

Parts of city to change from 'grey to green' after council funding go-ahead

Developers promise 'more high quality public spaces' and 'safer walking and cycling city centre routes'

BY POLINA GANEVA

The Grey to Green project will transform an underachieving area in Sheffield into an attractive public space within a few years, councillors have approved.

The project aims to turn 1.3 km of useless roads and buildings in the Castlegate and West Bar region into a beautiful public area incorporating meadows, gardens and new walking and cycling routes.

It is expected to renew the place and provide new settings for the businesses there, to open up new development sites and improve existing public buildings.

Phase 1 of the project, which includes the transformation of about 500m, was approved by the councillors unanimously. This forms about half of the total project.

Cllr Ben Curran, responsible for Finances and Resources and Cllr Julie Dore, Leader of the Council, expressed their strong support for the project and thanked Yunus Ahmed, overall manager from the City Regeneration service, presenting the report.

Mr Ahmed said: "We are long last reaping the benefits of the investment we made at the inner ring road. We believe this will bring about jobs - not only dozens of direct jobs but more indirect jobs - it will attract investors to build at least many hundreds of offices. It's a £4 million investment."

The total cost of the phase 1 of the project is almost £3,790,000 but it is being funded both by the EU and Sheffield City Region Investment Fund and has the positive 'go ahead'.

Grey to Green will improve the links from the "Heart of City", the City Centre, to the Riverside Business District and to the northern City Centre quarters. There will be more pedestrian routes to help people move between the areas without difficulty.

It will create more high quality public spaces which will improve the area for businesses and the public. It will be easier to

reach the already existing seven hotels in the area, and the Crown and Family courts will get a new more appealing exterior.

Trees and other greenery will be planted for more shade in the warm months and new drainage solutions will help prevent flooding in spring and autumn.

The renovated area is to have a big section of attractive and safe walking and cycling routes into and around the City Centre.

In particular older people and people with disabilities will benefit from the removal of kerbs and the wider footpaths to be built. Special attention to the materials was given so that an environment is created to help blind people move around safely and freely.

After renovating the Moor in 2013, this is the second biggest development in the City Centre with the aim to make it beautiful and safe both for residents and tourists.

Mr Simon Ogden, Head of City Regeneration, said in his report: "It will develop an innovative and aspirational model for the recycling of redundant highway infrastructure - Sheffield's own take on Manhattan's "High Line Park" and Paris' "Promenade Plantee" based on Sheffield's acknowledged expertise in the field."

Both are former derelict areas transformed into lush green tourist attractions, and are used as a basis for the Sheffield project.

The project has received strong support from the University of Sheffield, Urbo Regeneration Ltd. and Carillion Construction Ltd.

"There is an urgent need to transform the quality of the environment and public realm of this area", said Dr Nigel Dunnett, professor from the Department of Landscape, University of Sheffield.

"It is the innovative and forward-looking aspects of this proposal that is particularly striking, and which gives this project the potential for national and international significance."

The construction of the first part of the Grey to Green project is to be completed by the end of 2015.



Computer generated images of West Bar Greening

Successful world projects now favourite tourist attractions

BY POLINA GANEVA

Psychologists and color analysts have long claimed green is more appealing than grey. Landscape specialists and exterior designers have begun to think the same. They now aim to transform old areas with concrete, iron and cement into flourishing public spaces with gardens and flowers.

The Grey to Green project aim to transform 1.3km of useless roads and buildings in Castlegate and West Bar into an attractive area for residents and businesses. It was approved by the council and according to its creators, it is Sheffield's take on Manhattan's "High Line Park" and Paris' "Promenade Plantee".

Philippe Mathieux and Jacques Vergely were the first to think that an abandoned railway can be transformed into a lush green park. The elevated line between Place de la Bastille and Varenne-Saint-Maur was closed in 1859 but then resurrected in as Promenade Plantee thirty years later.

It is 4.5km of hazelnut trees, climbing plants and roses.

According to Ian Sant, 65, from Aberystwyth it is a "lovely walk with interesting views down to Parisian Streets".

"Lots of benches along the way for the weary of foot! You can look down onto avenues and go through canyons between modern buildings. You cross an airy bridge over a park which was full of sunbathers. There's a giant sundial in one section. Kids will love it for the novelty and oldies for its shade and serenity."

Almost 6,000km away, The High Line Park in Manhattan, New York features the same idea - a green space of 2.3km created in 2009 on an elevated railway that went out of use in 1980. Visitors are not allowed to step on the rails or to walk their pets there but they can admire the view of the city and enjoy some quiet in the middle of one of the world's busiest cities.

Colin Everett, from Wrexham, who recently visited the park said: "Not all tourists might look up the high line but they should. A legacy of community action to preserve part of New York City's industrial heritage the old railway, beautifully restored and embellished with artwork and plant beds, offers raised views of parts of the city you might not otherwise see."

Father killed himself after two-year fight with depression

BY POLINA GANEVA

A depressed father addicted to painkillers and alcohol locked himself in his home and committed suicide when his daughter briefly left the flat.

Alan David Butler, 53, stabbed himself in the neck, damaging his thyroid and windpipe, an inquest was told yesterday.

Mr Butler's daughter, Charlotte, called the police when she was unable to enter the flat in Stannington, Sheffield.

Officers forced their way inside where they found Mr Butler motionless on the sofa in only his underwear. A kitchen knife was beside his feet, Sheffield coroner's court was told.

He had died from a self-inflicted 50mm long wound to his neck.

Mr Butler had a history of depression and self-harm - in 2012 he allegedly threw himself down a flight of stairs. The same year, on New Year's Eve, he had an overdose of the painkiller Tramadol but it was unclear whether it was an unsuccessful suicide attempt.

He was put in the care of Fitzwilliam centre, which deals with substance misuse. "He was keen to get better", said Dr Mordekar who met him on March 20th. "But then he stopped attending and did not even pick up his medicine."

"He was clearly showing withdrawal symptoms," she told the court. Mr Butler was about to be put on a new medicine after a significant reduction of his Tramadol intake. At his worst time he took forty tablets a day, with eight a day being the maximum.

"He suffered from low mood and reduced motivation," said Dr Mordekar. "He had no suicidal thoughts, he said he had to protect his daughter and would not do anything."



Alan Butler 3 years ago

Doctor Nicola Wilson, Butler's GP saw him the day before he died but said there was "no obvious change to his mood."

He tried to renew his prescription of Tramadol, but was refused. He presented a letter allegedly from the police that he was burgled. Dr Wilson told the inquest she doubted its authenticity.

Mr Butler left, saying: "Thank you for trying."

Neighbour Barry Greg said in a statement read to the court: "I used to talk to Alan regularly but then he went off the boil. How he looks had declined massively. He mumbled and did not look well."

Mr Greg said that "druggies" were knocking on doors - including his - looking for Mr Butler.

He last saw him a few hours before his death. "His eyes looked gone, he was unable to walk a straight line and did not say anything."

Another neighbour, Laura Mason, gave the court a similar account. She said she was a "mediator" between Mr Butler and his daughter. They did not get on very well.

Ms Mason said she heard screaming a few days before Mr Butler's death.

She recognized Charlotte Butler's voice screaming: "I am sick of this, I am sick of you!". She went to comfort her.

Mr Butler and a local drug dealer were talking in the meantime which had upset Charlotte.

"Alan would go knocking on doors, asking for prescriptions," Ms Mason said in a statement read to the court.

He made excuses, such as losing his prescription at the chemist's, to ask family members and friends for more Tramadol.

On April 12, Charlotte Butler returned to her home after being gone for an hour.

She tried for 45 minutes without success to enter before calling the

emergency services.

PC Adrian Hill, of South Yorkshire police, who was first on the scene, said there was no sign of forced entry.

"All windows were locked from the inside," he told the court.

There was blood and bloody footprints on the carpet.

A note was found saying "Sorry for everything! x".

PC Hill said the police concluded the note was from Charlotte and concerned an argument with her father on another occasion.

There was blood all over the flat, indicating that Mr Butler had moved around the house bleeding before eventually killing himself.

Smears of blood were found on the kitchen light switch, on the refrigerator door and on a milk carton inside. Another smaller knife was found lying outside the kitchen door.

Pathologist Dr Burton said in his post mortem examination that the cause of death was a "50 mm incision to the neck." There were other scars and bruises on his body, some of which were inflicted just before his death.

He had a deep cut on his wrist but Dr Burton said it "did not contribute to his death."

A toxicology report stated he had alcohol in his blood - "twice the legal level to drive", said assistant deputy coroner Louise Slater.

In the courtroom, Mr Butler's family was shocked. "Often people don't want to worry their families and so are more open and honest with professionals," Ms Slater told the relatives.

"I see some of this comes as a shock to you."

She recorded a narrative verdict that Alan Butler took his own life by inflicting a wound to his neck. His family wept as she left the courtroom.

Hit novel to be an audiobook

The Blemished by Sarah Dalton is just the first, author says she has much more planned for the new year

BY POLINA GANEVA

The first book of the Blemished hit series on Amazon and Goodreads with the same name is going to come out on a new platform available for everyone.

Sheffield-bred author Sarah Dalton is to release her first audiobook in February. The book will be read aloud by a female voice actor, chosen to match the main character as Ms Dalton imagines her.

With over 20,000 copies sold worldwide, the story about the futuristic world where one does not choose destiny seemed to be liked by many. The Blemished is a dystopian novel with a strong female lead that fights for her own place in the world ruled by genetics and strict rules on visual appearance.

"I am a feminist and the image of the perfect woman that young girls have today is very unnatural and unfair to them," Ms Dalton said. "I created a world where that ideal is taken much further - to promote healthy thinking about female body image and help girls have better self-esteem by realising how wrong is the media's body type promotion."

The setting of the book is a futuristic Sheffield.

"Sadly I have very few readers who are from Sheffield and who can see the parallels. Most of my readers are from the USA because the British still stick to buying books from high-end bookstores and

don't trust the internet that much."

The first book of the Blemished series is free on Amazon for Kindle but the paperback edition can also be bought in most bookstores.

Sarah Dalton is a self-published author with a goal to publish new books as frequently as one every six months. Alongside with the audiobook project, she is currently writing the second novel of her Mary Hades series, a gothic horror for young adults with humorous elements.

She said: "I am jumping genres because this is how I read - I enjoy a bit of everything, so I want to provide my readers with a bit everything."

Ms Dalton is active on Facebook and Twitter and chats regularly with her readers, discussing the books that are on sale and those that are still being written.

"It is great how the community helps you improve," she said. "After all, I am writing for them, so it is important to take their wishes and comments into account. Writing a book is no longer a one-way process with the authors and the editors - readers and fans can have their say, and I love that about self-publishing."

She regularly hosts interactive events which help readers engage in the process of creation.

Yesterday, she asked them to give her numbers and when they did, she shared a line or two of the her new Mary Hades



Sarah Dalton holding her books; The Blemished novel on the right

book. Even though it is still in writing, she accepted comments on the style and content of the quotes.

"Being a full-time writer was my dream - and I achieved it," she said. "It is touching to connect with so many people who like my ideas and the worlds I create in my head. Recognition in this line of work feels amazing."

More information about the process of self-publishing, the books and the difficulties of being a businesswoman and an author you can find on our website. Read the full interview with Ms Sarah Dalton on www.sheafnews.com.

Blood sugar researchers looking for volunteers

BY POLINA GANEVA

Study on blood sugar levels and the immune system will help deal with patients suffering from diabetes more effectively.

Dr Ahmed Iqbal and his team from University of Sheffield are looking for healthy volunteers between 18 and 65 who are keen to help their medical research.

He said: "These studies will help us understand how variations in blood sugar affect the body's immune system. This will give us more ideas on why diabetes is associated with increased risks of strokes and heart attacks."

The project will be a research studentship for Dr Ahmed Iqbal, a medically qualified doctor undertaking a PhD funded by the Medical Research Council.

The study is led by Professor Simon Heller (Diabetes Consultant) and Professor Ian Sabroe (Respiratory Consultant and expert in inflammation).

Participating holds minimal health risks and is paid up to £150. It includes several visits to Northern General Hospital and volunteers are free to drop at any time without warning.

Approved volunteer Jeremy Poon, 20, said: "I know some of the tests are going to be uncomfortable but I still want to participate. It is very rare to get such good and well-paid volunteer opportunities. The research is exciting too."

Those who wish to be part of the project should email Dr Iqbal at ahmed.iqbal@sheffield.ac.uk.

City celebrates Armistice Day

BY POLINA GANEVA

Sheffield held two-minute silence to pay respects to the war heroes of World War I on Armistice Day.

Citizens gathered at Barker's Pool in the city centre for a two-minute silence traditionally at 11am. Families, passer-bys, military veterans and people from civil services stopped to commemorate the lives lost in the war.

Christine Spencer, chairman of the Sheffield and Districts Joint Council of Ex-Service Association, coordinated the short service which included prayers led by Rev David Shaw, of Upper Chapel, Sheffield.

"I have never skipped a single remembrance Sunday service every year, since I was 17 and a half," she said. She first joined the Royal British Legion as a serving soldier, then the Women's Royal Army Corps.

A lot of her life was built around the Army. She met many of her friends there, some of which had then gone to serve in Afghanistan and Northern Ireland.

"Now they only live in my heart," she said. "I met my husband while I was in the British Legion. He was in the Medical Corps and when we got together I followed him around the world - Cyprus, Germany, Singapore."

"But no matter where we were, we also celebrated Remembrance Sunday. For me it is a very important day that holds many memories."

"My first ever Remembrance Sunday service was at the Royal Albert Hall. I was almost 18, and when they dropped poppy petals on our heads, a lady told me each one stands for a life lost. There were so many flying down."

"When I looked around, people were teary, some were crying. I still remember that day vividly."

"I heard there was a boy, who worked for the paper here and he went to war," said Mr Mark Simpson after putting some flowers down on the memorial monument.

"He got shot in his right arm, and got a medal when he came back. This is about remembering people you haven't seen. You don't know them but you have to remember what they did for you and your country."

An elderly couple, Mr and Mrs Hill also took part in the organised remembrance for Armistice Day.

They said: "We should have come with our grandchildren, to teach them how important it is to remember history. We have been here every 11th Nov for almost 20 years now - we must not forget what our fathers and mothers did for us."

Passer-by Mrs Eleanor Lane said: "My father was in the war but he didn't get killed. My grandma's brother died in the First World War in France, he wasn't so lucky. This day is for them - to remember them and everyone else, as well."

She was not wearing a poppy on her coat but went and bought one from the vendor nearby. After pinning it on, she stopped for a second to remember - or to pray - and continued to where she was headed.

Last we forget.