

Work begins at Saughton Park

Over the next twelve months the council will oversee the project to transform Saughton Park into something akin to its former glory and attract people back to use it.

The decision to redevelop the park began five years ago but was only made possible by funding of £3.8 million from Heritage Lottery Funding.

Earlier this afternoon the Lord Provost the Rt Hon Frank Ross, accompanied by the Transport and Environment Convener, Lesley Macinnes, and local councillor Cathy Fullerton conducted the ground breaking ceremony in the Walled Garden. This marks the official commencement of the redevelopment work.

Over £5 million is being spent to restore Saughton Park to its former glory pic.twitter.com/PlpQLG89TF

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [August 15, 2017](#)



Transport and Environment Convener Lesley Macinnes and the Lord Provost perform the ground breaking ceremony

The redevelopment will cost £5.2m in total, and Contractors P1 Solutions are contracted to do the work.

Friends of Saughton Park members, who have worked closely with the Council and other partners to raise funds and engage with the community throughout the process were at the ceremony along with David Knott President of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society.

The Caley as it is affectionately known will have a new base there. David Knott explained why this was important to them :

“We have been homeless for the last ten years and it offers us an excellent opportunity to re-establish a base and re-engage with our members and also the local community in Saughton and the wider community not just in Edinburgh but across Scotland as well. We have already had a number of working party days when we have split and lifted and divided some of the herbaceous plants and we will have quite a strong input into the horticultural plans in the redeveloped Saughton Park.

“I think that is a real challenge but this park when it was first developed the importance to the local community of a green space to the surrounding area for their health and wellbeing. I think now we are finding the benefits of the urban green spaces to the local community and that is something we are very keen to reestablish for the future.”



The Lord Provost told us that it will cost a lot of money but it should be seen as an investment. He said : “The council originally made the investment back in 1905 and 1906 to provide a facility for the local community. It has been well used over the last hundred years, though perhaps forgotten about now so we have a real opportunity to reinvest for a new community. We are very fortunate that we have managed to get matched funding from various groups in particular Sustrans and the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is good collaboration.”



Councillor Cathy Fullerton who represents Sighthill and Gorgie is delighted that money is being spent here. She told us that local people are very excited to see the work starting. She said :”They can’t wait for a year’s time to be in here enjoying themselves and enjoying the park as it used to be and with better improvements now.

“This park is quite unique. It is one of our premier parks in the city and it got that title because it deserves it. There

is no other place like this in the southwest of the city.”

Transport and Environment Convener, Councillor Lesley Macinnes, told us the work will be completed by next summer by which time there will be many improvements. She said : “They will see a revitalised park. It is one of those hidden gems in this part of the world.

“There will be a new café, there will be new borders, there will be refurbished winter gardens, there will be a lot for people to see and smell in terms of the flowers.

“There is an original bandstand which was found in the council’s warehouses and that is being brought back and restored.”

Among other improvements will be the restoration of the park’s stables as a community venue and base for The Caley, the construction of the new café and the repair and installation of furniture, lighting and paths across the site.

In addition, an ongoing management plan will ensure the development of a full programme of events and activities, volunteering opportunities and work towards achieving Green Flag status.

Lucy Casot, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, 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. Saughton Park, tucked away in the South West of Edinburgh, is one of the latest parks to benefit from over £64m of National Lottery funding, which over the last 20 years has played a crucial role in revitalising over 65 parks across Scotland.”

Shona Nelson, Chair of Friends of Saughton Park, said: “The Friends of Saughton Park are very excited to see the redevelopment work start. Saughton Park is a little gem in

the West of Edinburgh, over the last three and a half years we have been singing its praises not just locally but far and wide. We are looking forward to securing the future of the park for the next 100 years!”



HISTORY

First established in the 17th century on the grounds of Saughtonhall House, which later became an asylum, the gardens were purchased by the Council in the early 1900s for recreational use by the people of Gorgie and Saughton.

In 1908, Saughton Park was redesigned to accommodate the Scottish National Exhibition, when more than 3.5m visitors flocked to enjoy the attractions. It is hoped that the park's restoration will recapture the spirit of the time, refreshing some of the key features installed for the Exhibition, including the bandstand, botanic garden and winter garden.

CYCLING

Consultation was recently carried out on new cycle routes linking the park with the city centre, which will be complemented by £500,000 recently awarded to the Saughton Park Restoration Project by Sustrans Community Links programme. Funding will enable upgrades to the park's path network and off-road links around the neighbourhood.

The majority of the park will be closed during the construction phase, including the Balgreen entrance and car park. The main east-west path, which is part of the Water of Leith Walkway and the John Muir Way, is also closed to allow re-surfacing and diversionary routes have been set up for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, the Gorgie Bridge entrance is closed until further notice to allow the construction of the new paths to the south of the park.

Further closures will be put in place throughout the construction phase, with full details available [on the Council website](#) and on notices at the site.

Find out more about the project [on the Council website](#).

The Saughton Park masterplan includes:

- Restoration of the walled garden and winter garden;
- Reinstatement of the bandstand
- Restoration of the stables as a new community venue and base for the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society
- Construction of a new cafe and public toilet facilities;
- Conserving all trees, woodlands and hedges and improving biodiversity across the site
- Repairing and/or installing furniture, lighting, paths and signage
- Improving car parks, entrances and developing circuit routes for walking, running and health activities
- Putting management and maintenance regimes in place to ensure park achieves Green Flag status
- Developing a full programme of events and activities which meets the needs and interests of a wide range of park users and offers volunteer and learning opportunities for all to enjoy
- Separate to the Heritage Lottery Fund project, it is also planned to improve the children's playground, and to install a new micro-hydro scheme and ground source heating system.