Mayor of Fingal launches Shackleton Gardens project in presence of An Taoiseach

The Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Mary McCamley, launched the Shackleton Gardens in Beechpark, Dublin 15 which are undergoing restoration in the presence of An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar on Friday, 15 June, 2018.

To mark the restoration of the historically significant gardens, the Mayor of Fingal planted a tree on the site which has been redeveloped by a group of volunteers under the direction of Fingal County Council as a tourism site.

The site was first known as Beechpark when it was bought by Captain Richard Wilson Hartley in 1857 before being sold to John W Shackleton in 1919. Following the death of John
and his wife Rhoda, Shackleton Gardens was occupied by their youngest son David, his wife, children and David’s sister Katherine.

David’s son Jonathan continued to live in the Shackleton Gardens in Beechpark with his wife Daphne and their three children until they sold the property to Neil McDermot in 1995.

Speaking at the launch, Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Mary McCamley said: “The Shackleton Gardens are a beautiful addition to Fingal’s list of Culture and Tourism attractions. It’s historical and horticultural significance is sure to make it a place of great interest for Fingal residents as well as tourists from across Ireland and abroad. I would like to thank An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar for being able to attend today as well as the Shackleton family and the group of dedicated volunteers who helped to drive this project with our Parks team.”

The gardens, which will undergo restoration through a development grant of over €200,000 from Fáilte Ireland, with match-funding from Fingal County Council, are located on 1.5 acres of land and include a wide range of rare and exotic plants and flowers. During the 1980s, the gardens were included in The Good Gardens Guide and were awarded two stars. This is the highest accolade awarded by the Guide and reserved for the very best gardens in Britain and Ireland. The gardens will be finished and open to the public next year.

Fáilte Ireland’s Head of Attractions, Paddy Mathews, said: “At Fáilte Ireland, we are always looking for new ways and opportunities to stimulate the development of top-class visitor attractions – both new and existing. Shackleton Gardens were once among the best in the country, and Fáilte Ireland’s investment in its restoration made perfect sense in terms of bringing this historical gem back to its former glory, and transforming it into a top-class and unique visitor attraction. The restoration of Shackleton Gardens will also enhance the Royal Canal area, and I have no doubt that the gardens will provide a compelling visitor experience for locals and visitors alike.”

The restored gardens will be easily accessed by visitors using public transport as well as drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. They are also well located as they are close to local amenities such as Blanchardstown Shopping Centre and other food and drink outlets in Dublin 15.
Also present at the launch was Chief Executive of Fingal Paul Reid who said: “Fingal has a unique natural landscape and culture which has allowed us to develop a rich tourism industry. Shackleton Gardens has so much educational, recreational and historical value and I am delighted to see it being opened to the public.”

Jonathan and Daphne Shackleton, along with their daughter Jane, were also present along with the volunteers who have helped drive the project in partnership with Fingal County Council's Senior Parks Superintendent, Kevin Halpenny, and Director of Planning and Infrastructure, AnnMarie Farrelly. Elected members of Fingal County Council and the Oireachtas were also in attendance.

During his visit to the gardens, An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD said: “I am delighted to see this project progressing so well, thanks to financial support from Final County Council and Fáilte Ireland which will allow the gardens to be restored to their former glory. The gardens are a true hidden gem, and their restoration has the potential to bring many more visitors to Clonsilla and Dublin West.

“The Gardens were once considered one of the best walled gardens in the country, with their collection of rare and exotic plants, and featured in numerous international publications in their heyday. I have long been a supporter of this project and I look forward to helping to promote it as a major tourist attraction once it’s fully completed and open to the public next year.

“I am really pleased to see several members of the Shackleton family here today and I would also like to pay tribute to the work of the local volunteers who have spent so many hours on the restoration work to date.”

Ends

PHOTO CAPTION: The Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Mary McCamley, An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD, Fingal Co Council Chief Executive Paul Reid, and elected members of Fingal County Council and the Oireachtas pictured at the tree planting ceremony in Shackleton Gardens last Friday.
Additional photos from this event are available on request from press@fingal.ie

For further information, please contact press@fingal.ie