon cutting will be carried out by the Mayor of Nottingham and the Lord Lieutenant. The ceremony will take place at 12:30pm.

Notes to editors

The Lodge is a Grade II listed single storey pavilion built by local architect Henry Moses Wood in Greek Revival Style' in 1857. It is set on an elevated position overlooking the eastern entrance to the park and Mansfield Road. The original building footprint is cruciform and the external finish is primarily white stucco.

By 1861 the building was in use as a police station and there is evidence that the basement was used as a jail. Up until 1980 the basement area was used as a mess area for grounds staff. Over recent years the building has been unoccupied and has fallen into disrepair (deterioration of building fabric and internal finishes), becoming a target for vandalism. It has been on the English Heritage at risk register since the late 1990s.

Nottingham City Council, the Partnership Council, Castle Cavendish Foundation and Friends of the Forest, worked together to successfully secure funding worth £5.2million to restore the site to its former glory.

The £5.2 funding is made up of:

- £3.2million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund
- £2 million from Nottingham City Council, Castle Cavendish Foundation and local development contributions.

Nottingham's LEP is a public private partnership between Nottingham City Council, Building Schools for the Future Investments and a private sector partner. In Nottingham, the private sector partner is inspiredspaces which brings Carillion as construction and facilities management services provider, together with Capita who provide ICT expertise. To find out more, visit Nottingham LEP's website.

Further information

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