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The Gardens of Rothamsted Manor - Management Plan

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Part E Options

Rothamsted Research

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PART E OPTIONS

This section sets out some of the options available to pursue new approaches to the management of the gardens.

Lottery Funding

Lottery funding could be sought for a capital project at Rothamsted. Such a project could be focussed and modest in scale, or more ambitious, extending to major restoration and public access across the Manor site and beyond.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) makes grants to projects that meet one or more of its 'Heritage Aims':

- to encourage more people to be involved and make decisions about their heritage;
- to conserve and enhance the UK's diverse heritage; and
- to ensure that everyone can learn about, have access to and enjoy their heritage.

Included in HLF's definition of 'Heritage' are:

- Countryside, parks and gardens;
- Objects and sites that are linked to our industrial, transport and maritime history;
- Historic buildings.

The House, gardens, soil store and experimental fields all fall into these definitions of 'heritage', and it would be quite possible to propose a project that might meet the 'heritage aims'. In practice, the HLF is more likely to fund a heritage project if it delivers wide public benefits. Typically this involves making the heritage item more accessible and available to a wider audience. A project to simply restore the gardens at Rothamsted would be eligible in theory for funding, but a bid would be unlikely to be successful if the results were to remain isolated and hidden away.

For a major lottery bid to succeed it is likely that several of the following objectives will need to be met:

- The project must demonstrate a benefit to the heritage, through enhancement of the heritage item itself and/or widening its accessibility and public benefits;
- Establishment of an educational programme with facilities and staff support;
- 'Outreach' - to the wider community;
- Improved presentation and interpretation;
- Preservation and increased availability of important historic records and archives;
- Involving more people - eg volunteers;
- Securing enhanced management and resources to sustain the capital investment for the future.

This would represent a major transformation of the Manor site and would potentially have a major impact on the institute as a whole. A decision to pursue a major bid would therefore require careful consideration and serious commitment.

Other features of HLF funding programmes to be aware of include:

- 'Partnership Funding' - 25% or more of the project costs must be supplied by the applicant in cash or in kind, from their own resources or fund-raising and donations;
- A major bid may take 5 years or more from inception to completion;
- HLF can supply Development Grants to help pay for consultants and detailed project development;

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HLF also offer Project Planning Grants of up to £50,000 to help applicants to develop their ideas. These can be used to pay for the following:

- Conservation Management Plan - similar in content to this document, but prepared with full organisational commitment. Contains clear outline proposals, and indicative programme and costings;
- Access Plan - identifies barriers to access and sets out an action plan for their removal;
- Audience Development Plan - identifies excluded groups and the reasons for their exclusion. Sets out priorities and an action plan for attracting and developing new audiences;
- Employing someone to help develop the project.

The award of a Project Planning Grant does not commit the applicant to making an application for a full capital grant.

Gradual improvement

There are a number of ways in which progress could be made towards meeting the management objectives without resorting to a major lottery bid. There may be several reasons for choosing this more gradual approach, eg:

- It is not considered desirable to open up access to the extent that may be required;
- The Trust wishes to see improvements but is not in a position to make the kind of commitments required by HLF;
- The Trust may have other plans for the future of the Manor and gardens:
- The HLF process would require quick decisions but this would introduce an artificial urgency. More time will allow ideas to be developed and matured;
- Time is needed to 'test the water' and to establish feasibility and the extent of interest;
- The Trust has other priorities, but is willing to encourage small-scale initiatives;
- An 'evolutionary' approach is favoured and considered to be appropriate to the character of the site, instead of sudden and possibly convulsive change.
- A more considered and focussed lottery bid would be possible after a period of gradual development and generally increased awareness and commitment.

The following are approaches that may help to achieve more gradual change:

- Make an organisational commitment to the improvement of the gardens and a new integrated strategy for the Manor site;
- Establish a strategic group to promote and oversee the implementation of a new vision (see below);
- Increase access and use modestly at first - eg. open days, a Rothamsted path, explanatory leaflets, public events in the gardens, visits and tours for local and interested groups;
- Develop information and guides;
- Establish a Friends group;
- Encourage a wider role for volunteers;
- Encourage people to come forward with ideas, and provide a forum for these ideas to be examined and developed;
- Investigate applying for an HLF Project Planning Grant;
- Identify a few reasonably modest projects in the gardens as priorities, and try to gather the resources and support to undertake them. This will raise awareness of the gardens and the larger objectives, and may provide the impetus for the next steps;
- Establish a secure budget for the gardens that allows at least some scope for repair and renewal;
- Tighten up existing practices and aim to improve productivity and motivation of staff.

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Unified management committee

One of the most vital early steps that could be taken in pursuit of the vision would be to set up a new group that brings together the interested and responsible parties. This group might set out to meet quarterly for the next 5 years or monthly for a year, but once running would establish its own pace, priorities and agenda.

Its responsibilities should include:

- To adopt an integrated and holistic approach to the gardens, Manor and wider estate;
- To develop long-term visions, strategies and policies;
- To champion the gardens and Manor House within the Trust and institute.
- To oversee the production and implementation of a Management Plan;
- To bring together interested and responsible parties;
- To pursue the maintenance and enhancement of the gardens and landscape;
- To aim to secure the necessary resources.

The remit of the group might be specific to the gardens and landscape, or could be wider. It may be restricted to a specific project, but would probably be more effective if it was free to consider all aspects of the site and to take a long-term view. Depending on the chosen approach, its title might be:

- Gardens Management Committee;
- Gardens & Landscape Development Committee;
- Rothamsted Manor Project Board;
- Estate Strategic Management Group.

The membership of the group would be, without an intimate knowledge of Rothamsted's upper management, beyond the scope of this document to determine. The core group would need to be sufficiently experienced, senior, influential and broadly-based to be able to successfully achieve its objectives. It would also need to draw on the contributions and expertise of a wider group as required. The following might all be expected to be involved to some extent:

- Senior representative(s) from the Trust and/or institute (board level);
- Head of Horticulture and Controlled Environment Services (HCES);
- Head of Crop Management;
- Head Gardener;
- Manager of Manor House;
- Head of Facilities;
- Staff representative(s);
- Woodland Advisory Group (WAG) representative;
- Key staff and managers from Trust and/or institute, eg.
    - Communications / PR;
    - Outreach/Education - if applicable;
    - Finance;
- Local community representative(s) - eg. Parish or County Councillor, local school teacher or governor;
- Committed and/or expert individuals - eg. Prof. Roger Plumb (Senior Fellow of the Trust), Kate Harwood (Staff, Garden History enthusiast, and Herts. Gardens Trust).