Historic conservatory set for launch

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The Grade II* listed glasshouse has been brought back to its former glory over the past 15 months. The renovation is the culmination of a 10 year fundraising campaign which began after the glasshouse was featured on the BBC programme Restoration in 2003.

During the faithful historic restoration, an incredible 4,000 parts were dismantled, labelled, cleaned and restored. An amazing 35 layers of paints including greens, whites and creams were removed to reveal intricate detail, showing the original colour to have been a creamy white.

Work began on re-laying encaustic tiles inside the conservatory and all three sections of the once crumbling roof were replaced. Finally the beautifully rippled machine-drawn glass was fitted giving the conservatory a sparkling finish.

Claire Herring, director at Wentworth Castle Gardens, said: “After a decade of fundraising, and over a year of renovating the conservatory, we are delighted and relieved to have finally reached this stage.

“The conservatory has been meticulously refurbished to its original state and this glorious glasshouse will be the jewel in Wentworth Castle Gardens’ crown.

“The restoration has been a triumph for Yorkshire skill. Under the supervision of York-based main contractor William Anelay Ltd, the frame was restored by Shepley Engineers Ltd at Shafton, Barnsley.

“The stonework was restored by Anelay’s own specialist stone masons and over 35,000 new floor tiles were painstakingly matched in with the originals over a nine week period by Horners Tiling.”

Wentworth Castle Heritage Trust’s own team of gardeners and volunteers have also been closely involved in planting the finished conservatory and surrounding new garden features.

The restored glasshouse will be a temperate house and will generally be about 5C warmer than the outside temperature, although it will always be kept frost free in winter.

The interior planting is based around the continents of the world, with five beds explaining the history of how different plant species – some of which are now common place in our gardens – first arrived in this country. The conservatory will also house the trust’s restored Blackamore Statue, which will be displayed in the Africa bed.

An interpretation gallery in the restored conservatory potting shed will tell the history of the house, and the plant hunters who helped create Wentworth Castle’s beautiful gardens and will also have lots of fun activities to help younger visitors get more out of their visit to the gardens.

The restoration work has been complemented by the construction of a brand new activity room next to the conservatory, which will provide a great base for school and community groups to discover the heritage and wildlife of the gardens.

The restoration has been funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, English Heritage and the Country Houses Foundation. The ERDF grant was awarded in partnership with Barnsley MBC's Cultural Infrastructure Programme.

Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and The Humber, said: "This project opens an exciting new chapter for Wentworth Castle as a major heritage attraction for the North. Not only has an architecturally important building been expertly restored but there will also be enhanced information and learning opportunities so visitors can derive even greater enjoyment from the whole estate."

Councillor Roy Miller, Barnsley Council Cabinet Spokesperson for Development, Environment and Culture, said: "I'm so pleased that this project to save such a delicate structure from demolition has been completed and my sincere thanks go to everyone who has been involved."

Trevor Mitchell, Planning and Conservation Director for Yorkshire at English Heritage, said: 'The conservatory has been the iconic symbol for the mammoth restoration project at Wentworth Castle Gardens. Its completion is yet another proof of the value of South Yorkshire's unique collection of historic parks and gardens. We are delighted to have been able to assist."

The conservatory was re-opened on Thursday, November 7 at 1.30pm and will be officially opened by the Mayor of Barnsley Councillor Ken Richardson.

Normal garden admission prices apply. During the winter, the conservatory will be open weekends and school holidays 10.30am-3.30pm and weekdays 10.30am – 2.30pm.

For more information about the conservatory restoration visit the Wentworth website.

Notes to Editors

Wentworth Castle
Wentworth Castle Gardens are cared for by Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Heritage Trust, a registered charity.For the past 10 years the Trust has gradually been restoring the gardens, 18th-century parkland, follies and monuments.

The trust has secured £3.7m for the restoration of its fragile Victorian Conservatory from HLF, English Heritage, The Country Houses Foundation and the European Regional Development Fund. The ERDF grant is awarded in partnership with Barnsley MBC's Cultural Infrastructure Programme.

The conservatory came to public prominence in the BBC's Restoration programme in 2003 and after a decade-long fundraising effort, the finely-detailed Grade II* listed iron conservatory is set for a splendid renaissance.

Wentworth Castle and its glorious parkland is located approximately 3km south west of Barnsley in South Yorkshire. The estate's Grade I landscape and formal gardens are nationally significant for their extensive monuments, housing some of the earliest gothic follies in the country.

Further information

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