

London Borough of Bexley

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Lesnes Abbey celebrates practical completion of £4.2 million improvement project

Local Councillors, volunteers and key partners got together to celebrate the practical completion of a grand park improvement project yesterday (7 September) at Lesnes Abbey Woods, close to Abbey Wood Station.

The improvements were financed by the Council with significant support from a £3.4 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Parks for People Programme.

The Leader of the London Borough of Bexley Councillor Teresa O'Neill OBE, joined by Heritage Lottery Fund Trustee Jon Sheaff, formally announced this key achievement and later guests enjoyed a tour of the park.

Cllr Peter Craske, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Environment and Leisure, said: "The new Lesnes Lodge offers space for fun and educational activities, where residents of all ages can enjoy learning about the site's rich history, environmental and scientific importance. The new Monks Garden uses features that would have existed at the time the 12th century abbey was in use, including medicinal herbs and plants growing in the bright and colourful garden. Various art installations can be found throughout the park, including stunning wood carvings, ironwork, stone sculptures and a mosaic. There's also a new Parkour area, the first of its kind in the borough, along with new outdoor fitness areas. There's even a place to grab a bite to eat at Abbey Good Coffee, which is part of the Lodge.

"These improvements were made possible thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a team of talented and committed Members, Council Officers, professional specialists and contractors who did great work together to help deliver this ambitious project. This is now a fabulous park with something for everyone and a place where residents can spend a grand day out."

The park stretches over 88 hectares, most of which is ancient woodland, and contains some stunning natural and human history, including a site of special scientific interest for its prehistoric fossils.

There is an outdoor classroom next to the fossil pit, where school children, families and researchers can visit and find the remains of sharks, other marine animals and mammals that lived and died in and near Blackheath Sea that covered the area 55

million years ago.

Other improvements made as part of the project include a new pump track, trim trail, outdoor gym, table tennis and picnic tables and several outdoor learning experiences such as a heathland classroom. The recreation area and children's playground have also been improved.

The investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the London Borough of Bexley will continue to fund a partnership and activity plan, which aims to ensure the continued development and improvement of the park by encouraging greater public use and community involvement.

The scheme faced a number of serious challenges which delayed its completion, including the unexpected discovery of an ancient burial ground, as well as a key contractor going into administration.

Guests at the celebration included archaeologists, architects, sculptors, artists, designers, volunteers, members of the public who attend the regular walking group, Councillors and Council staff. The cost of the event was met through sponsorship.

Notes to editors

Pictured left to right: Heritage Lottery Fund Trustee Jon Sheaff, The Leader of the London Borough of Bexley Councillor Teresa O'Neill OBE and Cllr Peter Craske, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Environment and Leisure.

At over 88 hectares, Lesnes Abbey Woods is the second largest park in the London Borough of Bexley. It is a site of metropolitan importance for nature conservation, a nature reserve and metropolitan open land. The Abbey ruins are a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and Grade II listed. The site is also a key area within South East London's Green Chain.

Companies / experts involved in the project:

Tom Harvey
Martin Potts from Hags
Heritage Lottery Fund
Patricia and Michael Hawes from MeiLoc
Keven Waters from Appleyard & Trew
Alison Wilson from 118 Designs
R C Services
Heather Burrell of the Steel Studio
Anthony Thomas of PRM Archaeology
Bolt & Heeks
Crofton Consulting
B R Stacey Ltd.
Ward Security
F M Conway Ltd.
Abbey Good Coffee
Berry Landscapes Ltd.

ISS Facility Services Grounds Maintenance
Gary Drostle of Drostle Public Arts Ltd
North West Kent Countryside Partnership
Learning Centre
Lesnes Abbey Walking Group
Valley Provincial Group

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Attachments

- Heritage Lottery Fund Trustee Jon Sheaff, The Leader of the London Borough of Bexley Councillor Teresa O'Neill OBE and Cllr Peter Craske, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Environment and Leisure. [Heritage Lottery Fund Trustee Jon Sheaff, The Leader of the London Borough of Bexley Councillor Teresa O'Neill OBE and Cllr Peter Craske, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Environment and Leisure.](#)



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