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Dear Hilary McGrady,

28 August 2020

re: National Trust 'Reset' programme

We write to express our profound concern at proposals contained within documents relating to the above and their implications for the future of parks and gardens in the care of the National Trust, should they be implemented.

The Trust owns more than 200 parks and gardens throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Some of these are of minor importance, but the vast majority are associated with the country houses, dating from the 16th century onwards, for which they were specifically designed and which continue to provide them with their essential setting.

Of these, some 90% are judged by Historic England, Cadw and NIEA (Northern Ireland Environment Agency) to be of 'particular significance' and are included on the English National Heritage List or their Welsh and Northern Irish equivalents. Many of these parks and gardens are held to be of 'exceptional' significance and one has been designated a World Heritage Site. Their high levels of significance are also specifically recognised in national planning legislation.

Given the above, it is clear that the National Trust is the guardian of what is perhaps the single most important assemblage of parks and gardens of special historic interest anywhere in the world.

The effective management of this portfolio, including its care and conservation, as well as the enabling of public access and enjoyment, requires a high level of knowledge, expertise and experience across a broad range of disciplines, as well as the ability to recognise and understand both the significance of what is being managed and the potential impact on it of future actions.

It is our view that the proposed losses of curatorial and other expertise at both regional and central levels will severely deplete this understanding and will damage the National Trust's ability properly to discharge its responsibility to protect and enhance the significance of these irreplaceable heritage assets.

We do not accept that the 'replacement' roles as currently proposed for these key personnel will in any way compensate for the irrevocable loss of the breadth of knowledge and understanding that presently resides within the Trust.

We urge you to reconsider these proposals and to seek another way to care for these unique places in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Dr James Bartos
Chairman, The Gardens Trust