



Helmsley Walled Garden



Impact Report

2025 - 2026



helmsleywalledgarden

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Introduction from our Executive Director

Welcome to the first Impact Report of Helmsley Walled Garden, continuing to benefit our community, as first established by Alison Ticehurst who founded the charity in 1999.

We have experienced some significant changes over the last few years, particularly to our staffing structure in 2025. We are predicting a future position of fully funding our Volunteer support staff within the next two years, creating an organisation that is more sustainable and focussed than it possibly ever has been.

The appointment of our Garden Manager in April 2025 has enabled our Volunteer Coordinators, and our Volunteers, to be better resourced on a day to day basis. With a strong focus on garden activities and priorities, our Garden Manager has been able to greatly enhance our volunteering experience whilst ensuring a professional presentation of the garden for our visitors.

Achieving the King's Award for Volunteering has been a tremendous accolade for the garden, reflecting the success of our ground breaking work with volunteers, particularly since the pandemic of 2020.

We continue to receive applications from our community for volunteering and we have managed this year to significantly reduce our waiting list. This has been through the introduction of new volunteering opportunities, additional mentors and the creation of new sessions for our volunteers.

What has become evident throughout the last 12 months is that we need to continue to adapt our approach to ensure we support those that need the garden the most. This knowledge has informed not only our well established 'Learning to Grow' project but also the proposal of our new initiative, 'Seeds of Change'.

Over 26,000 visitors enjoyed the garden in 2025 and this revenue stream continues to support the work that we continue to deliver and develop for our local community.

June Tainsh, MHort,
Executive Director



Helmsley
Walled
Garden

A beautiful garden changing lives



What goes into the garden

- ❖ Our board of seven volunteer Trustees have oversight of the operations of the charity, holding regular board meetings with our Executive Director. The board regularly reviews the set of policies and procedures that govern all operations including Safeguarding and Diversity & Equality.
- ❖ We have a Volunteering Policy and follow an induction procedure for all new volunteers. Training is provided for staff and mentors and all permanent staff have DBS checks.
- ❖ We maintain and develop the walled garden site, including buildings, the polytunnel, tools and equipment, to ensure continuity and appropriate facilities for staff and volunteers. In 2025 we refurbished our existing Orchid House and this is an ongoing commitment of the charity to maintain this beautiful building in good condition.
- ❖ Volunteers are supported in the garden by our staff of 2 full time volunteer coordinators and our Garden Manager. In addition we have 12 volunteer mentors, experienced volunteers who work one-to-one with those who benefit from extra support
- ❖ In 2025 we supported 85 volunteer gardeners who together contributed 6,600 hours to maintaining and developing the walled garden. Our 21 kiosk volunteers contributed 1,200 hours of their time to welcoming our visitors and keeping our shop open.
- ❖ The presentation of the garden is key to our visitor experience and the revenue generated by our visitors supports our volunteers in their work.
- ❖ This simple relationship ensures that the work of our volunteers in maintaining the garden is fully appreciated by our visitors, further enhancing the sense of purpose and well-being our volunteers get from their involvement

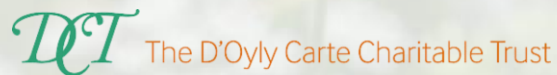
The Wider Community

As a community-centric project, there are many people beyond the staff and volunteers who combine to make Helmsley Walled Garden a success.

Belonging, giving and sharing are key to human wellbeing and we see a circularity where everyone contributes and everyone benefits in their different ways. We acknowledge all those who support the garden.

- ❖ Volunteers' families and support network, enabling attendance at the garden.
- ❖ Garden visitors, using our shop and café.
- ❖ Local community groups & gardening clubs who organise visits to the garden
- ❖ Other professionals who use our facilities to host workshops.
- ❖ Local authorities, tourism organisations, the Royal Horticultural Society and coach tour operators who all promote our garden
- ❖ Individual and business donors and grant funding organisations
- ❖ The Vine House Café and our landlords, Duncombe Park.

Over £200,000 of grant funding since 2020. 'Learning to Grow' our exemplar project funded by Community Lottery.



What we do and what we have achieved

The sensitive and environmentally aware development of Helmsley Walled Garden continued throughout 2024/25 with some notable achievements.

- ❖ New alpine show garden displayed at Harrogate Flower Show, winning a Silver Gilt medal & reconstructed by our volunteers at the garden
- ❖ Presentation of King's Award for Volunteering in November 2024
- ❖ 3 years of Community Lottery funding for our 'Learning to Grow' initiative, propagating and growing plants to sell to our visitors.
- ❖ 'Up the Garden Path' funding appeal to restore the central path in the walled garden
- ❖ Creation of a new staff role and subsequent appointment of a Garden Manager
- ❖ Six new volunteers have joined the garden since February 2025.
- ❖ New interpretation boards, depicting the history of the garden, funded by North York Moors National Parks.

What we do and what we have achieved

Our knowledgeable and specialised staff support the needs of volunteers and visitors.

We provide horticultural training and training for our kiosk volunteers to welcome visitors and give guided tours.

Volunteer activities include pruning fruit trees, growing vegetables, creating new areas of planting and propagation.

A monthly diary is kept, recording all work done in the garden, and the volunteers involved. Our 'Learning to Grow' programme propagates plants to sell and for the garden.

We provide social events for volunteers and free use of the garden for local community groups and schools

Along with flowers, our volunteers grow apples, pears, lettuce, carrots, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, parsnips, beetroot and lots more...

Our volunteers are active, keep learning, give, connect, take notice and care for the planet

Supported volunteer gardening sessions provide opportunities for team working and wellbeing activities

We run 6 x 3-hour volunteering sessions every week, attended by up to 16 volunteers and volunteer mentors. Mentors are paired with individuals according to need, friendships and experience.

We champion nature friendly and sustainable gardening practices, are working with other local organisations to develop our Climate Action Plan.

We host art & craft workshops taught by experts, gardening workshops and fundraising events.

The well-being benefits of Helmsley Walled Garden

- The Wheel of Well-being is a simple and meaningful way to consider the wellbeing benefits of our supported gardening sessions. This suggests six areas of activity to support and promote mental health for everyone. (See 'The Wheel of Well-being explained' for more information.)
- Although described separately, there are clear overlaps in how Helmsley Walled Garden can help people to achieve the six aims of the Wheel of Wellbeing, (WOW). For example, learning, volunteering and physical activity with other people offers an ideal opportunity to socialise and increase our sense of connection and community. Gardening in a community garden provides opportunities for volunteers to enjoy all the activities within the WOW.
- Volunteers and visitors alike can find mindful moments in the effortless fascination of plants and wildlife in the garden, community groups can use the space to meet, join creative activities and everyone can 'give' by supporting the project through plant sales.
- The strong sustainability ethos of the garden strengthens nature connectedness for the gardeners, supports the aim to Care for the Planet within the garden and provides inspiration for others to garden in an environmentally friendly way.



Well-being benefits

BODY, BE ACTIVE

Volunteers attend sessions 4 days per week from 9.30 am where they gather to be allocated tasks. Even in poor weather, volunteers are out in the garden working on a range of activities from turning compost to pricking out seedlings and everything in between.

Many volunteers deem the garden to be their key form of exercise and hate to miss a session. Ann Smith, a volunteer for 10 years suffers from a health condition that affects her mobility. This has improved enormously since her involvement with the garden

Ann Smith



Alex Phillips

MIND, KEEP LEARNING

All our volunteers enjoy tutorials by our Garden Manager on techniques such as apple pruning, planting bulbs and plant identification. With funding from Community Lottery we have established an afternoon propagation session focused on learning new skills for our volunteers.

Alex was our first apprentice on our garden apprenticeship scheme that began in 2024. He achieved great results and has learnt so much about horticulture in his 12 month paid position

Well-being benefits

SPIRIT, GIVE

Funding in 2021 supported the establishment of our 'Over the Garden Gate' project. This project engages volunteers in mentoring others for a range of reasons - lack of confidence, limited mobility, learning difficulties or new volunteers to the garden.

Liz has been a mentor with us for three years and volunteers on a Wednesday for our two sessions. She regularly supports a volunteer living with autism and has found her volunteering a real source of joy and satisfaction

Liz Latham



Janet Terry

PEOPLE, CONNECT

Over 100 volunteers are involved in the garden, and some of them work in our kiosk welcoming visitors. These three hour sessions can be quite busy in the summer months and our kiosk volunteers are always fully supported by our staff team.

Janet has been volunteering in the kiosk for four years and really enjoys the experience. She is retired and volunteers because she loves chatting to visitors about the garden. She loves to hear feedback - many visitors come back to the kiosk and tell her how much they've loved their visit.

Well-being benefits



Clare
Belbin

PLACE, TAKE NOTICE

The garden has been developed along the 8 principles of experience values as defined in Scandinavian landscape architecture. These values include sanctuary, biodiversity, heritage and opportunity for communal activities. Our visitors can enjoy all these aspects of the garden through visiting and through enjoying activities arranged by the garden and other community groups.

Clare Belbin has worked in the garden as an artist for over 10 years. She paints almost every day, come rain or shine and has an annual exhibition of her work in the Orchid House.

PLANET, CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Helmsley Walled Garden has a strict policy around the use of insecticides and herbicides. We only use glyphosate on our paths when absolutely necessary and never use any insecticides in the garden. We promote our environmental sustainability to our volunteers and our visitors, ensuring we have minimal negative environmental impact on our garden and the surrounding areas.

In 2020, the Finnis Scott Foundation funded a small natural pond in the garden that is designed to be supportive of a wide range of insects and amphibians. Tucked down in a shady corner of the garden, this pond is home to dragonflies and newts and a popular area for visitors and volunteers alike.

Wheel of Well-being



Wheel of Well-being is owned by South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial Share-Alike 4.0 International License

The Wheel of Well-being (WoW) was created in 2009 to support a practical, community based programme increasing mental health and wellbeing as part of the Well London health improvement initiative. Initially designed with the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM), WoW and associated tools are now hosted by Thrive Wellbeing Consultancy.

- ❖ **Body: be active** - Being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness, it can also raise your self-esteem, enabling you to set goals, physiologically changing your mood.
- ❖ **Mind: Keep learning** - learning new skills can help you build a sense of purpose, improving connectedness with others.
- ❖ **Spirit: Give** - Research suggests that acts of giving, including giving time and energy as a volunteer, can help improve your mental wellbeing.
- ❖ **People: connect** - Good relationships build a sense of belonging and self-worth, give you an opportunity to share positive experiences, provide emotional support and allow you to support others
- ❖ **Place: Take notice** - Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing, help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better.
- ❖ **Planet: Care** - Developing a strong feeling of connection to nature encourages attitudes and behaviours that enhance long term health and wellbeing, increasing our sense of responsibility to the wider environment.

Josh's Story

Josh Whittaker joined the garden as a volunteer in June 2022, initially coming with his dad, Phil. Phil and Josh worked together as a great team and it wasn't long before Josh began to attend volunteering sessions on his own, Phil dropping him off and picking him up at the end of the day.

Last year, we asked Josh if he would like to be our new garden apprentice and he jumped at the chance, working his way through our course with our volunteer coordinators. He is paid for six hours every week and has learnt a wide range of horticultural skills.

Josh, on the right, with Will Jeffrey, another of our garden volunteers, working on our 'Learning to Grow' project



"Working and volunteering at HWG has helped Joshua in so many ways. With the support of his work colleagues and friends, he has grown in confidence - both in his interactions with others and his ability to carry out tasks and develop a set of valuable skills.

At home, Joshua seems more relaxed and talkative and is always happy when it comes round to his working day at the walled garden. He always seems to be first in line when the cakes and biscuits are on offer at break-time and these days he is much more likely to join in the conversations over a cup of tea!

This was Joshua's first paid job and it has given him something very important - belief in himself. His self-esteem has grown significantly, and so too has his independence.

All he ever needed was the opportunity to learn, grow and be valued - and he has found that HWG surrounded by a unique group of friends, mentors and colleagues."

Helen and Phil Whittaker, February 2026

Some comments from our volunteers

- ❖ 'continues to be a really enjoyable and rewarding experience.' CS
- ❖ 'I love coming here! It restores my soul.' CT
- ❖ 'I feel so understood, accepted for who I am, trusted, a member of a team, valued and respected.' JR
- ❖ 'Sense of purpose' SR
- ❖ 'Positive environment to work - encouragement from colleagues and staff.' LB

...and from our visitors

- ❖ 'So peaceful with a beautiful community spirit' , Tony, Carolin and Emma.
- ❖ "Wonderful gardens & gardeners! Ethos amazing", Kiplin Volunteers.
- ❖ "Beautiful community space", Barry Walker, Scotland
- ❖ "Stunning gardens, good for the soul. Enjoyed very much", Paul & Lin.
- ❖ "Beautiful and peaceful gardens. Volunteers lovely", Sandra and Andy