

It's all change on the Forest as final plans for improvement go public

A great deal of work is being done to improve the Forest Recreation Ground on Gregory Boulevard and that's before the project gets the £3.1 million it was awarded from the Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery!

The improvements are underway thanks to investment from Nottingham City Council and the Castle Cavendish Foundation (formerly Neighbourhood Development Company) whilst the details of the Master Plan to restore the Forest to its former glory are being finalised.

Now local people are being offered another opportunity to get involved in shaping the final details of the Master Plan – which has been developed with the help of local people from the word go.

The team behind the Master Plan includes local charity the Partnership Council, Nottingham City Council, Castle Cavendish Foundation and local community group the Friends of the Forest.

The project was awarded £3.1 million by the Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery funds last year, and the team is now developing detailed plans of how that money will be spent, before it's released later in the year.

The team is planning several public consultation events in the very near future, so that local people can have another say on the Forest, now that the Master Plan for improving it has been developed in more detail.

What is being done to improve the Forest now?

Work being carried out on the Forest now, funded by Castle Cavendish and Nottingham City Council includes:

- A £108,000 improvement programme to develop the site's footpaths and walkways – due to start in early spring in partnership with Inspired Spaces. (Inspired Spaces is a company set up by Carillion and its joint venture partners to deliver local authority building projects).
- Community events – Nottingham City Council is investing £4,000 in a range of events for local people including cricket sessions, bird-box making, mini-beast hunting and lawn games such as giant Connect 4. The money will also be spent on new equipment and the Council's park rangers will run the events.

- Schools and community groups will be able to borrow the new equipment to run their own events – and request support from the park rangers.
- Play Area Art Event – an artist is working with the park rangers and local schools, St Mary’s Catholic Primary School and Forest Fields Primary School, to produce wooden sculptures which will be installed in the play area opened on the Forest last summer.
- £8,000 Walk in the Park Programme – the Walk in the Park health initiative is already present in some city parks and is being brought to the Forest to encourage people to walk and get active whilst enjoying the Forest’s 77 acres.
- Facilities for young people – the Forest team is working closely with Nottingham City Council’s Youth Service and local youth groups to develop facilities for young people. Young people in the area will be given the chance to help design their own facilities as part of the final Master Plan.
- Environmental projects – the Forest team is currently exploring the possibility of developing a small community garden on the Forest, or a similar environmental project, to ensure the site is used to its full potential whilst offering local people more benefits and opportunities to get involved.
- Community safety – the Forest team is working with Temporary Inspector Anwaar Ahmed from Canning Circus Police Station, who is responsible for neighbourhood policing in the Forest area, to develop a safety and security strategy for the area.

What has already been done to improve the Forest?

- A £340,000 play area was opened on the Forest last July - funded by the City Council and the Department for Children, Schools and Families through the Play Pathfinder Scheme. The new play area is the largest in Nottingham and was designed with the help of local children, via the Partnership Council. It includes activities for children of all ages including a toddler area, a huge pirate ship, a basket swing and a large timberwood tangle climbing frame.
- A £95,000 outdoor multi sport area was installed on the Forest last year – funded by NHS Nottingham City. The area is free to use and includes 13 pieces of gym equipment, a climbing wall and areas for basketball, football and dance.

What other improvements will be made as part of the Master Plan?

The Forest team is currently developing a detailed plan to deliver the following improvements:

- Renovate the Forest’s Central Pavilion - including new changing facilities.
- Open a community room and café in the Pavilion.
- Restore the Forest Lodge for community use.

- Replace the Forest's Victorian-style railings and gateways.
- Add plenty of new bulbs, plants and shrubs – especially wildlife-friendly varieties.

Councillor Dave Trimble, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Customers at Nottingham City Council says:

“It's great to see improvements on the Forest taking shape and there are some very exciting developments in the pipeline. With aspects like the multi sport area and the new children's playground the Forest is already attracting more visitors. With the introduction of ideas such as the Walk in the Park programme, I'm confident the Forest will become even more popular and well used. It's great to see such a beautiful and historic site really brought to life.”

Ruth Greenberg, Chief Officer of the Partnership Council agrees:

“It's taken over 10 years of hard work to get the Forest improvements underway and local people have been the driving force from the beginning. It's great to see city organisations really investing in the Forest but now we need local people to get involved once again and help us finalise the Master Plan – it's your park, so make sure you have your say!”

June Perry from Friends of the Forest says:

The Forest was considered so important by past generations, that it was protected by the Nottingham Inclosure Act of 1845, preserving it for recreational use, which is one of the reasons why it's never been built on. Now it's up to all of us to make sure that once again, the Forest is given the attention it deserves. It's very encouraging to see the city investing in the site and I call on local people to get involved again – now's your chance to have another say.”

Details of forthcoming public consultation events will be announced very soon.

To find out more about the Master Plan for the Forest contact Eddie Curry, Head of Parks and Open Spaces at Nottingham City Council on 0115 915 2733 or Ruth Greenberg at the Partnership Council on 0115 970 8200.

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