

Gardens set to provide a green oasis

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Abbotsford, home of Sir Walter Scott

Thanks to National Lottery players, we are helping several of the UK's most-loved gardens survive the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.

Gardens are providing a beacon of hope in difficult times, as spaces where people can start to meet safely and reconnect with nature.

Some of our favourite gardens have been saved from closure thanks to the [Heritage Emergency Fund](#). Our grants have been funding vital horticultural jobs as well as day-to-day running costs, from greenhouse maintenance to the supply of plants and compost.

Saving Stephens House and Garden



Stephens House and Gardens. Credit: Holly Collier

At [Stephens House and Garden](#), in Finchley, London, the closure of the house meant an immediate loss of their main income.

They furloughed all but three staff, with one undertaking the significant task of deferring and cancelling the many weddings and other event bookings. A grant of £36,000 is helping to cover ongoing maintenance costs and ensuring that the gardeners, furloughed since March, can return to work.

"The wildlife in the garden has become more prolific without visitors, and we have seen baby fox cubs, baby moorhens and even a hedgehog – amazing in a city centre garden."

Malcolm Godfrey, General Manager

A tiny group of dedicated volunteers have looked after the garden, but nature has been taking advantage of the peace and quiet.

Malcolm Godfrey, General Manager, said: "The wildlife in the garden has become more prolific without visitors, and we have seen baby fox cubs, baby moorhens and even a hedgehog – amazing in a city centre garden. We have a medlar tree in the playground that normally struggles to grow

because it gets climbed a lot, but this year it is in fine fettle.”

The garden reopened to the public on 1 June and the café is now operating as a takeaway.

“We hope the house can be operating as a venue again by September, and by December we think that people will be more than ready for a party.”

Malcolm is positive about the future. “It’s been tough, and as with everyone, there was a point when people thought we might never come back, but I have never allowed that thought to settle.

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Help for Abbotsford



The beautiful gardens at Abbotsford

[Abbotsford](#), in Melrose, in the Scottish borders, is the home of Sir Walter Scott and his descendants. It faced a loss of income of £350,000 from the closure of the historic house and garden.

Although the team still anticipate tough times ahead, a Heritage Emergency Fund grant of £224,200 is helping them keep going.

The grant is covering essential day-to-day costs including salaries for the head gardener and two garden staff, who over the past weeks have been struggling to maintain the historic 100-acre gardens and wider estate on their own. They are overjoyed that their small group of volunteers are able to return this week.

"Four families of ducks hatched in our Victorian walled garden, and we had to ceremoniously open the gates for them."

Tim Owen, Head Gardener

Tim Owen, Head Gardener, said: "The storms in February damaged some of our trees, and then we had lockdown, so this has been a tough year for us."

He too has noticed an increase in wildlife. "Four families of ducks hatched in our Victorian walled garden, and we had to ceremoniously open the gates for them so that they could waddle off towards the River Tweed. I am also enjoying being serenaded by song thrushes as I'm working."

An unexpected visitor

An unexpected visitor also took up residence in the Hope Scott Wing, which usually offers luxury accommodation.

When the security alarms went off, their collections manager was concerned to find pictures and lampshades askew and hear an ominous hissing sound from under the grand piano. The intruder was a goosander duck, which had fallen down the chimney. It was safely returned, with the help of the SSPCA, to the River Tweed.

Katy Jackson, Development Manager at Abbotsford, said: "We are carefully following announcements from the Scottish Government for guidance on when we can reopen. Meanwhile we are so glad to have our garden volunteers back – we have missed them, and they have missed us."

Saving the UK's gardens



Cressing Temple Gardens

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has been awarding Heritage Emergency Fund grants weekly since the start of May.

Other gardens and garden trusts to receive grants include:

- Cressing Temple Gardens, Essex
- Hestercombe Gardens Trust, Somerset
- Birmingham Botanical Gardens
- Hoghton Tower Preservation Trust, Lancashire
- Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park

Supporting heritage during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Have you applied for support yet?

The National Lottery Heritage Fund is committed to helping the heritage sector through this crisis.

Our £50million Heritage Emergency Fund is open until 31 July for grants from £3,000 - £250,000. We want to support as many organisations as we can. Submit an application before the deadline so we can help your organisation too.

Additional support includes:

- Digital Skills for Heritage: increasing sector skills and confidence to bring heritage to more people
- maintaining our financial commitment to all of our 2,500 existing projects
- help and advice from our UK-wide teams

[Find out more.](#)

You might also be interested in...

[**Welsh island puffins protected thanks to Heritage Emergency Fund grant**](#)

Emergency funding has helped us save our charity