

The Isabella Plantation Access Project Update

The Isabella Plantation Access Project – What's it About?

Following a year of public consultation and a further year of development, the Royal Parks secured nearly £1.5 million from the Heritage Lottery (HLF) and Big Lottery Funds to deliver a number of improvements to Isabella Plantation. A generous grant of £120,000 was also received from the SITA Trust to fund the ponds and streams component of the project.

Plans have been designed to retain the unique character of the Isabella Plantation. We are now almost done with the physical works:

Environmental and Ecological Improvements

- Desilting of ponds
- More sustainable water storage and irrigation
- Reed beds
- Vegetation management: canopy thinning, pruning, control of Rhododendron ponticum and new planting.

- Pond works completed March 2013
- Ponticum removal 2/3 complete, last phase due autumn 2014

Access Improvements

- Resurfacing and redesign of Peg's Pond (disabled) car park and approach road
- Improved entrance gates
- Resurfacing and upgrade of the path network to provide a variety of accessible routes

- Completed April 2014

WE WANT YOUR MEMORIES!

WE ARE COLLECTING MEMORIES, PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORIES OF ISABELLA

- We can scan photographs and other documents
- We can record an interview with you to capture stories

Contact Isabella@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk or phone Chris on 0300 061 2218

Visitor Facilities

New sustainably built facilities including:

- Toilet, shelter and seating
- Due for completion June 2014**
- Modernisation of the existing toilet block to make it accessible for all users.
- Completed March 2012**

FREE TRANSPORT

From April to August, we are running a weekly WEDNESDAY round the park minibus all day so you can get to Isabella even if you don't drive.

We are also running an electric buggy between Broomfield Gate and Car Park on the last Saturday of the month from April to August.

Check out our website or contact Chris for details on 0300 061 2218

We would like to offer our apologies to anyone who has been inconvenienced by the enhancement programme, and hope that in the long run, the works will make Isabella a better, more accessible and more sustainable environment.



LOTTERY FUNDED

Jan to March 2013 Ponds and Streams

The first major stage of physical work for this project related to the ponds and streams.

Removal of fish from Peg's and Thomson's Pond was carried out in November 2012 by Bedwell Fisheries Services in advance of draining the ponds. During the wet and muddy winter of 2013, contractors Salix Bioengineering drained and desilted the ponds, extended Peg's Pond, planted reed beds to create new environments for wildlife, cleared streams and constructed boardwalks for visitors to view the pond.

Gardeners and volunteers have been busy cutting back azaleas and removing over colonised Royal Fern and Skunk cabbage to allow more light in stream channels and to clear the way for the contract led elements of works to streams.

The Isabella Horticultural Volunteers and gardeners will continue to remove and control invasive species. Additional planting of native species along margins will take place where appropriate. This work has been essential to the long term health of the Plantation's plants, although some, especially the removal of Rhododendron Ponticum has left the Plantation looking rather scarred in places, however we are replanting, and before long, the impact of this work will be healthier plants and a more beautiful woodland.

APPRENTICES IN ISABELLA

The project includes two eighteen month apprenticeships – we are now recruiting for one due to start September 2014. If you are a school leaver and want to gain Horticultural qualifications and the experience of a lifetime – apply by the end of May.

<http://www.royalparks.org.uk/be-involved/the-isabella-plantation-apprenticeship-scheme>

Oct 2013 to June 2014 Infrastructure and Access Work

Over the past months, we have worked closely with Blakedown Landscapes to carry out a series of improvements to infrastructure and access. The majority of these works are complete, and the new toilet block should be ready for summer.

We have been:

- Creating an irrigation system that is not reliant on mains water.
- Upgrading the path network to create more accessible routes.
- Upgrading bridges and making gates more accessible
- Installing new benches
- Upgrading Peg's Pond (disabled) car park and access road
- Constructing a new sustainable toilet block and shelter adjacent to the Peg's Pond gate. This will be made of green oak and screened by planting. It will be provided with off grid power and heated by a biomass boiler. The toilets themselves will be low water composting.

Community activities

A Partnership and Community Engagement Officer started in April 2011 to work with local charities, schools and user groups to develop walks, talks, volunteer schemes and conservation opportunities, and new resources. If you want to bring your group, become a volunteer or plan a special event, we would be happy to help.

Contact Chris on 0300 061 2218

Keep in Touch

We will announce the main phases of work and activity on The Royal Parks website: <http://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/richmond-park/richmond-park-attractions/isabella-plantation>

Sign up for our mailing list and receive regular news about what's going on with the project. Sign up today or contact us on isabella@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk.