



Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) Visiting Group Report 2015

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Contact

The role of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) is assessed periodically to review the quality and impact of its activities, strategies and future plans. This report is the result of the review carried out in September 2015 which was comprised from experts with a wide range of experience in areas relevant to RBGE.

[Jenny Watson](#)

Executive Summary

The role of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) is assessed periodically to review the quality and impact of its activities, strategies and future plans. The 2015 review comprised experts with a wide range of experience in areas relevant to RBGE. The Visiting Group found that RBGE is an efficient and effective organisation punching above its weight, especially in international science. The review identified key strengths, strategic and operational issues, and made recommendations for actions to strengthen the operation and resilience of RBGE.

Key Strengths

- RBGE is a relatively small organisation that delivers a great deal in comparison to other similar organisations
- RBGE staff are highly experienced and knowledgeable and the many volunteers are an enormous asset to the organisation and its integration with local communities
- The balance across the wide range of RBGE activities was considered appropriate
- The integration across all RBGE activities is an outstanding strength
- The living, herbarium and library collections are world-leading in quality and innovation
- RBGE's projects and further ambitions to promote access to specimens and resources through new developments such as digitisation were commended
- RBGE represents one of the last bastions of plant taxonomic expertise at a time when these skills are increasingly rare internationally
- RBGE continues to play a leading role in conservation and reintroductions and the great depth of expertise can be readily applied to current and predicted issues
- All work is underpinned by high quality scientific evidence and has much to offer domestic and international policy and activity
- The depth and breadth of education opportunities present a significant contribution to a Smarter Scotland and reach all socioeconomic and geographic

sectors of society

- RBGE's visitor services offer an extremely wide range of facilities and events and engage a wide range of individuals and communities

Strategic Issues

- Urgent investment required to safeguard the unique living collection in glasshouses
- High visibility and profile are key to widening impact, access to resources, and building collaborations
- RBGE is well placed to play a coordinating role in the area of Natural Capital

Operational Issues

- Development of further interpretation material for visitors is desirable RBGE are encouraged to promote the impact of their work to a greater degree
- Further benchmarking in all areas would be useful

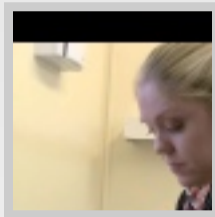
- Upgrading the website is considered important to improve access and visibility
- Further audience research would assist strategic planning to achieve maximum impact from events, fundraising efforts and smaller investments
- Further research funding would add value to core work and provide the opportunity to develop or gain access to new or additional skills
- RBGE and its sponsor Division should continue to work closely to find creative and flexible options for capital and operational funding
- Investment in a new visitor centre at Benmore is required in order for all the Gardens to achieve 5 star status from VisitScotland.

Channels

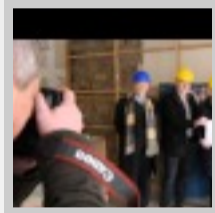
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