



RHS Partner Garden Forum

23 October 2025

Tulip Room

RHS Wisley

Maximising the potential of our Gardens



Today's Agenda

9:30am	Coffee and Networking
10am	Clare Matterson, RHS Director General
10:15am	RHS Presentations and Discussion
11:30am	More coffee!
11:45am	RHS Partner Gardens Information Sharing
12:30pm	About the Garden Magazine
12:50pm	RHS Partner Garden Update
1:15pm	Lunch
2pm	RHS Wisley Garden tours
2:45pm	John McLeod lecture with Kate Bradbury



Welcome

Clare Matterson

Director General of the RHS



Maximising the potential of our Gardens

Katie Vosper, Head of Insight



Sector context

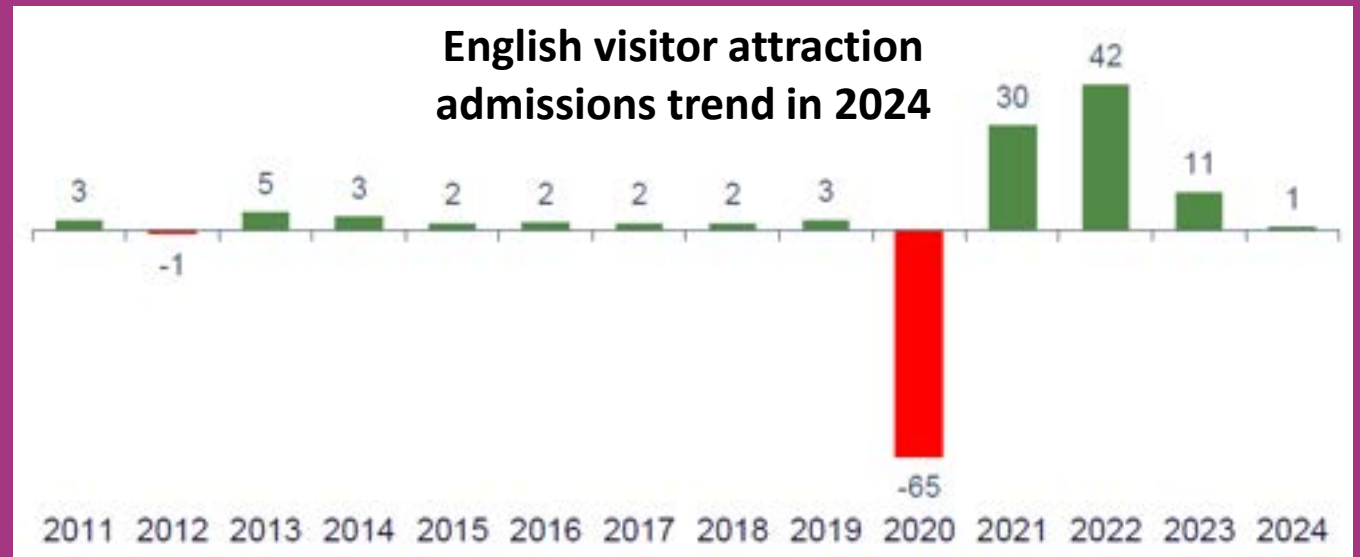


Attractions sector admissions remain substantially behind 2019...

... and post-pandemic growth has now slowed

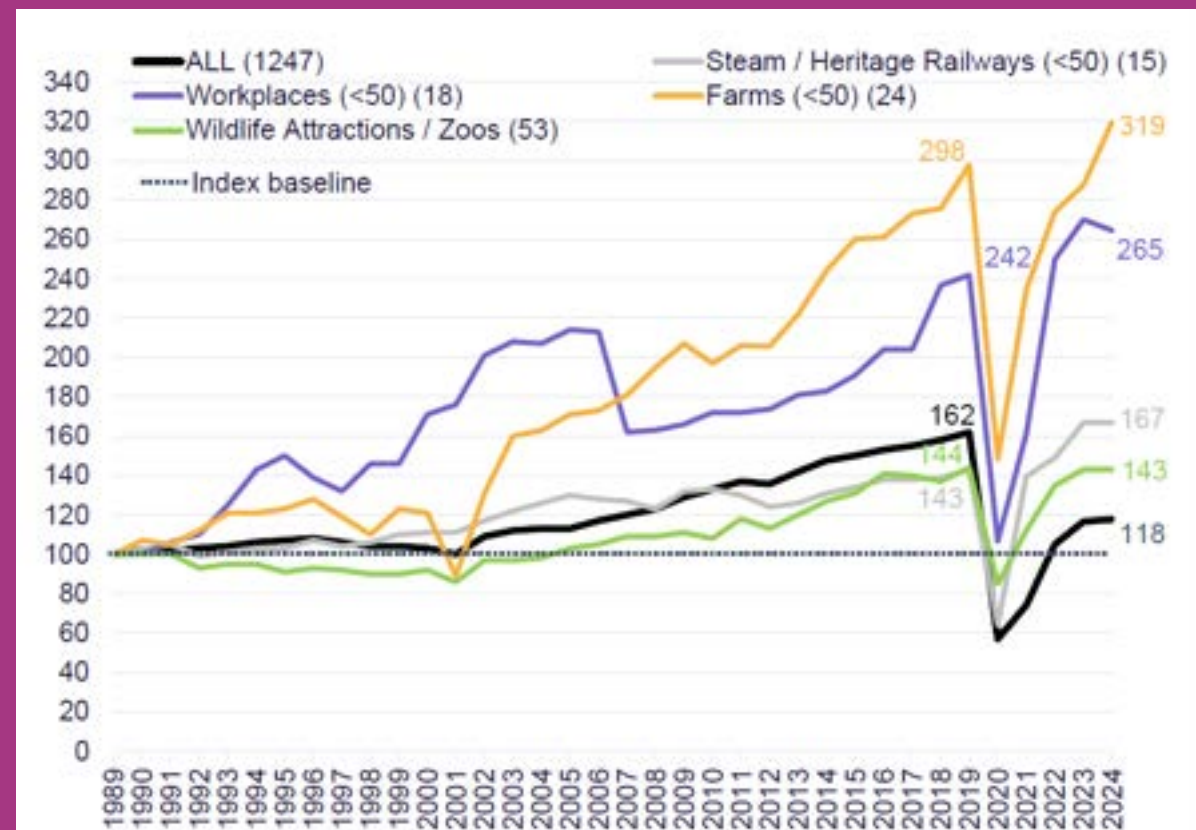
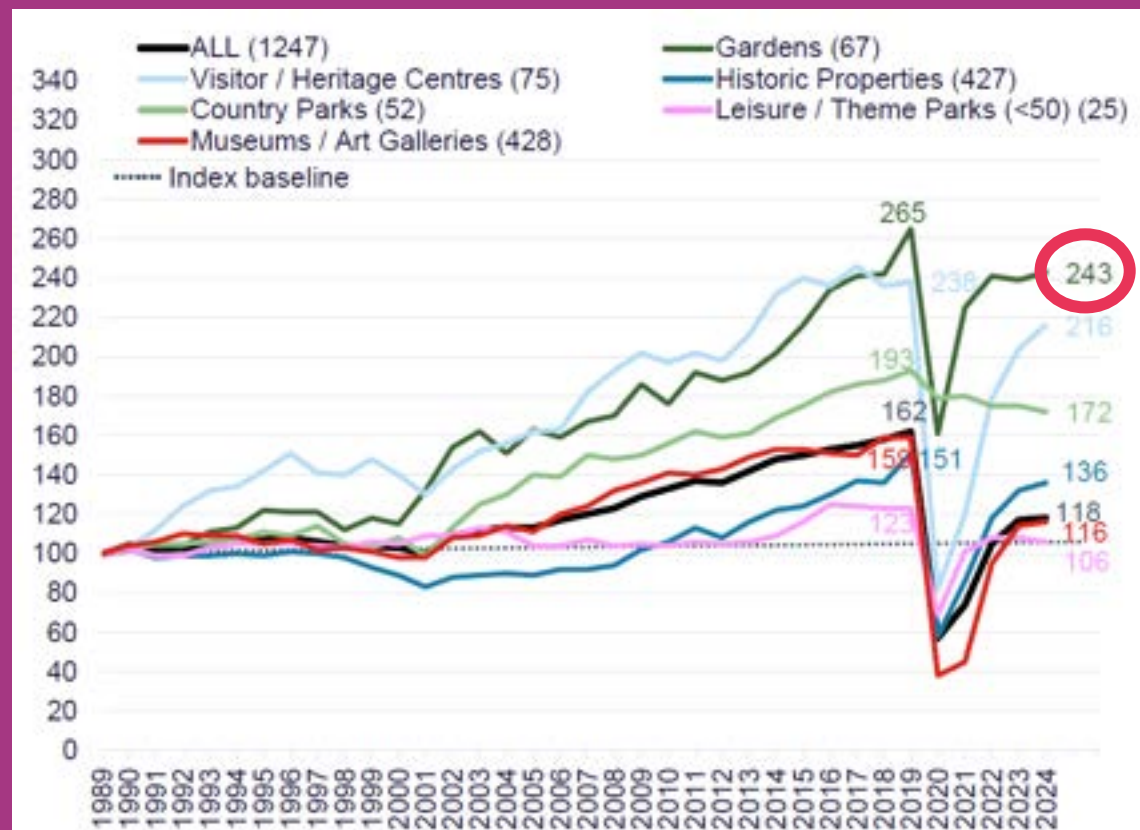
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
% difference from 2019 visit volume	/	-65%	-55%	-35%	-28%	-27%

2024 and 2023 visitor volume was provided through the survey *Previous visitor volume is an estimation based on the sector trends recorded through this research.



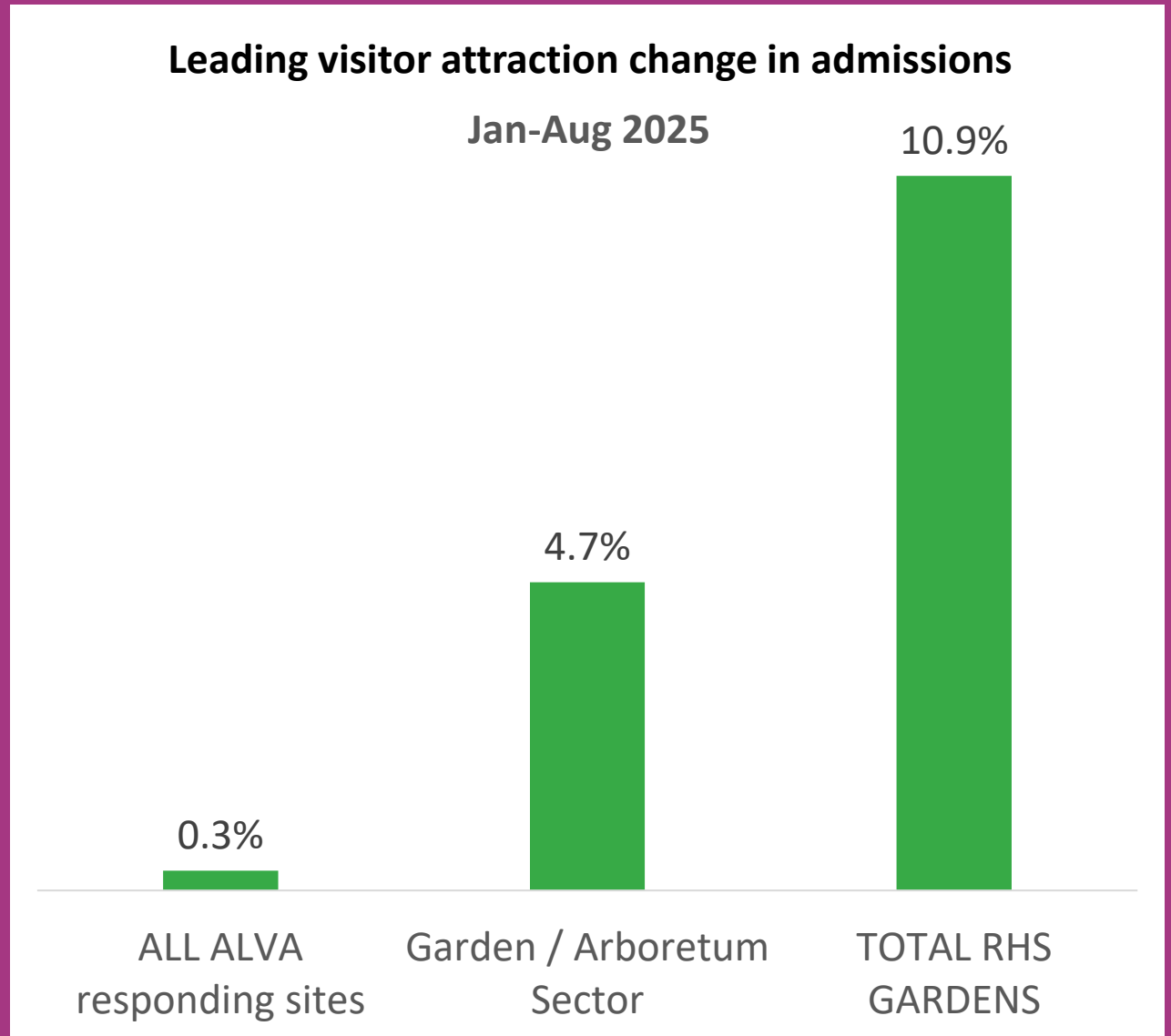
Gardens have recovered quicker than most attraction types...

...but not as quickly as the experiential family focused categories



Fine weather has supported further growth across the gardens sector this year...

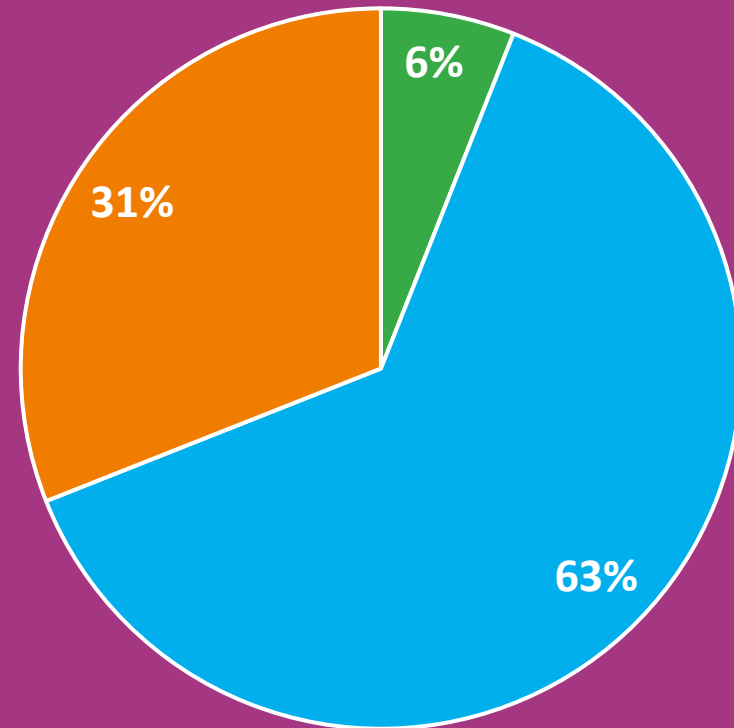
... and the RHS has done better than average



During a cost of living crisis, attraction entrance fees are clearly a barrier to visiting

As a result of the cost-of-living crisis, will you visit paid-for attractions, exhibitions or cultural events...?

■ More than before ■ Same as before ■ Less than before



Average admission charge (2024):

Adults: **£12.21**

Children: **£8.04**

83% of attractions with entry fees
charged for child entry

Average change in attraction price is **+7%**
(v.s. 4% CPI inflation rate)





**Encouraging
new visitors**

Optimising entry pricing

Look at:

- Local competitor pricing
- Visitor value for money ratings (ideally benchmarked)
- Demand by season and day type

Consider:

- Pre-booking discounts
- Dynamic or variable pricing
- Child pricing



Saver £14.80 Weekdays Oct-Mar (excl. 27-31 Oct)	Off-peak £16.60 Weekends Oct-Mar Weekdays Apr-Sep & 27-31 Oct (excl. 7-21 Apr, 5, 26-30 May & 23 Jul-7 Sep)	Standard £18.40 Weekends Apr-Sep Weekdays 7-21 Apr, 5, 26-30 May & 23 Jul-7 Sep	
Other tickets			
On the day £19.80 All year round	Under 5s Free All year round	Kids 5-16 £5.00 All year round	Members Free No booking required for existing RHS Members. Join today to become a member.

Weather proofing attractions

Make it part of the fun!

E.g. National Trust 'things to do on rainy days'

Add more covered spaces, or better utilise the ones you have if rain is predicted

E.g. marquees, event spaces

Create outdoor spaces indoors

E.g. Longleat's indoor beach

Provide weather protection (ponchos/ umbrellas)

e.g. Little Island (New York) provides free ponchos when it rains

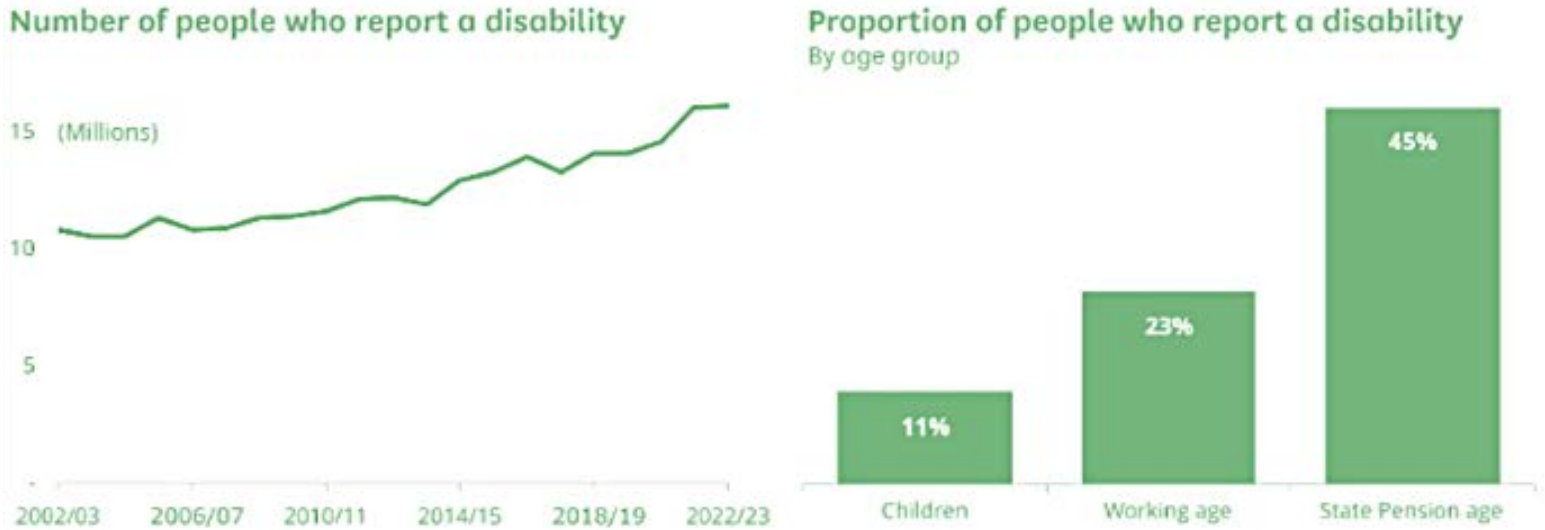
Free return promise if rain lasts for more than x amount of time

e.g. ZSL 'weather buster' guarantee – free revisit within 2 months if more than 1.5 hours of continuous rain



Catering for people with accessibility needs

24% of the UK population (16.1 million people) have a disability of some kind and this proportion is growing



Official government statistics based on the government definition of disability – someone who has a physical or mental health condition or illness that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more that reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

21% of UK attraction visiting parties include someone with a disability (ALVA visitor benchmarking survey)



How to address accessibility needs

Mobility

- Seating throughout the site
- Even paths
- Mobility vehicles
- Sufficient disabled toilets
- Displays and counters within reach of people in a wheelchair

Hidden disabilities

- Sunflower lanyard e.g. to skip queues
- Quiet openings (e.g. for events that will get busy)
- Sensory areas
- Nimbus access card

Young families

- Baby change
- Breast feeding areas
- Bottle warming service



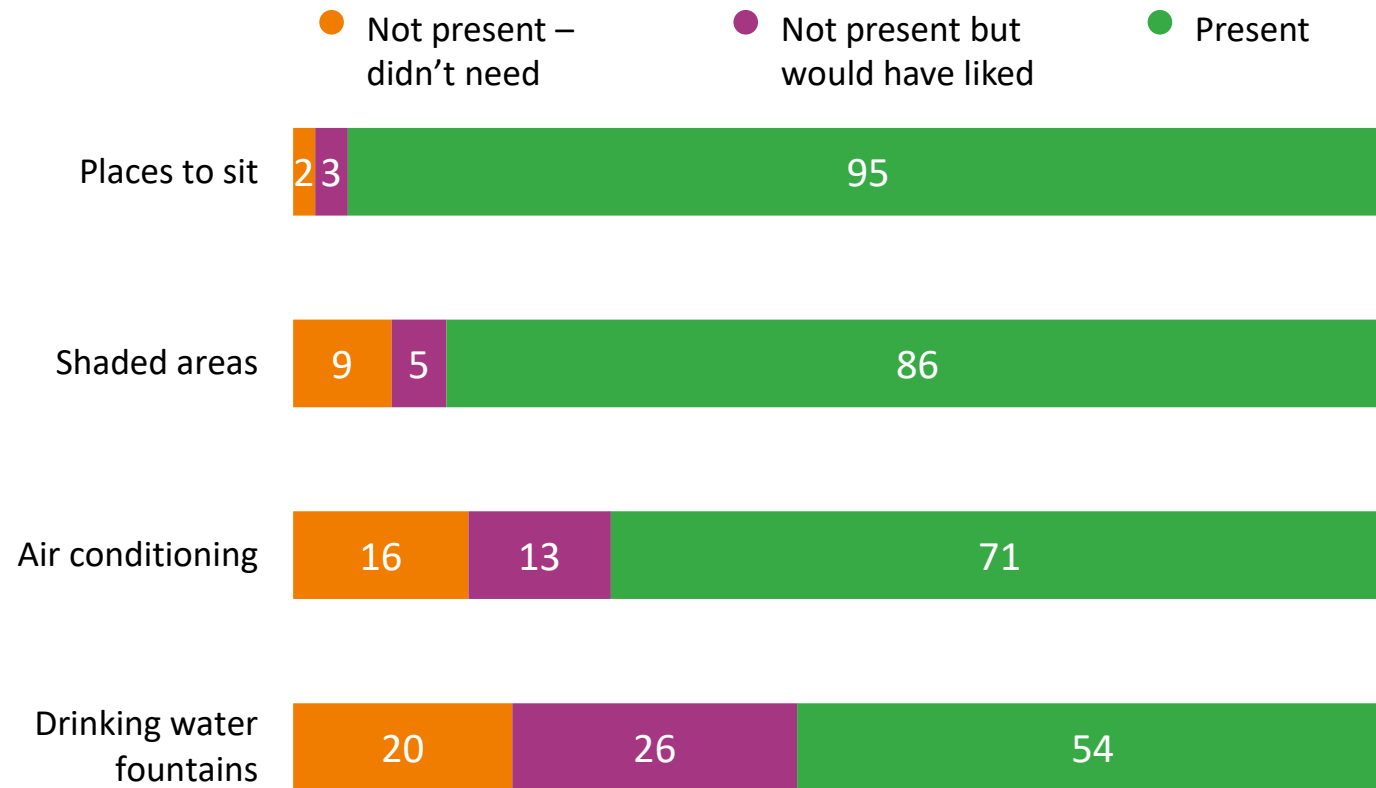
Encouraging repeat visits



Making the experience comfortable for visitors



Desired hot weather provisions at attractions



Providing a warm welcome

Welcome visitors from the very start

E.g. National Memorial Arboretum places volunteers in the car park

Employ a frontline team that represent visitors

e.g. Royal Albert Hall, National Theatre

Ensure staff are visible/ stand out

e.g. staff ratings increased when Roman Baths changed their uniform to make staff more visible



Importance of training



We all know the staff can make or break a visit – a positive interaction can help visitors to feel valued and connected with the site.

National Memorial Arboretum recognises this and goes beyond the standard health & safety and wayfinding training with its volunteers, through:

- **Mentoring** – shadowing of senior volunteers, followed by feedback from two different people on their own tour/ presentation
- **Self learning** – giving volunteers access to their database of facts and encouraging independent research to identify the stories that they want to tell
- **Inclusion and mental health training** – to ensure volunteers are aware of any unconscious bias and are able to provide appropriate support to visitors
- **Volunteer newsletters** – providing fresh stories for volunteers to share when talking with visitors.



Improving the queuing experience

Distract visitors from queuing time, by engaging them while they are queuing

Turning Queues into Learning Moments



Smithsonian
National Zoological Park
Conservation Biology Institute

- Installed **two video screens** along the queuing path, featuring interactive quizzes like “*Guess the animal?*” to engage visitors while they wait.
- Used **trail camera footage** to showcase not only pandas but also their broader habitat and the conservation work carried out through camera traps.



JANUARY 23, 2025

The Official Panda Fan Quiz

Think you know giant pandas? Take this quiz and see how your panda knowledge stacks up!

Make restoration/ developments part of the visitor experience

The Old Royal Naval College

During restoration of its Painted Hall, ORNC decided not to close the building but instead used it as a visitor engagement and revenue building opportunity, by allowing visitors up the scaffolding to see the ceiling up close – making it a once in a lifetime opportunity.



Warner Bros Studio Tour London

During a major tour expansion, WBSTL needed to screen off part of their car park for a significant period. Rather than using plain builders screening they designed screening decorated with quotes and symbols from the books, turning it into another feature of the attraction. This was so popular the screening was replicated in a more permanent form after the restoration work was completed

Blenheim Palace

Used restoration work as an opportunity to share the conservation process with visitors, creating a restoration lab where visitors could see the techniques used first hand.

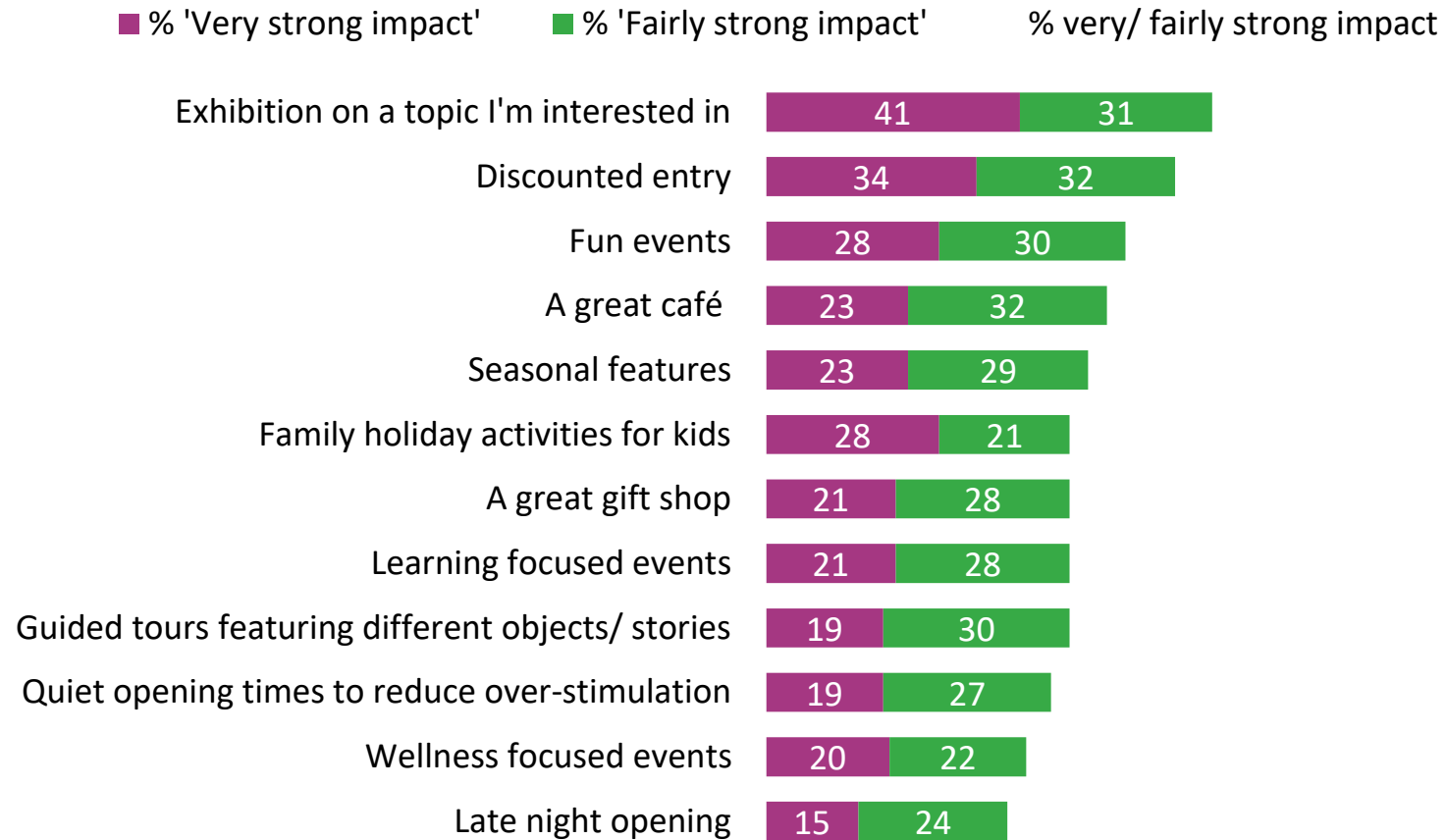
English Heritage

Explain the work being done through messaging on screening, adding opportunities to donate to the project.

What encourages repeat visits?



Triggers that would encourage people to re-visit an attraction



Leveraging data

Oxford Brookes University expertise in AI helps Blenheim Palace

Tuesday 21 February 2023



Blenheim Palace and the surrounding estate. Photo by Pete Seward.

[Oxford Brookes University expertise in AI helps Blenheim Palace - Oxford Brookes University](#)

An artificial intelligence project, developed by experts at Oxford Brookes University, is helping one of Oxfordshire's most prestigious tourist attractions enhance its customer service and visitor experience.

A 32-month-long [Knowledge Transfer Partnership \(KTP\)](#) between Oxford Brookes and Blenheim Palace is helping to transform the historic estate – famous as the birthplace of Winston Churchill – into a 'smart' visitor attraction by using Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The achievements of the partnership, funded by [Innovate UK](#), will be showcased as part of the [Oxford Brookes Festival of Artificial Intelligence](#), which takes place this week from Monday 20 to Friday 24 February.

Experts from the AI and Data Analysis Network (AIDAN) at Oxford Brookes helped Blenheim Palace to develop a Smart Visitor Management System (VMS) that helps the operations team at Blenheim make decisions about running the palace. The system uses data from digital sensors located around the Blenheim Estate that monitor everything from footfall and ticket sales to retail and catering sales.

The Oxford Brookes team developed AI models that use the data to help predict visitor flows and monitor consumption in locations such as the estate's catering outlets. They also developed an app called What's Open When (WOW) that tells the operations team at Blenheim Palace in real-time which parts of the Palace and Estate are open, where it is busy and where it is quieter.

Dr Paul Jackson, principal lecturer at Oxford Brookes Business School and the chair of the AIDAN, said: "A unique characteristic of this partnership is the mix of expertise from the University's School of Computing and the Business School, ensuring that Blenheim is at the cutting edge of data-informed estate management."



Diversifying revenue streams

Wellness/ mindfulness offers



NHM Yoga: £36 a ticket



8 October, 15 October, 22 October, 28 October / 9:30am

Mushroom Masterclass

Forage, grow, and eat mushrooms.

The Newt in Somerset Mushroom
Masterclass: £150 a ticket



29 October / 9:30am

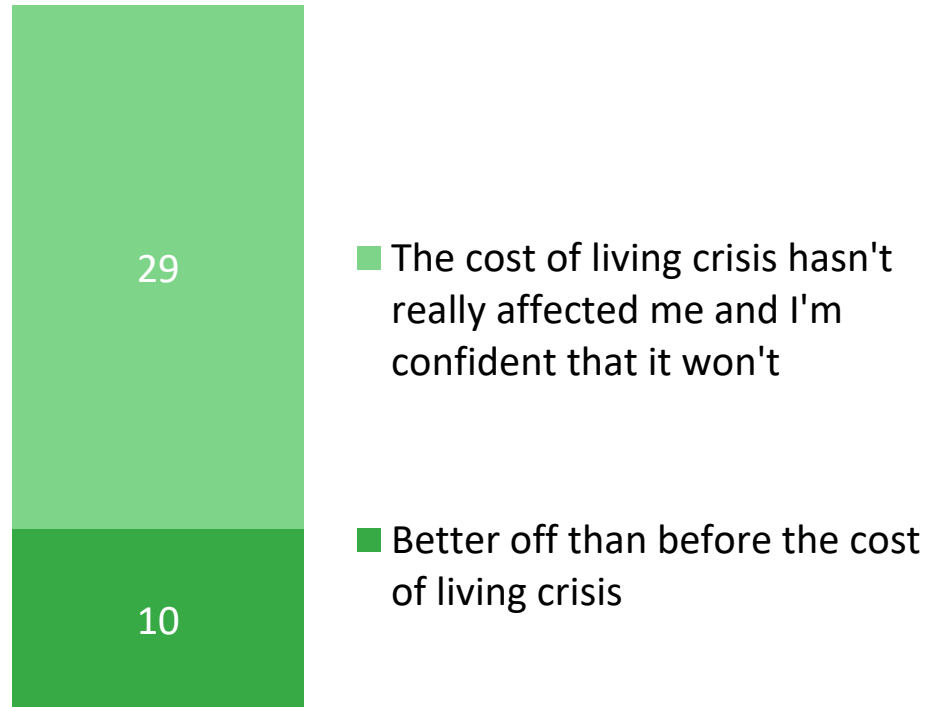
Autumn Wreath Making

Create seasonal floral arrangements for the home

The Newt in Somerset Wreath
Making: £150 a ticket

[What's On | The Newt in Somerset](#)

Upselling VIP experiences



VIP experiences tend to be the fastest to sell out

e.g. Paddington the Musical - £34 for a marmalade sandwich

e.g. Chester Zoo Latin America Adventure - £500 for two people (2.5 hours)

e.g. WBSTL Dinner in the Great Hall - £275 pp

Charitable requests

Many attractions now have charitable donation stations (e.g. NHM, Chatsworth House)

Creative charitable donation requests can work particularly well e.g. Wentworth Woodhouse:

- ‘Ding dong donation station’
- Engraving names and messages on roof slates as part of their roof restoration (raised £60k)
- Currently ‘Forge a link’ campaign – initials engraved for donations of £50+



Pick the right cause

Projects that offer an emotional connection, provide a spark of inspiration and a point of interest to all sorts of supporters work best.

Volunteers can bring a cause to life

Well-briefed, well-trained and highly engaged volunteers can bring a campaign to life in a way that information boards can't always replicate.

Make the offer tangible

Tangible offers like Chatsworth's "Sponsor a Stone" offer work well

Visible opportunities to donate

Support donation requests with interesting panels that add value to a visit.

Small donations prove engagement

While on site donations might be small relative to the cost of major development, on-site fundraising can be used to prove to the larger funders that there is public engagement, helping to unlock grant funding.

Capitalise on the buy-in

Capturing email addresses at the point of donation enables you to keep donors engaged and updated and is a valuable source of donors and visitors for the future.



Tips taken from the GWD website

Engaging the local community

Wentworth Woodhouse 'The Flock' art installation:

- 10k wooden bird templates decorated by the local schools, businesses and organisations
- Decorate one side, story on the other – impact of lockdown
- Displayed in a giant tree painted on the lawn in front of the house

This generated income through:

- Visits to see the installation (with many participants visiting to see their own bird)
- Framed artwork sold at £78

NEWS

[Home](#) | [InDepth](#) | [Israel-Gaza war](#) | [War in Ukraine](#) | [Climate](#) | [UK](#) | [World](#) | [Business](#) | [Politics](#) | [Culture](#)

[England](#) | [Local News](#) | [South Yorkshire](#)

Wentworth Woodhouse birds displayed to mark lockdown

30 September 2020



WENTWORTH WOODHOUSE

Each wooden bird is intended to be a symbol of how people have pulled together during the pandemic

Retail: Take home an authentic piece of the site

- Volunteers at Wentworth Woodhouse use waste products (e.g. damaged roof slate/old brass piping) to make unique items, raising around £30k a year.
- The Big Pit National Coal Museum in Wales sells coal earrings, with coal mined by their tour guides.
- National Museums Wales' blankets woven on site using their traditional loom sell at a £60 premium compared with other blankets.



FUNDRAISING - A PIECE OF HISTORY
Take home a little piece of Wentworth Woodhouse with these specially crafted items. Made from original materials, such as slate and wood.
Items are for collection from Wentworth Woodhouse
[Read more](#)

PRODUCTS

Product Name	Price
INDUSTRIAL LAMP - 50% DEPOSIT	£125.00
COPPER TEA LIGHT HOLDER	£30.00
SLATE CLOCK WITH WOOD STAND	£70.00

Monetising YouTube

Wentworth Woodhouse has setup a free to access YouTube site designed to **reach new audiences**.

However, this also provides a **revenue stream through advertising**...

...and is used to provide **valuable work experience to local students** who do the filming.







Revenue Opportunities for Gardens

Barbara King, Head of RHS Garden Centres

What are we:

- The leading **Plant Centres** in the UK selling the largest collection of 100% Peat Free plants
 - The most sustainable **gift Shops** in the UK
 - **Advisory centres on Peat Free plants and Peat Free compost types**
 - **Inspirational places** to shop with **sustainability and local products** leading the product ranges
 - Shops that give **customers confidence** in their purchases
 - An end to an inspirational visit to an **RHS Garden**
 - A place to browse – knowing there is **something for every visitor**
 - Quality plants and products with **price ranges to suit every budget**
- 

Our Commitment

- To provide **quality, sustainability, and beauty** – creating gardens and green spaces that are both luxurious and environmentally responsible.
-  **Our Difference is our Unique Selling Point**
- We're not a traditional garden centre.
- Instead of filling shelves with artificial trees, non-sustainable wood, or chemical fertilisers, we've chosen a different path —
- One that puts the health of your garden and the planet first.

Income Change from 2026

- Year to date 60% of sales from plants and 40% other
- 2026 a decline in our plant supply
- Developing space opportunities
- Flexing space for families and members :
- Workshops & Story Time Corner



Upmarket supermarket chain Waitrose says it has seen a surge of customers searching its website for recipes to use for their foraged ingredients this autumn.

Searches for blackberry preserve, for example, are up 57 per cent on a year ago, while demand for mushroom recipes is up 225 per cent. Growing numbers of people are also making their own booze from foraged berries, with searches for how to make bramble and berry rum up 150 per cent



We have been working with the Gardens

- Increasing food and alcohol beverages products sold using produce from the gardens
- We are always working with small artisan producers



We have grown the sales from 2024 to 2025

- Apple cider introduced September 2024 has been a huge success



Made with apples from the Devon Heritage Orchard at RHS Garden Rosemoor. The apples were picked and pressed by our team, and have made a superb example of true Devonshire cider. The different apples all bring unique and important characteristics to the cider - which is why they have been treasured by cider makers for centuries.

Inviting aromatics, bitterness for balance and mouthfeel, acidity for structure and sugar to produce a healthy fermentation into alcohol which is vital for the warming notes and keeping quality. The RHS is a proud custodian of the Devon Apple collection, and continues to participate in vital genomic research protecting and understanding these special and rare fruits.

Made in collaboration with Sandford Orchards of Crediton.

RHS Garden Rosemoor,
Torrington EX38 8PH

Allergens: contains sulphites
Lot Code: 0423

Alcohol: 6.3% ABV

500ml e

See neck for best before date

The UK Chief Medical Officers recommend adults do not regularly drink more than 14 units per week

 **RHS**
Garden Rosemoor

**RHS Rosemoor
Apple Cider**

A blend of Devon Cider apples grown in our orchard at RHS Garden Rosemoor

Made in Devon

- Using Blackberry and Apples grown in Rosemoor gardens - we have extended the range to Jams and Preserves



Sales

RHS ROSEMOOR MARROW AND GINGER MARMALADE	£ 31.90	£ 523.80
RHS ROSEMOOR BLACKBERRY AND APPLE JAM	£ 46.54	£ 789.50
RHS ROSEMOOR BLUEBERRY AND LIME JAM	£ 77.34	£ 911.62
RHS ROSEMOOR VERY BERRY JAM	£ 39.60	£ 790.51
RHS ROSEMOOR GOOSEBERRY AND CIDER CHUTNEY	£ 73.70	£ 792.28
RHS ROSEMOOR KITCHEN GARDEN CHUTNEY	£ 68.94	£ 657.87
RHS ROSEMOOR ROASTED BEETROOT CHUTNEY HORSERADISH	£ 104.50	£ 995.90
RHS ROSEMOOR CARAMELISED RED ONION CHUTNEY	£ 105.65	£ 780.59
RHS ROSEMOOR HOT SQUASH CHUTNEY	£ 34.10	£ 386.00
RHS ROSEMOOR CIDER AND APPLE CHUTNEY	£ 47.86	£ 819.00
RHS ROSEMOOR DAMSON KETCHUP	£ 57.79	£ 418.62
RHS ROSEMOOR STRAWBERRY AND REDCURRANT COULIS	£ 96.80	£ 189.80
RHS ROSEMOOR APPLE JUICE 2024 75CL	£ 474.47	£ 2,703.59
SANDFORD ORCHARDS RHS ROSEMOOR CIDER 500ML		£ 288.05
	£1,259.19	£11,047.13



Sold 136 Bottles of Sparkling wine over 2 years

- Challenges – This year a bumper year for grapes and we have had to release our reserves.



Product Range...

Our growing range of products with Brand designed labels – keeping everything together with consistent look and messaging. Cider from Sandford Orchards, wine from Plumpton College and apple juice from Court House Orchard.



Product Range...

- Preserves and coulis from Waterhouse Fayre
- Working with local artisan companies





Any questions?





Introduction to the RHS Development and Corporate Partnerships Team

October 2025

Graeme Wotherspoon
Head of Individual Giving

Shivani Modha
Individual Giving Manager

The RHS Development and Corporate partnerships team

- Team of 25
- We work across all income streams, raising approximately £16m a year for the RHS
- We fundraise for our projects and programmes, as well as unrestricted income
- Our fundraising includes our learning and public engagement, our gardens, our community work and our scientific research



Visitor and Individual Giving

- We have donation boxes in our gardens and a small number of tap to donate machines
- We send appeals to members by post and by email
- We promote the RHS lottery



Legacy support

- We raise around £2.5m a year through gifts in Wills and in memory support
- We hold events in each of our gardens for people interested in leaving a legacy, and for those who have already told us they plan to leave a gift
- Most of our legacy gifts come from RHS members



Patrons

- RHS Patrons are the highest level of RHS membership
- We have two types of Patron:
 - Fellows Patrons – donating £6,000 per annum
 - Associate Patrons – donating £2,500 per annum
- They enjoy a programme of exclusive events and activities, including access to RHS Chelsea Flower Show out of hours
- We arrange garden visits to outstanding gardens for our Patrons and often visit Partner Gardens
- Our Patrons contribute about £1.4m per annum in total



Major donors and philanthropy

- We focus on people who can support with gifts of £5,000 or more, and family trusts (ie those trusts where the family members act as trustees)
- We use our trustees and other contacts to make introductions, using events as a reason to get in touch
- Chelsea is a huge advantage as everyone wants to come to the show (especially out of hours)
- We ask people to support a range of different projects and programmes, normally something that is planned for the garden they visit the most
- We always thank donors by inviting them to see the project they have funded



Engaging donors and prospects at events

- Purpose of philanthropy events varies from stewardship of existing donors, to cultivation of new prospects and funders
- Popular events are preview and out of hours tours at RHS gardens and shows, and those that are hosted by horticultural experts and garden designers
- Stewardship events may include behind the scenes tours during project build and the opportunity to be involved in planting, as well as an exclusive invitation to a celebratory opening event – supporters really value recognition on donor boards!



Institutional Funding

Institutional Funding can be broadly split into three categories:

- Funding from Statutory Bodies, e.g. local authorities, central government departments (e.g. Department for Education), or non-departmental public bodies (e.g. National Lottery Heritage Fund, UKRI etc.)
- Funding from large Trusts and Foundations, e.g. Oak Foundation, Wolfson Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. These tend to be more organisational, e.g. they might have paid staff in addition to the Trustees, and have the capacity to give large sums but require rigorous application processes, often of three stages
- Funding from miscellaneous charitable bodies, e.g. the foundations of corporations like Veolia or Bloomberg

Institutional Fundraising often involves creating complex proposals with very clear objectives and measurable aims. Partnerships with funders take up to 3 years to develop, and last even longer.

National Lottery Heritage Fund (HF)

- Fund a broad range of projects that connect people and communities to the UK's heritage.
- Two main grant programmes up to £250,000 and up to £10million
- New Strategy Heritage 2033 includes a focus on natural heritage and environmental work. Your heritage project could include:
 - **Nature** – works to improve habitats or conserve species, as well as helping people to connect to nature in their daily lives.
 - **Designed landscapes** – improving and conserving historic landscapes such as public parks, historic gardens and botanical gardens.
 - **Large-scale rural projects** that help improve landscapes for people and nature by, for example, restoring habitats and celebrating the cultural traditions of the land.



National Lottery Heritage Fund Top Tips

- Seek advice from HF – attend roadshows, webinars, directly ask for feedback from Project Enquiry and or Expression of Interest processes
- Align with their Good Practice Guidance: <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance>
- Connect to other HF funded partner gardens and share learnings
- Clear aims, outputs and outcomes which show the difference the project will make
- Balance and integration of capital repairs, interpretation and activities
- Involve community and partners from the beginning
- Commit to inclusion across all aspects of the project
- Keep legacy and sustainability in mind throughout
- Develop an authentic project that reflects your organisation and local needs

Corporate partnerships

- Most of our current corporate support comes through sponsorships and partnerships for Chelsea
- We also seek partners for our other shows and garden events
- We are hoping to launch a corporate members programme later this year



Useful resources for fundraising

- The Chartered Institute of Fundraising is the membership body for UK fundraising and offers a wide range of training courses
- Subscriptions to online resources such as the Directory of Social Change (GrantsOnline and FundsOnline) help you identify new funders and grants
- Prospect research via external agencies such as Prospecting for Gold which specialises in major gift fundraising
- Tax effective giving from the US – one organisation that can offer this is Chapel and York, there are others who offer a similar service



Any questions?

graemewotherspoon@rhs.org.uk





Updates from RHS Partner Gardens





Waterperry Gardens, Oxfordshire

Simon Buchanan, Managing Director











Forde Abbey, Somerset

Alice Kennard, Owner





Forde Abbey Café and Entrance Development 2025



Monk's Dormitory range Before Development



New Plant Nursery and
Entrance door



New Oak Door from the inside showing repaired arch, the uncovered tracery window.



Original Entrance and Shop



Café Interior showing two types of dividers. One filled with garden dried flowers



Café Counter with Estate grown Spalted Chestnut Front



New Café
Entrance



Seating Area February under Construction

Transformation of Old Plants Sales area into Outdoor Seating



Seating area in June





Goldstone Hall, Shropshire

John Cushing, Owner











Helmsley Walled Garden, North Yorkshire

June Taish, Director



Helmsley Walled Garden

Ticketing system

- Annual pass only – gift aid
 - Reduced residents pass
 - Online system
 - Gardener's world 2 for 1 (and RHS)
 - Free garden tours by volunteers
 - Community days – free or reduced entry
 - Events run by external organisations/charities
 - 'Shoulder' season workshops – willow, etc
 - Art & sculpture exhibitions
 - Donations for produce
 - Plan propagation & plant sales
-



Coach tours

- Discounted entry
 - Guided tour for donation
 - Advertised
-
- Collaboration with Yorkshire Arboretum
 - Collaboration with Helmsley Businesses
 - Helmsley Arts centre performances
 - Resident artist and resident writer
 - Garden posies
 - National collections – apple and rosebud pelargonium
 - Which trials
 - Harrogate show garden
 - Winter fundraisers & leaflet drop
 - Memorial & legacy opportunities
-



Borde Hill, West Sussex

Maria Kirk, Heritage Project Manager



REINVENTING BORDE HILL: WHOLE PROJECT OVERVIEW

Connecting communities with the restorative power of nature, and inspiring future generations through outdoor learning.





ABOUT BORDE HILL

- Listed by English Heritage as being of Grade II* historic importance and set within 383 acres of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the High Weald, Borde Hill is a Garden and Parkland of national botanical importance, featuring one of the largest collections of privately owned champion trees in the UK, with over 70 specimens.
- Borde Hill Garden Charity is responsible for preserving our significant botanical collection of rare and exotic plants and trees - collected by the great plant hunters of the early 1900s - for the enjoyment, education and benefit of the public.
- With 70,000 annual visitors, Borde Hill is a beautiful, unique destination.
- With a new future vision, and funding support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we have ambitious plans to become more sustainable and inclusive than ever before, while safeguarding our natural heritage, and inspiring future generations through our 'Reinventing Borde Hill' (RIBH) project.

COMMUNITY ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT



The Project will:

- Engage new, diverse communities with the power of nature
- Improve access and accessibility, encouraging green travel by opening up our South Lodge entrance
- Unlock 110 acres for outdoor learning and mental / physical wellbeing
- Work with diverse groups across the local community, including those with disabilities, and others who may find it difficult to access outdoor green spaces
- Offer activities and special access for disadvantaged groups from the local community with a Community Card

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Our local community are involved in the development of the plans every step of the way. We are already working with local charities, schools and services, including the NHS, Mind, Dimensions Crawley, Sussex Wildlife Trust, and local primary and secondary schools. Representatives from many of these groups make up our Community Advisory Group who meet quarterly.

The project will enable us to deliver tailored activities for the most in need groups. So far pilot activities have included:

- NHS Social Prescribed 'Wellbeing Walks': patients shared that walks gave the opportunity to meet new people, enjoy the outdoors, and feel mentally and physically better
- A Biodiversity enhancing woodland management STEM Project in collaboration with Sussex Wildlife Trust: with Northlands Wood Primary school
- Seed collecting and planting workshops with local schools, including Woodlands Mead SEND school
- Free Family Learning activities including wildlife walks for groups including Bentswood Youth Group, Young Carers and Refugee Resettlement groups





OUR VISION

This pioneering, community led project will:

- Provide much needed affordable, accessible outdoor space for an additional **65,000** local visitors to engage with nature and improve their mental and physical wellbeing each year
- Encourage and facilitate outdoor learning, discovery and play to inspire children and young people, with **5,250** pupils engaging with the project in Year 1
- Connect with **34,000** people including diverse and disadvantaged groups across the local community and those with disabilities, delivering activities for those who may find it difficult to access outdoor green spaces
- Make a positive environmental impact, encouraging biodiversity, educating our visitors about our natural heritage, and protecting against climate change
- Deliver **65 new volunteering** opportunities and **job creation** across horticulture, education, and visitor-welcome roles

Giardini di Villa della Pergola, Italy

Alessandra Ricci, Owner and Manager



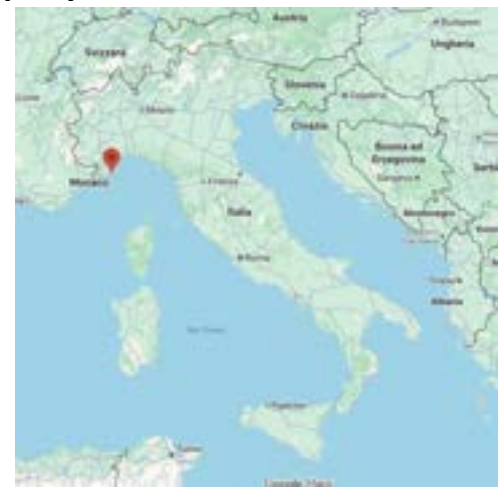


Giardini di Villa della Pergola

- **We are in Italy, in Liguria – the Italian Riviera**
- Located in **Alassio**, a seaside town with around **11,000 residents**
- A **tourist destination** with a strongly **seasonal summer peak**
- We have a **deep historical connection with British families**
- We **saved this place from real estate speculation**, preserving its heritage
- Our most famous **botanical collections** are **Wisteria** and **Agapanthus**, among many others

Visitors Over the Years

- **May 5th, 2012**: Opening day with **over 10,000 visitors** (free entry)
- **2013–2019**: Seasonal openings with an average of **3,000 visitors per year**
- **2020–2023**: Average of **7,000 visitors per year**
- **2024–2025**: Around **10,000 visitors per year**



Culture and Conservation in Action

Botanical Heritage as a Living Museum

The garden is a living museum that combines conservation and community engagement to protect rare species and historic plants. Through propagation, seasonal nurseries, micro-museums and hands-on activities we transform botanical care into educational and sensory experiences. We have also introduced **seasonal and themed events** to engage diverse audiences, and opened the **Gardeners' Greenhouse** to the public for **small events and workshops**. We invite the public to learn, participate and become active custodians of plant heritage for a more resilient future.



Culture and Conservation in Action

Special visits to the Villas – winter period



During winter, we offer **guided visits to the historic Villas and museum interiors**, connecting culture, history and conservation.

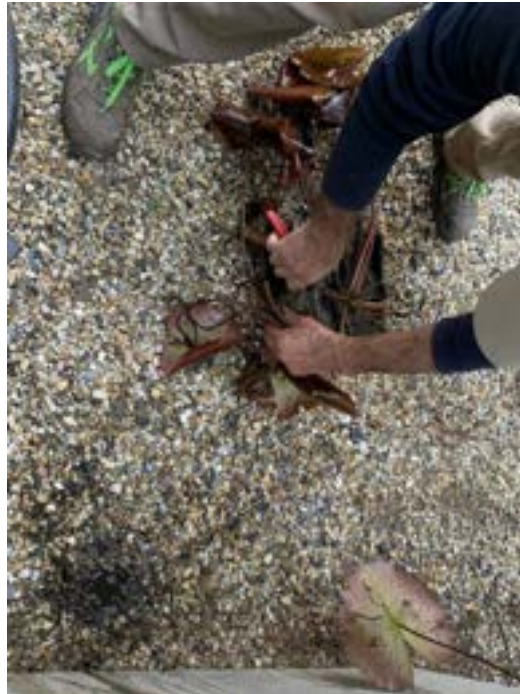


Beyond the Garden

Three members of our team have become certified Environmental Hiking Guides, allowing us to lead nature walks and hikes beyond the gardens.

We have introduced exclusive experiences for hotel guests, including: Cooking classes celebrating local ingredients and garden produce Hands-on activities with our Head Gardener, exploring seasonal care and plant heritage

These initiatives connect landscape, culture and hospitality, offering a more immersive experience of the Italian Riviera



Growing Value from the Garden

Harvesting Stories, Flavours, and Sustainability

We transform our harvest into artisanal products — from marmalades and preserves to ancient myrtle liqueur and popcorn from local maize — using tastings, labs and sales to fund the Gardens







Doddington Hall, Lincolnshire

Jordan Wallhead, Head Gardener







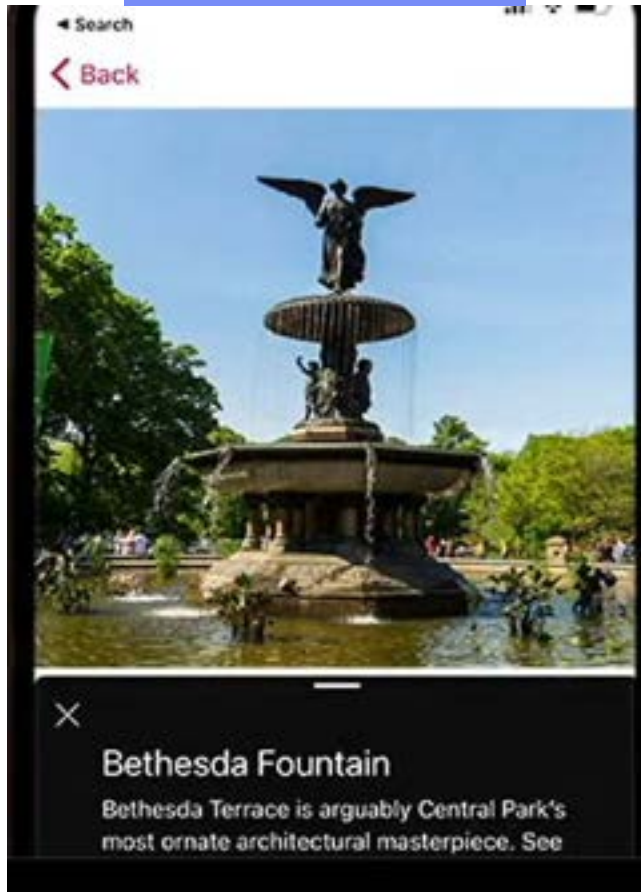




**Other things
we've seen on our
travels!**



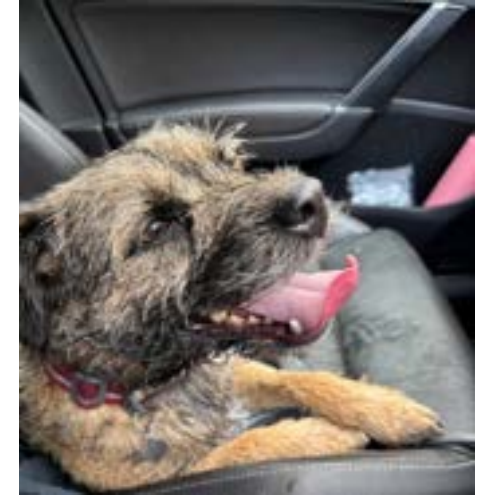
Other things we've seen on our travels!





Lullingstone Castle & The World Garden

Other things we've seen on our travels!





The Garden Magazine

...And how to get into it

Amy Oliver, Associate Editor



What is The Garden?

- 600,000+ RHS Members
- UK's largest gardening magazine
- 83% read The Garden every month
- The Garden app: 30,000+ views per month



Our readers love...

- Gardening! 83% of RHS Members surveyed say they are 'gardeners'
- Gardening inspiration
- RHS Partner Gardens & The Garden are in top 3 Member benefits



What makes news?

RHS PARTNER GARDEN

NEW BBC WOLF HALL SERIES FILMS AT THE BISHOP'S PALACE

Disguising tree ferns and leaving lawns to grow out their stripes were just two of the changes made at an RHS Partner Garden while filming the new BBC series *Wolf Hall: The Mirror and the Light*. The Bishop's Palace in Somerset hosted actors Mark Rylance (Thomas Cromwell) and Damian Lewis (Henry VIII) for scenes based on the final novel in author Hilary Mantel's trilogy.

Head gardener James Cross said the production's horticulture team made the requests during a visit to the 14-acre gardens earlier this year. "They needed to hide the tree ferns in the Phelps Garden – those plants wouldn't have been seen by Europeans in 1536 when the series is set," he says.

"We'd been cutting back a bay tree, which was introduced around that time, so they used these branches, and pots of another new plant for the time, *Viburnum tinus*, to hide them. Lawnmowers weren't invented until 1830 so we couldn't cut the grass for three weeks before filming either." It was a similar story for the nearly 30m of yew hedges. "If we'd used our hedge trimmers, the edges of the yew would have been too sharp and therefore not appeared historically accurate, so we had to leave them too," says James.

Wolf Hall: The Mirror and the Light airs weekly on BBC1 from 10 November – 15 December.



Maisie Richardson-Sellers and Mark Rylance filming in the garden.

The Somerset gardens have previously provided a verdant backdrop to BBC series *Poldark* and Hollywood films *Hot Fuzz* (2007) and *The Huntsman* (2016). "Wolf Hall will be extremely popular, but *Poldark* – particularly because of its star Aidan Turner – brought a lot of people in," says James. "*Hot Fuzz* still continues to draw large numbers even 17 years later."

An RHS Partner Garden since 2016, The Bishop's Palace features wide, open lawns, specimen trees and a luxuriant mix of shrubs and perennials. For James, the Phelps Garden is the most special. "My first project when I started at the Palace in 2004 was creating it," he says. "It's still one of my favourite areas 20 years on."

● For more RHS Partner Gardens: rhs.org.uk/partnergardens



The World Garden in Kent is home to plants from around the globe grouped by continent.

RHS PARTNER GARDEN

LULLINGSTONE MARKS 20 YEARS WITH NEW PRAIRIE

The World Garden at Lullingstone Castle, Kent, an RHS Partner Garden, is celebrating its 20th anniversary this month by unveiling a new prairie-style area to the public in 2005.



Hesperantha coccinea features in the new 15m-long border.

CHAMPION TREES

Impressive pear breaks all records

An espaliered pear tree at Houghton Lodge Gardens near Stockbridge, Hampshire, has broken a Guinness World Records title. Declared a Champion Tree in 2019 by The Tree Register, the plant has additionally now been verified as The World's Longest Espaliered Tree at 16.44m wide (longer than three adult African elephants, trunk to tail).

The handsome 'Beurre Diel' pear tree, still in fruit, is trained against a wall in the garden. "Sadly, we're not sure exactly how long it is," says proud owner Sophie Busk. "The tree is at least 100 years old, or maybe even older. It was mentioned in an advertisement for the house back in 1801."

Houghton Lodge is an RHS Partner Garden. For more information, visit rhs.org.uk/partnergardens.



RHS PARTNER GARDEN

Nature rises from the rubble at St Andrews

A new experimental area at RHS Partner Garden St Andrews Botanic Garden in Fife is showing how derelict sites can be reclaimed.

how these places can continue to be amazing for nature by working with the soil microbiome, plants and deadwood as one system. The project is part of the eco-friendly 'Rising from the Rubble' series of

Other top slots

News

People Making a Difference

Don't Miss

RHS Stat

Expert's pick

Garden story

Out & About

RHS Podcast



The time is ripe

RHS Partner Garden
RHS members can visit for free on Tuesdays and Wednesdays

A year into Head Gardener Harry Baldwin's tenure at The Newt in Somerset, his guidance of the gardens' latest trajectory is starting to bear fruit, says Abigail Willis
Photography: Jason Ingram



Rosa Lichfield Angel ('Ausrelate') AGM

“Climbing Cécile Brünner” will repeat until the first frosts”

The pruning expert Jenny Barnes



Jenny is Head Gardener at RHS partner garden Cottesbrooke Hall in Northamptonshire. She has a passion for sculptural rose pruning and training

Rosa 'Climbing Cécile Brünner' AGM throws up the soft flexible growth I'm after to manipulate across walls and over frames. The deep red stems are themselves a feature and aren't too thorny. It's a big rose (up to 4m tall) for a high wall, but it isn't unruly. Bubblegum-pink, button-like flowers open from pert little buds and billow in clusters. If you deadhead, it'll repeat until the first frosts. It also has a compact shrub form (R. 'Cécile Brünner' AGM), which is more delicate and can even be used as a bedding rose interplanted with annuals.

Rosa Lichfield Angel ('Ausrelate') AGM is sold as a large shrub to about 1.4m tall, but it can have long stems, so we grow it as a small climber wrapped around free-standing frames on the statue walk. It's strong and healthy, but admittedly not especially flexible. I love the many-petalled creamy flowers set against the pale green foliage. We enjoy at least three flushes each summer.

Rosa 'Direktor Benschop' is also known in Britain as City of York. It flowers early and then is constantly in bloom, provided you keep removing faded flowers. Then, once you stop deadheading, it sets sprays of attractive hips. The semi-double flowers are lemon in bud, opening to creamy white with yellow centres and showy stamens. It's also useful for growing on a north-facing wall, as its bright flowers happily lighten up a dark spot. It's a climbing rose that reaches about 4.5m.



Don't miss!

1 Yeo Valley Organic Festival
Arit Anderson, Alys Fowler and Frances Tophill are among the speakers offering practical insights and inspiration into more sustainable gardening at the inaugural Yeo Valley Organic Garden Festival (18–20 September) in Somerset. Set within the sumptuous grounds of RHS Partner Garden, Yeo Valley Organic Garden and RHS members enjoy nearly 30 per cent off adult tickets.
• Book at: yvogardenfestival.co.uk

2 Seed-saving tips
Start saving seeds from your garden plants this month, says the RHS Grow With It team, the charity's year-round campaign to help people start gardening and make more planet-friendly choices. The RHS website offers money-saving advice and videos on gathering, cleaning and storing seeds, ideas for seed swaps and starting a community seed library.
• More at: rhs.org.uk/saveseds

3 The Thursday Murder Club
RHS Partner Garden Englefield Estate in Reading provides the backdrop for new Netflix film *The Thursday Murder Club*, based on Richard Osman's bestselling novel and starring Helen Mirren and Pierce Brosnan. Some 1,000 species grow within its 12 acres of Italianate gardens and deer park. Oak, maple and *Liquidambar* offer a riot of autumn colour in late September.
• Learn more: englefieldestate.co.uk

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL STATS

8016

Reports to RHS Plant Health of *Buddleja* being damaged by aphids across 147 counties in 4 countries of the UK.

People making a difference

Meet Katie Childs, Chief Executive of new RHS Partner Garden Chawton House, where she champions the legacy of early women botanists and writers

Men weren't the only plant writers in history, although they were typically better educated. Women wrote about botany too – just in different ways, through poetry, novels, cookbooks or diaries. At Chawton House, Hampshire, we hold the UK's only collection of pre-20th-century women's writing in the UK. Among the 16,000 works, many are inspired by the natural world.

Women are the true protagonists of this estate. Not only those whose books are preserved in the library but also those who lived in the house itself, including Jane Austen, who made it famous, and Florence Knighth, whose development of the gardens shaped what we see today.



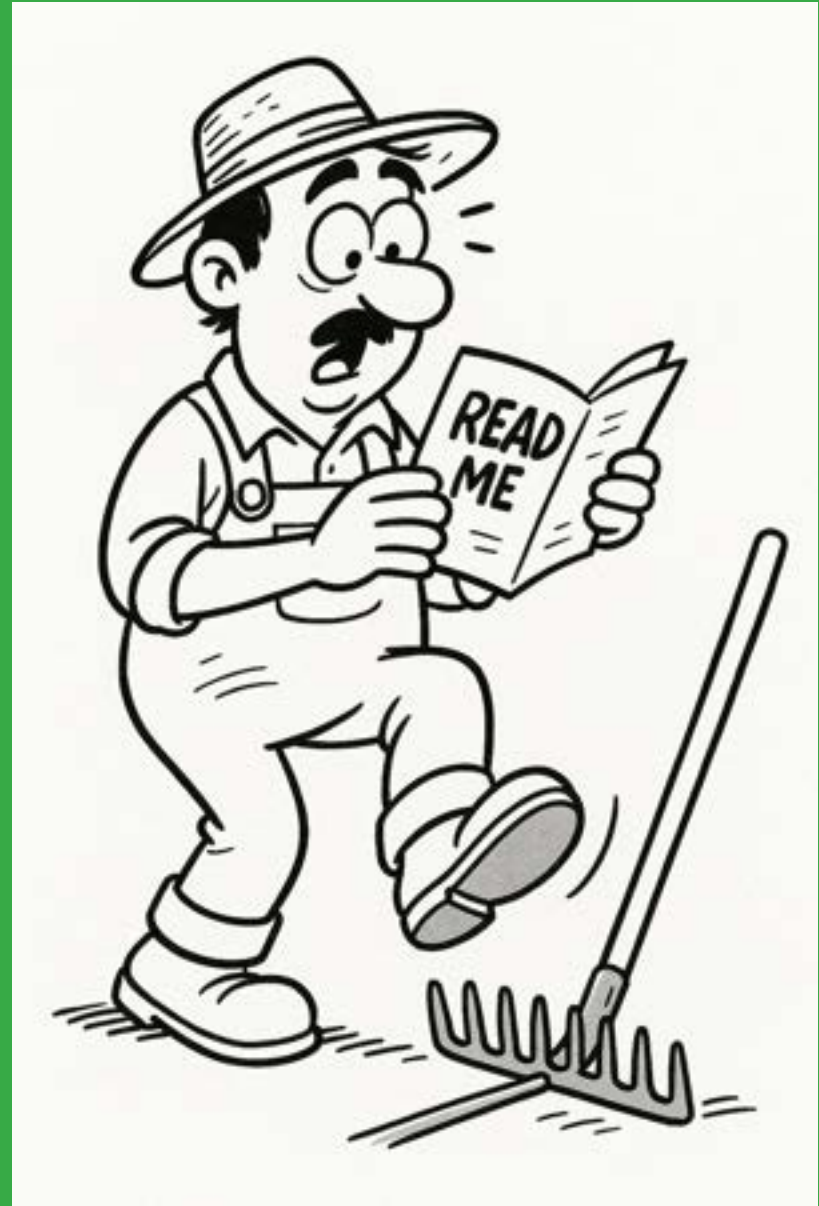
Jane Austen and Chawton House are inseparable. The estate was inherited by her brother Edward, and she spent nearly a decade in the village. We've got first editions of her works, a family manuscript, and works by the authors she read, including Frances Burney's *Camilla*.

Jane had a sharp wit, even when it came to gardening. In one memorable letter, she wrote: "I will not say that your mulberry trees are dead; but they are not alive." To mark her 250th birthday this year, we'll have an exhibition and events. We're restoring her brother's walled garden, within which there'll be a flower bed named for her as well as a container garden inspired by Elizabeth Kent's *Flora Domestica*, the first-ever portable garden guide. A new trail called In Austen's Footsteps will show the paths Jane walked as she explored the estate.

• For more: chawtonhouse.org

Useful information

- We work at least 3 to 4 months in advance
- The features department works 1 year ahead
- Every article is as seasonal as possible
- We can't guarantee stories will run
- We often need to move things around at the last minute
- Pagination changes depending on the issue





News

amyoliver@rhs.org.uk

Expert's Pick, Podcast

garethrichards@rhs.org.uk

Garden features

danmasoliver@rhs.org.uk

www.professionalgardenphotographers.com



RHS Partner Garden Team Updates

Pru Murray, RHS Partner Garden Manager



2026 Networking Forums

- Wed 11 February 9:30am RHS BioSecurity, Plant Passports & Plant Health Update (Sara Redstone, RHS Biosecurity Lead) – Online
- RHS Gardeners' Networking Days in conjunction with RHS Expert Groups – details coming soon.





RHS Sandringham Flower Show

RHS Partner Gardens/Head Gardeners Feature



Celebrating Head Gardeners



RHS Show Dates 2026

- **RHS Chelsea**

- Tues 19th–Sat 23rd May
- President's Drinks – Tuesday 19th

- **RHS Badminton**

- Wed 8th -Sun 12th July

- **RHS Sandringham**

- Wed 22nd –Sun 26th July

- **RHS Malvern Spring & Autumn**

- 7-10 May/ 25-27 Sept

RHS Partner Garden Website Pages

- Over 26 million RHS website users
- 74th most popular UK website (25-34 years)
- Increased impact of PG pages
 - PG page profile
 - Open this month
 - Themed articles
 - Website carousels

Latest from RHS Partner Gardens

Keep up with what's blooming, where to go, and what's new in RHS Partner Gardens:



Magical white gardens
Take inspiration from this selection of RHS Partner Gardens and create your own white garden at home

Autumn's bounty beckons
Discover autumn's bounty at RHS Partner Gardens, where vibrant foliage lights up the landscape

RHS Partner Gardens to visit in the Midlands

RHS Partner Gardens with fabulous rose gardens

Enchanting Scottish RHS Partner Gardens

RHS Partner Gardens with cottages and hotels

Forthcoming website carousel themes

December:	Small Winter Gardens
January:	Unusual Glasshouse collections
February:	Japanese & Chinese gardens
March:	Iridescent Irises
April:	Wonderful Wisteria
May:	Tree Topiary
June:	Volunteer-run gardens

Farewell to Susie!



Thanks to your support, the RHS is inspiring everyone to grow by:

- Supporting children in **over half of UK schools** via the RHS Campaign for School Gardening
- **Conducting over 100,000 hours of scientific research** to help everyone garden sustainably
- Working alongside the NHS to create **hospital wellbeing gardens**
- Training the next generation of gardeners by supporting **over 5,500 students and 70 apprentices**
- Introducing, ***New Shoots*** to **increase the diversity of people** in horticultural careers
- Inspiring more people to garden by **supporting over 5,000 community groups and societies**

Any questions?



We'd love your feedback!

RHS Partner Garden Forum

