

## ROYAL HORTICULTURE SOCIETY (WISLEY) – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

### Declarations of Interest

Note: In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, the Leader of the Council, Councillor David Bittleston, Councillor Graham Cundy and Councillor Kevin Davis will declare an interest in this application, arising from their Memberships of the Royal Horticultural Society. The interests are such that speaking and voting are permissible.

Note: In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, the Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, and the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, will declare a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in this application, arising from their Memberships of the Royal Horticultural Society. The interests are such that they will not prevent them from advising the Council.

### Executive Summary

The original flagship garden, RHS Garden Wisley is a Grade II\* listed garden of around 65 hectares of land of international historic, scientific, cultural and social importance. Established in 1903, Wisley is a living laboratory for experimentation and education in horticulture. The iconic listed Laboratory was purpose-built in 1907 to house RHS Science and the School of Horticulture.

The RHS Wisley is applying for grant support of £100,000 for the financial year 2019/20. The purpose of the funding is to go towards the build costs of the Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning. The Centre will completely transform their horticultural science, learning and public engagement, enabling them to deliver cutting-edge research, share scientific understanding with schools, universities and industry, and influence gardeners and communities across the UK to build a greener future. The Centre is part of a significant multi-million pound investment programme at Wisley that will have numerous benefits for the local area's economy and its communities. The total project cost is £34.4m and the Group has a fundraising target of £11.3m, with the RHS contributing £23.1m.

Memberships have been forecasted to increase from 499,278 (as of 1 August 2018) to 520,000 in 2019/20, and expect to reach 580,000 members by 2022/23. The number of visitors each year is expected to exceed by 1.4m (an increase of 28%). The current visitor experience does not fully cater for the needs and interests of all visitors, and risks undermining the RHS's long-term sustainability and ability to fund its charitable objectives. If the RHS does not make this major investment now, it risks the further deterioration in the condition of its built and collected heritage assets.

The developments at Wisley strongly support and align with all six themes of the Woking Community Strategy, as befitting Wisley's place as a significant local visitor attraction, and a national hub for horticulture. Wisley Garden is the 10th most visited visitor attraction in the country and therefore vital to the region. The developments at Wisley will have a significant impact on the local, regional and national economy by creating jobs for the site and the visitor economy.

In addition, the RHS has a number of community outreach teams which work with a wide range of local groups, societies and many local voluntary sector organisations which represent different user groups. For Woking, these include Home-Start, Woking Mind, Shah Jahan Mosque, Sheerwater Estates residents' groups, Sythwood Children's Centre, Sight for Surrey, Surrey Coalition for Disabled People, Thrive, The Wildlife Trusts and the WWF.

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A Members' site visit to see and learn about the work RHS Wisley undertakes in the local community took place on 29 June 2019. A copy of the slide presentation given to those who attended is attached at Appendix 1.

Taking into account the consultee comments and immense community benefit of a new Centre for Horticulture Science as demonstrated to Members at the site visit, it is recommended that a grant of £100,000 be awarded to support the RHS Wisley with this project. The funding would be awarded from the Community Fund.

### Special Justification

Whilst just beyond Woking's administrative boundary, RHS Wisley attracts and has substantial member representation amongst Borough residents and communities. Woking Borough Council and RHS Wisley have a strong and developing association, offering one another support for organisations' complementary and proactive environmental agendas, in particular helping to deliver the Council's Woking 2050 and Natural Woking strategies.

Over the past 12 months, particularly fruitful relationships have been developed by RHS's South and East Community Outreach team, based at Wisley, with the Council's Community Engagement and Green Infrastructure officers. This has brought forward the following projects delivering tangible and sustainable outcomes: to quality of life and well-being, through getting people out into nature, and helping residents understand what they can do for the natural environment and adapt to climate change:

- Bulb planting in communal areas and the Sheerwater Community Garden in Dartmouth Avenue, the latter linked to a horticultural student design competition which could look at other sites in the future
- RHS Community Outreach officers have met with New Vision Homes to explore opportunities;
- Informal horticultural advice assistance help to Green Infrastructure officers research greening opportunities;
- The RHS, Woking Local Action 21 and the Council partnered this year to present LA21's AGM, featuring headline presentations and an expert RHS and local panel on 'Gardening in a Changing Climate'.
- Participation in the Sheerwater Street Party, free trips to RHS Wisley for a number of families living within Sheerwater and its Incredible Edible event. In addition, the RHS is developing strong links with the local schools (Broadmere and Bishop David Brown) and the Mosque. Its support in the locality has helped to engage with local residents very positively by increasing the levels of interest and participation by volunteers, thus supporting the Council's over-arching Health and Wellbeing agenda.

The new Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning would open up many additional opportunities through which the RHS can engage with and benefit residents of Woking Borough. The proposed new gardens surrounding the building focus on health and wellbeing, World Food, edible plants and biodiversity, and would complement both the Council and LA21 agendas whilst reaching a more diverse audience.

The RHS's proposed new Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning is just outside of the Council's administrative boundary, however it will provide extensive additional opportunities for Woking residents to benefit from its excellent facilities, and taking into account the very significant community benefits it is proposed that the grant application be supported.

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<b>Recommendations</b>	
The Executive is requested to:	<b>RESOLVE That</b> funding of £100,000 be awarded from the Community Fund towards to the cost the project to build the Centre of Learning and Science.
Reason for Decision	To enable the RHS to continue to grow and invest in the future of its members and horticultural science.
Legal Authority	S19 (Misc. Provisions) Local Government Act 1976
Conditions	<p><b>Accounts.</b> The Organisation must submit audited accounts for the year in which the grant is awarded, including an income and expenditure account and balance sheet. Please note that accounts for other years may also be required.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Information.</b> The Organisation must submit monitoring information as a measure of its achievements. Failure to provide details will jeopardise the award.</p> <p><b>Venue Hire.</b> Woking Borough Council has a duty to ensure that publicly-owned venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists and are not used to disseminate extremist views. This duty extends to organisations that work with the local authority so this includes recipients of any grants from Woking Borough Council. If you hire out your venue/s you should ensure you have good processes in place for record keeping and checking if they are an appropriate group to be making the hire arrangements. The following are some of what should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic details should be recorded to include speakers address, mobile phone number &amp; organisation details.</li> <li>• Has the identity of the speaker been confirmed &amp; is their organisation bona fide? Are they known to you?</li> <li>• Is the speaker from the area? Are they UK citizens or from overseas &amp; will they travel specifically for this event?</li> <li>• Consider checks on the internet to confirm the status of speaker to include website, YouTube or social media sites.</li> <li>• How many people are likely to attend (check previous or similar events either locally or online).</li> </ul>
Performance Indicators	<p><b>Publicity.</b> The Organisation to advise how the Council's support for the project has been publicised.</p> <p><b>Statement of Use.</b> The Organisation to provide a statement stating the use to which the grant money has been put.</p>

**The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendations.**

### Background Papers:

2019/20 Application Form.

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### **Reporting Person:**

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### **Contact Person:**

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### **Portfolio Holder:**

Cllr Ayesha Azad  
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### **Shadow Portfolio Holder:**

Cllr Will Forster  
Email: cllrwill.forster@woking.gov.uk

### **Date Published:**

3 July 2019

## Royal Horticultural Society (Wisley) – Application For Financial Assistance

<b>1.0 Summary of Application</b>	
1.1 Status and Aims	<p>The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) is the UK’s largest and best known horticultural charity, established in 1804 to inspire passion and excellence in the science, art and practice of horticulture. In 2013 the Charity launched a ten year, £160 million strategic investment programme with a vision to enrich everyone’s life through plants, build stronger, healthier and happier communities, and create better places to live.</p> <p>This decade of investment and development will enable increasingly diverse audiences to engage with the benefits of plants, gardens and gardening for human and environmental health; inspiring people to take action to protect the environment, addressing skills shortages and improving the status of UK horticulture.</p> <p>The original flagship garden, RHS Garden Wisley is a Grade II* listed garden of around 65 hectares of land of international historic, scientific, cultural and social importance. Established in 1903, Wisley is a living laboratory for experimentation and education in horticulture. The iconic listed Laboratory was purpose-built in 1907 to house RHS Science and the School of Horticulture.</p> <p>Although of significant heritage value, the Laboratory no longer provides adequate facilities for modern scientific research nor the right environmental conditions to safeguard internationally important collections. Due to space constraints there are no interpretation space in which to engage the public with their collections or scientific work.</p> <p>The future of gardening now depends on a major investment for the creation of a new national Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning. The Centre will completely transform the horticultural science, learning and public engagement, enabling the Organisation to deliver cutting-edge research, share scientific understanding with schools, universities and industry, and influence gardeners and communities across the UK to build a greener future.</p>
1.2 Employees	<p>967, comprising 412 FTE.</p> <p>The Charity is comprised of the following departments: Communications; Education, Fundraising and Communities; Finance; Gardens; Horticulture; Leadership Team; Members and Marketing; People (HR); Risk and Governance; Science and Collections; and IT.</p>
1.3 Volunteers	<p>314, whose roles sit across departments in Science and Collections (including the Library), Education and Learning, Visitor Services, Horticulture, Curatorial as well as Trials and Events. The average length of time a volunteer is involved at Wisley is 5 years, with some volunteers staying for over 25 years. As a result of the capital projects at Wisley around 200 new volunteering opportunities will be created.</p>
1.4 Clients/Users	<p>There were 1,138,481 visitors to RHS Garden Wisley in 2017. This was comprised of the following groups:</p> <p>RHS Members = 827,620 (72.7%)            Children under 5 = 126,462 (11.1%)            Paying Adults = 103,294 (9.1%)</p>

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	<p>Other non-paying visitors = 44,496 (3.9%)</p> <p>Children over 5 = 22,387 (2.0%)</p> <p>Groups = 14,222 (1.2%)</p> <p>The Charity's business plan projects that the strategic investment programme will result in over 1.4 million visitors a year by 2024/25.</p>
<p>1.5 Members</p>	<p>499,287 (1 August 2018), comprising:</p> <p>146,543 male</p> <p>335,959 female</p> <p>11599 resident in Woking</p> <p>229 aged 0-5</p> <p>30 aged 6-10</p> <p>307 aged 11-18</p> <p>207,961 aged 19-65</p> <p>119,855 aged 65+</p> <p>(170,896 unknown age)</p> <p>Key membership statistics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 85% annual retention rate of members</li> <li>• 7 years average RHS membership</li> <li>• 30% are male and 70% are female</li> <li>• 22% aged 30-49, 68% aged 50+</li> </ul>
<p>1.6 Sum Requested</p>	<p>£100,000 (Capital)</p>
<p>1.7 Project</p>	<p>The Society is applying for funding towards a new national Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning at RHS Garden Wisley. The Centre will completely transform their horticultural science, learning and public engagement, enabling them to deliver cutting-edge research, share scientific understanding with schools, universities and industry, and influence gardeners and communities across the UK to build a greener future. The Centre is part of a significant multi-million pound investment programme at Wisley that will have numerous benefits for the local area's economy and its communities.</p> <p>The new Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning will incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connected interpretation, linked digital engagement programmes and enhanced accessibility throughout the site to ensure visitors are better able to engage with horticulture, collections, and science and advisory work</li> <li>- A large public engagement atrium space showcasing how plants play a vital role in improving human and environmental health to a range of audiences</li> <li>- Bespoke learning studios with particular provision for secondary school students, further and higher education and lifelong learning</li> <li>- Three new horticultural science laboratories where cutting-edge research can be undertaken to investigate plant pests and diseases</li> </ul>

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	<p>and climate change mitigation, to provide critical advice for gardeners, the horticultural industry and government bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spaces where important historic collections (library, herbarium, archive) can be conserved in the correct conditions, and shared with the public, many for the first time</li> </ul> <p>Three new gardens surrounding the building will focus on health and wellbeing, edible plants, and biodiversity. All three gardens will act as 'living laboratories' to support ongoing research, including citizen science projects that will engage visitors and help them understand the role that gardening plays in improving people's wellbeing, feeding the world and protecting wildlife.</p> <p>Planning permission was granted for the Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning in September 2016. The project is now at RIBA Stage 4 (detailed design) and a contractor is being appointed. Enabling infrastructure works and site clearance are in progress. With work on the build due to begin by summer 2019 with completion in summer 2020.</p> <p>The flagship Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning in Wisley is a £70m projects which incorporates three new major hubs within the garden. The development also includes a new re-imagined Welcome Building which unites all visitor facilities in one space, and transformation of the Grade II Listed Laboratory Building, opening this historic building to the public for the first time ever.</p> <p>Together, these new facilities will transform the effectiveness and impact of work at the RHS Wisley Garden, engaging a wider and more diverse audience. Guided by a site-wide access audit, an access plan and an audience development plan, they have identified the physical, social, intellectual and cultural barriers that need to be removed and actions that must be taken to remove barriers and increase access to Wisley for all audiences.</p>																												
<p>1.8 Cost breakdown:</p>	<p>The estimated total capital project costs for the Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning are £34.4m. A breakdown of the build costs is given below. The RHS is funding £23.1m of enabling works, planning costs, garden infrastructure relating to the building, development costs to RIBA Stage 3, professional fees, new staff offices, and café and catering fit-out costs.</p> <p><b>Capital Costs for the national Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Area</th> <th>Cost</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Build costs (Stage 4)</b></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Atrium</td> <td>£2,062,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Herbarium</td> <td>£2,045,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Digitisation viewing room</td> <td>£149,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Library and archive</td> <td>£1,513,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Learning studios</td> <td>£1,194,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Activities and events space</td> <td>£2,771,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Diagnostic Lab</td> <td>£688,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Molecular research Lab</td> <td>£671,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Environmental research lab</td> <td>£562,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other areas- offices, staff areas, plant, circulation etc</td> <td>£8,997,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Irrecoverable VAT</td> <td>£1,222,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Building enabling works</td> <td>£45,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Area	Cost	<b>Build costs (Stage 4)</b>		Atrium	£2,062,000	Herbarium	£2,045,000	Digitisation viewing room	£149,000	Library and archive	£1,513,000	Learning studios	£1,194,000	Activities and events space	£2,771,000	Diagnostic Lab	£688,000	Molecular research Lab	£671,000	Environmental research lab	£562,000	Other areas- offices, staff areas, plant, circulation etc	£8,997,000	Irrecoverable VAT	£1,222,000	Building enabling works	£45,000
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	Interpretation <span style="float: right;">£916,000</span> <b>Sub-total</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>£22,835,000</b></span>
	<b>Landscape costs (Stage 3)</b> Wildlife Garden <span style="float: right;">£524,000</span> Wellbeing Garden <span style="float: right;">£560,000</span> World Food Garden <span style="float: right;">£594,000</span> Connecting areas between the three gardens <span style="float: right;">£569,000</span> Professional fees and other costs <span style="float: right;">£152,000</span> Sub total <span style="float: right;">£2,400,000</span>
	<b>Other costs (fully funded by the RHS)</b> Curatorial Hubs, enabling projects, planning and infrastructure <span style="float: right;">£9,145,000</span> <b>Total Capital Project Cost</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>£34,379,000</b></span>
1.9 Community Benefit	<p>The project marks a step change for the RHS as visitors become more deeply engaged in environmental learning, the Centre engages with new audiences, and scientific research and collections are showcased for the first time. As a result of the project the following outputs and outcomes are anticipated to be achieved by 2024.</p> <p><u>Outputs</u></p> <p>Annual visitor figures are expected to increase from 1.165m in 2017/18) to 1.494 million in 2024/25 (28% increase).</p> <p>The Charity aims that at least 250 new volunteers will participate in an enhanced and more diverse volunteering programme, which includes 22 new, more flexible, roles; acquiring new skills to support pathways into careers including horticulture, plant science, interpretation, and managing heritage attractions.</p> <p>There will be increased engagement with primary and secondary schools visiting Wisley, through repeat visits and longer term projects with schools. There is an expected increase in learning visits from 19,700 to 23,750 by 2022/23, including increasing secondary school students visiting from 1,300 to 3,500 per year.</p> <p>As well as focusing on the younger generation, another aim is to increase the number of adults attending lifelong learning courses from 800 in 2017/18 to 2000 in 2022/23 with a focus on increasing engagement in horticulture, increasing horticultural skills and creative arts skills linked to gardens.</p> <p>With new facilities for research, there is the opportunity to have in training 20 collaborative PhDs and will have supervised 10 MSc students with local and national universities by the end of 2024, more than doubling our research capacity.</p> <p>The project would assist the local economy by providing 59 FTE jobs directly at Wisley, with a further 81 FTE non-RHS jobs supported (indirect and induced impact) and approximately 200 construction jobs supported.</p> <p><u>Outcomes</u></p> <p>Visitors, particularly young people, will feel better connected to nature through greater awareness and knowledge of the science and practice of horticulture, the role of gardens and gardening in improving wellbeing, and the role of plants in improving urban environments.</p>



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	<p>People’s perceptions of Wisley, the RHS and plants will have changed through more inclusive activities and enhanced interpretation for people of different cultures, ages, backgrounds, learning and access needs, and welcoming those who have never considered coming to the garden before.</p> <p>Gardeners across the UK will be better able to adapt to a changing world, identify and control pests and diseases, and improve their own living environments, as a result of increases in RHS scientific advances to enhance the global knowledge bank on gardening and garden plants.</p>
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<b>2.0 Financial Background</b>	
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £16.9m in the bank. The sum of £12m is reserved for funding of current RHS capital projects that are underway and they would maintain approximately £5m working capital for the operational business.</p> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for 2019/20 which shows an anticipated income of £94m against an anticipated expenditure of £88m, resulting in an anticipated surplus of £6m.</p>
2.2 Accounts	<p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2017/18 which show an income of £102m against expenditure of £95m, resulting in a surplus of £7m. The sum of £152m was carried forward at the end of the 2017/18 year.</p>
2.3 Support over the past five years	New application.

<b>3.0 Assessment of Application</b>		
3.1 Key Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Constitution</li> <li>○ Registered Charity</li> <li>○ VAT Registered</li> <li>○ Equal Opportunities Policy</li> <li>○ Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>○ Reserves Policy</li> <li>○ Quality Mark</li> <li>○ Other funding sources pursued</li> <li>○ Other support by the Council</li> <li>○ Fundraising</li> <li>○ Two quotes</li> <li>○ Regular monitoring provided previously</li> </ul>	<p>Yes (Charter and Bye-Laws)</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>
3.2 Consultee Comments	<p><u>Tracey Haskins, Green Infrastructure Manager</u></p> <p>The grant application has been received from RHS Wisley for a £100,000 capital grant towards a new Centre for Horticulture Science</p>	

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and Learning. Information required regarding green infrastructure and community benefit.

The expertise of RHS Wisley staff, and the quality of the Wisley Garden, are recognised both UK-wide and internationally; we are fortunate to have such a wonderful resource on our doorstep.

Whilst just beyond Woking's administrative boundary, RHS Wisley attracts and has substantial member representation amongst our Borough residents/communities.

Woking Borough Council and RHS Wisley have a strong and developing association, offering one another support for our complementary and proactive environmental agendas.

Over the last 12 months, particularly fruitful relationships have been developed by RHS's South and East Community Outreach team, based at Wisley, with the Council's Community Engagement and Green Infrastructure officers.

This has brought forward the following projects delivering tangible and sustainable outcomes: to quality of life and well-being, through getting people out into nature, and helping us help residents understand what they can do for the natural environment and to adapt to climate change:

- Bulb planting and the Sheerwater Community Garden, the latter linked to a horticultural student design competition which could look at other sites in the Borough in the future;
- RHS Community Outreach officers have met with Steve Charles of New Vision Homes to explore opportunities;
- Informal horticultural advice assistance help to Green Infrastructure officers research greening opportunities;
- RHS, Woking Local Action 21 and WBC have partnered this year to present LA21's forthcoming (15 November) AGM, featuring headline presentations and an expert RHS and local panel Q&A on the theme of 'Gardening in a Changing Climate'.

Working with RHS is helping us to deliver a number of our Woking 2050 (climate change) and Natural Woking (biodiversity and green infrastructure) strategies' objectives.

If the proposed new Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning is delivered, this could open up many additional opportunities through which RHS can engage with and benefit residents of Woking Borough through its work.

The proposed new gardens surrounding the building - focusing on health and wellbeing, World Food/ edible plants, and biodiversity – would complement both WBC and Woking LA21 agendas, whilst the focus on reaching a more diverse audience is welcomed.

Zafar Iqbal, Senior Community Engagement Officer

Over the last 12 months RHS's Community Outreach Team has been engaged with the following activities in Sheerwater in support of our work with residents in the area:

- Installation of community gardens designed by the RHS School of Horticulture on either side of the shopping parade on Dartmouth Avenue

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bulb Plantings in communal areas</li><li>• Participating in the Sheerwater Street Party</li><li>• Free trips to RHS for families in the area</li><li>• Incredible Edible event</li></ul> <p>In addition I am aware that RHS is developing strong links with the local schools (Broodmare and BDB) and the Mosque. Their support in the locality has helped to engage with the local residents very positively by increasing interest and participation by volunteers. Thus supporting WBC's Health and Well Being agenda/targets.</p> <p>RHS's proposed new Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning may just be outside of Woking Borough boundaries, it is likely to provide extensive additional opportunities for Woking residents to benefit from such excellent facilities.</p>
3.3 Assessment	<p>The RHS Wisley is applying for grant support of £100,000 for the financial year 2019/20. The purpose of the funding is to go towards to build of the Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning. The Centre will completely transform their horticultural science, learning and public engagement, enabling them to deliver cutting-edge research, share scientific understanding with schools, universities and industry, and influence gardeners and communities across the UK to build a greener future. The Centre is part of a significant multi-million pound investment programme at Wisley that will have numerous benefits for the local area's economy and its communities.</p> <p>Planning permission was granted for the Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning in September 2016. The project is now at RIBA Stage 4 (detailed design) and is currently in the process of appointing a contractor. Enabling infrastructure works and site clearance are in progress, with work on the build due to start by summer 2019 with completion in summer 2020.</p> <p>The Organisation highlights three reasons why the new Centre should be supported by Woking Borough Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Horticulture is important and undervalued</li></ul> <p>Although often overlooked, horticulture is critical to all our lives, and the benefits of growing plants are vast, from strengthening communities and building a more resilient society to supporting biodiversity, cooling cities, growing food, combating climate change, protecting against flooding and improving air quality.</p> <p>However, horticulture is at risk along with the benefits it can offer future generations. An increasing number of front gardens are being turned to paving or parking, there is a squeeze on public funding for community green spaces and our gardens and countryside are under threat from an influx of new and potentially devastating pests and diseases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is a pressing need for the project</li></ul> <p>Increasing environmental threats to our planet require a society-wide response, and these will not be met without engagement of the nation's gardeners, present and future. Our entire natural heritage is under threat unless we take this challenge seriously now – the new national Centre for Horticultural Science and</p>

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Learning will act as a global knowledge hub for the public and horticulture industry alike to enable us to tackle these issues together.

A serious skills shortage threatens the horticulture industry, with knowledge of plants and gardening at risk due to lack of skills-sharing and low levels of interest in careers in botany, gardening and horticultural science. Many young people have a poor perception of the horticulture industry, and little knowledge or understanding of the benefits of gardening. As a result children and young people are becoming increasingly disconnected from the natural world, while also experiencing poorer physical health and emotional wellbeing. The need should be tackled urgently by safeguarding the social capital represented by the living heritage of our experienced gardeners. The Wisley project will build skills and knowledge across all audiences to address this. A visitor experience that does not fully cater for the needs and interests of all visitors, risks undermining the RHS's long-term sustainability and ability to fund its charitable objectives.

If the RHS does not make this major investment now, it risks the further deterioration in the condition of its built and collected heritage assets. The RHS cannot deliver its vision without support. To create the national Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning, the RHS will invest £23.1m but must secure an additional £11.3m from external funders.

- The project will be of multiple benefits to Woking residents

The developments at Wisley strongly support and align with all six Themes of the Woking Community Strategy, as befitting Wisley's place as a significant local visitor attraction, and a national hub for horticulture. Wisley Garden is the 10th most visited visitor attraction in the country and therefore vital to the region.

The developments at Wisley will have a significant impact on the local, regional and national economy creating jobs for the site, the visitor economy and our supply chain, including the UK's important horticulture industry.

In addition, the RHS has a number of community outreach teams which work with a wide range of local groups, societies and many local voluntary sector organisations which represent different user groups. For Woking, these include Home-Start, Woking Mind, Shah Jahan Mosque, Sheerwater Estates residents' groups, Sythwood Children's Centre, Sight for Surrey, Surrey Coalition for Disabled People, Thrive, The Wildlife Trusts and the WWF.

Taking into account the community benefit of a new Centre for Horticulture Science and Learning, it is recommended that a grant of £100,000 be awarded towards the project.

REPORT ENDS