£961,000 to restore glasshouses at Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded a grant of £961,000 to regenerate the large run of derelict Foster & Pearson glasshouses at Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden, it was announced. In their current state of disrepair, the glasshouses are dangerous structures and are an eyesore in an otherwise beautiful garden, greatly detracting from the visual experience. The regeneration will restore them to their former glory, completing the garden, preserving important local heritage and improving the facilities available to visitors.

A Heritage Impact Assessment, commissioned by Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council in 2011, concluded that the glasshouses, ‘as a complete range, were an unusual survival’ and were ‘of significant historical and social interest’. The report recommended a ‘sympathetic restoration in timber’ which would ‘not only enhance the garden but also preserve the heritage value of the site’.

The whole run of Victorian/ Edwardian glasshouses will be recreated on the original footprint, reusing original brickwork, and the frame will be rebuilt in timber. A great deal of the original ironwork remains and as much of this as possible will be restored and reused to preserve valuable heritage features. The work, which is expected to start in late 2012, will also include refurbishment of the back sheds. The finished buildings will include working glasshouses, a display glasshouse, potting sheds, educational space, heritage displays, a kitchen, a café area, outdoor seating and much needed indoor event space.

The garden was created around 1830 when Thomas Parr, a prominent Warrington banker, began the construction of a country house and estate. Unusually, the walled garden combined both a pleasure garden, including three ponds, and a kitchen garden within one walled boundary. The Parr family played an important part in the economic and cultural development of Warrington in the 19th century and founded Parr’s Bank in the town centre. The family also built the Parr Hall and gifted it to Warrington in 1895.

The estate was broken up in the 1950s and the house, which had fallen into disrepair, was demolished in 1975. English Partnerships carried out extensive refurbishment works to reclaim the garden, which had become neglected, preserving it as a local amenity for the new housing development of Grappenhall Heys. It was then transferred to Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council in 2005, along with a substantial endowment fund to cover the cost of maintenance, and is the only significant physical element of the estate that remains intact today.

The award will ensure that the garden will not only survive, but be viable in the long term and able to expand on the current range of activities offered to provide better educational opportunities, encourage more community involvement and tell the story of the history of the area to future generations.

There is a very active Friends group, with over 220 members, which supports the garden in many ways and raises funds by organising events and providing refreshments. The garden is open to the public every day and entry is free. Regular events are already held at weekends and refreshments are served every Sunday throughout the summer months. The kitchen garden is well stocked and seasonal produce is on sale when available. Details of events and

further information can be found on the Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden website.

Janet Richards, Clerk, Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council, comments: "The restoration of the glasshouses at Grappenhall Heys will provide a fabulous community facility for recreation, learning and participation for a broad range of groups within the local community. The regeneration will not only restore their visual beauty, but will also preserve local heritage for future generations to enjoy and appreciate. We are absolutely thrilled to bits that our lottery bid has been successful, and look forward to seeing the glasshouses being brought back to life."

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "The Walled Garden at Grappenhall Heys is a much-loved local heritage treasure, and we at HLF are delighted that our funding will make the restoration of these magnificent glasshouses possible. At the same time, the planned activities and volunteering opportunities will give people from across the community the chance to get involved, through helping with caring for the garden, leading tours or managing events. It is wonderful that we are able support the fantastic work of the Parish Council and Friends group in the further development of the Walled Garden."

Further information

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