Kew’s Temperate House opens after £15million redevelopment

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Kew Gardens’ spectacular 19th-century glasshouse will once again be home to some of the world’s rarest plants.

Home to 10,000 plants (1,500 species), the Temperate House has undergone a five-year redevelopment programme, including the removal of 69,000 individual elements for cleaning, repairing or replacement, as well as scaffolding equivalent to the length of the M25.

National Lottery players dig deep

Funded with £15million from the National Lottery, the world’s largest Victorian glasshouse will once again be home to some of the world’s rarest and most threatened plants.

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive at HLF, said: “We know from speaking to National Lottery players the value they put on protecting and understanding the natural world – a value that also makes the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew one of our best-loved visitor attractions.

“Our grant of nearly £15m has helped give the Temperate House some much-needed repairs as well as a new sense of purpose. This extraordinary glass structure has always epitomised all that is wonderful about these gardens – it is a magical place with a massive heart, which makes a huge contribution to biodiversity and natural heritage.”

Global glasshouse

Entering the glasshouse, visitors will feel like they are embarking on a global adventure. They might be in Mauritius, where they will see *Dombeya mauritiana*, a tree that was thought to be extinct in the wild until Kew's renowned 'plant messiah' Carlos Magdalena found one growing in the Mauritian highlands. They could be then be transported to the mountains of Nepal, encountering the *Taxus wallichiana*, exploited for the Taxol market (a chemotherapy drug) and now subject to a clonal propagation programme to help conserve it in the wild.

Richard Barley, Director of Horticulture at RBG Kew, said: “From young to old, for budding gardeners or aspiring artists, for those making a pilgrimage from great distances, and for our local community, we hope every visitor will see plants in a new light”.

Nature and wellbeing

Kew is committed to building stronger relationships with its local community. Based on evidence showing links between health, wellbeing and connecting to nature, the opening of the first-ever Kew Community Allotments will help engage with a wide range of groups. Kew is also working with local children’s centres, inviting young parents and children to take part in the new 'Kew Babies' programme.

Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship programme, partly-funded by HLF, will provide young people from local areas of high deprivation with the skills, training and confidence to succeed in specialist horticultural careers.

Youth Explainer Programme

Kew's first programme of its kind will see teenagers aged between 14 and 17, volunteer as guides in the Temperate House over the summery holidays.

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