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The Heritage Alliance is England's largest coalition of independent heritage interests. We unite over 130 organisations which together have over 7 million members, volunteers, trustees and staff. The vast majority of England's historic environment is owned, managed and cared for by Heritage Alliance members.

Gardens and parks have huge contribution to the UK economy as part of the historic landscape and the heritage sector, which total estimated GVA contribution to the UK's GDP of £13.1 billion in 2016, equivalent to 0.75 per cent of UK's total GVA¹. Their contribution, however, is far bigger than the above numbers, as it also adds to other important areas of social development as education, culture, health, wellbeing and international leadership.

In direct response to the questions, listed in the [enquiry](#), launched by The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee on gardens' contribution to UK tourism, the economy and to our national heritage, the members of the Heritage Alliance would like to note the following points:

- *How can gardens across the UK be supported to attract visitors and to ensure their future sustainability?*

One of the main issues in the maintenance and development of gardens and parks in the UK is **the need for strong funding**. The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) [Alliance member] has provided a lot of financial help to many projects affecting gardens and landscaping (from Kew Gardens, through Chiswick Country House and Gardens and Wrest Park, to the festival dedicated to the 300th anniversary of the birth of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown). We call on Government to protect the 20% share of National Lottery funding for NLHF, and to explore opportunities to enhance that still further to meet emerging needs. Historic England and the Arts Council join NLHF as the bedrock of the sector. Their future stability and adequate funding is crucial. This affects to the funding of gardens and parks in the country, as their contribution to the heritage and the economy as a whole is considerable. There are other organisations that look after gardens and parks in UK more directly, **many of them Heritage Alliance's members, including The National Trust, English Heritage, Historic Houses, Association for Leading Visitors Attractions, Chelsea Physic Garden, The Environment Trust, The Gardens Trust, Historic Royal Palaces, The Landmark Trust, London Parks & Gardens Trust, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Weald and Downland Living Museum and many others,**

¹ [The heritage sector in England and its impact on the economy](#), A report for Historic England, Oct 2018, p.6

and they all benefit from effective and sufficient support of their activities and projects in various ways.

More than 1,600 parks and gardens in England are designated as being of national importance. These are included in the [Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England](#). They make a special contribution to the historic environment of our countryside and towns. In addition, there are 99 registered parks and gardens on the Historic England's [Heritage at Risk Register](#), representing 5.9% of the total number of [registered parks and gardens in England](#). These complex landscapes often require significant monetary investment. They also need commitment from their owners to achieve the positive management necessary, so that they can be removed from the Heritage at Risk Register. Historic England's grant funding, as well as that from other funding bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and Natural England (through the Countryside Stewardship scheme), delivers repair solutions for designed landscapes, and they need to be supported by Government with sufficient funding and legislative protection.

A significant contribution on the legislative side is the **fiscal protection** of these bodies and organisations. We need a more positive, and simpler, tax regime for repair, maintenance and conservation. Work to historic buildings (including built features in gardens, bridges, etc.) is subject to 20% VAT, yet no VAT at all is charged on new buildings. This creates a perverse incentive to demolish old buildings rather than repairing, maintaining or altering them. VAT should be permanently reduced to 5% on the repairs, maintenance and improvement of dwellings.

As Historic Houses [Alliance member] pointed out, **practical improvements to the tax framework** are essential to help historic houses and gardens generate funding (from their own resources) to tackle the huge backlog of repair and maintenance these special places require. Historic Houses' evidence indicates that reforming Heritage Maintenance Funds (HMFs) would be the most cost-effective tool for their sites – their independent research has concluded that reducing the income tax rate on HMFs to the basic rate of 20% would generate a net economic benefit for the UK economy of £85.5 million by 2023. This benefit derives from the additional tourism visits that would be carried out (because more houses and gardens would be open to the public), the additional maintenance and repair work that would be carried out, and the general enhancement to wellbeing that arises from greater public access to well looked-after heritage assets.

There is also the issue of **planning permission and/or listed building consent for temporary structures in gardens**. Many Historic Houses and other sites places not only open their gardens for visitors, but also use them to offer summer season cafes, events venues and wedding facilities. This in turn increases not only the popularity of a venue, but also creates an additional revenue stream which supports the long-term sustainability of the historic garden and the historic house. By helping to promote best practice in this area, the Government could enable more historic gardens to open to visitors and be sustainable, thanks to the addition of temporary structures that promote their ongoing viability – such as a café, visitor centre or events space.

Another clear need is to acquire **more funding for the development of rural broadband**, alongside better promotion of existing schemes. Only 37% of Historic Houses places have sufficient access to 4G and fibre optic broadband.

There is also the issue of the *'final mile'*, which refers to a **lack of public transport options** between the closest train station or airport and a tourism destination. While some Historic Houses places are large enough to be able to partner with local transport companies such as bus and taxi firms, others do not have the same resources. There is an opportunity here for heritage sites, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Destination Management Organisations and/or Local Government to work together to tackle the issue of the *'final mile'* in support of their local rural tourism businesses such as historic gardens.

Government support to gardens and parks could also be expressed through supporting **apprenticeships and volunteering programmes** and **skills development** in the sector. The current Government's approach to apprenticeships through the Trailblazer programme tends to favour large scale industries over the niche skills the heritage community needs. We call upon all parties to particularly support smaller-scale apprenticeship programmes, including those in historic parks and gardens, as well as working towards the creation of an immigration system that won't prevent getting expert labour from Europe after Brexit (see The Heritage Alliance's [briefing on Immigration and Brexit](#)).

- *What contribution do gardens and garden design make to domestic and international tourism?*

As the Government has acknowledged already, [Research conducted by VisitBritain](#) has found that a third of overseas tourists to the UK spent part of their trip at a park or garden. In addition, for the first time a [report published by Oxford Economic](#) for the Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Group reveals the significant value of the UK's ornamental horticulture and landscape industries. According to the report, £24.2 billion is the total GDP footprint of the UK's ornamental horticulture industries in 2017.

Two out of the top ten visitor attractions in the UK for 2017, according to [VisitEngland2018](#), are gardens – Royal Botanic Kew gardens – 1.5 mln visitors, and the Royal horticultural society in Wisley – 1.1 mln visitors.

Many gardens and parks are **part of heritage sites** and estates that are maintained and looked after by the Heritage Alliance's member organisations, such as Historic Houses, The National Trust and English Heritage. The National Trust has been caring for special gardens for over 110 years. They now look after over 200 gardens and parks and 32 Plant Heritage National Plant Collections and over 70,000 plant species. They employ nearly 700 people to look after their parks and gardens, who are assisted by a large number of volunteer gardeners and those helping with activities such as plant selling and guided talks. Their gardens are a major draw for tourism in Britain: VisitEngland estimates parks and gardens generate £625 million in

visitor spend among domestic visits alone, and even more than this in associated spending on local businesses.²

English heritage [Alliance member] looks after many nationally important historic gardens and landscapes, such as those in Wrest Park and Osborne House. Their conservation is guided by detailed management and maintenance practices, and they have developed [extensive guidance](#) on these, including on environmental sustainability and conservation management. This specialised expertise, together with the heritage assets that the historic gardens represent, are of indispensable value to the economy and the cultural industry of the country.

As another Heritage Alliance member [Historic Houses] noted, **a key part of the appeal of many of the 1,650 historic places are gardens and designed landscapes - in their own right or as part of an historic house estate.** Many of the parks and gardens are registered heritage assets and draw visitors from across the country and the world - there are more than 26 million visits to Historic Houses places each year, which generate over £1 billion for the economy, and support more than 33,000 full time equivalent jobs. Garden tourism is also a vital part of the sustainable future of many Historic Houses places, who reinvest the profits from opening their gardens into the maintenance and repair of a listed house and gardens; across the UK, Historic Houses places currently face an outstanding repair and maintenance bill of £1.38 billion.

We have much to benefit from **international engagement** as well. The Government is well aware of the contribution our cultural heritage makes to international relations – UK's expertise in garden landscaping and development as well as garden and parks management for the benefit of the cultural and tourism industry is a major contributor to this too. The independent heritage sector has long been a source of **world leading expertise** from our pioneering heritage science to our archaeological accreditation process. UK's horticultural and landscaping design expertise is part of this. The [Heritage Alliance's International Report](#) highlights the expertise that we offer as a sector and explores some of the innovative projects as well as the range of advice and support that Heritage Alliance members export, offer or engage with in the course of their work.

Even individual garden members of the Alliance can testify for the special attraction that gardens and parks have to the visitors – in 2016, [Chelsey Physic Garden](#) [Alliance member] welcomed 58,109 visitors. Their world-leading [seed exchange programme](#) now operates between approximately 368 other Botanic Gardens and universities in 37 different countries, enabling gardens all over the world to introduce new plants to their countries and to maintain interesting and diverse collections within their grounds.

The Open Gardens initiative has an immense popularity all over the country – in June every year hundreds of thousands of people visit various open gardens – from those in villages and towns, to the gardens of historic houses and national sites. [London Parks & Gardens trust](#) [Alliance Member] organises every year in June their [Open Gardens squares weekend](#), which highlights some of the best gardens and green spaces that make up the rich tapestry of London's green infrastructure, but there are many others – just as valuable to their

² Visit England Valuing Activities Research, 2015 - <https://www.visitbritain.org/england-visitor-activities>

communities – which are in decline or under threat of development. Funds raised during OGSW mean that the London Parks and Gardens Trust can continue its work to protect them.

- *How do gardens and garden design contribute to the creative economy?*

The gardens of historic houses, parks and other heritage sites **are often used by the creative industry – in film productions, for concert and festival venues, exhibitions, promotions and other PR events**, underpinning the success of their industries. The visitors to many UK historic houses and gardens are drawn by the appeal of those films and programmes associated with these historic locations and landscapes. From *Harry Potter* and *Narnia* to *Downton Abbey*, *Swallows and Amazons* and *Pride and Prejudice* – all these productions and their huge fandoms led to significant increase in visitors per year (and consequent income) to the gardens and estates associated with them. This part of the cultural tourism would be unimaginable without the historic landscapes of the English countryside and the gardens of the historic houses, and this is yet another reason for [VisitBritain](#) to include them as a [separate big attraction to the UK](#) .

Equally, many **music, theatre and film festivals, including outdoor theatre**, are hosted at historic houses park and gardens (from Hampton Court to Burghley House), which provide the best setting for outdoor events of this type (especially in the summer) and give the visitors the opportunity to appreciate British culture both in heritage/horticultural and creative aspects. Even singular events like concerts, theatre plays, fashion shows and awards nights have often taken place in gardens and parks across Britain, capitalising on the natural attraction and the perfect creative potential of their setting to accommodate participants and viewers alike (eg. the outdoor theatre at George Bernard Shaw’s House, Shaw’s Corner)

Apart from that, many public gardens and national parks attract plenty of visitors in their own right (see statistics above), providing a perfect showcase for **sculpture, murals, ornaments and other various forms of art and design**, incorporated in the garden landscapes. In fact, sculpture and art gardens have their own presence and place in the cultural life of most UK cities and towns ([separate section on VisitBritain](#))

- *How can garden design and landscaping best support community spaces and community connections?*

Britain is known for its love for gardening and landscaping and its special prowess in creating beautiful green spaces and gardens even in the smallest of spaces. Beautiful and well-designed green spaces always promote **health, activity, and better standard of living**, alongside the clear **environmental benefits**. Parks and gardens support the overall **individual and social wellbeing**, invite more people to get together and interact, which ultimately stimulates **community cohesion** and **prosperity** as a whole.

The study *Environment and Crime in the Inner City (2016)* found that people living in greener surroundings reported “lower levels of fear, fewer incivilities, and less aggressive and violent

behaviour.”³ communal gardens create a sense of community and people are less likely to litter. A further study by Kuo and Sullivan, *Aggression and Violence in the Inner City*, showed that buildings with more green spaces reported less aggression and violence than barren buildings.⁴

Gardens and green outdoor spaces offer additional opportunities to undertake **volunteering activities**, which have been proven to contribute both to the economy (heritage and tourism included) and the wellbeing of people and communities. Heritage volunteering accounts for 6% of all voluntary work undertaken in England. The National Trust alone has over 65,000 volunteers alone. Heritage volunteering promotes a healthy lifestyle by encouraging people out of their homes and by offering roles that can involve public interaction, learning new skills and physical work. The correlation between volunteering and improved mental health is made clear in a [2011 Heritage Lottery Fund project](#), which investigates ‘*the social impact of volunteering in HLF-funded projects*’. Similarly, a survey of volunteers who took part in the 2016 [Heritage Open Days](#), England’s largest grass roots heritage festival involving over 40,000 volunteers and 5,000 events, revealed that 69% felt ‘*more relaxed*’, while 64% felt healthier and more active having taken part in the event.

Another example of extremely popular use of gardens are the special events and initiatives with more social and educational character, which demonstrate not only the economic, but also the **communal and cultural value** of the British gardens. After over five years in the making, the [Magic Garden at Hampton Court Palace](#) finally opened in May 2016. The Magic Garden draws inspiration from the Tudor palace and offers families a new and exciting way to explore elements of Hampton Court’s history. In its first year, the Magic Garden attracted over 250,000 delighted family users and helped to boost Hampton Court visitor figures to record levels.

The National Trust also attracted many people to visiting their properties, parks, gardens and outdoor areas by introducing the [50 things to do before you are 11^{3/4}](#) initiative. This inspired thousands of children and families into venturing in the outdoors and exploring all amazing gardens and open spaces that have been under the management of organisations like the National Trust – thus acquiring not only physical fitness and knowledge about the world that we live in, but experiencing these connections with nature and heritage that makes them feel that they are part of something bigger and beautiful, that they belong.

The more the Government can do to unleash the full potential of garden tourism, the more this vital part of our tourism industry will be able to grow and flourish – not only contributing to UK GDP and providing rural jobs and prosperity, but also supporting the communities and nationally important heritage assets associated with those gardens. From the monastic gardens of the first millennium to the ground breaking designs of our world class modern designers, our cultural heritage is embedded in the gardens of historic houses, natural parks, historic towns, villages and sites.

³ Frances E. Kuo, William C. Sullivan. (2016) *Environment and Crime in the Inner City*. Sage Journals: Vol 33, Issue 3, pp. 343 - 367

⁴ Frances E. Kuo, William C. Sullivan. (2001) *Aggression and Violence in the Inner City*. Sage Journals: Vol 33, Issue 4, pp. 543 - 571

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