

A grant of £103,600 is helping the much-loved Victorian mansion in Cardiff stay partly open and serve the local community.

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> *Gray Hill, Director of Insole Court*

Insole Court is a 160-year-old Grade II listed mansion set in a Grade II registered garden in the Llandaff area of the city.

Operated by the Insole Court Trust, the once-derelict mansion and outbuildings reopened in 2016 following £2million renovation works part-funded by the Big Lottery Fund (now The National Lottery Community Fund).

Insole Court quickly became a must-see attraction and community hub offering a permanent exhibition in the main house and a range of activities and events.

Lost income and uncertainty

Insole Court Trust had taken over the running of The Potting Shed café on the site in September 2019, which later closed temporarily for major renovation work. With the café closed, the trust missed out on trade. Then with lockdown in

March came an even longer period of lost income and uncertainty.

Gray Hill, Director of Insole Court, was concerned: "There’s a reason why people fall in love with this place and when we locked the doors in March, it wasn’t just the potential job losses that were going through my head. I was worried about our visitors, many of whom have a lifelong connection with this place.”



The historic walled garden at Insole Court.

Reconnecting with the community

An emergency grant of £103,600 has helped the trust provide a range of services and activities for the local community including an outreach programme.

Local school pupils have learnt how to grow plants and vegetables on allotments in the building’s historic walled garden. And students from Cardiff Metropolitan University’s School of Art and Design have hosted exhibitions in the setting of the picturesque Victorian mansion.

People with learning disabilities have also had a chance to help realise their potential and boost their confidence by working in the trust’s shop. The trust also employs 20 members of staff and has provided opportunities for over 120 volunteers as visitor guides, retail assistants and gardeners.



Gray Hill, Director of Insole Court, with one of the mansion's stone guardians.

Keeping going

Gray Hill added: “The emergency funding will allow us to give people back what they’ve been missing. There’s no doubt we’ve been bruised by the lockdown – this has been incredibly painful, but now we’ve got a chance thanks to the lifeline we received from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

“Right now, it’s about keeping going - it’s not about a potential second phase or further redevelopments – there’ll be another time for that, but now we have a chance to prepare for whatever’s around the corner.”



Welsh island puffins protected thanks to Heritage Emergency Fund grant



New funding for community environment projects in Wales