

Park make-over will create 'significant leisure attraction'

AN historic Carmarthen park is set to undergo a £2.3 million make-over that will create a "significant leisure attraction" in the town.

The Tywi Gateway Trust's ambitious plans to conserve and revitalise Bishop's Park in Abergwili, home to the Carmarthenshire County Museum, are a step closer to being realised after a grant of £1,274,300 from the National Lottery Fund was secured.

The plans include the reinvigoration of the pleasure gardens on the site, the walled kitchen garden, the Great Meadow

ROB HARRIES

01267 610463

robert.harrises@mediawales.co.uk

and the Bishop's Pond.

Central to the new set-up will be the Tywi Gateway Centre, which will house activities, learning facilities and a coffee shop. Four new vacancies will be created and local volunteers will be sourced.

"One of the great strengths of Bishop's Park is that it's much loved by local people; it's their park," said park trustee Michael Norman.

"Working alongside the County Museum and the future Tywi Valley

Cycleway, Bishop's Park will therefore be a community-driven and reinvigorated place that's more welcoming, accessible and attractive for quiet recreation and learning.

"Health and well-being will also be high on the agenda, as will opportunities for volunteering and employment.

"The park will mesh its visitor facilities with those of the museum to help assure the future of both, an innovative concept we believe is unique to Wales."

The National Lottery award will provide more than half of the project's estimated £2.3 million cost, with the rest of the funding coming from the Tywi Gateway Trust (and its predecessor, the Carmarthen branch of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust), other charitable trusts and donations.

Carmarthenshire Council has also contributed £300,000 towards capital costs.

Councillor Peter Hughes Griffiths, Carmarthenshire Council's executive board member for culture, sport and tourism, said: "This is a huge achievement by a dedicated group of local volunteers.

"Carmarthenshire Museums has collaborated with the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust and Tywi Gateway Trust throughout this exciting project development and is really looking forward to the next stage of this journey.

"Alongside the park scheme, the planned cycleway development and proposals to revitalise the museum will together provide a significant and high quality heritage and



The Tywi Gateway Trust has secured funding from the National Lottery Fund to revitalise Bishop's Park in Abergwili.

leisure attraction over the coming years."

Funding from the National Lottery has helped to restore hundreds of parks since its inception in 1994, with almost £1 billion being spent on spaces that it says are vital to people's everyday lives.

The Heritage Lottery Fund's chief executive, Ros Kerslake, said: "It's difficult to overstate the importance of our public parks. Vital to our well-being and essential to biodiversity, they are highly valued spaces enjoyed daily by people from all walks of life.

"Bishop's Park is one of the latest parks to benefit from over £900 million of National Lottery funding, which over the last twenty

years has played a crucial role in revitalising more than 800 parks across the UK."

There are hopes that the regeneration of the park in Abergwili will boost the local economy by becoming an exciting tourist attraction and a community hub for learning, leisure and health.

The site has been described by the Heritage Lottery Fund as a place that "combines and contrasts cultural, historic and ecological features of great importance to the heritage of Wales."

It is hoped that work will begin on the project before the end of 2017.

Find out more online at...
walesonline.co.uk/carmarthen

The history of Bishop's Park

FOR 500 years Bishop's Park was the private garden of the Bishops of St Davids.

Changes have been made over the years, including in the 1970s when parts of the grounds were chosen as the site to build a new Bishop's Palace, with the old palace becoming home to Carmarthenshire County Museum.

The building itself has been in use since the 13th century, and the college of bishops occupied the palace from the 16th century.

The palace itself was damaged by a large fire in April 1903, and adaptations were made following the blaze to take the building into the 20th century.

The location today is a popular site for families and dog walkers.