

The Alnwick Garden Trust

Social Impact Report

APRIL 2025 - MARCH 2026



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Awards and Accolades



2025/26

Green Tourism Award
Learning Outside the Classroom Award

Green Tourism
Council for Learning
Outside the Classroom

Gold Award

2024/25

Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Award
Lilidorei - New Tourism Business of the Year

North East Tourism Awards
North East Tourism Awards

Bronze
Highly Commended

2023/24

Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Award
Lilidorei - Judges Choice Award
Community Business of the Year
The Treehouse - Sustainability Excellence
Excellence in SME People Practices

North East Tourism Awards
Regional NE RICS Awards
North East Chamber Awards
The Food Industry Awards
HR&D Awards North East

Gold
Winner
Highly Commended
Winner
Short-listed

2022/23

Better Health At Work
Food For Life

Better Health At Work
Soil Association

Silver
Bronze

CEO Welcome

I am delighted to share this year's report, which proudly highlights the impact The Alnwick Garden Trust has made in our community over 2025/26. The Trust is unlike any other, not only a destination for a great day out, but also the home of life-changing programmes that support those who need us most.

This year is one of the most significant in our history. In 2026, The Alnwick Garden celebrates its 25th birthday, marking a quarter of a century since Her Grace, the Duchess of Northumberland, first opened our gates to the public. What began as an ambitious regeneration project, created to raise aspirations and bring new pride and opportunity to the area, has grown into one of the North East's best-loved destinations. A recent independent report from Newcastle University confirms the scale of The Alnwick Garden's economic impact across Northumberland and the wider region. Over the last 25 years, the Trust has generated £400 million in economic value, nearly half of which has been retained locally through jobs, wages and spend with local suppliers. You can read more about these findings, and what they mean for our community, in the Economic Impact section of this report.

None of this, the visitors welcomed, the jobs supported, or the lives changed through our community programmes, would be possible without the extraordinary commitment of our staff and volunteers. Their energy and passion continue to drive the social and economic benefits the Trust delivers, and it is their dedication, built up over 25 years, that we celebrate most of all in our anniversary year.

I want to thank Her Grace, the Duchess of Northumberland, and our dedicated Trustees, whose vision and inspiration guide our work, and to thank you for taking the time to read this report. As we mark 25 remarkable years, I hope you enjoy discovering the difference The Alnwick Garden Trust continues to make.



Mark Brassell CEO The Alnwick Garden Trust

Our Social Purpose



Throughout the year, The Alnwick Garden Trust has continued to place people at the heart of everything we do. Guided by our social purpose, we have delivered programmes that promote wellbeing, develop skills, reduce social isolation, strengthen communities and create opportunities to engage, learn and thrive.

Our programmes and initiatives are all developed to provide safe, inclusive, engaging and meaningful activities to a range of community groups with targeted outcomes for some of our more disadvantaged groups:

- **Ageing population – over 55s**
- **Young people with special educational needs, and their families**
- **People with barriers to employment**
- **Families and individuals struggling with the cost of living**
- **People who are socially and rurally isolated**



Our measurable social impacts span across the following areas:

**Improving
physical
and mental
wellbeing**

**Addressing social
isolation and
creating a sense
of belonging**

**Helping people
learn new skills**

**Increasing life
expectancy and
quality of life
for our ageing
population**

**Moving people
into employment**

**Educating how to
live healthy
lifestyles**

**Preventing
drug-related
harm**

**Educating and
addressing
the climate
emergency**

Our Social Purpose



The Alnwick Garden Trust is a community-focused charity dedicated to creating opportunities and improving the lives of those who need our support most. Through a range of innovative and inclusive programmes, we promote wellbeing, encourage learning, and empower individuals facing disadvantage to build confidence, develop skills, and achieve their potential.

Wellbeing

ELDERBERRIES

Purpose: To address the impact of loneliness and isolation for people aged 55 and over living in Northumberland. The programme aims to support people to age well in our community using NHS England guidance – 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing, through connecting people, encouraging daily activity, learning new skills, sharing with others, and being mindful.

YOUNG GARDENERS

Purpose: To provide an inclusive learning experience for young people with additional needs and their families, using horticulture to improve confidence, communication and social skills.

COMMUNITY FRIDGE

Purpose: To reduce food wastage whilst providing a positive social space for local visitors and the community.

LILIDOREI FREE FRIDAYS

Purpose: To give the opportunity to all Northumberland primary school children to visit Lilidorei. Imagination and play helps children to develop their cognitive, physical and social skills, improving their emotional wellbeing in a fun and inspiring environment.

Education

LEARNING THROUGH NATURE

Purpose: To educate and inspire our visitors and communities to engage in climate action, demonstrating leadership through the delivery of innovative programmes.

ROOTS AND SHOOTS

Purpose: To reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity through learning about healthy eating and the importance of physical activity.

DRUGS EDUCATION

Purpose: To prevent harmful substance use, allowing young people to make informed choices and consider safer options.

CORE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Purpose: To provide educational and learning opportunities outside of the classroom whilst helping children improve their cognitive, physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

Empowerment

SEEDS FOR SUCCESS

Purpose: To provide a platform for people to develop the practical business skills required to start up their own business.

GROWING TOGETHER NORTHUMBERLAND

Purpose: To improve wellbeing, cultivate skills, and raise aspirations, enabling participants to take their next steps into training, employment, or volunteering opportunities within their local community.

GROW INTO WORK

Purpose: To prepare individuals for the workplace by building confidence and skills through tailored support and hands-on work placements across the departments of The Alnwick Garden.



Economic Impact

Alongside the life-changing outcomes delivered through our community programmes, the Trust continues to generate substantial economic value for Northumberland and the wider region. Our activities support local jobs, businesses and suppliers, creating a lasting contribution that extends far beyond our garden gates.

To mark our 25th anniversary, we commissioned Newcastle University to carry out an independent review of the Trust's economic contribution since we opened our gates in 2001. Using recognised STEAM tourism methodology and HM Treasury Green Book appraisal principles, the research provides the most comprehensive picture yet of the difference The Alnwick Garden has made to the regional economy over the last quarter of a century.

Since opening in 2001, The Alnwick Garden has welcomed more than **nine million** visitors, around **80%** of them from outside the region, helping to establish Northumberland as one of the UK's leading tourism destinations. In 2023 alone, the Trust generated a total economic impact of **£24.5 million**, of which **£16.1 million** came from off-site visitor spending in hotels, restaurants, shops and other local businesses across the county, a clear illustration of how a single visit to The Garden ripples out to support the wider local economy.

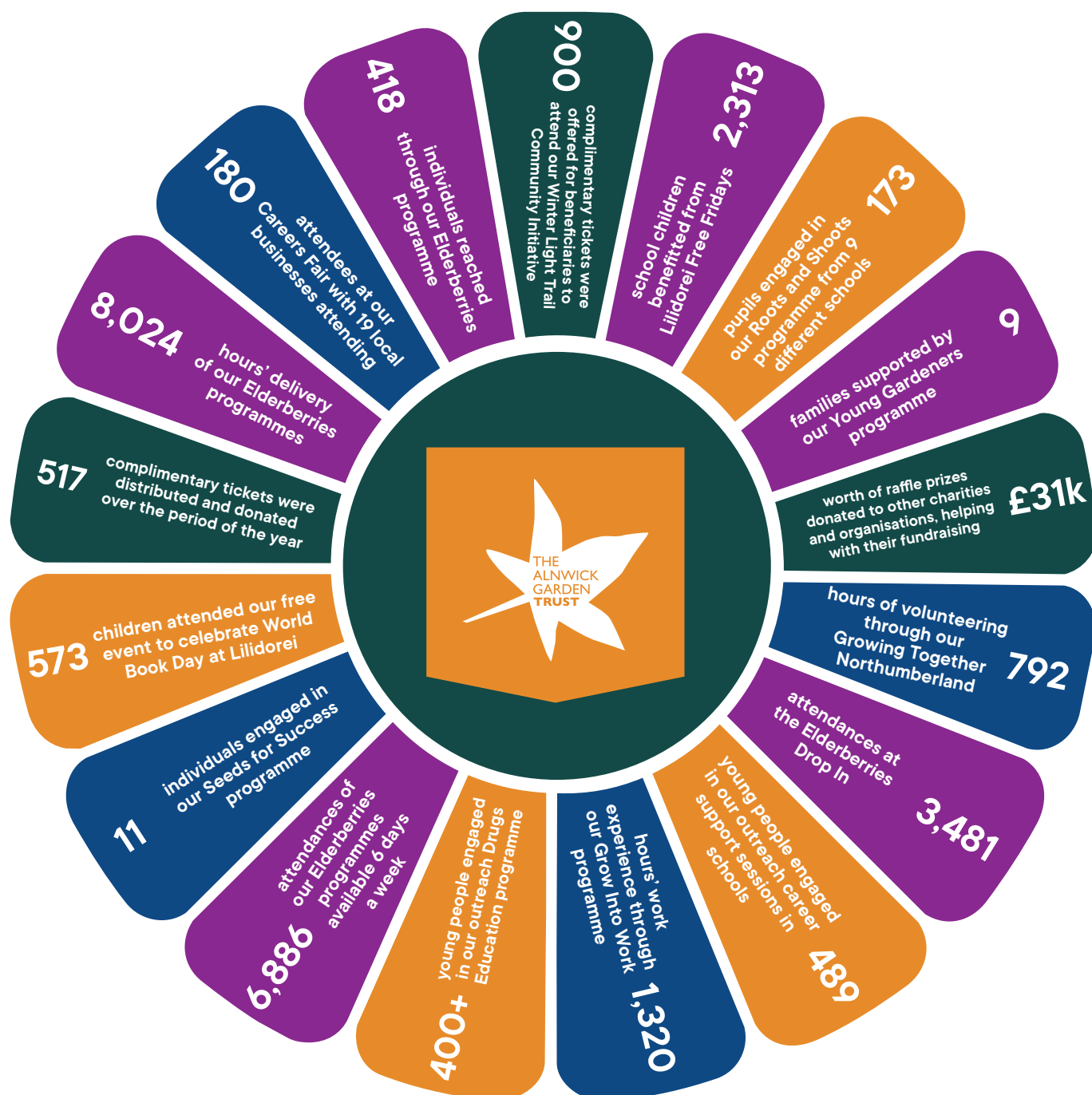
The findings also point to the growing importance of destination-led tourism in Northumberland. Following the launch of Lilidorei in 2023, visitor growth accelerated significantly, with the attraction contributing an additional **£18.3 million** in GVA between 2023 and 2026 alone. This underlines the role that continued investment in new experiences plays in sustaining the Trust's economic and social impact for years to come.

As we celebrate our 25th birthday, these findings are a reminder that the Trust's impact is twofold: the economic value we generate, and the life-changing social programmes detailed throughout this report. As we look to the next 25 years, we remain committed to investing in experiences and programmes that continue to benefit the local economy, support education, and inspire future generations.

25 Years of Economic Impact

£400m Total GVA Generated Cumulative gross value added, 2002–2026	£191m Local Supplier Spend 48% of total GVA retained in Northumberland	9m Total Visitors 7.1m from outside the region, 1.8m local	103 Avg. Employees Currently 111 permanent & 156 seasonal roles	126,400 Volunteer Hours Dedicated community contribution since 2001
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Key Highlights





Wellbeing in The Community

Fact

Elderberries programmes are on offer 6 days a week.

Elderberries

The Elderberries programmes help people aged 55 and over to stay connected, improve their wellbeing and enjoy healthier, more active lives. By creating regular opportunities for social interaction and participation, the programme reduces loneliness and provides a sense of belonging within the community. Every activity and group session is aligned with at least one of the NHS 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing, ensuring the programme delivers lasting benefits for participants' mental, emotional and physical health.

418 beneficiaries were reached through our Elderberries programmes in 2025/26, with a total of **8,024 hours'** worth of activities. The Elderberries' activities are delivered all year and run **6 days a week** supporting our over 55s to have a positive outlook and to live a fulfilling life.



NHS 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing:



Connect with other people



Be physically active



Learn new skills



Give to others



Pay attention to the present moment (Mindfulness)



Fact

Our Elderberries programmes had 6,886 attendances.

Elderberries - Tunes on Tuesday

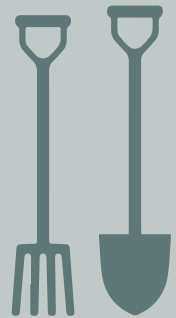
An initiative promoting wellbeing through singing, helping to lower stress, enhance memory and improve mental health. The singing group runs monthly and is open to all, regardless of singing ability. **18 individuals attended** monthly sessions throughout 2025/26.



Elderberries - Gentlemen's Garden

Gentlemen's Garden provides a welcoming weekly gardening group where men can connect with others, reduce social isolation and improve their overall wellbeing. Participants share traditional gardening skills, learn new techniques and enjoy the therapeutic benefits of spending time outdoors. During the growing season, each participant cultivates their own allotment plot, promoting physical activity, healthy eating and a sense of achievement through growing fresh produce. Throughout the winter months, the programme continues indoors with creative workshops, guest speakers and social outings, ensuring participants remain connected and engaged all year round.

In 2025/26, **17 gentlemen** participated in Gentlemen's Garden, with a total of **444 attendances**.



Elderberries - Wellbeing Talks

Monthly talks and presentations from services and professionals offering advice and information on topics such as health and wellbeing, fraud and scams, and energy efficiency. There were **191 attendances** in 2025/26.



Fact

Drop In had
3,481 attendances
over the year.



Elderberries - Blooming Well

A twice weekly initiative to support over 55s who have early onset dementia, and their carers. The sessions offer a range of activities from arts and crafts to therapeutic horticulture, as well as allowing those who attend to connect with others to reduce social isolation. **33 people** benefitted from these groups in 2025/26 with **631 attendances**.



Elderberries - Drop In Centre

The Drop In opens every Thursday, Friday and Sunday for those over the age of 55. The Drop In is volunteer-led and provides a welcoming space for Elderberries to connect with others, reducing social isolation and nurturing friendships. There were **3,481 attendances** in 2025/26.

Elderberries - Footcare

Providing footcare sessions to our Elderberries helps them to avoid foot ailments. There were **191 attendances** at footcare sessions in 2025/26, with 63 individuals benefitting.



Case Study

Brian's Story



Brian is a regular member of Elderberries, attending a range of sessions including Blooming Well, Tunes on Tuesday and the Walking Group. These activities have become an important part of his weekly routine, helping him to build friendships, improve his confidence and reconnect with the community.

Brian lives with significant sight loss as a result of a pituitary tumour, alongside memory difficulties. Before discovering Elderberries, Brian rarely left the house and describes feeling low, isolated and increasingly cynical about life.

Through Elderberries, Brian has found a welcoming and supportive environment where he feels comfortable, valued and able to be himself. The regular sessions have given him opportunities to socialise, try new activities and develop meaningful friendships, whilst also providing a sense of routine and purpose.

“Elderberries is wonderful. I can’t praise the staff and volunteers enough. It has made a big difference to my life and I am now optimistic about things. If I have any problems, I can have a chat and don’t worry about being judged.” - Brian

The impact has also been felt by Brian’s wife, Norma. Before becoming involved with Elderberries, Brian was experiencing depression and the couple were rarely getting out and about. They were introduced to the programme through their GP’s social prescriber.

“Brian was very depressed and we weren’t doing anything at all. We found out about Elderberries through the social prescriber at the doctors. We have made good friends, and I am able to get some time to myself when Brian attends the sessions. It means I can get things done and not worry about Brian.” - Norma, Brian’s wife

Brian’s story demonstrates the wider impact of Elderberries: by creating opportunities for older people to connect, participate and build friendships, the programme can benefit not only individuals but also their families and carers.



Fact

Our Elderberries programmes worked with **418 individuals.**



Elderberries – Walking Group

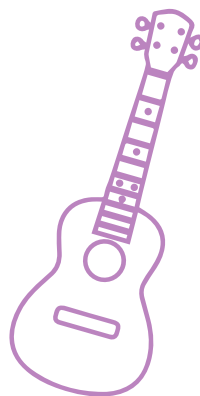
The Walking Group provides regular opportunities to stay physically active while enjoying the many benefits of exercising outdoors. Weekly walks support and improve physical and mental wellbeing, helping participants to increase their fitness, boost their mood and build confidence. The group also creates valuable opportunities for social connection, enabling participants to develop friendships, reduce feelings of isolation and strengthen their sense of belonging within the community.

In 2025/26, **69 individuals** took part in the Walking Group, generating **1,009 attendances**. Participants consistently reported improvements in both their physical and mental wellbeing, alongside the lasting friendships and social connections formed through the programme.

Elderberries – Ukulele for Fun

A 12-week course for beginners where Elderberries are able to learn a new skill, make new friends and connect with others. Evidence shows that learning to play a musical instrument improves memory, attention and concentration as well as promoting wellbeing.

23 individuals attended.





Fact

We delivered
8,024 hours of
our Elderberries
programmes.

Elderberries - Yoga and Pilates

Weekly sessions help to improve strength, flexibility and overall wellbeing, allowing Elderberries to stay active, practise mindfulness and build social connections, supporting both their physical and mental wellbeing.

40 individuals attend yoga and 221 individuals attend Pilates.



Elderberries - Tea Parties

Elderberries afternoon tea parties are held three times a year with **120 tickets** available at each. These popular events provide an opportunity to enjoy an afternoon of social connection with food, music, singing and dancing, helping to lift spirits, reduce social isolation and promote overall wellbeing.

Elderberries - Tea and Tech



Weekly digital support sessions provide practical advice and support with their own devices. The sessions help Elderberries to build confidence and learn new skills, enabling them to access essential services such as online shopping, online banking and the NHS app. Also providing help with email and social networking sites to stay connected with friends and family, reducing loneliness and social isolation.

In 2025/26, **70 individuals attended**, with **213 attendances** in total.







Fact

2,313 school children from Northumberland benefitted from Free Fridays at Lilidorei.



Community Fridge

An estimated one-third of all food produced globally for human consumption is wasted each year. In the UK, over 10 million tonnes of food are thrown away annually, creating significant environmental and social challenges. When food is sent to landfill, it decomposes and releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change.

Our Community Fridge continues to play a vital role by reducing avoidable food waste and redistributing surplus food to those who need it most. During the year, 525kg of surplus food was diverted from waste, helping both the environment and local residents.

With continued funding from **Northumberland County Council**, our partnership with FareShare has enabled us to provide weekly food support for members of Elderberries, while also strengthening the resources available through our Community Fridge.

FareShare is the UK's largest charity fighting hunger and food waste, working to save good quality surplus food and redistribute it to frontline charities and community organisations.

Free Fridays at Lilidorei

Free Fridays provides primary schools across Northumberland with the opportunity to bring pupils to Lilidorei free of charge during term time. As part of the programme, schools also receive curriculum-linked educational resources, carefully designed to complement the National Curriculum and enhance learning through imaginative play.

The initiative helps remove financial barriers, ensuring that more children can access the experience regardless of their circumstances. At the heart of Lilidorei is the belief that imaginative play is essential to children's development. Through exploration and creativity, children build cognitive, physical and social skills while supporting their emotional wellbeing in a stimulating and inclusive environment.

2,313 children benefitted from Free Friday visits during 2025/26.



Young Gardeners

Young Gardeners uses the magic of horticulture to support young people with additional needs and their families. Through shared gardening activities, they develop practical skills, confidence and connections while enjoying quality time outdoors together.

During the 2025/26 programme, nine families took part, visiting their allotment plots each month, with the following key outcomes achieved:

- **Increased time outdoors and opportunities for families to spend quality time together.**
- **Improved knowledge of healthy eating through hands-on growing and food education.**
- **Development of transferable skills, enabling participants to continue gardening projects at home.**

The programme not only nurtures practical skills but also promotes wellbeing, inclusion, and stronger family relationships through shared horticultural activities.

The Young Gardeners were thrilled to get involved this year in designing a “Show Home” garden for display at one of Lovell Homes’ new housing developments. This exciting opportunity allowed them to put their horticultural knowledge and creativity into practice, designing and creating their first commercial garden.

With support and guidance from Lovell Homes’ landscape gardener, the young people gained valuable hands-on experience while developing their confidence, teamwork and practical horticultural skills.



Case Study Alfie's Story



For Alfie, the Young Gardeners programme has provided much more than an opportunity to learn how to grow plants. It has given him the chance to develop practical skills, spend time outdoors, make new friends and build his confidence, while creating opportunities for his family to spend quality time together.

Alfie particularly enjoys being outdoors and learning new things. Through the programme, he has developed new gardening skills and experienced the satisfaction of planting, caring for and eventually harvesting his own produce. Seeing something grow as a result of his own hard work has given Alfie a real sense of achievement and pride.

"I feel I have benefitted from the Young Gardeners programme. I have loved learning new skills and how to garden. I enjoy being outdoors and learning new things, spending time with my family and making new friends. I'm so proud of seeing what I have grown and sharing it with my family." - Alfie

One of Alfie's favourite parts of the programme is harvesting the produce he has grown himself.

"The favourite part has to be picking your own produce when you've planted it, looked after it and watched it grow." - Alfie

From taking part in the programme, Alfie's family have seen a positive impact on his confidence, social skills and emotional wellbeing. The programme has created opportunities for Alfie to spend more time outdoors, interact with other children and share experiences with his family.

"As a family, it's been great for Alfie to spend more time outdoors, especially mixing with other children, boosting Alfie's confidence and knowledge. Socially and emotionally, it's great for all of our mental wellbeing, spending quality time together. Seeing Alfie so interested in his gardening and what he achieves makes us all very proud."

- Lisa, Alfie's mum

Growing Skills, Confidence and Connections

For families like Alfie's, the programme offers valuable opportunities to spend time together, connect with others and support positive wellbeing.

Lisa's advice to other families is simple:

"Go and give it a go! It massively improves the young person's life skills and wellbeing, as well as creating community and connection for families."

Education

Fact

173 pupils engaged
in our Roots and
Shoots programme.



Root and Shoots

Roots and Shoots is a targeted health and wellbeing programme designed to address some of the contributing factors linked to childhood obesity by working with children, families and schools through a combination of horticulture, food education and physical activity.

Childhood obesity remains a significant public health challenge, with links to reduced life expectancy, increased risk of health conditions and impacts on children's confidence, mental wellbeing and social experiences.

Through Roots and Shoots, children are encouraged to develop a positive relationship with food, nature and healthy lifestyles by learning how to grow their own fruit and vegetables and experiencing the benefits of eating fresh, nutritious produce.

Delivered in partnership with Northumberland County Council's Public Health Team, the programme incorporates key health messages around balanced diets, nutrition and the importance of staying active. Through engaging, hands-on sessions, children gain practical skills, build confidence and develop knowledge that can influence healthier choices beyond the programme.

Recognising the strong links between deprivation and childhood obesity, schools are selected based on key indicators including levels of deprivation and childhood obesity rates within their communities. In 2025/26, Roots and Shoots engaged with **173 children** across **9 schools** throughout Northumberland, providing meaningful opportunities for children to learn, grow and develop healthy relationships with food.



Fact

Over 400 young people engaged in our outreach Drugs Education programme.

Drugs Education

Our Drugs Education programme is designed to help young people make safer and healthier choices. Through creative and engaging workshops, they explore:

- The real risks of drugs and alcohol, dispelling myths.
- Why some young people may use substances.
- Safer, more positive alternatives.
- The wider harms, including the law and social impact.

Although the project is primarily delivered through outreach, it builds on the The Alnwick Garden's established Poison Garden tours, which explore the use and misuse of drug-related plants. By drawing parallels between plant toxicity and the risks associated with substance use, the programme creates an engaging and memorable learning experience. Connecting substances to their natural origins helps to challenge perceptions, encourage curiosity, and create safe spaces for open and meaningful conversations around drug awareness.

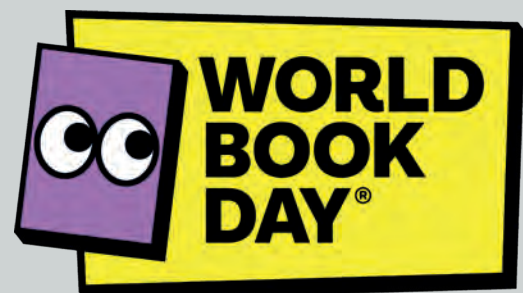
Over **400** young people engaged directly with the outreach Drugs Education programme. Following the sessions young people reported that they had:

- An increased knowledge of the health risks linked to drug and alcohol use.
- Explored reasons for substance use and positive alternatives.
- Considered wider harms, including legal and social consequences.

86,779 visitors experienced The Poison Garden in 2025/26, all receiving information about the drug-related plants within.

World Book Day at Lilidorei

A total of **573 children attended**, many dressed as their favourite book characters, bringing stories to life within the enchanting world of Lilidorei. The event not only created a sense of joy and imagination but also reinforced the importance and value of literacy, in a fun and memorable way.



Core Education Programme

4,842 children visited The Alnwick Garden with their schools as part of our education offer.

Our core education programme provides schools with high-quality, curriculum-linked resources designed to enrich classroom learning. The offer includes bespoke English writing activities, accompanied by supporting materials for classroom working walls, alongside a range of cross-curricular learning units that reinforce key knowledge and skills across a variety of subject areas.

Designed to complement the National Curriculum, the programme combines creative and practical learning experiences that inspire curiosity, encourage participation, and bring lessons to life through imaginative, hands-on activities.

Outcomes and Benefits

- **Strengthens pupils' literacy and writing skills through engaging and purposeful creative writing activities.**
- **Supports cross-curricular learning, enabling children to make meaningful links between different subjects.**
- **Develops creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills through interactive, practical learning experiences.**
- **Provides teachers with high-quality, ready-to-use resources that align with the National Curriculum, helping to reduce lesson planning time.**

In addition, a group of year 12 and 13 pupils completed their A-level Environmental Science coursework on site. The activities included measuring carbon sequestration of several tree species and ages, biodiversity sampling and data recording of species in a mixed set of habitats, scientific techniques in sampling and recording data of live species, and habitat surface areas experiments using the natural water pond.

"Pupils were fully engaged in all the activities, and their learning was extended well outside the classroom. A great experience for them all. Looking forward to next year".

"Brilliant for the pupils to see the link between natural growing methods and the potential to make all their clothes and accessories from nature. They were captivated and fully immersed."



Fact

**4,842 children
benefitted from
our education offer.**



Empowerment

Employability & Enterprise

Fact

11 individuals
engaged in our
Seeds for Success
programme.

The Trust recognises that tackling barriers to employment is fundamental to creating stronger, more resilient communities. Through targeted employability and skills programmes, we support individuals to build confidence, develop practical skills, and progress towards education, training, volunteering, and sustainable employment.

We know that some Northumberland residents face complex barriers to employment and the county has some of the highest levels of economic inactivity in England, with employment rates in the North East remaining below the national average, at approximately 70%.

Barriers include:

- **Physical and mental health challenges.**
- **Limited skills, qualifications, or employment experience.**
- **Additional challenges associated with living in rural communities, including fewer local employment opportunities and limited public transport.**



Seeds for Success

Aim: To encourage entrepreneurship and small business start-ups.

What we delivered: Practical workshops covering the essentials of business start-up with opportunities focusing on first steps to creating a small business.

Impact: 3 courses were delivered through the year and 11 individuals benefitted through attending these sessions covering topics such as market research, marketing and financials.

Growing Together Northumberland

Growing Together Northumberland, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund - Reaching Communities, supports people aged 16 and over who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), economically inactive or unemployed.

Aim: The project aims to improve wellbeing, cultivate skills, and raise aspirations, enabling participants to take their next steps into training, employment or volunteering opportunities within their local community.

Programme Activities: Improving wellbeing and developing skills through volunteering. Volunteering placements provided participants with the opportunity to build confidence, establish positive routines, and gain valuable workplace experience. By developing transferable skills, increasing self-belief, and achieving a greater sense of purpose and achievement, participants were better equipped to progress towards further education, training, volunteering or sustainable employment.

Outcomes for 2025/26: 67 participants benefitted from direct support through the project, including volunteering in community projects, volunteering at The Alnwick Garden and one-to-one employability support to help people move onto their next step.

The programme saw **8 beneficiaries** securing employment with **82% of participants** stating they had improved physical and mental wellbeing.

An additional **255 members** of our community are benefitting from the community projects.

Matthew who is 33 years old had been economically inactive for 10 years due to poor mental health. He was introduced to the programme as he wanted to work towards improving his mental wellbeing. Matthew volunteers one day per week to improve his confidence and develop skills needed to work.

"I'm now applying for jobs after 10 years of not leaving the house. Now I have a purpose to the day and feel a sense of job satisfaction. There has been a real variety of experiences that I can use now I'm applying for jobs."

Matthew, Volunteer

"I was concerned about my health and lack of physical activity when I retired. Project managing the garden renovation keeps my brain ticking over and I get a tremendous sense of satisfaction from sharing knowledge with the younger generation."

John, a RAF veteran

Fact

**792 hours of
volunteering through
Growing Together
Northumberland
programme.**



Fact

1,320 hours' work experience through our Grow Into Work programme.



Grow Into Work

This programme gives those out of work real opportunities to get them ready for the workplace, building confidence and skills through work placements across the various departments of The Alnwick Garden.

Aim: To support Northumberland residents into sustainable employment.

What we delivered: A combination of tailored one-to-one learning (CV writing, application forms, interviews, presentation skills) and hands-on work experience. In total we delivered **516 hours** of direct employability-skills programmes with **1,320 hours** of work experience offered.

Impact: **21 individuals** engaged in Grow Into Work with **6 people** securing employment following work placements. Individuals also noted improvement in skills and an increase in confidence upon completion.

Careers support in schools

489 young people engaged in outreach career support sessions in schools. This included CV building, interview skills and careers guidance.

Skills Days

With the support of North East Combined Authority, we hosted three skills days which gave young people from SEND schools the opportunity to experience the workplace. Pupils from **7 schools** engaged in a carousel of workstations related to a job role within the organisation. The young people carried out a job-related task or activity at each stop.

"It has been a pleasure working with you on this year's skills days. I am really pleased with how things have gone and excited to start planning next year. There are some really nice highlights that have come out and I can't stress enough how important these positive experiences are to these young people. I can't thank you enough, and sincere thanks for providing such a great experience."

James Crowther, Specialist Adviser: Enterprise Coordinator for NECA

Collaboration & Supporting Others



in the Wider Community

The Trust plays an important role in supporting the growth and development of Alnwick and the surrounding areas. By working as a key stakeholder, collaboratively with partners, supporting local businesses, and investing in community initiatives, we strive to make a meaningful contribution to the local economy and help secure the region's long-term prosperity.

As part of our ongoing commitment to community engagement and support, a total of **517 complimentary tickets** (to the value of £10,926) were distributed to charitable organisations and community groups. These tickets enabled their own beneficiaries to visit The Alnwick Garden and Lilidorei. This also included raffle prizes that were donated to assist the organisations to raise funds in support of their own charitable aims.



The Alnwick Garden's Role in Alnwick Community Enterprise

Alnwick Community Enterprise (ACE) is a community-led organisation set up to drive inclusive economic growth and regeneration across Alnwick and North Northumberland, tackling long-standing challenges such as an ageing population, youth out-migration and limited local skills provision. Its work is structured around four pillars; Skills, Enterprise, Place and Housing, bringing together local businesses, education providers and community groups to agree the town's priorities and secure the investment needed to deliver them. The Trust plays an influential role in this work, with our CEO sitting on the ACE board, helping to shape its strategy and ensuring the Trust's experience of driving regeneration and visitor growth in Alnwick continues to benefit the wider town.



We supported local businesses to achieve their own Corporate Social Responsibility objectives through volunteering. Throughout the year we supported **8 different companies**, equating to **147 individuals with 735 hours' worth of opportunities**. Companies included: Newcastle Building Society, CSSC, McBryde, Northumberland County Council, Robson Laidler, Tyne Tunnels, Procter & Gamble, Brewin Dolphin.

We continued our commitment as a corporate member of Rotary International.



We were thrilled to welcome **900 beneficiaries** to our Winter Light Trail Community Initiative. We offered free entry to families and individuals who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to experience the magic of the lights. The initiative is designed to spread joy and create lasting memories for those facing barriers such as cost of living, affordability or challenging life circumstances.



We hosted a Careers Fair with **19 local businesses** in attendance. **180 job seekers** attended the event.

Collaboration & Supporting Others

in the Wider Community



King's Trust with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service

The King's Trust Team Programme is a 12-week personal development and employability initiative for young people aged 16–25 who are not in education, employment or training. The programme helps participants build confidence, develop essential life and social skills, and prepare individuals for the next stage of their journey into employment, further education or training.

As part of the programme, **29 young people** took part in a visit to The Alnwick Garden, where they successfully completed the Supporting Others in the Community and Community Projects modules, gaining valuable practical experience while making a positive contribution to the local community.



A new relationship has been formed with The Oswin Project, a charity which specialises in supporting ex-offenders as they seek to rebuild their lives.

Through this partnership we aim to provide specialised skills development in pre-identified vocations and pathways to employment, as well as supporting Café 16 which operates within HMP Northumberland as the foundation of the Oswin Project's hospitality training programme.

Our own café has been supplied with baked goods such as pies and scones, as part of our supply chain in support of the project.



Thank you

None of our achievements would be possible without the commitment of our volunteers. Their enthusiasm, generosity and dedication enrich every area of the Trust's work, from supporting visitors and maintaining our beautiful spaces, to helping deliver community programmes that transform lives.

They give their time freely, not for recognition, but because they believe in what The Alnwick Garden Trust stands for: a place of beauty, community, and inspiration.

On average the Trust has benefitted from the support of **91 volunteers** this year and we truly cannot thank them enough. Over the 2025/26 year, volunteers gave up **9,092 hours** of their time to support the Trust's endeavours. Their time, kindness and dedication make all the difference.

We would also like to sincerely thank our wonderful sponsors and donors for their generous support. Their contributions help us to continue with our mission and make lasting and positive impacts.

In 2025/26 our key sponsors and donors included:

- Annasley Park
- Benefact Group Movement for Good
- Bernicia
- Carr-Ellison Trust
- CEO Sleepout
- Community Foundation Tyne & Wear
- Dawson and Sanderson
- Global Brands Ltd
- Hubbub Foundation
- Jane Robertson Alnwick
- Kilfrost
- Lovell Partnership
- Sage Wealth Management
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- W L Straughan & Sons

In 2025/26 our Winter Light Trail sponsors included:

- Arnold Clark
- Sage Wealth Management
- Tyne Tunnels
- Worldpay

We would also like to thank:

- Fundraise & Recycle, W L Straughan, Suez, Ikea, Worldpay, Vertu Motors, Alnwick Specsavers who have collaborated with us to fundraise through clothes banks, as well as helping reduce carbon emissions by recycling 2,423kg of clothes.
- Arriva, Oddballs, W L Straughan and Lexus for their support as Corporate Partners and providing additional experiences through their takeover days.

While we cannot personally thank every individual who has donated, supported us or been part of this year's remarkable journey, we are sincerely grateful for every contribution. Your generosity, encouragement, and commitment have made a lasting difference. Without your support, none of this would have been possible.

Contact Us

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