Celebration of the Forest

31/08/2013

The park which has benefited from a £5.2million restoration project thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and other funding, will host its official opening ceremony on Saturday 31 August, marking its return to the community.

The completion of the heritage regeneration stage of the project is a major milestone and a fantastic tribute to a huge amount of hard work by local people working hand-in-hand with public and community agencies.

A community fun day will take place from 12 – 4pm featuring a climbing wall, bouncy castle and carousel as well as falconry, circus skills and art workshops. Live entertainment will be provided by dance and carnival troops, Ilkeston Brass Band and there will even be a special appearance by Mickey Mouse! A number of community stalls will be on site offering activities and information on local services.

There will also be guided tours around the park where visitors can learn about the park's history and find out more about the restoration work which has taken place over the past year. Food will be provided by Homemade Café and will be on sale in the Pavilion Café from 12pm onwards.

An official ribbon cutting ceremony with the Lord Mayor of Nottingham, Merlita Bryan and the Lord-Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, Sir John Peace will take place outside the refurbished pavilion at 12.30pm.

A flag will be raised to mark the park's first Green Flag Award, awarded last month by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy.

A key feature of the £5.2m restoration project is the refurbished pavilion which now includes a cafeteria space, public toilets, changing facilities, function room and office. Nottinghamshire Police will also have access to the building and will conduct high visibility patrols to ensure the park is a safe and secure space.

The funding has also enabled the park's historic entrances and some of the railings to be re-instated along with improvements to the park's paths, lighting, play facilities, sports pitches, planted areas and visitor information. The Grade II listed lodge has also been brought back to life thanks to careful restoration whilst the project has also secured a dedicated park ranger and an additional three gardeners to help keep the park clean, safe and well maintained.

Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, Vanessa Harbar, welcomed the completion: "This is a landmark milestone for Forest Recreation Ground that will encourage even more people to enjoy one of Nottingham's much loved parks. Our green spaces are an incredibly important amenity for us all. Our parks, and the historic features within them, are a wonderful legacy passed through generations. We are delighted that through the hard work of so many the vision of this project has finally been realised."

Councillor Dave Trimble, Nottingham City Council's Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture, said: "It's great to see the completion of such an exciting project that seeks to revitalise the whole area and ensure that one of Nottingham's major parks continues to attract visitors from the city and beyond.

"On behalf of the council I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who have contributed to the restoration –

the fruits of 14 years of incredibly hard work by energetic local residents, the Friends of the Forest and numerous public and community agencies will finally be revealed at the grand unveiling. It has been a very worthwhile investment – I hope the local community now feel a sense of pride about their park."

June Perry of Friends of the Forest said: "We are delighted to see that our historic park is once again regarded as a valuable open space for the many local residents and a source of pride for the city council."

A photography exhibition based on the famous Goose Fair will be previewed during the opening ceremony. Photographer David Severn was awarded an Arts Council grant to photograph the fair. On speaking about his work, he said: "My aim was to engage the public with the fairground on another level, to help them understand the people behind the fair and quash common preconceived misconceptions about travelling show people."

The images will be displayed alongside historic fairground ephemera (old posters and ride tokens) sourced from the National Fairground Archive at the University of Sheffield. The general public will also be able to view the exhibition whilst Goose Fair is on between 2 and 6 October.

The final piece of the jigsaw would be the completion of the Sports Zone in the north eastern corner of the park - a first-class scheme has been drawn up to create state-of-the-art sports facilities for local people and the final stages of fundraising are being progressed. For more information on this element of the project or if you think you can help, please contact Eddie Curry, Head of Parks and Open Spaces on 0115 876 4982.

Notes to editors

Photo opportunity: Saturday 31 August 12.30pm, Pavilion, Forest Recreation Ground: Official ribbon cutting ceremony with the Lord Mayor of Nottingham, Merlita Bryan and the Lord-Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, Sir John Peace.

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

The £5.2m funding is made up of:

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

The Heritage Lottery Fund recently announced new research showing that heritage-based tourism is now worth £26.4billion to the UK economy – £5.8bn higher than the previous estimate published in 2010.

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's local education partnership website.

Further information

For further information or to arrange media tours, interviews or filming please contact Kirstie Gee, Marketing and Communications Officer, Nottingham City Council, on 0115 876 3312.