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We are seeking to introduce the Gardens Trust, in our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. I am writing to highlight our work and to outline the contribution that historic parks and gardens can make to current challenges and opportunities. As you will have seen, the Government has announced a desire to remove the Gardens Trust as a statutory consultee in the planning system. We are launching a robust campaign to counter the Government's proposal, and any help you can give in amplifying our messages would be hugely appreciated. Our current statement is at [The Gardens Trust's response to the government's intention to consult on removing it as a statutory consultee - The Gardens Trust](#)

**The Gardens Trust is the only national organisation exclusively focused on historic designed landscapes**, commonly known as 'historic parks and gardens'. A charity, the Gardens Trust represents and supports the 36 local volunteer County Garden Trusts in England, the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, and works with related bodies across the UK. The Gardens Trust is the statutory consultee for planning applications which affect parks and gardens. We do not recognize the Government's description of statutory consultees in relation to our work – we respond to consultations in a timely manner, offering constructive pragmatic advice to local planning authorities, at a cost of only £42,000 to the taxpayer.

**Historic parks and gardens have a role to play in:**

- Growing the economy, as historic parks and gardens support well-designed development with ready-made access to pre-existing greenspace. They also add hugely to the UK's tourism economy, being one of the biggest drivers in this field, nationally and internationally.
- Meeting the challenges of the climate emergency, as landscapes have historically supported the provision of energy use and generation and we are keen to show how this can be done. They are critical too in supporting nature recovery, especially as older, established landscapes support biodiversity significantly more than newly-created open space.
- Fostering safer streets, as public parks play an important role in social cohesion by offering both places to come together and build communities, as well as offering places for wellbeing, play and recreation for all. This is the reason that so many of them were created in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and challenging inter-war periods.
- Ensuring that the NHS is fit for the future, because parks help reduce demand on the NHS by offering free-to-access places to exercise and enjoy fresh air, critical for health and wellbeing.
- Nurturing opportunity for all, because not only does an active parks and gardens sector support inclusive access to leisure but it also offers a range of accessible career pathways.

We would welcome the opportunity to explore these contributions with you and would be grateful for any help at all that you can offer in sharing our key messages, including around our statutory consultee status.

We would also like to share our **forthcoming report into the value of historic parks and gardens in a changing society** and the role they can play in development, tourism, healthy communities and nature recovery. We can send a copy when it is published later this Spring but please get in touch if you would like to discuss this in the meantime.

Most immediately, we would love to welcome you to our **conference on historic parks and gardens in the planning system**. This is in London and online on 3<sup>rd</sup> April. Details are at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/london-conference-historic-landscape-assembly-tickets-1083595235519> or do get in touch and I will reserve you a place.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Blandford, OBE, Trustee