



Strategic Plan

2026 - 2030



Opening inspirational gardens to enhance everyone's health and wellbeing



OUR VISION

That everyone has access to gardens and values the benefits to their health, wellbeing, and enjoyment of life.

OUR PURPOSE

To raise funds for nursing and health charities by opening an unrivalled portfolio of gardens to visitors, enabling them to experience the benefits to their own health and wellbeing that gardens offer to everyone.

We will do this by:

- Inspiring garden owners to open their exceptional and diverse gardens to raise funds for our beneficiaries.
- Offering everyone, including those who do not usually have access to green spaces, a unique and personal experience in a garden.
- Raising awareness of the health benefits of gardens through public engagement and the example of gardens and health projects that we fund.
- Demonstrating how gardens are a gateway for people to enjoy nature and the environment, and to understand the importance of sustainability.
- Improving environmental sustainability in our own practices and helping our Garden Owners to do the same.
- Influencing government policy and public opinion around both the health and social importance of gardens, and the work of our beneficiaries.

WHO WE ARE

The National Garden Scheme gives visitors unique access to 3,500 exceptional private gardens in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Channel Islands. Through private gardens which open to the public, we raise large amounts of money through admissions, teas, and cake. Our principal beneficiaries are nursing and health charities, but they also include those that provide Garden Therapies, those which support and train Gardeners, as well as Community gardens.

In 2025, thanks to the generosity of garden owners, volunteers, and visitors, we donated a record total of £3,875,596 to our beneficiaries. Since our foundation in 1927, we have donated over £77.8 million.

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

As we approach our Centenary in 2027, we are evolving. We do not just open beautiful gardens; we are passionate about the physical and mental health benefits of gardens too. We run a Community Garden Grants programme and fund projects which promote gardens and gardening as therapy.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2026-2030

The period of this Strategic Plan includes our Centenary year (2027), a milestone that offers a unique opportunity to celebrate our history while boldly defining our future. Building on the success of the 2021–2025 strategy, we will focus on five key areas to ensure resilience, growth, and societal impact.

A. Expand and Diversify Our Reach

To secure our future and deepen our impact, we must expand the range of gardens we open and the visitors we welcome.

- **Build our Portfolio:** We will maintain the proud tradition and heritage of our range of open gardens. The generosity of our Garden Owners is an extraordinarily precious currency. Garden Owners collectively are the jewel in the crown of the National Garden Scheme and all are hugely valued and cherished.
- **Broaden the Range of Open Gardens:** We will actively recruit and support Group Openings, Community Garden Openings, and Allotment Group Openings. These clusters of smaller gardens foster community cohesion and broaden our appeal to a wide range of visitors. By championing smaller, relatable community spaces alongside larger gardens, we will enhance our place within local communities and attract a more diverse demographic of both garden owners and visitors.
- **Maintain the level of quality in our Open Gardens:** As we build and broaden our portfolio of gardens which open, we will not compromise on the level of interest or quality within them. In this way a visit to a National Garden Scheme Open Garden will continue to be a great value visit to an inspirational garden space.

B. Maintain and Grow the Charity

We aim to increase our impact through financial growth, visibility, and operational efficiency, ensuring we remain a robust supporter of all our beneficiaries.

- **The Centenary Circle:** We will continue to build a financial endowment through the Centenary Circle. Our strategic goal is for endowment income to cover a significant percentage of our running costs, ensuring that the maximum possible amount of gate money goes directly to our beneficiaries.
- **Visibility & Impact:** We will work to increase the population of Garden Visitors – all are welcome in our gardens. Alongside this, we aim to grow the number of Gardens that open and thereby drive higher donations for our partners. We will continue to amplify the profile of our beneficiaries, demonstrating how our funding supports vital work.

C. Enhancing Gardens and Health

We will position the National Garden Scheme as a leading organisation for the integration of gardens into healthcare.

- **Electronically Prescribable Garden Visits:** We will spearhead the development of a system for electronically prescribable garden visits. We will collaborate with the Royal College of GPs, the National Academy of Social Prescribing and other major partners—to make garden visits a standard social prescription.

- **Gardens and Health Projects:** We will continue to support, fund and promote projects around the country which enhance health through Garden-based Therapies including Social and Therapeutic Horticulture.

- **Advocacy:** We will continue to lead on lobbying and advocacy to firmly place gardens on the health agenda.

D. Digital Transformation and Cybersecurity

To support our expanded reach and health initiatives, our digital infrastructure must be robust, modern, and secure.

- **Overhaul of Systems:** We will comprehensively overhaul our IT infrastructure, website, and digital marketing strategy to improve user experience for visitors and garden owners.

- **Cybersecurity:** As we digitise more processes—including potential health-related referrals—we will prioritise the safety of our electronic systems, ensuring that our assets are secure.

E. Environmental Sustainability

We recognise the urgent need to address the climate crisis and will embed environmental sustainability into our culture and operations.

- **Internal Operations:** We will audit and improve sustainability practices at our central office, Hatchlands Park.

- **Volunteer Network:** We will develop policies and practical guidance to help our volunteers and garden owners reduce the environmental impact of their National Garden Scheme work, promoting both sustainable gardening and event management practices across the nation.



OUR APPROACH: HOW WE WILL WORK

The National Garden Scheme remains a charity with volunteering at its heart. Our network of over 600 volunteers and thousands of garden owners are the lifeblood of our success.

We will continue to balance the vital local work of our volunteers with a strong central hub that drives strategy, digital innovation, and secure financial management. As we integrate new health initiatives and digital systems, we will provide the support necessary to help our volunteers and Garden Owners to embrace these changes with confidence.



SUMMARY

This plan sets out an ambitious path for 2026–2030. By diversifying our gardens, revolutionising the role of gardens in healthcare, and fortifying our digital and environmental resilience, we will ensure the National Garden Scheme flourishes on its journey into the next one hundred years.

In 2025, we donated an extraordinary and record-breaking £3,875,596 to our beneficiaries. Through these strategic priorities, we aim to grow this contribution further, ensuring that gardens remain a powerful force for good in the nation's health and wellbeing.





“The National Garden Scheme has partnered with Macmillan Cancer Support since 1984 and donated over £20million in that time funding hundreds of Macmillan Nurses and Professionals and helped to build Macmillan Cancer Centres in Bristol, Chesterfield and Y Bwthyn. This funding means that Macmillan can be there to help people living with cancer, providing emotional support and all the information they need. The long-term commitment allows us to plan for a future where everyone who is affected by cancer get the best care the UK has to offer, whoever and wherever they are.”

Gemma Peters
CEO of Macmillan Cancer Care



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

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