

September 22nd 2011

The Royal Parks, Royal Parks Foundation & Halcyon Gallery launch the *Isis Education Centre* at The LookOut, Hyde Park

Public art plays a significant social role, helping bring young people, who have become increasingly distanced from the natural world, closer to the environment

Today sees the launch of the Isis Education Centre, a £2.2m environmental education facility in Hyde Park for city children and the wider community. This inspiring, eco-friendly centre has been funded by a unique collaboration between the Royal Parks Foundation, Halcyon Gallery and The Royal Parks; creating a new model of fundraising where the charity, private and public sector work together to generate income for education purposes through public art.

Situated in the heart of Hyde Park, in an area called The LookOut, the Isis Education Centre will tackle the need to encourage city children (aged 5-18 years) to explore nature and the environment, outside the classroom. Research shows that connecting young people with the natural world is good for their physical and mental wellbeing; it has a beneficial impact on their creativity and personal development; and it encourages them to look after the environment for the future.¹

The new education centre features nature trails, a dipping pond with underwater endoscopes, a mini-allotment, butterfly bank, lightning tree and mini-beast habitats. It incorporates a rubble roof, natural ventilation and a grey water system, is fully accessible, and will provide education programmes linked to the National Curriculum all year round, including a secondary school programme for the very first time.

Mark Camley, Chief Executive of The Royal Parks comments; *“This new education centre will help young people learn about the natural world and it will encourage them to look after the environment. Following Government cuts, The Royal Parks is very grateful to the Royal Parks Foundation and Halcyon Gallery for their wonderful commitment to develop education in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens for the next 20 years.”*

This new environmental addition to Hyde Park takes its name from *Isis*, a stunning bronze sculpture created by British sculptor Simon Gudgeon, found on the southern shores of the Serpentine. Around the sculpture’s base lie 1,000 plaques, available for personal inscription at £1,000 each, raising £1m for the new Isis Education Centre. Three collection boxes in the plinth have enabled further generous donations by Hyde Park’s 7million visitors per annum.

Sara Lom, Chief Executive of the Royal Parks Foundation says; *“As public funding diminishes, new fundraising models are increasingly important. Isis is the perfect example of how art not only adds beauty to our lives, it can also bring far wider benefits to society. Isis has helped build a new £2.2m environmental education centre, sparking people’s interest to support and tackling the need to get city children connected with nature. It is hoped that this successful partnership between the charity, private and public sector can be replicated elsewhere to benefit even more young people in the future.”*

¹ Gillian Thomas and Guy Thompson, A child’s place: why environment matters to children: Green Alliance / Demos Report, May 2004

The fundraising innovation is the idea of Paul Green, President of Halcyon Gallery, who gifted the *Isis* sculpture in 2008 to help the Royal Parks Foundation raise money for the new environmental education centre. He comments; *"We are incredibly proud to support the development of education in Hyde Park. The legacy of Isis will benefit and inspire future generations. Isis captures the spirit of the Park and the power and beauty of nature. To know she will secure the future of this amazing educational facility and be a source of inspiration for generations to come shows how art can truly make a difference to people's lives."*

The Isis Education Centre was designed by David Morley Architects, constructed by Fairhurst Ward Abbotts, and project-managed and developed by a team of consultants from Rider Levett Bucknall, Price & Myers, and Max Fordham. The external area is designed by the Landscape Agency.

The Isis Education Centre at The LookOut, Hyde Park will be available for schools to book from the beginning of October. For all education enquiries please contact: education@royalparksfoundation.org or call 020 7086 8057. Visit www.lookout.org.uk



Isis Sculpture in Hyde Park



The Isis Education Centre at The LookOut, Hyde Park

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For more information or for a selection of images please contact Edwina Bagge on edwina@ktbpr.com, 075000 58599 /0207 924 7214 or Lindsey Evans lindsey@ktbpr.com, 07507 833137 /0207 924 7214

Notes to Editor:

About the Royal Parks Foundation

The Royal Parks Foundation is the charity for London's eight amazing Royal Parks and was awarded "Fundraising Team of the Year" at the Institute of Fundraising National Awards in 2009. Established in 2003, it reaches out to make the Parks part of more people's lives - raising funds for a wide variety of projects from wildlife conservation and landscape restoration, to community sport, art and education. Its charity registration number is 1097545, for more information, please visit www.SupportTheRoyalParks.org

About the Royal Parks Foundation (USA)

The Royal Parks Foundation (USA) is a new independent charity in America that supports the work of the Royal Parks Foundation in the UK. It aims to strengthen and reinforce Anglo-American ties and the many links that exist between parkland in the United States and in Britain. It receives full tax exempt status from the IRS under section 501(c) (3) allowing United States taxpayers to receive tax deductions on gifts and has contributed funds to the Isis Education Centre.

About The Royal Parks

The Royal Parks is an executive agency of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Royal Parks are: Bushy Park, The Green Park, Greenwich Park, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, Richmond Park and St James's Park. For further information please visit: www.royalparks.org.uk

About Halcyon Gallery

Halcyon Gallery is the Principal Education Partner of the Isis Education Centre through its generous gift of the *Isis* sculpture and ongoing financial support for the first three years' of the education programme. For further information please visit www.halcyongallery.com