

Role Specification

President



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The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) is the UK's leading gardening charity. Founded in 1804, its purpose is to encourage and improve the science, art and practice of horticulture in all its branches. Today, the RHS seeks to inspire a lifelong love of gardening and to demonstrate the positive impact that gardening can have on people, communities and the environment. It brings together members, volunteers, scientists, horticulturists, educators, partners and supporters in pursuit of its charitable purpose.

The RHS's mission is “to be there for everyone on their lifelong adventure with gardening.” These principles underpin all aspects of the RHS's work, from its gardens and flower shows to its scientific research, education programmes, community initiatives and public advocacy.

As a charity, the RHS believes that gardening has a vital role to play in addressing some of its most important challenges. Through its work, it seeks to support physical and mental wellbeing, strengthen communities, enhance biodiversity, tackle environmental challenges and build a more sustainable future. The RHS combines horticultural excellence with a commitment to making gardening accessible and relevant to people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience.

The RHS reaches millions of people each year through its five gardens, world-renowned flower shows, publishing activities, digital platforms, educational programmes and community outreach. RHS Chelsea Flower Show remains the world's most iconic flower show, while the RHS's broader programme of shows, gardens and events provides inspiration, learning and engagement for gardeners across the United Kingdom and beyond.

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The RHS vision: a world where gardening is embraced as a way of life – a source of joy and fulfilment, building healthier lives, stronger communities and thriving environments.

The History of the Royal Horticultural Society



The RHS's work is guided by six strategic priorities:

- Opening up gardening for anyone, anywhere
- Growing its story to share the joy of gardening
- Building horticulture for the future
- Delivering science solutions for people, gardens and nature
- Championing the essential role of gardening
- Unlocking its potential



Delivering Impact at Scale

Following a period of substantial growth and investment, the RHS enters its next chapter as a larger, more visible and increasingly influential charity. The RHS combines a national platform, a world-renowned brand, significant commercial activities and a charitable mission focused on people, communities and nature. Guided by its charitable purpose and long-term strategic priorities, the RHS is well positioned to continue championing gardening's contribution to people, places and nature.

The RHS now engages millions of people each year through a broad range of activities and platforms:

- Five RHS gardens across the UK
- Four major RHS flower shows, including RHS Chelsea Flower Show
- Income of over £124m in 2024/25 and more than £130m reported in 2025/26, reflecting the scale and reach of the organisation
- Significant investment in infrastructure and public engagement, including a recent £180m capital investment programme
- National programmes spanning horticultural science, education, community outreach and public advocacy

How the RHS is organised



The RHS is a registered charity incorporated and governed by a Royal Charter and Bye-Laws that are approved by RHS members. The RHS Council is the highest decision-making body and has overall responsibility for the organisation, providing strategic direction and monitoring the delivery of the RHS Strategy with support from the Leadership team and the three pillars of governance.

The RHS is governed by its Council and supported by an executive leadership team under the leadership of Director General Clare Matterson. The RHS Council is the governing body and comprises the President, Treasurer and up to 15 ordinary members, elected by RHS membership, plus up to two co-opted members. Under the Charter and Bye-Laws, the RHS Council holds the responsibility for:

- The future direction of the RHS
- The investment and disposal of RHS assets
- The strategic management and performance of the RHS

The three pillars of RHS Governance are Statutory, Guidance and Oversight, and Expert Groups that set the strategic direction of the RHS and ensure that it's charitable, regulatory and compliance requirements are met. They also make key decisions and recommendations to RHS Council, offer guidance and oversight to specific areas of RHS work and provide key horticultural advice and expertise.

More on the RHS Structure and Governance can be found [here](#).

More on the RHS Directors & Council Members can be found [here](#).



The role: context



The RHS is seeking its next President as Keith Weed completes his final term after seven years in the role.

The appointment comes at a pivotal point for the RHS, following a period of significant growth, investment and increasing national prominence.

With a clear strategic ambition to broaden the reach and impact of gardening, the RHS is looking for a President who can provide effective leadership of Council, support the executive team in delivering the RHS's charitable purpose, and act as a compelling ambassador for one of the UK's most respected institutions.

It is anticipated the next President will spend a minimum of 30 days per annum on the role, including 12 days of governance meetings (and associated preparation), a strategy day, and attendance at RHS Chelsea and other shows throughout the year.



The role: responsibilities



Role of the President

The President provides leadership to Council, champions the purpose of the RHS and serves as its senior ambassador, helping to strengthen its profile, influence and public trust.

The Council approves strategy and oversees its delivery, performance, risk and long-term sustainability, while the Director General and Leadership Team are responsible for implementation and day-to-day management.

Stewardship of the RHS's Purpose and Strategy:

The President helps ensure that the RHS remains true to its charitable purpose while delivering its long-term ambitions. Responsibilities include:

- Leading Council in shaping and approving the strategic direction of the RHS
- Overseeing strategy delivery, performance, risk, financial sustainability and the stewardship of resources.
- Ensuring Council receives the information and assurance needed to assess progress and inform decision-making.
- Supporting oversight of major opportunities, risks and investments.

Leadership of Council and Governance:

The President leads Council in fulfilling its governance responsibilities and fostering a culture of openness, respect and constructive challenge. Responsibilities include:

- Building and maintaining an effective Council, including evaluation, development and succession planning.
- Upholding high standards of governance, ethics and accountability.
- Ensuring compliance with the RHS Charter, Bye-Laws and regulatory requirements.
- Fostering productive relationships between Council and the Leadership Team.
- Ensuring Council remains focused on long-term priorities and organisational sustainability.

Partnership with the Director General:

The President develops a strong and constructive relationship with the Director General, based on trust, mutual respect and a shared commitment to the success of the RHS. Responsibilities include:

- Providing support, advice and constructive challenge
- Leading the Director General's appraisal and succession planning.
- Fostering effective relationships between Council and the Leadership Team

Ambassador and Champion for the RHS

The President is the senior representative of the RHS, using their profile, influence and networks to advance its mission, reputation and long-term success. In partnership with the Director General, the President helps deliver the RHS's ambitions. Responsibilities include:

- Championing the RHS, its mission and values.
- Building relationships with key stakeholders, partners, donors and supporters.
- Supporting advocacy, philanthropy and strategic partnerships that advance the RHS's ambitions.
- Representing the RHS at significant events and public occasions.
- Protecting and enhancing the reputation of the RHS.



The role: detailed specification



	Must have	Nice to have
Board leadership		
Chair ready (committee chair experience as a proxy)	✓	
Experience operating at senior Board level	✓	
Demonstrable experience as Chair of a Board		✓
Experience in Board and ExCo development & successions		✓
Professional experience		
Strong track record in commercial environments	✓	
Interest and passion for horticulture	✓	
Proven capability navigating financial pressures, investment trade-offs and growth	✓	
Driving innovation, transformation and organisational evolution	✓	
Diversified revenue models		✓
Membership and charitable organisations		✓
Fundraising / sponsorship environments		✓
Other considerations		
Experience of diverse stakeholder groups	✓	
Understanding balance between commercial performance and charitable purpose	✓	
Ability to guide long-term strategic thinking and prioritisation	✓	
Credibility, presence and network in UK	✓	
Commitment to make this role a clear priority	✓	
Ambassadorial presence and willingness to engage in external engagement	✓	
Capacity to carry out responsibilities beyond the Board room	✓	



Board dates: 2027



First half of 2027 is for information only as the incoming RHS President would likely be attending some meetings as an observer:

- 23-24 February 2027 – Council, Board and Committee meetings (RHS Wisley)
- 22 April 2027 – Finance and Commercial Board and Audit and Risk Committee meetings (Vincent Square)
- 28-29 April 2027 – Council meetings and RHS garden visit (RHS Harlow Carr TBC)
- 6-9 May 2027 – RHS Malvern Spring Festival
- 16-22 May 2027 – RHS Chelsea Flower Show
- 8-9 June 2027 – Board and Committee meetings
- 6-7 July 2027 – Council meeting and AGM (including election of President, Treasurer and Council members)
- 21-25 July 2027 – RHS Flower Show Tatton Park
- 21-22 September 2027 – Council, Board and Committee meetings (Vincent Square)
- 26 October 2027 – Council Awayday (location TBC)
- 16-17 November 2027 – Board and Committee meetings (Vincent Square)
- 1-2 December 2027 – Board and Committee meetings (Vincent Square)



Links



[RHS website](#)



[Annual Report 2026](#)



[RHS in a snapshot](#)

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