

Making a difference at Fulham Palace

Local MP Andrew Slaughter joined young people, charitable organisations and businesses on Friday to help transform the gardens of Fulham Palace – and make a statement of community goodwill – by planting some of the 20,000 bulbs needed for next spring.

Mr Slaughter, MP for Ealing, Acton & Shepherds Bush, gathered with members of the Youth Unltd volunteering group, staff and service users of Hammersmith & Fulham Action on Disability (HAFAD) and employees of the Starwood Central London Hotels group to work on the garden as part of Make a Difference Day, the UK's biggest day of volunteering. Several thousand bulbs were planted on the day, ranging from daffodils for spring colour, to bluebells to mark out the line of the old moat, to wood anemones to enhance the freshly cleared woodland.

The day was organised by the Hammersmith & Fulham Volunteer Centre, whose staff, trustees and supporters also took part in the back-breaking work. The VC chose to assist Fulham Palace in order to demonstrate the importance of the environment in voluntary work. The Palace's gardens are a registered 2* designed landscape, making them some of the most important gardens in the country. Having gone largely unmaintained for over 50 years, the gardens are now being restored in partnership with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers; volunteers provided by the VC have already been involved in the restoration, too, helping to clear the Palace's fernery.

Chris Richardson, head gardener at Fulham Palace, says: "The volunteers did very well on Friday and got through a good few thousand bulbs – they were really putting their backs into it. They planted bulbs around the bases of the trees on our lawns, and in our wilderness area; they also planted loads of bluebells on the site of the old moat, which will give a splash of colour next year and represent the blue of the water. We're also using lots of wild bulbs, conserving and replanting wherever we can, in the hope that we can restore the gardens to their former glory."

Marion Schumann, director of the VC, says: "I'd like to thank Andrew Slaughter MP and everyone who gave up their time to 'make a difference' on Friday. Volunteering is something that people of all walks of life can enjoy, and the range of volunteers present on Friday – young and old, employed and unemployed, able-bodied and disabled – was testament to that fact. It was a great day, hard work but for a very worthy cause: the gardens at Fulham Palace are a national treasure and a place that the local community will be able to enjoy day in, day out."

Anyone interested in learning more about volunteering should call the Volunteer Centre on 020 8741 9876, or drop in at Galena Mews, 148 King Street, Hammersmith.

