

The £1.87million restoration work on Raphael Park was completed just in time for the 110th anniversary of the much-loved park.

It was first opened on 2 June 1904 by Sir Herbert Raphael MP, who gave the park to the district of Romford – and exactly 110 years to the day, members of the public came together to mark the occasion, together with the completion of the restoration.

The celebrations saw the well-known children's author of the Percy the Park Keeper books, Nick Butterworth, speak to local schoolchildren about how his stories were inspired by his visits to Raphael Park. Punch & Judy were also in town to delight the children and many others enjoyed a traditional tea dance in the afternoon.

The Mayor of Havering, Eric Munday, planted a ceremonial tree, and a plaque was unveiled near to the main entrance of the park to commemorate the day.

In March 2013, the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded £1.87million to improve the park facilities. This grant, along with council funding, a generous grant from the Veolia North Thames Trust and funding secured by the Friends of Raphael and Lodge Farm parks, has paid for the restoration works to the park.

Simon Parkinson, Head of Culture and Leisure for Havering Council, said:

“Raphael Park really does look wonderful since the restoration, thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Veolia North Thames Trust - and what a momentous time for this to fall, on such a significant anniversary. There’s something for everyone, no matter age or ability, and I hope that residents make the most of all it has to offer.

“I’d like to thank everyone who has been involved in the project, from the elected members who have supported it throughout the years it has taken to get to this point, and the friends group, who have worked very hard alongside our staff.”

The funding secured was used towards improving and restoring the entrance gates, the banks of the lake, the planted areas, railings, benches and walkways; as well as paying for new signs and a refreshment kiosk, with toilets, adjacent to the children’s play area.

One of the major changes near to the entrance on Main Road has been the construction of a new restaurant/café, with a terrace overlooking the lake, which is due to open by autumn.

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: “We are delighted, through our Parks for People programme, to have been able to support the restoration of Romford’s first municipal park. It is much loved by local residents and we hope that even more people will now take the opportunity to enjoy its improved facilities and historic features, especially as summer approaches.”

Further information

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