



CHISWICK HOUSE
& GARDENS TRUST

Ten Year Strategy

For everyone – every day

2022 – 2032





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Preface

The whole world has been through turbulent times since we started writing a new ten-year strategy for Chiswick House and Gardens in 2019.

We do not know how many of those who loved this House and Gardens have been seriously ill or may have lost their lives or lost loved ones due to the pandemic. We grieve with those who have suffered such loss.

Against this backdrop of personal tragedy and widespread alarm and fear, and in a time of extraordinary commitment by NHS and Care staff and other essential workers, we understood our own ambitions and worries about our charity might seem parochial.

Nonetheless we did have staff to worry about, a 65-acre Garden to keep going and a 290-year-old House to conserve. Life continues, and indeed we know – at a time when exercise and being outdoors has become more precious and valued – how important it is that the Gardens stay open.

The Trust exists only to sustain charitable objectives which conserve the internationally important architecture and landscape and make both available to people from near and far to learn, be inspired by, and enjoy their beauty.

So, we got on with it. We launched a fundraising drive in June 2020 which attracted over 2900 new donors who love the place as much as we do, and collectively raised over £120,000. We bid for any pot of money we could and had a very good response. We are grateful to the Cultural Recovery Fund, whose grant of £462,000 greatly helped mitigate the £765,000 in commercial income we lost over two years. English Heritage Trust used its emergency funding to help us as well. Meanwhile we cut our own costs drastically. We kept the house closed for 2020 but opened it with a fantastic new exhibition in May 2021. Securing 3-year funding from the Linbury Trust to establish a programme working with some of the most vulnerable in the community underpinned our commitment to be a space available for everyone.

We launched a new Membership scheme which has caught the imagination of lots of visitors. In its first year some 400 members signed up.

We are conscious that the Estate has survived for nearly three centuries. It has gone through the grievous flu pandemic of 1775, the cholera epidemic of 1832 and the ravages of Spanish Flu in 1918. It has witnessed two World Wars and outlasted the reigns of eight monarchs, from the Stuarts to the Windsors. The House was built in the period of Britain's first Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole; 54 others have held office since then.



We will not let the Estate suffer harm on our watch. Indeed, we are determined to see it flourish and for our charitable works to bring its joys to a wider audience.

To do this we need your help.

To inspire your help, we want to lay out our ambitions.

What is possible remains to be seen; but without ambition we will drift.

Our ambitions are already greater than they were in 2019.

This is the first strategy written since the Trust took over responsibility for both the House and the Gardens in 2017. What a far-sighted, ambitious idea that remains. We want to live up to the ideals in that initial plan.

Derek Myers

Chair, Trustee Board



Introduction

This strategy serves to plot a way forward for Chiswick House and Gardens Trust over the next ten years. It commits us to a renewed Vision: to be a place for everyone every day; and a new Mission: to conserve our historic, horticultural, and natural heritage for our visitors, sustain and improve our biodiversity, and support our local community's health and wellbeing.

Bringing clarity to why we exist and our purpose has helped us, throughout the pandemic, to focus on making choices that have broadened our reach, made us more relevant to more people, and enhanced our natural environment.



We have set out six big strategic plays to transform our Vision into reality, along with six big revenue-enhancing elements and four indicators of a successful Trust. There is still financial uncertainty, but we are hopeful that we can start to plan our recovery. We have kept the financial detail light here, but we are committed to exploring major capital expenditure through: a new learning centre; a new community pavilion in a neglected, unused area; a new area for local design and maker businesses; a new visitor facility; a renewed Conservatory; additional catering outlets and a re-presented House that is fully accessible for disabled people.

We are committed to continuous enhancements of the Gardens. We have defined four priority improvements: restoring each of our entrances with better planting and refurbishing our gates; an enhanced shrubbery planted for year round interest, showcasing some of our historic camellias and for wildlife value; improving the wildlife habitats by the lake; and an enhanced presentation of our historic 'bowling green' area in the northern wilderness. All our improvements will be planned with a commitment to improving biodiversity, sustainability and the environment, balanced with safeguarding our historic assets and in partnership with our community.

We believe that heritage sites have more than one role to play, and that we can both offer an historic experience whilst also recognising the enormous potential this site holds to respond to some of the challenges we face as a society. Isolation, loneliness, disconnection from nature, unemployment and poverty are just some of the serious issues we grapple with in our borough, and we have resources on this site to make some difference to the lives of people who live locally and are affected by these issues. We want to ensure that we truly are a local asset serving all our communities.

We believe it is an exciting strategy that harnesses the enthusiasm of our funders and property owners, the energy of new trustees and senior staff, and a sense that our fundamentals are strong but our future is even stronger. I hope you do too.

Xanthe Arvanitakis
Director

Why is this place so special?

The Gardens

Most visitors to the estate will use the free-to-enter Gardens. A small proportion will enter the House and Kitchen Garden, our ticketed attractions. We want to increase this proportion.

Both House and Gardens are historically important.

Chiswick House is the most widely recognised example of the English 18th Century Palladian villa nationally and internationally.

It is the personal creation of Lord Burlington – the most influential arbiter of architectural taste and patron of the arts in early Georgian England – along with his friend and protégé, William Kent.

Burlington sought to re-create the style of house and garden found in ancient Rome, as interpreted through the lens of 16th Century Italian Mannerist architects. His design drew not only on published architectural sources but on Burlington's and Kent's direct experience of Italy, particularly the work of the architect Andrea Palladio, many of whose drawings Burlington purchased in 1719. The garden contained a wealth of features including the Amphitheatre, the Cascade and the column and obelisks, which could have been found in ancient Roman gardens or in Renaissance Rome.

Semi-circular design features such as the Exedra, the two pools and the forecourt may be inspired by ancient Roman baths.

While the grounds contained features found in other contemporary gardens – such as *patte d'oies* and formal *allées*, grass earthworks, wildernesses and classical buildings and statuary – the densely packed succession of theatrical incidents within such a small area was unique.

The creation of the serpentine river *c.*1729 can be cited as a pioneering example of a new natural style of gardening.

Later generations altered parts of Burlington's Garden and many of its features were recreated in the 1950s or more recently. Among significant survivals from the Earl's time are the main part of the serpentine river, the avenue leading to the Rustic House, the plan of the Exedra, the great cedars in its avenue, the terrace and, with some remodeling, the two wildernesses.

Several of Burlington's Garden buildings survive, including the Rustic House, the cascade, the Ionic Temple, the Deer House, the Doric column and two obelisks.

England's first classical architect and admirer of Palladio, Inigo Jones, is represented by a gateway from Beaufort House, Chelsea which was moved to Chiswick in 1738.

When Lord and Lady Burlington's surviving daughter, Charlotte, married the 4th Duke of Devonshire Chiswick House and Gardens passed to the Devonshire family.

Their son, the 5th Duke of Devonshire, made significant changes:

The Classic Bridge, designed by James Wyatt, was built in 1774. Samuel Lapidge, Capability Brown's professional heir, naturalised the western area of the Garden around 1785 by planting out two of the formal allées in the western wilderness, introducing shrub planting of evergreens, honeysuckles, lilacs and guelder roses, and creating a new perimeter walk with views over the park.

The 5th Duke's wife, Duchess Georgiana, had French connections which influenced her to collect roses in the 1790s and to commission a formal rosary at Chiswick, planted in concentric circles around the Doric column.

The 6th Duke of Devonshire made more changes:

The purchase of the Moreton Hall estate in 1812 significantly enlarged the grounds when the Duke incorporated the walled gardens, including the Kitchen Garden still in use today. The Conservatory – designed by Samuel Ware, the Duke's architect and surveyor, and built in 1813 – was the largest in the country at 302 feet long. The end pavilions held pineries and in the centre was a fountain and basin with aquatic plants.

The Italian Garden designed by Lewis Kennedy in front of the Conservatory was among the earliest formal parterres to be revived in England in the early 19th century, forerunners of the high Victorian gardens of the 1850s and '60s. Charles Edmunds, head gardener from 1838–c.1878, was one of the first to experiment in the mid-19th century with massed annuals in some beds.

In 1828 the Conservatory was filled with 'a collection of camellias' purchased by the Duke's gardener William Lindsay, from Messrs. Chandler and Buckingham of Vauxhall. These were expensive imports costing between 3 and 5 guineas in 1825. Several of the original 40 varieties survive, making the heritage collection probably the largest in Britain under glass. The collection contains four of the first camellias introduced into Europe: *Camellia japonica* (c.1739), *C. japonica* 'Rubra Plena' (1794) *C. japonica* 'Variegata' (1792) and *C. japonica* 'Alba Plena' (1792). In 1994 the collection was adopted by the International Camellia Society.



The House

Chiswick House was an attempt by Lord Burlington to create a Roman villa (rather than a Renaissance pastiche) situated in a symbolic Roman garden. Chiswick Villa is inspired in part by several buildings by the 16th-century Italian architects Andrea Palladio and his assistant Vincenzo Scamozzi.

Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington (1694-1753) was, unusually, his own architect. The house was built between 1723 and 1729 and therefore will celebrate its tercentenary in 2029.

Art and culture have always been at the heart of Chiswick House and Gardens – from Lord Burlington's original collection to contemporary artists today.

Rather than a conventional home, Chiswick House was a bold architectural experiment. It also provided an exquisite setting for Burlington's collection of paintings, specially designed furniture, and souvenirs from his European travels.

The lavish interiors on the first floor, the 'piano nobile', were hung with richly coloured velvet. These wall coverings have been re-created in the Blue Velvet Room, Lord Burlington's private study, which is hung with hand-woven blue silk velvet.

In the 18th Century the velvet hangings would have been almost obscured by a vast number of paintings. Lord Burlington was one of the century's greatest art collectors in Britain and his support of designers, artists and musicians earned him the title 'Apollo of the Arts', bestowed on him by the historian and writer Horace Walpole.

By the early 1890s Chiswick had largely been cleared of its collections, but from the mid-1950s onwards some pieces have returned. Today the Upper Tribune provides the best example of Burlington's original picture hang.

William Kent was responsible for the painted ceilings at Chiswick. His ceiling in the Red Velvet Room shows Mercury (representing Commerce) directing Abundance (who holds a cornucopia or horn of plenty) to the three visual arts: Architecture, Sculpture and Painting.

At the rear of the Villa were positioned 'herm' statues that derive from the Greek god Hermes, the patron of travellers; these are welcoming figures for all who wish to visit the Gardens. Lord Burlington's gardens at Chiswick were the most visited of all London villas. A small entrance charge applied even then!

Strategic considerations

The last business plan for Chiswick House and Gardens Trust (CHGT) was published in November 2016 and was written as a supporting document to a 2017 bid to the then Heritage Lottery Fund. That was a follow-up to a successful earlier bid whereby the Fund and other private and voluntary sponsors provided funds for major improvement and recovery works to the Gardens which were completed in 2010.

The second bid sought support for a new wing to be built onto the original Burlington Villa and a 'Link Building' to provide better visitor reception facilities including full disabled access, more retail space and better toilet provision. The bid would have improved heating, lighting, and IT in the House, and transformed interpretation. The bid total was £7.3m with the hope that £4.5m would be granted from National Lottery Heritage Fund and £2.3m from fundraising. Some c.£200,000 was earmarked from S106 funding obligations following local residential development but no other fundraising was achieved.

That bid was made in Spring 2017 and was refused a First-Round pass on 26th September 2017 on the grounds that the application was premature; the case made was not strong enough and did not connect with the impact of the first project; and project risk was too high due to the absence of community engagement and fundraising.

That optimistic business plan now needs to be drastically revised, particularly because it anticipated considerable investment in the visitor experience within the House. That investment has yet to happen.

The first Local Management Agreement between English Heritage Trust and CHGT was signed in Spring 2017 and lasts for five years. We are confident of a second agreement, hopefully for ten years from 2022.





A solid platform

We have a strong group of volunteers who love to assist in the Kitchen Garden, wider gardens, visitor experience, shop and produce cart, ranger duties, beekeeping, lake management, the archive and House and Garden tours. Over 250 individuals contribute thousands of hours each year, sharing their skills and enthusiasm.

We have a devoted and enthusiastic staff group who contribute well beyond the contribution described in their employment contracts.

The Gardens and buildings are in satisfactory order with some elements outstanding. The heritage Gardens continue to win Green Flag and London in Bloom awards. Visitors continue to be appreciative of the Gardens and there is no great demand for change.

Colicci, the cafe contractor, has refurbished the cafe and improved the menu. The private venue hire business (such as weddings) had grown from 10 couples in 2010 to 30 couples in 2019, bringing in revenues of c.£160,000. Covid wiped this out and it is only slowly growing back.

Our large partner events business (such as Pub in the Park) was also wiped out by Covid but confirmed events for 2022 and beyond look encouraging.

We were much helped by English Heritage Trust who enabled our event marquee to be replaced in 2021.

We have worked incredibly hard over the last 2 years to build more sustainable and diverse sources of income. We have successfully launched our Chiswick House & Gardens Membership scheme in 2021 and have therefore significantly grown our income from individual donations.

We have also benefited from a sizeable Culture Recovery Fund grant in 2020/1 to allow us to cover some basic costs, refresh our visitor experience and retail offer, and start a public programme – all of which is generating new income from admissions and retail. Major support from the Linbury Trust has enabled us to start a programme of community work based round the Kitchen Garden.



The challenges ahead

We are currently failing to present the House in a way that is respectful to its importance, intrinsic beauty, and history. We made some improvements in 2021 but want to go further.

We have the use of the Grade I listed Conservatory which, as well as housing part of our internationally recognised Heritage Camellia collection, is popular for wedding ceremonies. But the Conservatory has a high-maintenance design, consisting of a particular blend of fenestration, guttering and wooden supports, which is not very weather resilient as more severe rain events become normal. The Conservatory wings are closed to the public, but the central rotunda is safe and open at this moment whilst the London Borough of Hounslow considers the options to renew the Conservatory.

We don't have a Conservation Action Plan for the House though we do have a condition survey dating from 2017. We want to strengthen our work on repairs and conservation with English Heritage Trust.

Our list of items requiring better maintenance is long, including gardens, paths, gates, tenanted properties and some of the heritage statuary and buildings.

Though the core gardens are exceptionally fine, with beautiful trees and planting, other areas would benefit from better planning and more time to improve their quality and sustainability. Our much-loved woodlands, known as the 'Wilderness', should retain their natural feel but would benefit from more proactive woodland and habitat management. We know we are home to bats, bees, birds, hedgehogs, and invertebrates. Plans have been produced for various purposes over the years but we now have an integrated Garden Plan for all 65 acres, which is summarised below.

The facilities that support the House i.e. toilets, access facilities, buggy parking and retail space are below the standards we want.

Our community engagement and learning offer has only just been launched and is dependent on external short-term grants. Ideally this should be a key enduring component of our charitable activity.

We believe we can get more community access and sports education out of the cricket pavilion and outfield.

Our local area

West London is and will remain an affluent area of choice for families and older long-stayers. The area is cosmopolitan and varied with some long established Asian and Polish communities and newer European, Japanese, and Chinese communities.

We cannot expect to change the noise inflicted by Heathrow flightpaths. We believe we are the finest green space in the Chiswick/Brentford/Acton/ Hammersmith areas – which are those most likely to supply regular visitors – and through our community engagement we reach deeper into these areas, attracting a wider local demographic.

Our popularity with c.1000 dog walkers, many of whom come every day – drawn by the variety of paths, open space for off-lead walking and external seating at the cafe – ought to encourage us to see opportunities to build loyalty and ensure folk have opportunities to stop for coffee and be otherwise tempted to leave a financial footprint. The dog walking arrangements, including certain controlled areas, are mature and no changes are planned.

West London has been and will continue to be a place people are drawn to when they aim to set up home. In the same way that Lord Burlington wanted a site out of London away from its noise and dirt, so West London continues to appeal as a green, well connected and safe area. Chiswick House and Gardens are a big selling point.

Local competition and complementarity

West London is well served with heritage attractions and many of these have received or are receiving investment to improve their competitive offers. Chiswick House is amongst the oldest and has better gardens than others. We need to make sure our visitor offer compares well, but also look to combine with others to allow visitors a Grand Day Out, combining a visit to two attractions.

There could be opportunities to suggest combined visits to any combination of Fulham Palace, Chelsea Physic Garden, Marble Hill, Gunnersbury Museum, Hogarth's House, Boston Manor House, and Chiswick House.

Closer to the Estate the riverside pubs, Turnham Green Terrace and its independent shops, and Hogarth's House offer complementary attractions.





Our target audiences

Chiswick House and Gardens is like other heritage attractions in attracting older, white, usually retired visitors. We are committed to reaching out and welcoming people who have never visited before, particularly from other parts of Hounslow, our home borough.

The last marketing analysis procured by the Trust is ageing but was encouraging. Chiswick House was found to have good brand awareness (4th out of a list of 16) but poor conversion of awareness to visits. The study reported only 1 in 10 potential 'heritage visitors' living within a 60-minute drive time had visited. The study thought that up to 2.2m might be tempted to visit by a better offer. Current visitors were found to describe themselves as knowledgeable. The cost of admission to the House was not found to be an obstacle. Half of the day visitors used the cafe.

We have improved signage and route options and renewed our 'visitor map' and website. The basics are now in place to welcome more visitors.

Although our data is incomplete, the pandemic lockdowns increased foot traffic within and through the Gardens and remains high.

We have refreshed our audience development plan to focus on four targets:

- To increase the diversity of our visitors so that we can better reflect the ethnic diversity of our borough.
- To attract families who are visiting the Gardens into Chiswick House and the Kitchen Garden.
- To become more accessible and ensure access to interpretation is appropriate for diverse audiences (age, background and needs).
- To persuade our regular local visitors to support Chiswick House & Gardens Trust by joining our Membership scheme.

Economic outlook

This plan assumes no real term growth in either the London Borough of Hounslow or English Heritage Trust's contribution to our core costs. The grant from Hounslow is guaranteed at the current level plus inflation until 2033. Both organisations have other priorities. The Trust needs to stay alert to Mayoral, Borough or Government initiatives where we can make a useful contribution.

Rampant inflation would be difficult; interest rates are not influential as the Trust carries no debt and has no significant money on deposit.



Response to our draft strategy

The pandemic had two effects. It has meant an extended period where our draft strategy has been on our website and available for comment, but it has also meant we have arranged no meetings to discuss the strategy with interested parties beyond our immediate allies and funders.

We are grateful to those who have taken the time to comment. In all we had brief comments – all supportive – from a dozen or so individuals, and detailed comments from seven people and from Chiswick House Friends. We thank them and have considered their feedback carefully.

This final version of the strategy has less emphasis on ‘design’ as we have identified three themes: Design, Biodiversity and Wellbeing, which will thread through all our work. This should not be read as a retreat, merely that we want to ensure we give equal emphasis to all three themes at the heart of all our work. These are best illustrated by our inaugural 2021 public programme ‘Bring into Being’, our new community programme ‘Growing Together at Chiswick House’, the principles underpinning our garden enhancement project at Corney Road Gate, through to the new products in our Shop.

We are pleased our commitment to expanding our audiences is supported by all those who commented. We were encouraged by the recognition that a stronger community engagement and learning offer will be important in the future. Partly this requires facilities and partly expertise. Both require funding.

We are humbled by the knowledge about and love for the Estate illustrated in the consultation replies, and are particularly grateful to those who pointed out that the site has a history before Burlington and that the more recent history, including 20th century uses, will reveal remarkable stories.

This strategy is not the last word; it can neither refer to all the things we intend to do, time and cash allowing, nor the many other improvements that individuals might hope for.

We will remain mindful that, as voluntary trustees, the Trust has the privilege and duty of running the Estate for a portion of its history. We do this for others and want to be open to contributions from others.



A refreshed Vision for our work

The Trust was set up because there was a compelling ambition to manage, as one historic Estate, the Gardens owned by the Council but also including the House and monuments owned by English Heritage.

We will always be in debt to this far-sighted conviction.

The bare bones of the strategic challenges are not complicated:

1. We need to re-present the House and wider Estate to attract, engage and entertain more visitors. We need to be strong advocates to ensure the House and contents are well conserved and well maintained.
2. We need to have ambitious standards of horticulture, arboriculture, and habitat management throughout the Estate.
3. We need to encourage and provide for a wide range of people to exercise, improve their wellbeing, and have fun.
4. We need to attend to our responsibilities for the buildings and structures on the Estate.
5. We need to find a formula to do this in a way that is financially sustainable, environmentally responsible, respectful of our residential neighbours, mindful of our conservation responsibilities and fair to our staff.
6. We want our visitors and audiences to be diverse and our charitable work to be relevant to all.
7. We want to work in a way which is accessible, accountable and receptive to ideas and challenges. We want to be, and to be seen to be, 'well run'.

Our vision is to be:

A special place to delight, educate and be inspired by our 300 years of stories of influence, design, and environment. For everyone, every day.

And our mission is:

To conserve our historic, horticultural, and natural heritage for our visitors, sustain and improve our biodiversity and support our local community's health and wellbeing.



Our unique selling point is that the Estate is a wellspring of modern architecture and the English Landscape movement. Design as a fascinating, important characteristic of human life is beautifully illustrated by Chiswick House and Gardens. We believe Lord Burlington together with his collaborator William Kent were radical pioneers. Their ideas have resonated for generations. They helped create tourism for visitors who wanted to see beautiful things created by human ingenuity. They cared about natural and crafted beauty. So do people today. So do we.

Lord Burlington and the Dukes of Devonshire and subsequent occupiers of the House and Estate were important influencers. They carried weight; they supported causes; they were active in politics. This influence altered the course of history, and we want to tell those stories too.

We have 300 years of history (more if you look through the past of the walled Kitchen Garden and the estates that preceded ours), and this includes decades of aristocratic use but also over 30 years when the Estate was a radically different therapeutic community for those who were mentally unwell. The Estate has already been in public ownership for 90 years (the centenary will be in 2029) and we are committed to being a vital local community asset.

Ensuring financial sustainability

The last business plan foresaw the Trust needing a yearly revenue of £1.6m at 2016 prices. If we adjust that figure for inflation it might be posited as £1.8m at 2019 prices.

It anticipated that, of this figure, some 80% would be earned income and the rest continuing financial support from English Heritage Trust and London Borough of Hounslow.

We now want to be more ambitious.

We have a target operating model based on responsible financial provision to allow for the right size staff group, including resilience for planned and unplanned absences; provision for subsidised public programmes, learning and community engagement activity; planned maintenance and renewals; funding for marketing and forward planning; and sufficient advice for the Trust to know its future options and be a good advocate for the House.

It seems likely that we should plan to increase gardening capability; volunteer, learning and community leadership and support; administrative and event management resilience; learning provision and provision for community events that don't have to make money. Ideally, we would seek to have a retained Conservation Surveyor to help us ensure the House, contents and statuary are always safe and in great order.

To complete this strategy we need to 'name the gap' between our current financial capability and the target capability to deliver our mission.

The first draft of this gap was £1m. We believe that to see the Estate fully flower – to ensure ambitious standards of maintenance, horticulture, and charitable endeavour – we need to have an income of at least £3m.

The strategy seeks to close this gap.

Again, the component parts of our strategy will not be difficult to name and follow some themes from the last business plan:

1. Secure regular unrestricted income from individuals including Members, Patrons, and occasional donors.
2. Increase revenue and margin from our partner events, private and corporate venue hire and wedding business.
3. Increase revenue from admissions, catering, and retail from more visitors to the House and Kitchen Garden.
4. Be a trusted partner so institutional funders can support our charitable work.
5. Expand our income from our property assets.
6. Seek long term sponsorship from a small number of commercial partners.



Medium term priorities

1. New built facilities

We have used architects and charitable sector business planners to look at options for our under-utilised spaces and buildings so we can increase our community engagement and learning work, run more community projects, host revenue contributing partners and increase catering outlets. These are bold ideas but from the start they are sensitive to our special site and well away from sensitive areas.

If we are not going to revisit the 2016 idea of a new wing on the House, which has many obstacles in its path, we still need to address the same visitor deficits. We need better space for receiving visitors, providing them with modern facilities and engaging them with our history.

2. Develop Outdoor Play

We have partly renewed the children's playground by the café and could improve it further if funds allow.

We have been working with Chiswick Cricket Club to ensure cricket for adults and children continues to be played. We want to do more to encourage children's play, exercise, and sport in the grounds.



3. Improve the Gardens

The Gardens extend to 65 acres. Visitors enter through one of seven entrances. Most areas have full public access, but the Kitchen Garden is ticketed and we reserve the two areas in the northeast of the site for events. Dogs are welcome but must be on leads in certain areas. They are Grade I Listed and represent a holistic historic and artistic statement, alongside the House and some 14 other Grade I listed artefacts. We regularly win awards from London in Bloom and other bodies and will offer ourselves to this external assessment at periodic intervals.

The Trust is responsible for horticulture, tree maintenance, lake maintenance, grass cutting, waste management, water supply, paths and drives, gardening, and some historic buildings. The Council retains responsibility for boundary walls and drains. English Heritage Trust are ultimately responsible for the House and several Grade I listed structures across the estate.

Our Garden Plan builds on the original Conservation Management Plan dating from 2004 which informed the National Heritage Lottery Fund work completed in 2010. Most of those aspirations have been met; a few should be set aside, and others remain. They are too detailed to be set down here, but our Garden Plan sets them out in detail.

The Plan proposes policies to ensure that Chiswick remains:

- A vital resource for the local community,
- A site of International Historic Significance, and
- A place for nature conservation and biodiversity in West London.

Our enduring commitments:

1. We will maintain the overall shape of the Gardens and character areas defined in the Garden Plan.
2. We will maintain the Kitchen Garden as a visitor attraction, a productive garden, and a place for community engagement and learning activities, and volunteer experiences. We have set out a 3-year Kitchen Garden plan.
3. We will maintain the Italian Garden, the Rosary, and the garden to the east of the café as our priority flower garden areas.
4. We will maintain the cricket pitch and try to ensure cricket can continue to be played.
5. We will maintain the Lake as a haven for wildlife.
6. We will maintain a Conservation Management plan that commits us to good upkeep of our heritage assets and areas and a continuing respect for the original ethos of the historic gardens.
7. We want the Estate to be a place where we can create opportunities to learn, but also a place where individuals and families can take exercise, develop new skills, experience a sense of community, and have fun.





Areas where we intend to experiment:

1. How we respond to climate change and the impact on how we maintain and garden more sustainably.
2. How we manage our grasslands to expand our meadows and improve the diversity of wildflowers to encourage greater wildlife and invertebrate activity.
3. Thinking about our woodlands and how we can improve the quality of the tree stock, improve the understory, and increase the flora and fauna.
4. Enhance our wetlands at the edges of the Lake.
5. Continue our commitment to regular public programming and commissioning of the contemporary artistic community.
6. Thinking about curating a good skill mix across our paid gardeners and apprentices, our volunteer gardeners, and our contracted staff.
7. Thinking about how to respond to increasing numbers of visitors, leading to greater wear and tear of grass and other aspects.
8. Being thoughtful about what sort of events we host – where, when and how.
9. Manage our pest and disease threats, including box blight and Ash die back, and responding in an informed way.
10. Better waste management to reduce waste, increase recycling and reduce environmental impact.

We want to improve the Gardens every year with a rolling programme, of which the first four elements are:

1. Improvements to planting and presentation at each entrance gate.
2. Enhanced shrubbery planted for year round interest, showcasing some of our historic camellias and for wildlife value.
3. Better planting and management scheme around the Lake.
4. Improvements to the 'Bowling Green' surrounded by our largest group of veteran sweet chestnut trees.

The London Borough of Hounslow gives us good support by way of a fixed, inflation-adjusted grant each year. We are realistic that the Council is unlikely to be able to increase this amount given resource constraints and competing priorities.

Our calculation is that in a pre-Covid financial year, this payment met about 65% of our gardening costs plus a share of inevitable overheads. In this plan we commit to improvements which will require more gardeners, more plant materials, more expense on arboriculture and more support to our volunteer gardeners. Our expectation is that to fulfil these new commitments each year will require us to add about £200K to our Gardens expenditure.

4. Do better

The community experience during the pandemic proved the importance of accessible and interesting outdoor space. Our vision of a Place for Everyone, Every Day places us firmly in service of this human need.

But we can go further and want to be a place that does good. We can contribute through our educational mission, but we can also seek opportunities to see the estate used to expand life opportunities, help people gain new skills, gain social confidence, and manage their physical and mental wellbeing. We have launched our Growing Together at Chiswick House community programme and are committed to expanding this activity year on year. We are dedicated to working in collaboration with our local community, building strong and sustainable partnerships, co-designing programmes that meet local need, inviting genuine participation through creative and horticultural activities and enriching local community services by being a place that is welcoming and accessible to all.

5. A better Chiswick House experience

Our 2021 public programme 'Bring into Being' proved Chiswick House can commission contemporary artists to make new works and run workshops and activities, providing a fresh perspective for visitors experiencing the House and Gardens.

The visitor experience is already better, with a new introductory film, new audio tours and the addition of the 17th century Kitchen Garden as a visitor attraction.

We want to go further, with an ambitious new joint initiative with English Heritage Trust to this end. We want full access for all visitors whatever their requirements. We want to be able to present the history of the House, its cast of residents and a sense of its place in history. We want to use our extensive archive to allow visitors to understand how an Estate like ours comes into being, survives and transforms. We want a House that rewards repeat visitors with new and untold stories each year and gives a platform to young voices. We want a proactive conservation approach, with ambitious standards for fabric conservation and internal decoration.

And our Vision will yield new opportunities for employment, for volunteering, for the practice of old and new skills.

6. Renewing the Conservatory

Although the building is Grade I listed, the current structure only dates from the 1930s and is possibly the third version of the building on the site. As a mainly wooden structure the building would not have been expected to have a permanent life, and the repairs ten years ago and in the winters of 2019 and 2020 suggest the current design is high maintenance and flawed.

The Trust has now received a full study as to options for the Conservatory. None are inexpensive. The Trust will work with the Conservatory owners, the London Borough of Hounslow, to produce a long-term plan.





How the strategy can be funded

To increase and improve our work we need new and increased income. These are our plans:

1. Expand our supporters

Charities often seek to create a large group of regular supporters who provide regular unrestricted income. Chiswick House Friends was first set up in 1984, well before the Trust itself; the group has donated many tens of thousands of pounds over the past 35 years and continues strongly today. They have raised most of their funds from events – for many years a Garden Opera, and for the past 15 years a highly successful annual Dog Show, now the biggest in London. We are extremely grateful to all the Friends and other volunteers who make these events happen. These events are volunteer run but do require support from the Chiswick House & Gardens team. To date the Friends have not contributed regular unrestricted income to the Trust; they have either part funded or wholly funded improvements to the Gardens or supported events such as the Camellia Festival.

Because we need regular unrestricted income, we launched a Membership scheme in 2021 to run alongside a remodelled Patrons' scheme. Both schemes are growing well, and further growth is anticipated. We believe we can grow membership from the first year's 400 to 10 times this number in 10 years.

2. Improved revenue from admissions, retail, and catering

This strategy does not rely on a significant increase in admissions income from the House anytime in the next nine years. We are planning for a modest increase year on year but the 40% of visitors who visit for free as EHT (English Heritage Trust) members will always have an impact on our income.

However, as we realise a new Visitor Centre from c.2030, a significant increase in visitors makes more sense.

Colicci has been our cafe operator since 2020 and is trading well. They provided a secure income stream during the pandemic and adapted throughout. We will work with them to look for opportunities to extend their offer, for example:

- Looking at the locations Estate-wide for pop-up catering facilities.
- Continuing with the vintage ice cream pop-up during the summer period.
- Consider extended hours or evening service.

3. Increased return and margin from partner events, private and corporate venue hire, weddings, and filming

As our partner events mature and consolidate we will seek to maximise our return. Our planning permission only allows for four major events in the area surrounding the House; we need to ensure these events are profitable as it is our largest event income stream. Overall, we should expect to raise our contribution from partner events and hires by c.20% in real terms over the next five years.

We are talking to new partners daily who want to offer activities from yoga to buggy fit, and we already have great relationships with a range of businesses including Little Forest Folk, Duck Pond market, and Bizzy Buddies – our kids summer camp provider. We will continue to expand our offer.

We have tendered for and contracted a venue hire partner and caterer to expand our private and corporate hires and weddings business. We are targeting to increase contribution generated from venue hire to more than £250k over the next 3 years. Our wedding business is important to us, and some couples use the House and Conservatory for their ceremony.

Separately we have also appointed Film Fixer to develop and expand our filming business with an ambition of doubling the revenues achieved in the current year.

We have put in place a clear plan to manage the balance between access to visitors, events, and filming.



4. Improved fundraising

We need to raise our game in terms of specific project fundraising. Through our membership scheme we receive unrestricted income to pay for our core expenditure, so we will maintain a programme of engagement activities to sustain this vital membership. We recognise that, within our group of supporters, we have individuals with disposable income who would like to invest in specific projects such as capital projects to do with restoration or new buildings, public programmes and exhibitions, the Gardens and camellias, and the playground, to name a few.

Our new executive team has transformed our ability to attract funding from Trusts and Foundations, drawing on our contacts in the grant-giving world as well as the expertise within our team to ensure that our applications reflect the deep knowledge and our capability to carry out a successful project. However, larger scale projects will need to be extremely ambitious about fundraising.

5. Improved revenue from property assets

Currently the Trust has:

- Two tenanted properties.
- A cricket pitch and pavilion for hire.
- A half share in the proceeds from a car park.
- A café.
- Back sheds, a let lockup barn and several other outbuildings.

We need to ensure we are getting a fair return from these assets and that they are managed in a way that protects future income, and to fund our continuous responsibilities for site security, everyday repairs, and water management.

We have used outside experts to consult with others and help us look at options for increasing our service to others. This sub-strategy for our current and evolved assets, called 'A Place for Everyone', will be taken forward in stages and is of course subject to incremental development, fundraising and external consents. However, our strategic intent is to re-utilise and extend some existing buildings to support greater community engagement, fostering new creative enterprises and income generation.

The Trust will need to be mindful of maintenance demands for its assets, particularly the heritage assets. We need to establish a condition survey for key assets and a regular revenue contribution for periodic maintenance. If we get a significant increase in coach visitors, we will need to look at coach parking arrangements. In our asset discussions we will need to be mindful of our designation as a Conservation Area with land designated as Metropolitan Open Land.

6. Headline sponsors

The estate is such a special place that we are open to discussing how commercial companies might be invited to become key sponsors. Our package of benefits might include branding on our marketing and advertising, staff volunteer sessions and entertainment opportunities. We are also actively seeking companies whose staff could assist in estate activities, provide grants for project funding and/or assist in IT improvements.

Measuring Success

A good strategy defines success. And a successful organisation recognises success is never complete. We strive to get better each year.

There are four sets of key indicators of success:

- The opinions and engagement of our target audiences and regular visitors.
- The considered views of our property owners, English Heritage Trust and London Borough of Hounslow.
- The considered opinions of our staff and volunteers.
- Key data measuring the impact of our charitable activity that tests alignment with our stated ambitions.

We will devise simple measures for testing these opinions and ways of ensuring these opinions are responded to, and we will set out indicators of success for our charitable work.

In addition, we want to be known as good, trustworthy managers of the Estate and to be transparent and accountable for the money we raise and spend and the decisions we make.

Get Involved

There are many ways you can support our 10-year strategy
For everyone – every day.

Visit our website, chiswickhouseandgardens.org.uk, and:

- Make a donation
- Join as a Member or Patron
- Visit the House and Kitchen Garden
- Join our mailing list to stay up-to-date
- Follow us on social media

Get in touch

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Working in partnership with:



ENGLISH
HERITAGE



**London Borough
of Hounslow**