£2.3m HLF cash boost to restore romantic landscape of Penllergare Valley Woods

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Located on the northern fringe of Swansea, Penllergare Valley Woods was once a famous gentry estate and home to John Dillwyn Llewelyn, the notable 19-century horticulturalist, philanthropist and pioneering photographer. It is Llewelyn's design, vision and influence behind the picturesque and romantic landscapes of the park.

For almost half a century Penllergare Valley Woods was neglected, vandalised and threatened by development and so The Penllergare Trust was formed in 2000 as an independent charity with the aim of restoring and regenerating the park and now its vision is being realised.

The Trust is supported by volunteers as well as the Friends of Penllergare group which has upwards of 180 members. It is hoped another 250 volunteers will get involved in this project and will be offered a range of training opportunities from woodland skills to guiding techniques. Volunteers will help provide community events and activities, including bush craft workshops, open days, guided walks and photography competitions. The Trust also aims to involve partner organisations such as the Youth Offending Team and schools and universities.

The funding will support much-needed visitor facilities, including bilingual interpretation. It is hoped that the annual number of visitors will increase to 130,000 once the project is complete, helping to establish it as a major recreational facility for the community and key tourism attraction in Swansea, while still retaining its unique edge-of-wilderness character that makes it so loved today.

The site is home to an astronomical observatory, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, which will be restored through this phase of the project.

The grant will also fund the recreation of the old stone bridge as a fully accessible river crossing, the restoration of the upper lake and the replanting of trees and ornamental shrubberies.

An innovative micro-hydro power plant and a refreshment kiosk will also be created to ensure a sustainable future for Penllergare Valley Woods.

Five jobs will be created through the project, including positions for an Estate Manager, Woodlands Warden and Activities and Events Officer.

Dan Clayton Jones, Chair of Heritage Lottery Fund Committee for Wales, said: "HLF is delighted to be supporting this project, which will bring one of Swansea's most renowned gardens back to its former glory for the benefit of local people and visitors alike."

"The restoration of Penllergare Valley Woods will provide an essential green space to relax, explore and have fun in as well as creating jobs and providing training opportunities for local people. Volunteers are vital to the success of this project and it's fantastic to see so many people keen to get involved, learn new skills and play their part in taking our heritage into the future."

Hal Moggridge, Chairman of the Penllergare Trust, added, “For ten years this Trust has worked to protect and restore Valley Woods, this outstandingly beautiful landscape on Swansea’s doorstep, for everybody to enjoy."

“I’d like to thank everyone who has given so freely of time, energy and ideas to make this possible. This generous HLF grant is a massive investment in Swansea and its people and a huge vote of confidence in this Trust and will help us to lay strong foundations for the future, sustainable upkeep of Penllergare Valley Woods.”

The Penllergare Trust was awarded a first-round pass of 221,300 by Heritage Lottery Fund in June 2009 to further develop their plans for the project.