Spetchley Park wins Heritage Lottery Fund support to revive its visitor experience and unique heritage

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The project's aim is to create a sustainable, robust and future proof visitor experience combining the need for access, learning and historical revival of one of the country's most historically important landscapes.

Development funding of £134,700 has also been awarded to help Spetchley Park Gardens progress their plans to apply for a full grant at a later date.

The project aims to carry out essential conservation work to the garden lake, creating a robust habitat and improving the visitor experience. It will create an interpretation centre for visitors' enjoyment and understanding of the role of Spetchley within the local community and as a national treasure as well as create a learning facility for use by general interest groups, volunteers, schools and organisations to provide horticultural and silvicultural training and national curriculum based activities. It will develop the Spetchley Estate as a resource within the wider community by allowing volunteers to train in horticulture as well as giving the opportunity for research of the 400 year old Berkeley Family archive.

The gardens and surrounding landscape are one of the few remaining unchanged landscapes of its kind in the country. The parkland is unchanged from the 17th century and the gardens, one of the first to be opened to visitors, is a classic example of Victorian horticulture on a grand scale.

Mike Beak, head gardener at Spetchley, was thrilled at the news: "This will give us a chance to preserve Spetchley's unique qualities for generations to come and give visitors and local communities the chance to understand its history and be involved in its future"

Reyahn King, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands. said: "We are looking forward to seeing the detailed plans to enhance the visitor experience of this beautiful and historic landscape. Of particular interest will be the inclusion of volunteers from the local community to help in both research and practical tasks."

Notes to editors

About Spetchley Park Gardens

The garden was set up as a charitable trust in 1997 by its owner, Mr John Berkeley. The garden is 30 acres in size and was created in the 19th century by Rose Berkeley and her sister, the great Victorian Gardener, Miss Ellen Willmott. The gardens provided Edward Elgar, who regularly stayed at Spetchley, with the inspiration to pen his masterpiece, the Dream of Gerontius. In 2004 it was voted one of England's finest gardens and is filled with many rare plants not found outside the major botanical gardens. It has one of the largest private collections of Peony in the country as well as one of the most extensive collections of South African Lilly Agapanthus.

It was first opened to visitors under the NGS in 1924 and is open between 21 March and 30 September, Wednesdays to Sundays.

Further information

Please contact Henry Berkeley at the Spetchley Estate on 01905 345 213 or henry@berkeleyestate.co.uk.