

Project to restore Great Yarmouth's historic Waterways secures £45,000

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The Waterways in their heyday

When first opened in 1928, the Waterways, along North Drive, were the height of fashion, with hundreds of holidaymakers enjoying boat rides along the serpentine 'canal' and walks in the surrounding parkland, which at the time boasting a radical planting scheme.

The rides have long since ended and the planting scheme been grassed or gravelled over. But owner Great Yarmouth Borough Council and the charity Great Yarmouth Preservation are working together to return the Waterways, including the Boating Lake, to their former glory.

The project aims to restore this important Grade II-listed heritage asset, further boost the economy by providing yet another reason to visit the borough throughout the year, and to involve volunteers to develop a local pool of local gardening skills and much-needed building conservation skills.

Today, the £1.3m project has been given a major boost, as the HLF and Big Lottery Fund has awarded £45,000 from the Parks for People programme, which will enable the partners to work up a detailed application, including a business plan and masterplan, to support their bid for a total of £1,020,800. This full sum has been earmarked for the project. The remaining funds would come from the council and potentially the private sector.

The project would see volunteers work alongside experienced professionals to faithfully reinstate the original flower beds and planting. This garden design was exhibited at the 1928 Royal Horticultural Society's International Exhibition of Garden Design, where it was considered "bold" for moving away from familiar seaside bedding and instead using perennials and annuals in drifts.

Volunteers would also help to comprehensively repair the rusticated thatched shelters and bridges, which contribute much to the special character of the attraction, and also replace any missing bridges.

A private operator would be sought to run the boat trips. In the longer term, it is envisaged that a Friends of the Waterways group would be set up to help maintain the park into the future.

Cllr Graham Plant, the council leader, said: "The Waterways are one of Great Yarmouth's many unique heritage gems, and bringing them back into use would safeguard this special landmark, attract more tourists, and support the local economy, while helping to develop horticultural skills and much-needed building conservation skills.

"This partnership project also reflects the results of the recent public Transformation Consultation, which highlighted there was a need to regenerate areas, promote and upgrade the tourism offer, and promote the heritage and cultural offer. I would like to thank the HLF for their support."

Cllr Bernard Williamson, the preservation trust's chairman, said: "The Parks for People programme is a very competitive national scheme, so to have got through the first crucial stage of the funding bid shows huge confidence in the ability of the partners to work with the community to deliver results on heritage.

"The borough has a rich built heritage and we are working in partnership to promote heritage tourism to support the economy. Nothing is yet certain, but I hope to see the Waterways returned to their former glory."

Sir Peter Luff, chairman of the HLF, said: "We all benefit from spending time outside in the fresh air, so it's vital that we look after our green spaces, particularly in dense urban areas. National Lottery players' money will give a boost to these historic waterways, helping to make sure they have a great future."

The Waterways were commissioned by the borough council as an employment relief programme after the First World War. In following years, the Waterways were developed to include illuminations, and saltwater was replaced with freshwater to enable ice skating on the frozen canal during the winter.

Notes to editors

Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust is a not-for-profit registered charity working to preserve, save, enhance and promote the historic built environment. The trust has been delivering projects since its foundation in 1979, both directly and in partnership with Great Yarmouth Borough Council, which supports its work with expert staff time and office accommodation.

For more information about the history of the Waterways, visit the [Historic England Great Yarmouth Waterways listing](#).

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