

SPECIAL

HILL CLOSE GARDENS

The hidden hedged gardens of Warwick



March 2019

TVE* has begun!

Thanks!

The Trustees and I are surprised and touched by the fantastic response of our Members and Volunteers, with a total of £15,303 pledged. It worked: we had "Permission to Start" from Heritage Lottery Fund on 27th February, and work on Site will begin on 25th March. Pledge money will be collected in April.

* *Transforming the Visitor Experience*

Thanks must also go to the Garfield Weston Foundation, Warwick Town Council, and the Warwick Society, for their partnership funding.

A bit of history

The concept of a new Visitors' Room, to be created by an extension south of the Visitor Centre, was first

From this...



Photo of site for Visitors' Room, presently not much used

...to this



CGI mock-up of new Visitors' Room exterior

We must thank Heritage Lottery Fund who have granted us almost half of the £167k project cost, and thank also the players of the National Lottery who make that grant possible. As Vanessa Harbar, Head of National Lottery Heritage Fund West Midlands, said, *"We are delighted to support this project which, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, will mean that more people will be able to get involved with, and protect and learn about the exciting heritage right on their doorstep."*

Our other major partnership funder, to whom we are also very grateful, is Warwick District Council, through their Rural and Urban Capital Improvement Scheme. WDC is our landlord, and we are their partners in keeping their listed summerhouses and nationally important Gardens in the best possible condition for everyone to enjoy.

mooted to the trust by our Centre Manager in 2013. There was a recognition that the existing Lammas Room was a source of income, and that to grow that income was not compatible with sharing the space with our growing number of visitors.

We first contacted Heritage Lottery Fund in early 2017, and have benefitted greatly from their guidance. Our application finally left us in June 2018. So we have been waiting a fair while for this moment!

About the TVE project

TVE provides a dedicated space for our visitors, to be called the Bleasdale Room in memory of John Bleasdale, our Founder Chairman. It will be a restful space with refreshments on hand. It will offer visitors different



and better ways of presenting the story of our Gardens, not just by reading, but also by listening, looking and touching. Visitors will be able to choose what they want to know more about, be it the past, the present, or the future of our Gardens,

Our history is all about the local community of Warwick, and how it has changed since the Gardens took shape nearly two hundred years ago. The project therefore aims to reach out more positively to our neighbouring community in Warwick, who are presently under-represented as members, volunteers, or even visitors. We shall employ a Community Engagement Worker for two years on a part-time basis to spearhead this initiative.

Volunteers are crucial to our Gardens, and we hope TVE will entice a new generation of volunteers to join us, as well as providing exciting opportunities for many volunteers to help make the project a success. We will be inviting everyone to a celebratory opening of the Bleasdale Room in Autumn 2019.

A Project Team combining professional expertise and volunteers with deep knowledge of our Gardens will oversee TVE and to report back to the Trustees.

Some comments:

Trustee Ken Joy writes:

“On weekdays at present visitors are often restricted to a self service drink in the corridor. The Bleasdale Room will thus be a welcome addition to facilities, providing comfort and access to information on the history of the gardens and their past owners, and the horticultural heritage. It is pleasing to see that the room will be named for John Bleasdale, whose dedicated work from early days encouraged many volunteers, bringing the project to the success it is today.”

Trustee Rosemary Mitchell writes:

“This is a wonderful opportunity for us to look after our visitors better and to make them welcome.

We will make their visit to Hill Close Gardens more interesting as well as being a place of beauty, calmness and tranquillity. Visitors will be fascinated by the Victorian social history of our Gardens, why they are so special and who were the owners of the individual gardens.

For gardeners, information will abound about the wide range of plants and fruit trees in the gardens as well the Plant Heritage National Collection of Chrysanthemums.”

How to get involved

Do please let me have your views on what you expect the project to deliver. What could we do better? Is there a particular group of people not getting the best from us? Are audio guides out of date: should we now rely on a smartphone app? Is there something special to you about which you would like to know more? What refreshment offer means most to you?

Do you want to join the TVE adventure? We have opportunities for those with some spare time and relevant skills or knowledge. We can offer training for instance in IT or curating our collections.

Just e-mail me at cbegg@cbegg.com or ring 07747 846027.



CGI mock-up of the Visitors' Room looking north.
Entrance from reception/office in existing Centre at left rear.
Interpretation wall at right.
Way out to Gardens far right rear corner.



CGI mock-up of the Visitors' Room looking south
Opening doors to lawn at rear, main exit to Gardens at left.
Interpretation wall central.



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