



# THE ALNWICK GARDEN TRUST

## SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

APRIL 2019 - MARCH 2020



“Your Garden.....For Everyone.....Always.....”

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# Welcome

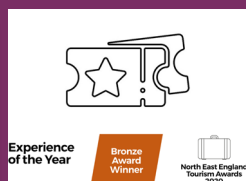


I have great pleasure in presenting our 2019/20 Social Impact Report. In 1997 The Duchess of Northumberland had a vision for a garden that would have a dual function: a world leading visitor attraction that would attract hundreds of thousands of tourists as well as a community project that had a deep and meaningful social impact in Alnwick and the North East.

Winning the Outstanding Social Enterprise award at the North East Charity Awards demonstrated that we are fulfilling this vision. Galvanised by this accolade we dived into identifying ways to extend our social impact. The three years subsequent has seen a tremendous amount of growth in our community work. The arrival of Tracy Machnicki, Head of Community and Education, and the strengthening of our Community and Education team has allowed us to introduce new innovative programmes such as the Drugs Education programme and our empowering Grow into Work initiative.

This year over 4,000 people have benefited directly from The Garden's community programmes and this is something we envisage growing even further in a post pandemic world. I hope you enjoy reading through this report and understand, in more detail, the great work we do.

Mark Brassell  
Chief Executive



## Awards and Accolades

2020: Large Visitor Attraction of The Year  
Experience of the Year

2019: Hall of Fame – 5 Years of Excellence  
Award of Excellence  
Loo of the Year

100 Best Gardens  
Great Place to Eat

North East Tourism Awards  
North East Tourism Awards  
Trip Advisor  
Trip Advisor  
Loo of the Year

Garden News  
Heritage Awards

Silver  
Bronze

Platinum

Winner  
Winner



Previous year's awards have included;  
Welcome Accolade  
Best Community Initiative Finalist

Outstanding Social Enterprise Awards  
Tourist and Visitor Attractions and County Estates

Visit England  
Horticulture Weekly  
Custodian Awards  
North East Charity Awards  
Northumbria in Bloom

# Executive Summary



The brainchild of The Duchess of Northumberland, The Alwick Garden is an award-winning visitor attraction in Alwick, Northumberland. The 12 acres of magnificent gardens are home to the world's largest Taihaku Cherry Orchard, a Grand Cascade comprising 120 water jets and the world's largest Treehouse. Through a combination of water features, beautiful plants and ornate spaces, it is a tranquil haven for horticulturists, families and tourists alike. The Alwick Garden welcomes over 350,000 visitors per year.

The Alwick Garden Trust became a registered charity in 2003. Any surplus from running The Garden is re-invested into improving and developing The Alwick Garden and for making positive social impacts through one of The Garden's award winning charity programmes. The programmes are aimed to help people in and around Northumberland from a variety of social backgrounds. During 2019 and 2020, over 4,000 beneficiaries were directly impacted through access to The Trust's community programmes. Key programmes include Elderberries programmes for elderly people such as the Drop In Centre, the Blooming Well Dementia Group, the Gentlemen's Garden Group and Health and Self sessions, the Roots and Shoots healthy eating programme for young people, Young Gardeners, the Enterprise programme for those seeking work and Drugs Education for young people.





## FACT

4,264 beneficiaries  
have worked  
directly with The  
Alnwick Garden  
Trust in 2019/2020

## *Who do The Alnwick Garden Trust aim to reach?*

The Alnwick Garden is a garden for the community, with a wide and far-reaching impact. It nurtures a sense of belonging and inclusivity for all. The Alnwick Garden Trust seeks to give back to communities, engage all walks of life and provide both familiar and new experiences and opportunities.

The Trust's Elderberries Programme works to address loneliness and isolation for people aged 55 and over living in Northumberland, offering local people access to projects, events, services and opportunities. It aims to promote a healthy fulfilled quality of life.

The Elderberries Programme includes 'Health and Self' which offers weekly exercise classes, a walking group and toenail cutting as well as health talks which bring people together to build new friendships. There are also seasonal parties, tea dances, Singing For The Brain (in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society), dance classes and monthly movies.

The 'Gentlemen's Garden' is a group specifically for men over 55 who enjoy gardening and crafts. 'Blooming Well' are twice weekly sessions aimed at people with early onset dementia and their carers. This project focuses on keeping people active, connected and supported while living well with dementia. The 'Drop In Centre' is open every Thursday, Friday and Sunday for those who wish to make new friends.

# About The Alnwick Garden Trust.....

## Mission

The Alnwick Garden cultivates communities and raises aspirations in a place of beauty. Fearlessly inspiring and connecting people in an inclusive garden environment that creates learning opportunities and enriches lives.

## Promote Skills and Lifelong Learning

Provide opportunities for people of all abilities to learn and grow. Empower individuals in raising aspirations to reach their potential through building skills, knowledge and confidence.

## Encourage Healthy Living and Well-being

Provide innovative and creative ways for the community to engage in experiences that promote positive well-being and healthy lifestyles. Tackle barriers to reduce social and rural isolation.

## Create and Nurture Community Partnerships

Complement other organisations services whilst working towards a strategic vision for support in communities. Be a pioneer for new initiatives, incorporating partners expertise and sharing good practice. Solidify our charitable presence locally, regionally and nationally.

The Alnwick Garden Trust believe that everyone has an innate need to be connected to others; to reduce isolation, to find a purpose and to get out and about. An essential role that The Trust can play in addressing disadvantage is to build confidence, self and collective expression and encourage big dreaming through role modelling, opportunity, excitement and exposure.



The Trust aims to be a leader and influencer in promoting arts, culture and heritage, visibly celebrating partnership and collective impact on communities and priorities through supporting positive mental health ensuring everyone leaves with a spring in their step. The Trust seeks to promote interaction, where people walk through and chat to each other with experiences for whole communities to be part of.

Arts and culture is an experience that all gain from, regardless of age and background. The Trust reflect and celebrate diversity, showcase skills, provide opportunities, promote inclusion and interest. Not only does The Trust seek to reach out to be part of family life to those who visit our site, but also into schools and community groups to support our next generation, adding quality and value that is tangible and excites young people and children.



## FACT

The free Grand Lantern Parade for the community was attended by over 4,000 people in 2019.

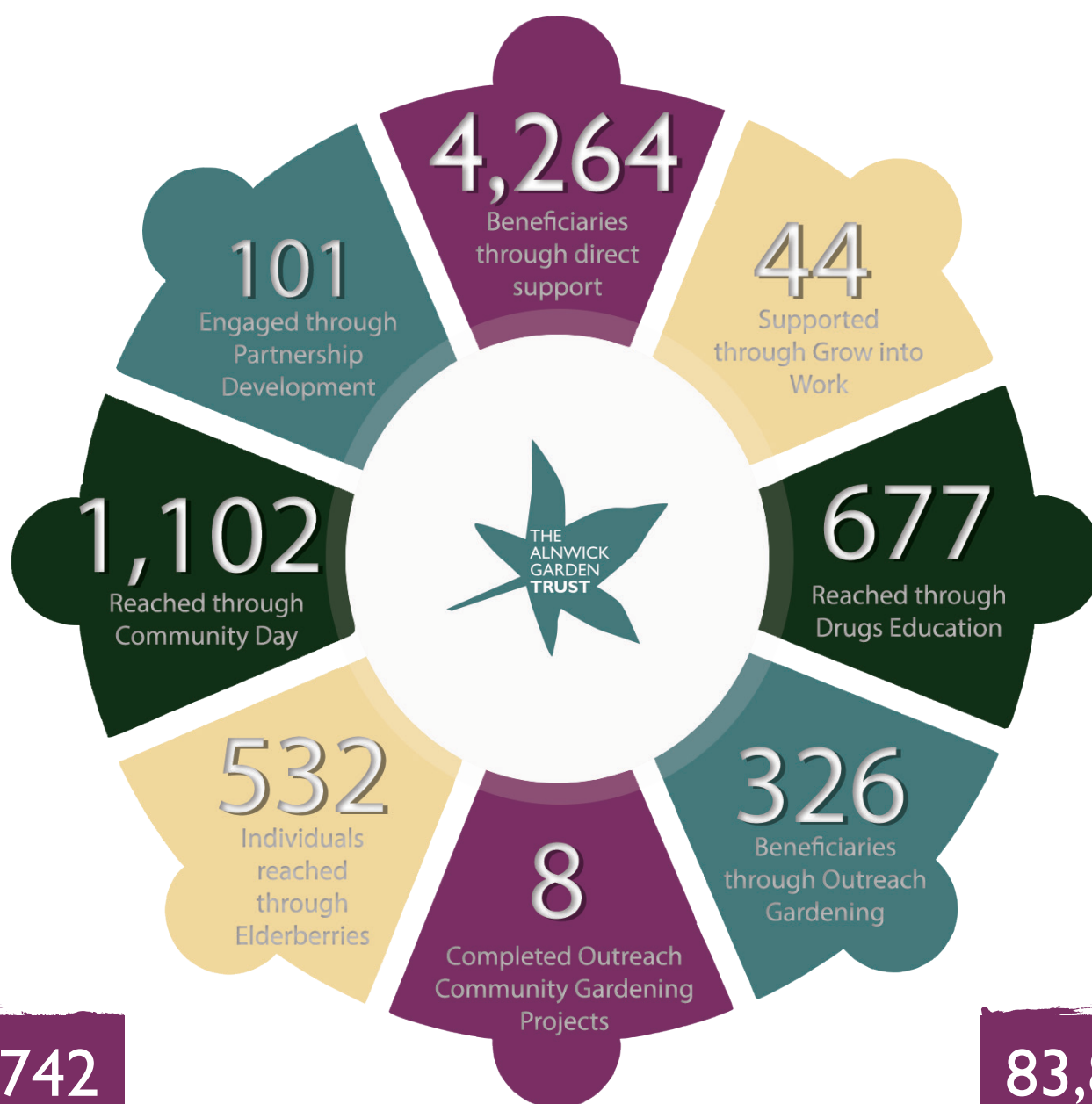
## FACT

Over 200 people joined in with 'The Big Sing' for BBC Music Day to raise awareness of dementia when The Alnwick Garden participated.

The Trust has a responsibility to engage children and young people in mentoring, coaching, education and volunteering - to become knowing adults, with aspirations, and feeling ownership to change the view of the world and themselves. Through exploiting our setting and lifting every day curriculum into a whole new world to explore the unfamiliar and increase positive life chances, we hope to inspire the next generation. We also have a responsibility to our elderly to give them a voice in their community, to share their stories and never stop learning and belonging, revisiting memories and making new ones.



# Our Impact at a Glance



37,742

Children participated in Budding Artists

83,893

People enjoyed a Poison Garden Tour

In 2019/ 2020, The Alwrick Garden Trust worked directly with 4,264 beneficiaries through regular groups, projects, engagements activities, workshops, programmes and school workshops.

Find out more on the following pages about our direct support and wider community partnership development.



## Community and Education

The beauty of The Alwick Garden has a positive impact on a person's wellbeing however this is further enhanced by the community programmes which deliver targeted, varied and valuable provision to local communities. Each programme has a specific need to address, ensuring that all participants benefit as they wish, whilst forming solid support networks and friendships.

### Elderberries

The Elderberries is the longest-running and most established programme at The Alwick Garden. The programme works with people aged over 55 to combat isolation, provide stimulating and mind provoking activities, as well as increase physical exercise and promote mental wellbeing. The Trust ensures that every activity and group follow at least one of the NHS 5 Steps to Wellbeing, which are:

- ✦ Connect with other people
- ✦ Be physically active
- ✦ Learn new skills
- ✦ Give to others
- ✦ Mindfulness

2019/2020 The Trust reached **532** beneficiaries through Elderberries, as well as hosting a wealth of one-off events, detailed in the 'Wider Community' section.

## Elderberries Drop-In

The Drop In is a hugely valued and needed service which is evidenced with **3,257** attendances from April 2019 to March 2020. Aimed at over 50's, the Drop In is entirely led and delivered by a team of dedicated and committed volunteers. The idea was borne by The Duchess of Northumberland, who wanted a community-based area for older people in Alwick and the surrounding areas, where friendships can be made and nurtured. The Drop In has been purpose built, funded by the Stuart Halbert Foundation and The Rank Foundation, to replicate a comfortable, heart-warming living-room feel. Home baked refreshments are served, free of charge, and a variety of games, books and magazines are available. At the Drop In, beneficiaries have the opportunity to spend time with others, playing games, passing the time of day, or sharing stories or memories.



### FACT

The Trust reached 512 beneficiaries through Elderberries, as well as hosting a wealth of one-off events.

## Blooming Well

The Blooming Well project is a twice-weekly initiative that supports people over 55 who have early on-set dementia, and their carers. Led by the Community Programme Coordinators supported by volunteers, activities range from therapeutic horticulture to the arts with the aim of reducing isolation, improving wellbeing and promoting positive mental health. Blooming Well supports up to **30** individuals per month with attendances at **868** for 2019/20.



## Singing for the Brain

Evidence suggests that music and singing can greatly benefit those with dementia and Alzheimer's. The monthly Singing for the Brain session, delivered in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, involves a diverse range of familiar songs to invoke nostalgia and memories. There were **271** attendances during 2019.

*One carer commented: "My mum doesn't always remember why she's been, she just knows that she feels better and happier."*



## Health and Self

Physical wellbeing is promoted for Elderberries participants through a variety of programmes including:

- ✳ Yoga - **523** attendances with up to **26** individuals per month
- ✳ Pilates – **1,362** attendances with up to **61** individuals per month
- ✳ Toenail Cutting - **88** attendances
- ✳ Chair Exercise - **146** attendances with up to **22** individuals per month

The weekly walking group is another popular group that supports physical wellbeing. Heavily supported by volunteers, with **623** attendances with up to **24** individuals at a session, the group enjoy walks around The Alwick Garden or within the town, with participants sharing stories and memories with each other.

*One participant commented: "The Walking Group offers us fresh air, exercise and wonderful company. The group is full of pleasant, easy-going people who are sociable and non-judgemental, accepting of all."*

There are also monthly talks in the Clinic Café where external organisations come to provide information and advice on various matters; whether it is keeping warm through the winter, or meeting therapy dogs. The Clinic Café had **151** attendances in 2019.

## Monthly Movies

The Elderberries team create a 'cinematic' experience with a different film each month to sing along to, share stories and relive memories while enjoying popcorn and refreshments. With up to a maximum of 18 participants at a session, there has been **102** attendances across the year.

## Tea N Tech

This is one of the newest Elderberries programmes, starting in February 2020, and also has the greatest demand. Weekly sessions provide over 55's with the opportunity to bring in their gadgets, whether a laptop, mobile phone or tablet, and receive support and advice to use it. This could range from shopping online, setting up online banking, saving phone numbers, transferring photos and using social media. Unfortunately due to the lockdown the sessions have been temporarily suspended but in February alone there were **72** attendances.

## Parties and Tea Dances

Elderberries parties and tea dances are accompanied by live entertainment and afternoon tea. In April 2019, **124** people attended the Spring Party and the tea dance in May was enjoyed by **93** participants. A further **77** people enjoyed the tea dance in September.

*One participant commented:  
"A lovely afternoon, the atmosphere so pleasant, the outlook beautiful, the food pleasant and the entertainment really enjoyable."*



### FACT

294 people have enjoyed parties and Tea Dances

## Grow Into Work

Grow Into Work is an employment support programme part funded by The Mercers Company, to help people in North Northumberland to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to secure sustainable employment. The six-week programme is a mix of work experience and classroom-based sessions where beneficiaries develop CV writing skills, application form completion and interview and presentation skills. Support continues once beneficiaries have completed the programme with telephone, face to face and email support. Support may continue until the beneficiary gains employment, and beyond if required.

**80%** of participants of the Grow Into Work programme have moved into paid employment with **15%** moving into further education or additional training.

Outcomes: To increase;

- Confidence
- Reliability
- Communication skills
- Work ethic
- Teamwork skills
- Use of initiative
- Job searching skills

## Young Gardeners

Young Gardeners is a horticultural programme specifically for children with learning differences and specific needs and their families. The programme offers an inclusive learning experience with support from The Trust team. Each family has their own plot for the growing season with each session resulting in a sense of great achievement through seeing their own produce grow.



Outcomes: Learning together as a family  
Increase knowledge around healthy eating  
Increase knowledge about looking after our environment

**27** children and parents participated; **9** families in total

Highlights: **6** families transferred skills learned to do gardening projects at home  
**5** families increased the time they spent outdoors as a result of attending the programme.

# Roots and Shoots Healthy Living Programme

Working in partnership with the NHS and funded by The Shears Foundation, The Roots and Shoots programme supports schools across Northumberland to tackle childhood obesity and promote healthy living in children and young people. The Trust works with **10** schools per year, each with approximately **20** children per season. Throughout the growing season, each school has their own plot where they prepare the soil, plant produce and harvest the vegetables. The practical sessions are coupled with classroom education around healthy eating, living well and the importance of exercise. The children can then take this learning home and help transform their own garden and prepare tasty meals with the produce they've grown.



Outcomes: To increase knowledge around healthy eating and lifestyles  
To embed learning and make positive changes as a result

**153** pupils successfully completed the programme in 2019, **10** schools (including three SEN schools) participated. **100%** of participants commented that they had increased knowledge around healthy eating and lifestyles with **32%** embedding changes.

*One of the school children commented: "I loved Roots and Shoots. It was my favourite part of school stuff. We learned what food help your body and how to eat healthily. I love watching our plants grow."*

*Feedback from teachers included:*

*"A fun and interactive and inspiring programmes for children and adults – friendly and knowledgeable staff."*

*"We have developed a gardening club and consider that selling the produce will be beneficial to school to show the children how to make money and reinvest in gardening equipment."*

*"The whole school has benefitted from displays in school and around fats and sugars in food."*





## FACT

Drugs Education Programme has recently been nominated for Learning Programme of The Year at the Museum Heritage Awards

## Drugs Education

The Alnwick Garden launched its Drugs Education programme in July 2019 to tackle the lack of drugs prevention support in Northumberland for children and young people. The Programme has recently been nominated for Learning Programme of The Year at the Museum Heritage Awards. Provision consists of innovative and engaging workshops and programmes to teach the dangers of substance misuse and also build young people's self-esteem and resilience to give them the confidence to make informed and positive choices around friendship groups, lifestyle options and engaging in positive activities. The programme dovetails with The Poison Garden within The Alnwick Garden which encompasses fascinating insight into poisonous plants to educate people on the dangers that can be found in our own gardens.

The overall aim of the Drugs Education programme is to prevent young people and children from engaging in substance abuse and longer-term measurables include decrease in anti-social behaviour levels, decrease in arrests of young people linked to substance misuse and a decrease in young people accessing crisis services.

Since the commencement of the programme, The Trust has worked with **10** organisations and schools across Northumberland, reaching **677** children and young people. In 2019, out of **509** children and young people:

**71%** felt they had more awareness around drugs misuse and the impact upon the body

**65%** felt more equipped to make informed choices

**53%** had a better understanding of the law and legal consequences

**50%** had increased their confidence in talking to adults and seeking support

**71%** felt more confident in having an awareness of substance misuse

**73%** felt they could explain facts around drugs, cigarettes and energy drinks.

**64%** were able to explain and had increased their knowledge around how substance misuse impacts upon mental health

Close ties have been made with Northumberland County Council Personal, Social, Health and Economic Lead and the NHS. Provision will be expanded through Continuous Professional Development delivery to teaching staff and Educators. A partnership has also been formed with Northumbria University in securing funding to make story boards and deliver further workshops on Chromatography and Drugs Analysis, which will be embedded within the programme.

## Community/Outreach Gardening

The Outreach Gardening project seeks to work with community venues, other charities and schools to restore desolate and unused plots into practical, beautiful, useable and accessible spaces and natural environments to learn in and enjoy. Through this work, the outreach gardening team pass on skills and knowledge to organisations in order to maintain the space through plant knowledge and choices, wildlife, the environment and the values and importance of leading healthy, active lifestyles through exercise and healthy eating coupled with the benefits to mental health through gardening.

From May 2019 to March 2020, eight gardening projects were completed, directly working with **326** participants and beneficiaries.

Outcomes: Promote healthy lifestyles through horticulture  
Bring communities together  
Work in partnership to create outdoor community initiatives



## School/Education Visits

We add to the school and education visits experience through engaging workshops and positive interactions with The Garden team to enhance the curriculum outside of the classroom and provide lifelong learning.

School workshops include;

- ✿ Clarty Crafting
- ✿ Art in the Garden
- ✿ Den Building
- ✿ Roots and Shoots
- ✿ Water Science
- ✿ Christmas/ Santa visits



Between April 2019 and March 2020, **76** schools visited The Alwick Garden, with **46** of the schools opting to access additional workshops and provision at The Garden. In all, **3,690** children and teachers attended.

## Budding Artists

During school holidays and at weekends during the summer season, The Garden's craft yurts open for families to enjoy activities themed around various events in The Garden. **37,742** people accessed the Budding Artists programme to make creative crafts based upon themes such as Taking Care of the Environment, Natural Materials and Recycling.

## Poison Garden

The Alnwick Garden's famous Poison Garden Tours attract people of all ages with its sinister facts, stories and anecdotes. In 2019, **83,893** visitors attended a Poison Garden Tour which aims to educate even the most qualified of gardeners in the dangers of household plants and foliage, as well as how and when plants have been used as poisons in murderous plots. The Poison Garden tours are a great foundation to the Drugs Education programme which engages the interest of young people and children.



### FACT

677 children have been reached through Drugs Education.

### FACT

83,893 have attended a Poison Garden Tour.

# Wider Community

The Alwick Garden promotes and supports other initiatives and community involvement, whether it be supporting smaller charities to hold events or to add its voice to a cause or message. Examples of community support follows:

## Community Charity Day

In June 2019 The Garden hosted over **1,100** vulnerable families and children. Third sector organisations throughout the region were contacted and invited to bring their beneficiaries for a free day out at The Alwick Garden. The aim of the day was to provide a warm, welcoming, safe and fun-filled day for the families to make memories and experience new things together. The event was attended by beneficiaries of Leading Link, Northumberland Domestic Abuse Service, Sure Start Children's Centres, North Tyneside Disability Forum, Newsham Residents Association, Adapt Hexham and Contact Morpeth.

*Feedback received included: "We had a fantastic day on Saturday with all our families reporting what a great time they had. The families participating simply can't afford days out in venues like the gardens and were bowled over at what they had to offer - and of course the weather was perfect too which always helps! We all loved it!"*



## The Big Sing

The Alnwick Garden participated in the national initiative 'The Big Sing' for BBC Music Day to raise awareness of dementia and the positive impact of music for those living with dementia. Over 200 people attended the event in The Garden, led by local celebrity Lewis Denning and backed by community and school choirs, volunteers, visitors, partner organisations and local townsfolk.

## Lantern Parade

The Lantern Parade is an Alnwick Garden led free event for the Alnwick community to coincide with the switching on of the town Christmas lights. The event is attended by over **4,000** people and in 2019, The Garden was successful in receiving funding from the Northumberland Cultural Fund to expand beyond the parade and work with various community groups to run lantern workshops for groups to create their own lanterns and take part in the parade. The workshops were attended by **38** people from community groups including the Brownies, a local care home and an adult learning group for those with learning needs. Lantern making workshops were also conducted at four schools, reaching **167** pupils.

*A teacher commented: "Pupils were proud to be involved and proud of their achievements."*



## Elderberries Christmas lunch

Each year, The Garden invites **100** isolated elderly people to the Elderberries Christmas lunch held in the Pavilion Room. Transport is provided for attendees who enjoy a three-course Christmas lunch, entertainment, and a raffle, with prizes donated by local businesses. In 2019, The Garden welcomed **82** new attendees; many of whom returned to The Garden to attend Elderberries programmes.

## Get Together Sing a Long

During the week of the Elderberries Christmas lunch a Christmas sing a long event was held and attended by **88** beneficiaries; many who were unable to attend the lunch. The event was supported by Alnwick Castle whose staff helped to serve refreshments.

## RAF Wellbeing Day

The Alnwick Garden have an excellent partnership with the local RAF base, RAF Boulmer. Volunteers from the base regularly support events and as a thank you for their support, The Garden hosted a wellbeing day for the RAF families, including some thought-provoking and nurturing events to encourage them to think about wellbeing from both a physical and mental health perspective. Over **400** individuals attended the successful event.

## Young Buskers

Throughout the season, The Garden hosts several young buskers who entertain visitors on a summer days. Last year we hosted **6** buskers ranging from 18 - 73. The buskers collectively made around £2,000 for their efforts.



## Hosting and Supporting Others

Throughout the year The Garden receives numerous requests to support other charities and community groups, from a request for a day ticket for a raffle prize to hosting a visit. Last year The Garden provided **£17,127** worth of tickets to over **3,000** individuals, charities, and community groups to support their fundraising efforts and beneficiary outcomes.

## Case Study:

Jaquie, Elderberries

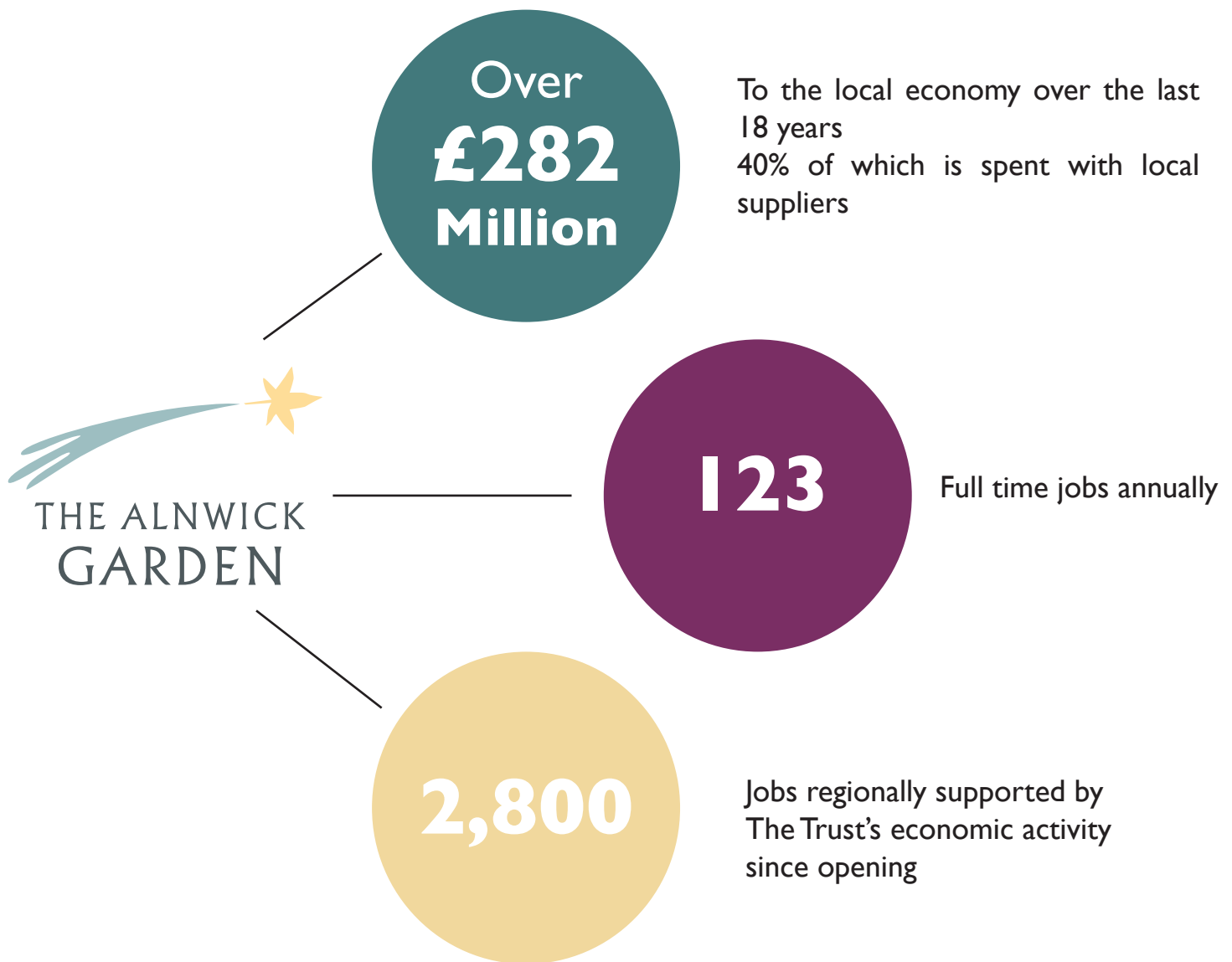
“After twenty-five years in Stirling, moving to a new area miles away and not knowing a soul, leaving all my friends behind and everything familiar, was a daunting proposition and that is exactly what my husband and I did in August 2018. Nothing much changed for him as he wasn't yet retired, but for me, being retired, it was a very different experience. I tried to think of it as an adventure, but I was extremely homesick and shed many lonely tears. I knew that it was up to me to change things and be proactive so having moved on the Saturday, the following Friday I joined the Elderberries walking group.

I didn't know anyone to walk with but volunteers and other walkers ensured that I wasn't alone and it was gratifying to know that people were not only interested in me but wanted to share their lovely town with me. I learned so much about Alnwick on that first morning. Now, I'd like to say that everything was wonderful from that day forward, but life isn't like that. It takes time to become part of a group and some mornings I confess I didn't feel like making the effort. I'd push myself out the door and once I was there, I enjoyed myself. Gradually I got to know people and realised I no longer had to make an effort but instead began looking forward to Friday mornings. Now I love it. I thoroughly enjoy the walking part, exploring The Alnwick Garden some mornings and the town itself on others and the walk is always followed by tea or coffee and a chat that is frequently infused with hilarity.

Nine months after the big move it's lovely to walk through the town and meet fellow Elderberries and I met my very special friend Hazel there. We share a lovely friendship, meet up during the week for coffee, shopping and generally misbehaving. We are both up for trying new things and had a lovely morning painting lanterns with the Elderberries. We went to an Elderberries Spring Party where we were entertained by the Riff Raff ukulele group. Encouraged by the Elderberries Coordinator, we have both been loaned ukuleles and are learning to play together. Hopefully we'll be good enough one day to join the group! With many other things on offer my involvement needn't stop there. Opportunities include pilates, tea dances, ceilidhs, concerts and of course volunteering opportunities which I haven't ruled out.

Thanks to Elderberries I have friendship, companionship and fun in my life again and I am so very grateful to the team all the volunteers who make it happen. Elderberries has proved to be a life changing experience for me.”

# Economic Impact



Beyond the impact of these Community Programmes, The Alwick Garden contributes significantly from an economic and social perspective to the wider region. Based on research conducted independently, it is estimated that The Garden has contributed over £282 million to the local economy over the last 18 years, 40% of which is spent with local suppliers. Annually there are 123 full-time equivalent employees, whilst the Trust's economic activity has supported 2,800 jobs regionally since opening, based on independent research commissioned by the Trust to quantify The Alwick Garden's impact on the local community since opening in 2001.

# Thank You!

We'd like to mention a special thanks to our supporters this year who make what we do possible:

**Northumberland Cultural Fund**

**The Shears Foundation**

**Mercer's Charitable Foundation**

**NHS**

**Northumbria Police Crime Commissioner**

**Community Foundation Tyne and Wear and Northumberland**

Everyone who has donated through our sponsorship appeals.  
All those who have donated to drug awareness through our Poison  
Garden coffin.

The Alnwick Garden Volunteers

Visitors who have donated through the Gift Aid Scheme.





# THE ALNWICK GARDEN

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Registered charity number: 1095435

Thanks to Margaret Whittaker and James Huntley for the use of their images.

