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# Local people vote for their Forest top five

More activities for teenagers came out top on a recent poll asking local people what they wanted to see on the Forest Recreation Ground on Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham.

The poll was carried out at a public consultation event held on the 26th April 2008 at the Djanogly City Academy on Gregory Boulevard. The event was a chance for both residents and people from further afield to meet the team behind a plan to improve the Forest, led by Hyson Green-based charity, the Partnership Council, Nottingham City Council, NDC (the Neighbourhood Development Company) and a group of Forest enthusiasts known as the Friends of the Forest.

Plus, draft plans for the new look Forest, designed by the team together with landscape designers, LDA Design, were also unveiled at the event.

The poll, which took the form of a questionnaire, asked the public to choose their top five priorities for the Forest, out of a list of 22 ideas. Very close behind 'more activities for teenagers' came enhanced play areas for all ages, including a performance space and seating; improved lighting and the addition of CCTV; a refurbished pavilion with an improved café, toilets and changing facilities; and more of a partnership approach to maintaining the Forest involving park wardens, the Police and local people.

The results of the poll will be used to finalise the plans for an improved Forest, which will go ahead if a bid for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund is successful. The bid is due to go to the Lottery in September, with more investment coming from Nottingham City Council.

The questionnaire is also available online at <http://aforestforall.wordpress.com/> and the public is welcome to keep voting for their Forest 'top five'.

The results of the poll are also backed up by comments that the public has been putting on the Forest blog <http://aforestforall.wordpress.com> Including:

*"I'm really pleased that the Forest is going to see a make-over. I went to school opposite for many years and we, as kids, barely dared go in the Forest. It wasn't run-down, so to speak, but a place that wasn't welcoming to families and children, with a number of vagrants always hanging around."*

*"In the current media frenzy over obese children and social exclusion a skate park (and other activity opportunities for young people) would offer something to kids that might be excluded from more traditional sports. The powers that be should be looking to push forward any developments that might help with these situations."*

Partnership Council · 47 Gregory Boulevard · Hyson Green · Nottingham · NG7 5JA  
Telephone 0115 970 8200 · Fax: 0115 970 8200 · Email [mail@partnershipcouncil.co.uk](mailto:mail@partnershipcouncil.co.uk)



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*"I think the best improvement would be to get the cars off the park - it's really frustrating if you're dog walking or out with children as it doesn't feel safe. The Forest does seem to be a bit tidier now though, on the positive side!"*

*"If a skate facility was to be built on the Forest site the benefits would be spread that much further, to kids from all around Nottingham and beyond. Scotland is full of amazing skate parks as the powers that be have realised the benefits of such facilities. (I.e. giving young people a sense of purpose, somewhere safe to socialise, reducing drink and drug use, reducing crime and reducing skateboarding in inner city public spaces.) It seems that England is following suit (Skegness, Stoke, Middlesbrough etc) but Nottingham is a bit behind."*

The team behind an improved Forest has spent several years talking to local residents about the Forest, and the plans have been designed to reflect this. Ruth Greenberg, Chief Officer of the Partnership Council, is delighted with the level of public enthusiasm:

*"There is a real strength of feeling about the Forest, not only locally but further afield too. For example, over 100 people came along to the recent consultation event, whilst more than 400 young people have also given us their views - with the help of the City Council's youth team. This project really has captured the imagination of local people. In fact, one of the local people we consulted, volunteered to join our team - because she's so committed to seeing the Forest improved."*

Councillor Dave Trimble, Nottingham City Councillor responsible for Parks and Open Spaces agrees:

*"We had a fantastic turnout and some really useful comments made at the consultation event, which will be used to shape the bid to the Lottery. We'd like to thank everyone who came along and gave their support."*

Other priorities for the Forest, revealed by the poll, include restricted car parking; an improved events programme for families, older people and young people; demolishing the existing toilet block and providing new facilities in the Pavilion; restoring the Forest's historic entrances and improving the footpaths.

To have your say visit the Forest blog at:

**<http://aforestforall.wordpress.com>**

Where you can also download a copy of the questionnaire and the plans exhibited at the consultation event.



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For press enquiries please contact

**Stephanie Robertson on 0115 924 4304**  
**or email [stephanie@13souls.com](mailto:stephanie@13souls.com)**

**or Kirstie Gee on 0115 915 4369**  
**or email [kirstie.gee@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:kirstie.gee@nottinghamcity.gov.uk).**

## Notes to Editors

### What is the Forest Project?

The Forest Recreation Ground was once one of Nottingham's most prestigious landmarks, as well as being home to Nottingham Forest Football Club and Nottingham Racecourse. Spanning 77 acres, it is also one of the largest open spaces in the city. The Forest team thinks it deserves to be renovated and restored in order to preserve its heritage, which is after all, a very important part of the city's history. The team also thinks local residents deserve a Forest Recreation Ground that is safe, clean, inviting, fun and functional.

### Who is involved?

The Forest Project has been running for around five years now and is led by the Partnership Council, a local charity, Nottingham City Council, NDC (Neighbourhood Development Company) and the Friends of the Forest a group made up of local residents and volunteers who feel passionately that the Forest should be restored to its former glory.

### What are we doing?

The team has a fighting fund of £60,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to put the ideas for the Forest into practice. This money is for project development and the team hopes to be awarded more money from the Lottery in the near future.

To find out more about the Partnership Council visit - **[www.partnershipcouncil.co.uk](http://www.partnershipcouncil.co.uk)**

To find out more about Nottingham City Council visit - **[www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk](http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk)**

To find out more about NDC visit - **[www.ndcnottingham.org.uk](http://www.ndcnottingham.org.uk)**

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