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GOVERNMENT DECISION PUTS ENGLAND'S HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS AT RISK OF DESTRUCTION – GARDENS TRUST

The Gardens Trust is devastated by the Government's announcement today that its role as a statutory consultee in the English planning system is being removed.

The Trust, founded in 1966, is the only national charity with a statutory responsibility to protect and conserve our heritage of designed landscapes, many of which are on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England.

It says that the decision, following a consultation by The Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, puts the nation's green treasure of parks and gardens, created and enjoyed over hundreds of years, at immediate risk of harm through poorly-informed development.

It adds that these developments will impact on the views to and from parks and gardens and the peace and tranquility in which they can be enjoyed.

The Trust recognises that some protection for historic parks and gardens will still be provided by it being notified of planning applications within parks and gardens

but are deeply concerned that this will not include applications affecting the settings of these these special places.

Notable examples include internationally famous and locally loved parks and gardens such as Hyde Park in London, Painshill in Surrey, Heligan in Cornwall, Chatsworth in Derbyshire, Wicksteed Park in Northamptonshire, Sheffield Botanical Gardens in Yorkshire, Birkenhead Park on the Wirral and Leazes Park in Newcastle.

In the 1980s, before the Gardens Trust was a statutory consultee, Belhus Park, designed by world-famous Capability Brown in the 18th century and an important Grade II free-to-access community asset, was cut in two by the M25, which dramatically impairs its quality as a landscape and the enjoyment of local people (see attached photos).

The Gardens Trust's Chair, John Watkins, said: "It is devastating news that the Government has removed key protection for parks and gardens by ending the Gardens Trust's role as statutory consultee.

"This devalues these special places and makes them vulnerable to poorly informed development. We do however welcome the Government's recognition that we play an important part in the planning process and will strive to continue to offer advice to local planning authorities on ways to ensure that historic parks and gardens can survive, to support communities today and in future.

"But the Government's decision means that this will be limited to development within the green spaces themselves rather than including setting. This removes protection for the views to and from them, and for the peace and tranquility in which people can enjoy them.

“Without proper consideration of registered parks and gardens in the planning system through the statutory consultee role, the checks and balances of the planning system will be eroded and the many much-loved Grade II sites will experience greater vulnerability.”

Parks and gardens have key roles in addressing issues facing us all in the 21st century, such as:

- Growing the economy: 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.
- Helping to ameliorate the impacts of climate change. For example, parks and gardens with mature historic trees will play an increasingly important role as they provide shade and cooling islands in and around urban areas.
- Supporting nature recovery, particularly in our cities, where established older landscapes can provide established complex habitats.
- Playing an important role in social cohesion as public green space offers places for people to come together and build communities, as well as offering places for wellbeing, play and recreation for all. Public parks were created to support rapidly expanding cities in the 19th century, 1920s and post war period and will be critical to the success of 21ST century urban expansion and concentration.
- Ensuring that the NHS is fit for the future, because parks and gardens 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.

You can read more about the role of historic parks and gardens in the 21st century in the Gardens Trust report [*Harnessing : Parks and Gardens in the 21st Century: How Historic Landscapes can Support our Today and Tomorrow.*](#)

As a statutory consultee, local planning authorities and the Planning Inspectorate must consult the Gardens Trust in relation to all planning

applications that may affect historic designed landscapes on the national Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England.

In 2024-25 the Gardens Trust only made 69 critical objections to planning applications on a variety of issues, including schemes that would have seen a total of 1,135 new dwellings built on or affecting the sites it protects.

The Gardens Trust receives a Government grant of around £45,000 to support its planning system work. The cost of all local planning authorities having to deliver this service themselves is estimated at £3,692,846 per annum.

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Issued on behalf of the Gardens Trust

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