Historic Preston gardens reopen after £1.2m



Winckley Square Gardens

Winckley Square Gardens have been officially reopened to the public today following a £1.2million HLF-supported restoration.

The Mayor of Preston, John Collins, was present to mark the completion of the historic gardens' refurbishment, which was led by Winckley Square Community Interest Company (WSCIC).

Winckley Square was constructed in 1799 and considered one of the most exclusive addresses in Preston. Originally private gardens for the surrounding houses, the green became public land in 1900 but gradually deteriorated throughout the 20th century as the buildings were demolished and traffic increased.

Restoring the gardens' heritage

Working in partnership with Groundwork, Preston City Council, Lancashire County Council, Preston BID and Preston Historical Society, the Georgian gardens have been restored to celebrate their heritage and character.

[quote=David Gill, WSCIC]"Today marks the start of an exciting future for Winckley Square Gardens, it's a landmark day for Preston. We are overjoyed with the transformation."[/quote]

The Robert Peel statue, erected in 1852, has been restored, and a historic circular promenade route reinstated. Public access has been improved through restored footpaths, accessible entrances and works to rectify the site's drainage problems. Tree and shrub works have also been carried out to promote biodiversity and to open up views of the gardens.

Thanks to National Lottery players, the renovation paves the way for a bright new future for Winckley Square Gardens. Early next year WSCIC plan to create a manifesto to set out the future of the square.

David Gill, chairman and a co-founder of the WSCIC, said: "Today marks the start of an exciting future for Winckley Square Gardens, it's a landmark day for Preston.

"We started with a blank sheet of paper, no money and a feeling by many we wouldn't get far... Our gratitude goes to all those partners and people who have come together to make this possible.

"We now hope the community will take ownership of the gardens and enjoy them for years to come."

New interpretation panels will share the gardens' history and WSCIC have planned a programme of educational and volunteer opportunities, including guided walks and school packs.

Investing in parks

Nathan Lee, Head of HLF North West, added: "This project is an excellent example of successful public and private sector partnerships delivering positive change for the local environment and community. Winckley Square Gardens is a much-loved and well-used town square, which has now been returned to its former glory thanks to National Lottery players. Well done to all involved."



A sunny day in the historic gardens





Computerised image of Winckley Square after restoration



restoration is approved

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