



# Impact Report 2023



Our donations help change lives







# About us

The National Garden Scheme gives visitors unique access to over 3,500 exceptional private gardens in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands, and raises impressive amounts of money for nursing and health charities through admissions, teas and cake.

Thanks to the generosity of garden owners, volunteers and visitors we have donated over £70 million to nursing and health charities since we were founded in 1927. In 2023 we agreed total donations from our garden season of £3,403,960.00.

Originally established to raise funds for district nurses, we are now the most significant charitable funder of nursing in the UK and our beneficiaries include Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Hospice UK, Parkinson's UK, The Queen's Nursing Institute and Carers Trust.

The National Garden Scheme doesn't just open beautiful gardens for charity, we are passionate about the physical and mental health benefits of gardens too. We fund projects which promote gardens and gardening as therapy, and in 2017 launched our annual Gardens and Health Week to raise awareness of the topic. We also support charities doing amazing work in gardens and health, and give grants for community gardening projects.

Our funding also supports the training of gardeners and offers respite to horticultural workers who have fallen on difficult times.

This report looks at the impact of our donations throughout 2023 and how our beneficiaries use those donations to support thousands of people across the UK.

We look forward to welcoming you to our gardens in 2024.

*From stately acres and cottage gardens to allotments and community spaces, the depth, variety and horticultural interest of our gardens has a wide appeal.*

**Photo (left):** The Oast, East Sussex © Bennet Smith

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**Front cover image:**  
Maggie's Newcastle © Philip Durrant

# Chairman's and Chief Executive's review



Chief Executive, George Plumptre and Chairman, Rupert Tyler

2023 proved to be a record year for the National Garden Scheme with income raised at gardens exceeding £4 million for the first time. This represents a superlative achievement by all garden owners and county team volunteers who together worked tirelessly to put on open days throughout the year. We open this report with a huge vote of thanks to them all.

The sums raised in turn enabled record donations to our beneficiaries, full details of which you will find in the pages of this report. In addition, further sums raised at some gardens were donated directly to small charities local to them, mostly when they provided the teas at garden openings, thereby increasing our impact and spreading it directly to communities up and down the country.

The National Garden Scheme's charitable impact is twofold. The garden events ensure extensive public benefit by offering people the opportunity to visit and enjoy a wide range of private gardens, most of which are never usually open. At the same time, the fundraising achieved at these events underpins the National Garden Scheme's charitable donations and we are proud that, once again, more than 80% of funds raised at gardens in 2023 has been given directly to our beneficiaries.

Our major long-term beneficiaries are leading providers of nursing and healthcare, in particular community and specialist nursing, cancer, palliative, and end of life care, or they create gardens for individual and public health benefits. In the current state of the wider UK health and care landscape

the impact of our donations has never been more telling, ensuring that our beneficiary charities can continue to make a crucial contribution to the health of the nation. As a group our beneficiaries are a significant force, and our support helps them continue their individual and joint activities.

We have continued to have a special impact with some beneficiaries by funding specific projects that benefit both their staff and patients or other service users. With the Queen's Nursing Institute we have continued to fund their Executive Nurse Leadership programme which trains and equips senior community nurses to take on some of the highest roles in the nursing profession. Previously these roles have rarely been filled by community nurses. Also with the QNI we continue to fund their Elsie Wagg scholarships. These are named after the QNI Trustee who had the original idea to establish the National Garden Scheme in 1927. They fund nurses to develop garden projects at their place of work, such as a GP's surgery or a care home, for the benefit of patients and their families. And with Marie Curie we continue to support their Nightingale Challenge which funds Marie Curie nurses to gain qualifications which enable their career progression, thereby helping ensure that nurses stay in the profession and do not leave.

In recent years, especially since the pandemic, some of the National Garden Scheme's most immediate and diverse impact on communities has been through its Community Garden Grants programme, for which this year has been the busiest. In 2023 we funded 86 programmes with a total of £260,000. The gardens which these programmes create, often in the most challenging of environments, support and engage thousands of people many of whom are living with physical or mental health conditions, or do not otherwise have any access to gardens or green space.

Our Community Garden Grants programme exemplifies the vision set out in our current Strategic Plan 2021-25, that "everyone has access to gardens and values the benefits to their health, wellbeing and enjoyment of life." We continue to pursue our vision and build the impact of our charitable activities from one year to the next.

Rupert Tyler  
Chairman

George Plumptre  
Chief Executive

# Our donations

Originally set up in 1927 to support district nurses, the National Garden Scheme now raises millions for nursing and health charities each year. We also support charities doing amazing work in gardens and health, grant bursaries to help community gardening projects and support gardeners at the start of their careers.

Throughout 2023 we worked with our main beneficiaries to help promote our partnerships, the importance of gardens to health, and to generate increased interest and support for the work of the National Garden Scheme and its portfolio of gardens. This report looks at how our donations made in November 2022 were spent throughout the year.

In 2023, we donated a total of £3,403,960 which includes:

## Main beneficiaries:

Marie Curie	£450,000
Macmillan Cancer Support	£450,000
Hospice UK	£450,000
The Queen's Nursing Institute	£425,000
Carers Trust	£350,000
Parkinson's UK	£350,000

## Gardens and health:

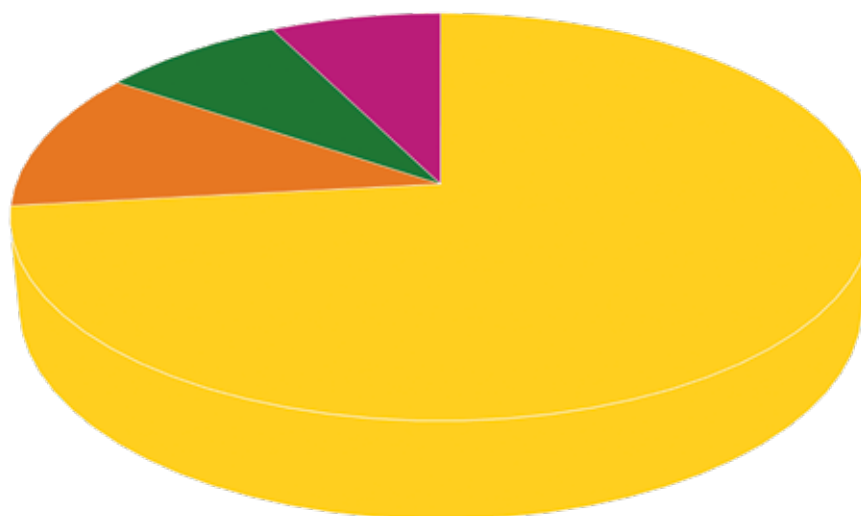
Maggie's	£100,000
Horatio's Garden	£90,000
Army Benevolent Fund	£80,000
Mencap	£50,000
Sue Ryder	£40,660
Thrive	£27,300

## Support for gardeners:

English Heritage	£125,000
Perennial	£100,000
National Botanic Garden of Wales	£26,000
Professional Gardeners' Trust	£20,000
The Garden Museum	£10,000

## Community gardening projects:

86 projects funded £260,000



■ Nursing and Health beneficiaries £2,475,000
 ■ Gardens and Health £387,960
 ■ Support for gardeners £281,000
 ■ Community Garden Grants £260,000

# 2023 in numbers... what our funding supports

**£3,403,960**

Donated to all  
our beneficiaries



**270**

Inpatients supported by the Y Bwthyn  
NGS Macmillan Specialist Palliative  
Care Unit in Wales to September 2023



**100**

Inpatients supported at  
Horatio's Garden Wales  
in 2023



**17,496**

The equivalent number of hours  
of Marie Curie nursing care that  
our donation supported in 2023



**800**

People working in horticulture  
supported by our funding for  
Perennial

**608**

Individuals supported  
through our donation for  
ABF The Soldiers' Charity



Our donation of £3,403,960 was generated from the opening of 3,389 gardens, supported by 585 National Garden Scheme volunteers during the 2023 season. The numbers illustrated here are just some of the incredible things that the money raised has supported.





**26,118**

Unpaid carers and their families supported through our donation to Carers Trust



**152,684**

People accessed guidance on what to expect when a person is dying through our support for Hospice UK



**c. 7,000**

People with Parkinson's supported across the UK



**47,000**

People affected by cancer reached by Maggie's centres supported by the National Garden Scheme



**2,500**

Queen's Nurses supported by our funding

**86**

Community Garden projects funded in 2023



Our audience reach in 2023 included: 63,000 subscribers to our weekly eNewsletter - 1.1 million visits to our website - 120,000 Instagram followers - 43,000 Facebook followers - 26,500 X (formerly Twitter) followers, 7,500 Threads followers and 20,500 YouTube subscribers. Twenty six National Garden Scheme gardens featured on BBC Gardeners' World.

# Nursing and health beneficiaries

## Macmillan Cancer Support

The National Garden Scheme is Macmillan Cancer Support's longest standing partner having donated more than £19 million since our partnership began 39 years ago. In November 2023 we made a donation of £450,000.

£50,000 from this year's donation completes the National Garden Scheme's funding for the Y Bwthyn NGS Macmillan Specialist Palliative Care Unit in the Royal Glamorgan Hospital, Wales. It was the final instalment of a £2.5 million commitment to help build and support this purpose-designed unit providing inpatient care, specialist day centre care and palliative medicine outpatient services.

Since opening to patients in September 2019 further improvements have been made to the unit including new flowers and shrubs being added to the grounds and the introduction of relaxation and pet therapy sessions. From June 2023, 21 complimentary therapy sessions were referred to the unit by consultants and clinical nurse specialists to boost patient wellbeing.

In total 270 inpatients were cared for at the Y Bwthyn unit in 2023 to October, receiving

extraordinary care at the end of their lives. The impact of the unit also helps patients families and friends.

The remaining £350,000 of the donation will help fund Macmillan Nurses. To-date, National Garden Scheme donations have funded 150 Macmillan nurses and other Macmillan professionals. When a person is diagnosed with cancer, having someone there with the expertise to guide them can help make a devastating experience more bearable. That specialist support, tailored to each person's needs, is exactly what Macmillan nurses provide.

Service-user groups and staff from Macmillan also visited National Garden Scheme gardens in 2023 as part of our Gardens and Health Programme, and as venues for staff away days. One participant from a Macmillan cancer support group said: "Both my mum and I totally loved the beautiful garden. It was simply lovely, tranquil and very relaxing. The range of flowers and the way they have developed their garden is truly inspirational."

The garden at the Macmillan Cancer Support Centre in Surrey also opened as part of the National Garden Scheme in 2023.



Sharon, Macmillan Gynaecology Clinical Nurse Specialist with patient © Macmillan Cancer Support



# Marie Curie



Marie Curie Senior Nurse, Halima, supports a patient during a home visit © Philip Hardman/Marie Curie

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Marie Curie since 1996, donating over £11 million in that time, making us the single largest funder of their work.

In November 2023, the National Garden Scheme donated £450,000 to help Marie Curie deliver their ambitious five-year strategy to close the gap in end of life care. Between now and 2028 they aim to design and deliver services providing the best possible care and support to people living with any terminal illness, and those close to them.

National Garden Scheme funding will help Marie Curie grow and transform their direct care and support, deliver more practical information and support and lead in shaping the end of life system.

During 2023, £47,575 of the 2022 donation was spent directly on funding the NGS Nightingale Challenge, a bespoke leadership programme for Marie Curie Nurses and other members of their caring services staff. Unique to Marie Curie, the programme supports the next generation of healthcare leaders in palliative and end of life care.

To-date, 34 Marie Curie nurses and caring services staff have completed the programme. The demand for places on the 2023-24 programme has been the highest ever with 20 delegates now signed-up.

While the remainder of the National Garden Scheme funding is unrestricted, to give an idea of the impact of the donation, it equates to:

- 17,496 hours of Marie Curie nursing care, ensuring that someone with a terminal illness and their loved ones can get the care and support they need in the comfort of their own home.
- 15,500 hours of bereavement support for those who have lost someone who has died from an illness and need to talk.
- 43 days of care in one of Marie Curie's nine hospices.

Thanks to the National Garden Scheme, Marie Curie has been able to directly care for over 66,000 people through their hospices, nursing services, helper and companion services and information and support calls. Three hospices also opened for the Scheme in 2023.

# Nursing and health beneficiaries

## Hospice UK



The National Garden Scheme has supported Hospice UK since 1996 donating over £7 million in that time. In November 2023 the National Garden Scheme donated £450,000 to Hospice UK which will enable them to continue supporting over 200 hospices in the UK that provide care for people facing terminal and life shortening illnesses, and their families.

In 2023 our funding enabled Hospice UK to:

- Invest £50,000 into the development and launch of an Innovation Hub to support the development of a sustainable hospice sector.
- Put £50,000 towards sharing specialist knowledge, skills, trends and practice across the hospice sector through Project Echo™
- Invest £20,000 to highlight the challenges to end of life care during the Covid-19 pandemic by supporting an inquiry through the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hospice & End of Life Care.
- Support advocacy and influencing work with Parliament on behalf of UK hospices to ensure they're not forgotten.
- Work with hospices to develop and deliver new ways of caring for patients with advanced frailty.

- Respond to the cost pressures hospices are facing by advocating for more financial support for hospices.
- Listen to children and young people with life limiting conditions and share their voices.
- Research and develop an initial programme of support for hospices to plan their net-zero futures and develop 'green plans' requested by local NHS partners to reduce their ageing buildings energy bills, and explore reusable and sustainable medical equipment, all without diverting crucial funds away from patient care.

Fifteen hospices in the network registered to open their gardens as part of the National Garden Scheme in 2023, inviting the local community to enjoy these special places and to engage with hospice staff and volunteers to better understand the role of hospices.

Hospice UK also revised and distributed a partnership booklet to encourage more hospices to open their gardens for the National Garden Scheme (shown above) and produced a beautiful film with Thames Hospice that celebrates the importance of gardens to wellbeing and our ongoing partnership.



# Carers Trust

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Carers Trust since 1996, having donated almost £6 million in that time to help the charity raise the profile of carers' issues, and enabling them to further their reach and support to even more unpaid carers. In November 2023, the National Garden Scheme donated £350,000 to Carers Trust.

In 2023 the majority of our funding - £325,000 - supported Carers Trust's core charitable work, including policy, research, external affairs, key awareness-raising campaigns and their UK-wide network of local carer centres. The National Garden Scheme's support has helped Carers Trust amplify their reach and impact and ensures that they are able to continuously deliver quality support to unpaid carers during the current cost of living crisis. Thanks to the flexibility of unrestricted funding, Carers Trust has been able to continue to deliver and adapt its core work including:

- Supporting Young Carers Action Day 2023.
- Supporting Carers Week in June 2023.
- Supporting the publication of stark research findings highlighting how eight of ten young carers (aged 11-18) feel lonely and stressed during the school holidays.

- Strengthening their network of local care services.

£25,000 also contributed to the Carers Fund programme which aims to address some of the financial barriers faced by carers. Carers can apply for up to £300 for essential items or activities that benefit them in their caring role or help alleviate the strain they may be experiencing as a direct result of their caring role. Expenses outside of day-to-day living costs can become unaffordable, meaning that if a washing machine breaks down or a cooker stops working, there is no money available to replace these essential items. A desperately needed break from caring is out of financial reach for many carers too.

The grants in 2023 provided 99 respite breaks and outdoor activities, and 19 items of garden equipment and services including sheds, garden furniture, play equipment and garden services such as clearing and re-paving. These grants make a huge difference to carers who are struggling to cope financially.

National Garden Scheme funding helped approximately 26,118 unpaid carers in 2023.



Carers enjoy a moment of tranquility on a visit to a National Garden Scheme garden © Neil Philips Film

# Nursing and health beneficiaries

## Parkinson's UK

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Parkinson's UK since 2012. In that time we have donated over £2 million to bring better care, treatments and quality of life for those living with Parkinson's. In November 2023, the National Garden Scheme donated £350,000 to Parkinson's UK.

During the year our donation helped fund three new posts directly supporting people with Parkinson's. These included: one Band 6 Parkinson's nurse at University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, and one Band 6 physiotherapist and one Band 6 occupational therapist at South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. These new roles support areas with a high prevalence of Parkinson's. In Morecambe Bay an estimated 997 people are living with Parkinson's and 1,800 people in South Tees. National Garden Scheme funding now reaches over 7,000 people living with the condition and has funded 20 new nurse and allied health professional posts.

Our funding also supports Parkinson's UK's awards evening which celebrates outstanding health and social care for people with Parkinson's, and provided match-funding for the charity's Big Give

campaign enabling them to raise over £60,000 at the end of last year. The remaining funds will be allocated to help fund further positions as part of the charity's new organisational strategy to support an additional 30 new nurse posts as well as 30 new allied health professional roles between 2023-2025 aimed at providing the direct support that people with Parkinson's need.

Also in 2023, Parkinson's UK produced a case study film to support the partnership and to raise awareness of the work of both charities. *The Power of Gardening* featured National Garden Scheme garden owners Jenny and Roger and explored the importance of gardening to Roger's health and wellbeing and in helping to manage his Parkinson's. The film received a hugely positive response across National Garden Scheme and Parkinson's communications channels and was shortlisted in the 2023 Garden Media Guild Awards.

Members of Parkinson's UK's senior management team once again held their annual cycle ride, visiting a number of gardens open across London on 11 June to support the partnership and say personal thank you's to National Garden Scheme garden owners.



Jenny and Roger featured in the 2023 case study film that was shortlisted at the Garden Media Guild awards © Parkinson's UK



# The Queen's Nursing Institute



A Queen's Nurse at work © QNI

The National Garden Scheme was founded by The Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) in 1927, when 609 gardens opened at a shilling a head. We became independent of the QNI in 1980 and the charity has remained a valued partner ever since with the National Garden Scheme donating more than £6 million over the charities' 96 years together.

In 2023 our donation included an additional £100,000 to cover the costs in 2023-24 of four professional community networks for which other funding unexpectedly ceased in June 2023. The National Garden Scheme was happy to fill the gap for its founding beneficiary and made the first of four £25,000 payments in November.

The QNI is reliant on funding from the National Garden Scheme to support all aspects of its work which includes:

- Funding the Queen's Nurse programme with 564 new Queen's Nurses receiving the title in October 2023, there are now almost 2,500 Queen's Nurses in all community specialisms.
- Offering up to 12 free places on their Executive Nurse Leadership Programme to help develop senior leaders in community

healthcare organisations - there are currently 11 senior nurses on the programme.

- Funding the annual NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarships focused on funding gardens and health projects designed by Queen's Nurses to help promote health and wellbeing in their communities.
- Supporting the publication of QNI reports and policy work including the District Nurse Education Report. QNI is also working on a joint report with Marie Curie on end of life care in the UK, due for publication in December 2023.

QNI staff and nurses continue to support and promote the partnership with the National Garden Scheme from the most senior level down. Four members of the QNI team opened their gardens for the National Garden Scheme in 2023 and Queen's Nurses spoke at a number of garden owner events across the counties.

In May, 30 Queen's Nurses and senior staff attended a special garden visit to Furzelea in Essex and in July, Queen's Nurses attended the Eton College open day.



# Gardens and health beneficiaries





Our Gardens and Health Programme raises awareness of the physical and mental health benefits of gardens and gardening for everyone. Celebrated in May each year with a dedicated Gardens and Health Week, we work to promote gardens and health throughout the year, linking service users from our beneficiaries with free garden visits, and funding gardens and health projects.

The charities we fund create gardens with health benefits and promote gardens and gardening as therapy. We also give grants for community gardening projects that support the wellbeing of local communities and groups. Our annual digital publication *The Little Yellow Book of Gardens and Health* (pictured) shines a spotlight on the importance of gardens to everyone's health and wellbeing and links us to our beneficiaries and the important work they do in this field.

The following pages report on the impact of our gardens and health funding in 2023.



## Horatio's Garden

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Horatio's Garden since 2015 to help the charity create and care for beautiful, accessible gardens in NHS regional spinal injury centres. In 2019, the National Garden Scheme confirmed funding for the completion of gardens at all 11 spinal injuries units across the country, committing to fund 25% of the total cost of each.

In 2022-23 the National Garden Scheme donated £90,000 towards Horatio's Garden Wales – the second tranche generously pledged for this garden.

The funding has been used towards the following costs of the capital build project; soft landscaping, planting, greenhouse, garden benches, furniture and fixtures. Groundworks began on the garden in February 2021 and Horatio's Garden were delighted to open it to patients and their loved ones in May 2022 with a special opening ceremony attended by Welsh Rugby legend Sir Gareth Edwards and National Garden Scheme former Wales Regional Chair, Rosamund Davies.

Since the opening the garden has bloomed with a colourful array of flowers planted by garden designer Sarah Price, head gardener Owen Griffiths and the garden volunteers.

Horticultural therapy organised by Owen Griffiths, an experienced horticultural therapist and Kew-trained horticulturalist, include one-to-one and group sessions including activities such as sowing seeds, transplanting larger plants and encouraging patients to use their creativity to produce flourishing planters of colourful flowers.

In a patient survey to measure the impact of the garden in Wales 100 percent of patients said that the garden helped with their rehabilitation, helped their mental health and improved their wellbeing.

Since opening, the garden has benefited around 100 inpatients across the year with the spinal centre treating several hundred outpatients, all of whom have access to Horatio's Garden.

The 2023 National Garden Scheme donation of £90,000 will help fund Horatio's Garden Northern Ireland. Including this one we have now made grants to support the build of five gardens, the others being Stoke Mandeville, Midlands, London & Southeast, and Wales totalling over half a million pounds.

Five Horatio's Gardens also opened as part of the National Garden Scheme in 2023.

*Photo left: 18 year-old Pia found support, solace and inspiration at Horatio's Garden after a spinal lesion threatened to change her life. Pia's story was featured in our 2023 Little Yellow Book of Gardens and Health. Photo © Horatio's Garden / Jude Wacks.*

# Gardens and health beneficiaries

## Army Benevolent Fund



Steve can now access his garden more easily thanks to National Garden Scheme funding © Em Fitzgerald

In November 2023, the National Garden Scheme donated £80,000 to the Army Benevolent Fund (previously ABF The Soldier's Charity) to support the provision of horticultural-related assistance to soldiers, veterans and their immediate families and thereby improve their health and wellbeing. We have been supporting the charity since 2010, with donations in 2010 and 2011, then annual donations from 2017, totalling £750,000.

During 2023, our donations were used to support eight individuals through horticultural related grants and to support four charity partners to deliver frontline services linked to gardens, horticulture, and health and wellbeing. In total, National Garden Scheme funding helped support 608 people during the year.

The National Garden Scheme also pledged a further three years of funding for horticultural related assistance for soldiers, veterans and their immediate families delivered through the Army Benevolent Fund and their partner charities

including the Boots on the Ground Project with Alabarè, Veterans Growth, Veterans Outdoors and HighGround.

Thanks to funding from the National Garden Scheme, the Army Benevolent Fund has been able to support veterans like Steve access green space.

Steve was 19 when he was badly wounded in a bomb explosion in Belfast while serving with The Royal Anglian Regiment. Despite having two prosthetic limbs, he became an accomplished sportsman with a talent for archery. The donation from the National Garden Scheme helped fund a new ramp in Steve's bungalow to improve his independent mobility and access his garden. He says:

"Life is still tough, there are days when my PTSD kicks in and I don't feel great. This work has made a massive difference. I have my independence back and it has given me a boost. I see gardening as the way forward, enjoying life in the fresh air."



# Maggie's

Maggie's centres offer the best possible support free to anyone with cancer and their families who walk through their doors. For each centre, architects and interior and landscape designers work closely together to create a strong connection between the outside and inside space.

During 2023, our donation of £100,000 went towards the new garden at Maggie's Northampton centre which is currently in the final phase of its fundraising campaign with the team hoping to start the build in 2024.

Also in 2023, part funding from the National Garden Scheme enabled Maggie's to enhance the gardens in Swansea and Oxford and the landscaping and planting of new gardens in Yorkshire and Southampton. The gardens are enjoyed by thousands of service users each year.

Each garden is designed to be integral to its building and all visitors enjoy the views from every window, or spend time outside exploring the year-round interest and seasonal planting. Over the last 12 months, collectively these centres supported nearly 47,000 visits. The majority of these were face to face at the centres.

In 2022, the National Garden Scheme committed to a ten year partnership with Maggie's to help create bespoke gardens at new centres. To celebrate the next stage in the two charities' partnership, President of the National Garden Scheme, Dame Mary Berry joined guests at a garden party at Maggie's Oxford in June. Dame Mary said: "I am delighted that the National Garden Scheme has committed to long-term support of Maggie's to help them continue to create the gardens at their wonderful centres which do so much for people living with cancer."

The National Garden Scheme is aiming to donate £1 million over the ten years to support people with cancer on top of the £320,000 already donated to Maggie's.

Also during the year, seven of the gardens at Maggie's centres opened as part of the National Garden Scheme providing wider access to these wonderful spaces. In 2024, the National Garden Scheme's show garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show - designed by Tom Stuart Smith and sponsored by Project Giving Back - will be relocated to the new Maggie's garden at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge.



Maggie's Cheltenham © Philip Durrant







# Support for gardeners

The National Garden Scheme raises money from opening exceptional gardens many of which are looked after by professional gardeners. As well as helping gardeners and others working in horticulture through our donations to Perennial, we also recognise that it is often hard for people to get started in a gardening career so we also fund a variety of training and apprentice schemes.

In November 2023, our donations in support of gardeners totalled £281,000 going to Perennial, the National Botanic Garden of Wales, the Professional Gardeners' Trust, the Garden Museum and English Heritage's outstanding Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme. These pages give a taster of our how our donations are being used.

## English Heritage Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme

In November 2023, the National Garden Scheme donated £125,000, the second tranche of three years of funding, to English Heritage in support of their Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme (HBGTP) in the 2023-24 academic year.

The donation made in November 2022 was used to support five trainees and two apprentices enabling them to take part in the Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme in the 2022-23 academic year. Trainees are paid a salary while being supported pastorally by the HBGTP Manager, as well as the professional garden team at their placement garden for whom English Heritage provide management and mentoring training and guidance. At the end of the year trainees receive a Certificate of Completion at a graduation ceremony.

Working closely with English Heritage's Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and charity recruitment specialists Prospectus, they ensured that advertising, application and interview methods were inclusive.

The training experience involves 12 months of practical training in a notable historic or botanic garden with an experienced garden team, weekly plant identification tests, three written garden

projects, optional external qualifications relevant to the garden and trainee's career development, four-day trainee seminar and three-day study tour visiting gardens and networking with peers with a focus on career development.

The 2022-23 cohort supported by the National Garden Scheme were placed at Osborne on the Isle of Wight, Audley End House and Gardens, Essex, Walmer Castle and Gardens, Kent, Marble Hill, Twickenham, Brodsworth Hall, South Yorkshire, Wrest Park, Bedfordshire and the National Botanic Gardens, Wales.

In addition to the trainee's benefiting from the programme, seven historic gardens enjoyed from the additional resource they provided.

The graduation ceremony for this year's trainees was held at Wrest Park on 30 August and was attended by National Garden Scheme Chairman, Rupert Tyler.

In 2023 as part of the ongoing partnership, English Heritage hosted exclusive, out of hours garden tours at five of their properties in support of the National Garden Scheme. These will be repeated in 2024 and will be promoted in the 2024 Garden Visitor's Handbook.



# Support for gardeners

## The Garden Museum

The National Garden Scheme has been funding the Horticultural Traineeship programme at The Garden Museum since 2013, match-funding the annual donation received from the museum's long-term supporter the late Bertie Leffman. 2023 marked the tenth trainee funded through the partnership.

The funding gives one gardener each year the opportunity to work within the gardens at the museum and to engage in the museum's busy and exciting schedule of horticultural talks and events, while also getting to spend time in gardens nationwide (and occasionally abroad), learning alongside fantastic plantspeople, from head gardeners and landscape designers to floral artists, growers and garden writers.

The £10,000 donation made in November 2023 by the National Garden Scheme brings our total funding for the programme to over £120,000.

The most recent traineeship began in May 2023 and will run until the end of April 2024. Funding supports the trainee's part time role on-site at the museum, working under the head gardener and

facilitates their allocated 18 days on placement in gardens across the country and abroad.

The current trainee, Georgie Johnson, has also conducted free workshops as part of her year at the museum, demonstrating horticultural practices and techniques to over 100 Garden Museum visitors. She has also contributed to the Garden Museum's digital outputs creating content and sharing her experiences via blog posts on the website, through instagram (reaching c.92.7K followers) and popular email newsletter to 21,000 recipients.

To date, alumni trainees have gone on to work in a great range of horticultural roles from senior management in historic gardens to authoring popular garden books. The museum's new community garden now offers future horticultural trainees the opportunity to work more directly with the wider Garden Museum community, and to pick up skills in food growing, education and people management.

The Garden Museum also holds an open day for the National Garden Scheme each year.

## Perennial

The National Garden Scheme is Perennial's largest single donor having donated over £2 million since the partnership began in 1986. This contribution makes a huge difference to the lives of thousands of people who are working, or have worked, in the horticultural industry in the UK and their families who find themselves facing tough times. In November 2023, the National Garden Scheme donated £100,000.

Throughout 2023 the donation from the National Garden Scheme supported Perennial's Debt Advice and Casework team. Perennial's qualified debt advisers are ready to support individuals with their financial concerns. They give free advice on all types of debt from credit cards to council tax, mortgages to fines, talk to creditors, and help with budgeting towards a debt-free future.

Many people that the team help are self-employed. Horticulture is seasonal work and generally low paid, so illness or injury, resulting in time off work, can be devastating to a family's income. The benefit service can be slow and people can wait up to

three months with no income. Perennial helps with paperwork and tribunals and gives financial assistance until benefits come through.

Support from the National Garden Scheme has provided a financial wellbeing officer and access to financial wellbeing programmes to build financial literacy and resilience. People who experience financial wellbeing are less stressed about money and this, in turn, has positive effects on their overall mental and physical health, and on their relationships.

Funding from the National Garden Scheme has also supported Perennial's helpline service to provide advice, information and frontline support to 800 people working in horticultural. It helped service users to access £199,618 of financial support and provided personalised help to people struggling with the cost of living crisis.

Two Perennial gardens, The Laskett and Fullers Mill also hosted open days for the National Garden Scheme in 2023 and will do so again in 2024.



# National Botanic Garden of Wales



Photo © Aled Llywelyn

The National Garden Scheme has been funding the apprenticeship in Botanical Horticulture at the National Botanic Garden of Wales since 2016. Including the donation of £26,000 made in November 2023, we have donated £166,000 to the programme.

The apprenticeship is an entry-level position designed for an enthusiastic and committed individual wishing to start a career in horticulture. Apprentices are employed on a salary paid in line with national minimum wage rates with college fees and placements paid for by the garden and its partners.

The apprentice gains confidence and work experience in all areas of horticulture at the garden including: botanical horticulture, garden maintenance, working in glasshouses, nurseries and display horticulture. Personal development is encouraged with opportunities to gain appropriate National Proficiency Tests Council qualifications and options to take part in placements with other partner gardens.

The National Garden Scheme has helped fund seven apprentices who have since gone on to work in a variety of horticultural roles in Wales and around the world.



Members of St Paul's Community Group, Bristol celebrate the completion of their garden project with the presentation of a National Garden Scheme plaque by County Organiser Su Mills





# Community Garden Grants

In addition to our annual donations to nursing and health charities, the National Garden Scheme awards grants to help community gardening projects, celebrating with the presentation of a special plaque on completion of the work. In 2023 we funded 86 projects with a total of £260,000.

The funding for 2023 was announced in April to mark Community Gardens Week. Commenting, Chief Executive, George Plumptre said: "The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the growing popularity and importance of community gardens, and our support has responded to this. Now, at a time when the cost-of-living crisis is forcing many people to find innovative ways to support themselves, their families and their communities our Community Garden Grants are providing even more of a helping hand to thousands of people across the UK."

Many of the 500 applications received centred on the growing of food for communities, foodbanks and those helping others to learn to grow food. Applications also came from a broad spectrum of society, including a number of ethnic minorities.

"Community gardens can help reduce isolation and build friendships, so it is easy to see why people get involved and we are delighted to provide ongoing support to so many inspirational projects," adds George.

From social welfare and gardening projects that help the isolated, the disabled and the disenfranchised to support for community orchards, food banks and social prescribing projects at GP surgeries, the funding provides a much-needed boost to those working on, or initiating, community garden projects throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Many of the funded community projects in turn open for the National Garden Scheme completing a virtuous circle of giving and giving back. Examples include:

**Rhubarb Farm, Nottinghamshire**, a two acre horticultural social enterprise that provides training and volunteering opportunities to 60 ex-offenders, drug and alcohol misusers, older people, school students, and people with mental and physical ill health and learning disabilities. The project opened its gates through the National Garden Scheme on dates in May, June, July and August and by arrangement for groups in 2023.

Set within the grounds of the **Glenfield Hospital in Leicestershire, the Secret Garden** is one acre in size, hidden behind the walls of a Victorian walled garden which has been lovingly designed and restored for the benefit of all those who visit it, and in consideration of the rich history and heritage of the garden and the wider Leicester Frith site. The garden received a Community Garden Grant in 2022 and opened for the National Garden Scheme on dates in June and July in 2023.

For the **Pakistan Association Liverpool (PAL) Wellbeing Garden** a £4,900 Community Garden Grant from the National Garden Scheme is helping the community members to continue building on the pilot garden and expanding around the back of the building. Established in 1977, PAL has served as a community hub for generations who integrate as equals under one roof, regardless of race, creed, and religion. The PAL Wellbeing Garden opened for the first time this year for the National Garden Scheme as part of the Canning Georgian Quarter group gardens on 18 June.

Since the Community Garden Grants began, £650,000 has been donated to almost 300 community projects.

These grants form part of the wider National Garden Scheme's Gardens and Health Programme which in 2023 saw the total funding for Gardens and Health projects exceed £3 million. It is a milestone on which the charity intends to build in the coming years, not only funding more garden projects in healthcare settings but also in the community for the benefit of individuals and diverse groups, enabling more people to have access to gardens and to discover the benefits they will find there.

To find out more about the Gardens and Health Programme, including recent funding for nurse-led community garden projects in partnership with our founder and beneficiary the Queens Nursing Institute and the projects it supports visit our website [ngs.org.uk](https://ngs.org.uk)

# Special thanks ...



The success of the National Garden Scheme and the significant amounts of money it donates to its beneficiaries would not be possible without the dedicated input of the charity's garden owners and volunteers. In 2023, 3,389 gardens opened for the Scheme supported by 585 volunteers. The enthusiasm, expertise and generosity of our garden owners and volunteers is at the heart of everything the charity achieves.

Some gardens have been opening since 1927, and in 2023 three of them - The Garden at Miserden in Gloucestershire, Saint Paul's Walden Bury in Hertfordshire and Scotney Castle in Kent marked 90 years of opening for the National Garden Scheme. These, and other landmark openings, were all celebrated.

"Whether it opens once or over a number of decades every garden is important," says Chairman, Rupert Tyler. "We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to all of our garden owners and all the volunteers who support them. Without their combined dedication and passion we would not have become the most significant funder of nursing charities in the UK or been able to give £3,403,960 to our beneficiaries in 2023. And, as we head towards our centenary year in 2027, we would like to thank everyone who has helped create such a vibrant, inspiring and enduring community that gives so much pleasure to visitors and raises so much money for good causes as outlined in the pages of this Impact Report."



Just a few of the fabulous 585 volunteers who help us achieve so much for nursing and health charities every year





*We could not do what we do without the hard work and loyalty of our wonderful garden owners who volunteer to open their gardens for the National Garden Scheme*





*A Marie Curie Healthcare Assistant cares for a patient at the Marie Curie Hospice, Hampstead © Philip Hardman / Marie Curie*



# Who's who

## Patron

The former Prince of Wales

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Dame Mary Berry

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## Deputy Chairman

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## Hon Treasurer

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## Chief Executive

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Professor John Newton\*

Susan Paynton

Mark Porter

Vernon Sanderson

Sir Richard Thompson †

Debbie Thomson\*

Alison Wright

† Retired in 2023

\* Appointed in 2023

# Additional thanks

## Core sponsor

# RATHBONES

Incorporating  
Investec Wealth &  
Investment (UK)

We are extremely grateful to our core sponsor, Investec Wealth & Investment (UK), who have supported the National Garden Scheme for almost 30 years, and acknowledge their recent exciting combination with Rathbones, making them the largest discretionary wealth manager in the UK.

## Our corporate partners

We are generously supported by a small group of corporate partners who help to raise awareness of our work, encourage more visitors to our gardens and make a financial contribution with an annual donation or through donations on the sale of selected products.

GRIFFIN GLASSHOUSES  
GREENHOUSES OF DISTINCTION

Agriframes  
Garden Inspiration

ii talking  
tables  
gather. together. smile.

Emma Bridgewater

GreenThumb  
LAWN TREATMENT SERVICE

Sophie August

## Special thanks

In 2023 we would like to note our special thanks to Blue Book for their generous sponsorship of our annual fundraising event and to Babylonstoren for donating the wine.





The National Garden Scheme  
East Wing Hatchlands Park  
East Clandon  
Guildford Surrey  
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Telephone: 01483 211535  
9.00am - 5.00pm (Monday – Friday)

The National Garden Scheme is a charity registered in the UK. Charity Number 1112664

*Photo: Volunteers working in the Secret Garden at Glenfield Hospital. The garden received a Community Garden Grant and opens for the National Garden Scheme © Dora Damian and the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare*

**We look forward to welcoming you to our gardens in 2024**