Uncovering the hidden heritage of Belfast City



City Cemetery Cross, Belfast

The funding will help restore its historic features and raise awareness of its huge heritage value. The City Cemetery in west Belfast will be the focus of the new project to reconnect people to the heritage of the cemetery and its monuments, memorials and the prominent figures laid to rest within its walls.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded developing funding of £165,800 through its Parks for People programme to enable Belfast City Council to work up more detailed plans in order to secure the full £1.85million requested.

[quote Head of HLF NI, Paul Mullan]"The City Cemetery is one of Belfast's greatest hidden heritage assets."[/quote]

Paul Mullan, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Northern Ireland said: "The City Cemetery is one of Belfast's greatest hidden heritage assets. It is so exciting to see these ambitious plans take shape.

"This project has the potential to be truly transformational. In addition to restoring and securing the built and natural heritage of the cemetery, the local community will be able to enjoy using this space and learning more about the history and heritage that is right on their doorstep."

The City Cemetery was first used in 1869. It was intended to be used for both Catholic and Protestant burials and a sunken wall was built to separate one from the other. The cemetery doubled in size in 1915 with the addition of the Glenalina section, becoming the largest green space in west Belfast.

The new project will raise awareness of the historic figures buried there and of the cemetery's heritage features, including those that have been lost over the years such as the Mortuary Chapel. New signage, information boards and maps will be created and displayed onsite, with social media and online resources developed to involve new and wider audiences. Native shrubs and trees will be planted to improve the biodiversity of the area, and repairs will be made to the boundary walls and gates to help secure the site and enhance its appearance.

Speaking about the award, Councillor Julie Anne Corr Johnston, Chair of Belfast City Council's People and Communities Committee, said: "City Cemetery is one of the Belfast's most important historical sites and I am delighted that this funding from HLF will allow us as a Council to do even more to ensure it achieves its full heritage potential."

The cemetery contains numerous features, monuments, memorials that highlight the Greek and Roman influences that were fashionable during the Victorian era. Amongst the fountains, fine columns and angels are the unmarked and lesser-known features such as the Jewish Cemetery, which was added in 1871 with its separate walls and entrances, and the Poor Ground where around 63,000 people are buried.

The graves and tombs of many prominent Industrial figures and pioneers of education and social justice can be found there, including Sir Edward Harland, co-founder of the shipbuilding company; Margaret Byers, educational campaigner and founder of Victoria College, and Sir William Whitla, physician and former Pro-Vice Chancellor of Queen's University.

Further information

Please contact Julie Halliday on julieh@hlf.org.uk or 07733 100 674.



A mother and child have fun in a park Pixdeluxe

Run-down UK parks and cemeteries in National Lottery windfall