



HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

2024/25 ANNUAL REVIEW



SPACE TO STIR AND BE STIRRED

TOWER OF LONDON • HAMPTON COURT PALACE • BANQUETING HOUSE
KENSINGTON PALACE • KEW PALACE • HILLSBOROUGH CASTLE AND GARDENS



Visitors at the Tower of London

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A JOYFUL VISION FOR THE FUTURE

An introduction from our Chief Executive

Recently, I was at the Chapel Royal in Hampton Court Palace, watching the Songstars programme unfold. Backed by choristers, trumpeters and a vocal animator, children from Hounslow schools began filling the chapel with song. You could feel the energy and pride vibrating through the chapel, connecting the generations, cultures and communities that were represented there.

That concert, delivered in partnership with the Choral Foundation and the Hounslow Music Service, is a reminder of why we do what we do. It points to the deeper purpose behind our work at Historic Royal Palaces: to create bold, unforgettable, heart-stirring experiences that bring people together in the most spectacular of settings. The joy in the chapel that day was palpable.

In 2024/25, we saw joy in many forms. In the thunder of hooves at the Hampton Court joust. In the creative brilliance of exhibitions like *Dress Codes*. In the conversations sparked by our work with schools and community groups. And in the fresh energy brought by our new apprentices who joined teams across our palaces.

It was a year of gathering momentum as we looked ahead with purpose. Our new strategy – Reach Further, Mean More, Act for the Future – called on us to be bolder and more ambitious.

We're opening up new pathways for young people, deepening our work around accessibility and belonging, and renewing our commitment to sustainability. We don't preserve the past for its own sake, but believe in leaving things better: more beautiful, more meaningful, and more ready for the future.

Thank you to everyone who made this year what it was – the people who visited, connected with us online and welcomed us into their communities, our partners, donors, patrons, members and, of course, our wonderful staff and volunteers.

This review is a reflection and celebration of the progress we've made. But more than that, it's an invitation to come with us into what's next.

To keep surprising. To keep connecting. To keep bringing the joy.



John Barnes, CEO



A CHARITY FOR EVERYONE

Our mission

We are the independent charity that loves and looks after six of the most wonderful palaces in the world.

The palaces are the setting for stories that shape us all, and we're bringing those stories to people in ways that mean more to them.

We want everyone to find themselves in the spaces and stories we share.



Visitors at Hampton Court Palace

24
25

Queen Charlotte wig goes on display at Kew Palace

A costume piece from *Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story* brought TV drama into a historic royal setting.



© Historic Royal Palaces/Netflix

Tulip Festival at Hampton Court Palace

Over 100,000 tulips burst into bloom across the historic gardens in this much-loved springtime spectacle.



Henry VIII on tour

A research project retracing the King's royal progresses is revealing the spectacle, politics and stories behind his Tudor travels. In Exeter, local events brought his 1539 visit to life. Delivered in collaboration with the University of York, Newcastle University and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.



Superbloom Schools returns

25 partner schools created their own 'moat in bloom' gardens, inspired by the Tower's Platinum Jubilee display. Schools received expert training, classroom resources, funding and a trip to the Tower.



Jane Seymour badge loaned to the National Portrait Gallery

Part of the *Six Lives* exhibition, seen by over 67,000 visitors.

Fire: A Princess's Guide to Burning Issues tours schools

Our secondary schools show reached over 7,000 students across London and the East Midlands.

Peter Rabbit™ comes to Hillsborough Castle and Gardens

A family-friendly trail brought Beatrix Potter's beloved characters to the gardens.



Ceremonial events and royal visits

Royal and state occasions were marked across our sites with a series of ceremonial salutes and high-profile visits.

Five-gun salutes were fired at the Tower of London, including tributes for state visits from Japan and Qatar. The Tower also upheld its centuries-old traditions, from the Lord Chamberlain's annual visit to the Ceremony of the Lilies and the Roses – an evocative tribute marking the death of Henry VI.

Hillsborough Castle and Gardens welcomed six royal visits throughout the year, including HRH Princess Anne and TRH the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. Meanwhile, Hampton Court Palace hosted TM The King and Queen for the Sustainable Markets Summit and The Queen's Reading Room Festival.

Restoration in Progress

In October 2024, we launched our first-ever brand campaign, highlighting the restorative benefits of our sites and the wellbeing opportunities they offer.

Relaxed Hour at the Tower launches

A new access initiative designed for neurodivergent and learning disabled children, offering a quieter, more welcoming Tower experience.



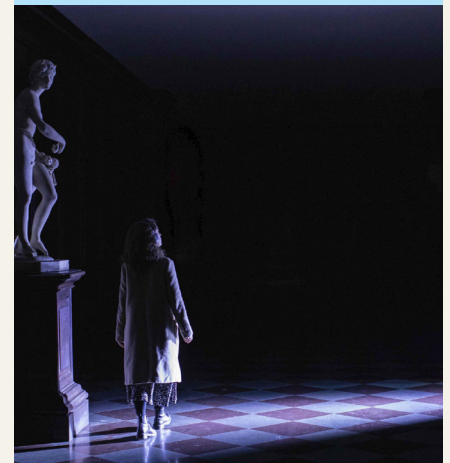
A-Level Study Day at Hampton Court Palace

Students explored the world of the Tudors through expert-led talks, behind-the-scenes tours, and hands-on encounters.



Royal Style in the Making opens at Hillsborough Castle and Gardens

This exhibition offers a behind-the-scenes look at royal fashion, revealing how designers and royal clients shaped public image through dress.



Still the Hours opens at Hampton Court Palace

An after-hours immersive audio tour unveiling the lives of forgotten women of the palace. Developed with an inclusive dramaturg to make it as accessible as possible for blind and visually impaired audiences.

LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR PAST

Introducing our new strategy

We want to be a charity for everyone, and we want the palaces, and their stories, to be a living resource for everyone, whoever and wherever they are. To help us achieve those aims, we've created a new strategy built on three pillars: **Reach Further**, **Mean More**, and **Act for the Future**.

Reach Further

We are on a mission to become truly inclusive and accessible. We're working to break down barriers, to bring our work to more people than ever before, and to explore new ways of sharing the palaces and their stories, online and in person, with people across the UK.

Mean More

We want everyone to find their own meaning and connections in the stories we share, and so we create experiences everyone can enjoy on their own terms. We do this by delivering meaningful work that has a real impact on people's lives and collaborating with communities and partners to create events and experiences that matter and mean more to them.

Act for the Future

It's our job to preserve six historic buildings, their contents, their landscapes and their stories for future generations. So, we are committed to investing in young people: reaching every school in the UK and increasing the diversity of our sector by providing opportunities for young people to gain practical skills and experiences. And we recognise the urgent need to act in response to climate change and the loss of nature. That's why we're aiming to be nature-positive and carbon net zero across all three emission Scopes by 2050.



Young visitors meet a Yeoman Warder at the Tower of London

PALACES FOR EVERYONE

Opening our spaces to the public

We care for some of the world's most extraordinary palaces, but they're nothing without people. Each year, we open our doors to welcome millions: families, school pupils, community groups, curious first-timers and returning culture lovers alike.

These are places to be explored, felt, and remembered. From hands-on learning to world-class exhibitions and wide-reaching access schemes, we're creating experiences that bring joy to people's lives.

We want everyone to enjoy our sites, no matter what that looks like. We're working hard to ensure more people than ever can see themselves in our palaces, their stories, and their future.

5m
people welcomed
through our gates

We now have over
160k members, who
made just over 300k
visits to our sites
this year.

Income from
our membership
generated £5.8m,
with an additional
£814k through
Gift Aid.

304k
visitors to *Untold
Lives: A Palace at
Work* exhibition
at Kensington
Palace



Visitors at the Great Pagoda, Kew

“

My entire life has been stories and I can see the power of storytelling... you can take these glorious buildings and make them real for children all over the world.

Caroline Michel, Historic Royal Palaces Trustee



A costumed performer at Henry VIII's Joust, July 2024
© Rob Jones/Outlaw Entertainment.

Our palaces unlock a range of thoughts and emotions

From surprise and discovery to a strong sense of joy, our latest visitor survey shows just how powerful a palace visit can be.

Discovery | 89%

Joy | 83%

Inspiration | 76%

Surprise | 70%

Belonging | 64%

Debate | 46%

% of total onsite visitors surveyed in 2024/25 who agreed strongly or slightly to the following statements:

I gained a better understanding of the stories of the place (discovery); I felt happier as a result of my visit (joy); I am inspired to learn/do more as a result of my visit; I was surprised by what I saw/learned on my visit; I felt like I belonged in this type of place; and I was challenged by what I saw/learned on my visit (debate).

Improving visitor access across our palaces

Whether financial or physical, we're working to remove the obstacles that can stand in the way of a great experience. We're committed to opening our palaces to everyone, whether visiting in person or exploring from home.

217.4k
£1 tickets sold

Tackling financial barriers

To make visits more affordable, we offer £1 tickets for anyone receiving Universal Credit. This year, we welcomed nearly a quarter of a million visitors through our gates via this scheme.

Making more visits feel possible

At Hampton Court Palace, we piloted deaf led tours of the site and an audio-described tour of *The Indian Army at the Palace* exhibition to give blind and partially sighted visitors a more meaningful way to connect with the past. We also created new access resources, including sensory maps, and a dedicated accessibility video.

We made our experiences more accessible using digital tools. From rolling out British Sign Language tours and audio-described tours on our Digital Visitor Guides (with more to come at Kensington Palace in 2026) to piloting virtual tours, we're helping more people enjoy the magic of our palaces in new ways.



A Yeoman Warder gives a tour to visitors at the Tower of London

Bringing the palace experience online

We've created new ways for people to connect with our palaces. Through curator-led podcasts, behind-the-scenes blogs and scroll-stopping TikToks, we're inviting audiences to explore stories from the past in their own time and space.

We relaunched our blog and continued to grow our podcast

This year, we relaunched our Historic Royal Palaces blog, welcoming over 200,000 readers into the fascinating, surprising, and sometimes dramatic stories behind our sites. Meanwhile, our podcast series including *Elizabeth I: The Women Who Shaped a Queen*, reached new audiences, offering fresh perspectives on familiar figures.



We turned centuries-old stories into viral moments

We reached over 99 million people across our social media channels. Nine of our TikToks reached over 1 million views, and we experimented with new formats such as performance-led videos and storytelling collaborations with curators and social media influencers.

201,749
active blog
users

99.5m
reached through
social

What's next?

We're improving physical access to our palaces through commissioning access audits and making site-sensitive improvements. We'll also be launching a relaxed events programme, deaf-led tours and access guides.

Online, we're highlighting more under-represented stories, and introducing new expert perspectives on well-trodden narratives. We're also rolling out more pre-visit access information such as guides and videos.

CARING FOR OUR MAGNIFICENT PALACES AND COLLECTIONS

Now and for the future

We are the trusted guardians of wonderful historic buildings, interiors, royal treasures and precious works of art. We believe our conservation should do more than protect and preserve. It should joyfully enrich our audiences' lives. We want to make everything in our care more beautiful, more accessible, and better prepared for future generations to enjoy.

Our heritage science is recognised as world class.

In 2024, we joined the UK's RICHES (Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science) programme. We're helping shape the future of conservation by sharing our data and discoveries with researchers nationwide.

It takes a broad range of expertise to care for the palaces and their stories. Our work includes research, managing environmental risks, cleaning, stabilisation and treatment. Our teams of specialists care for everything from wall paintings and textiles, to brick work and carpentry with minimal intervention and deep respect for the past.

Every project presents an opportunity to explore new ways for people to learn, engage, and find themselves in the spaces and stories we share. This year, we undertook projects that stretched from tiny threads of 16th-century tapestry to 10-metre-high scaffolds beneath a Baroque ceiling.



Britain's royal palaces are among the most important and beloved historic sites in the world, and conserving them for generations to come is both a challenge and a great privilege.

That task is not only about loving and caring for the fabric of the buildings themselves. It is also about making sure that we nurture great people with the skills required to keep the palaces the way they should be: living, working places with incredible stories to tell us all.

Dan Jones, Historic Royal Palaces Trustee

Preserving a masterpiece at Banqueting House

One of the last remaining parts of the old Palace of Whitehall, Banqueting House, closed to visitors in June 2024 for a major conservation and maintenance project.

With generous support from the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Wolfson Foundation, this work is helping to protect the iconic Rubens ceiling and ensure the building's long-term future.

The project includes the installation of an air source heat pump to reduce carbon emissions and help regulate the indoor environment, which is essential for preserving this fragile painted masterpiece.

Inside the hall, we're restoring architectural features and replacing the floor with beautiful English oak floorboards that better reflects the space's 17th-century grandeur.

We're also making improvements to accessibility and essential services across the site, making Banqueting House more sustainable, inclusive, and visitor-ready. The building will reopen in Autumn 2025.



Staff onsite during the Banqueting House works project 2024



Digitising the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection

We continued a major project to digitise the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection – a designated collection of national and international importance. It contains over 10,000 items spanning the 16th century to the present day.

These garments tell stories of fashion, life at court, ceremonial tradition, and the personal lives of some of Britain's most iconic figures. The collection includes clothing worn by George III; Queen Victoria; Queen Elizabeth II; Princess Margaret; and Diana, Princess of Wales, alongside pieces that belonged to the people who dressed and encountered them.

This project has been made possible thanks to an extremely generous legacy from Michael

Stennett. As a celebrated theatre and opera designer, Michael was deeply passionate about the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection and wanted his bequest to open the collection to a wider audience.

In partnership with Google Arts & Culture, we launched an online platform to bring together more than 200 objects from the collection, making them accessible to people worldwide, far beyond the palace walls.

200
items digitised to
ultra-high resolution
gigapixel quality

100
additions to
our collection



Laser scanning to create digital 3D models of collection items



Portrait of Wills Hill, 1st Earl of Hillsborough by Allan Ramsey

© Historic Royal Palaces; Accepted in lieu of Inheritance Tax by HM Government 2023 and allocated to Historic Royal Palaces for Hillsborough Castle. Treatment funded by The Apollo Foundation.



Costume items mounted and captured in ultra-high resolution photography

Conserving the Chapel Royal's east wall

We assembled a specialist team of conservators, surveyors, curators, and architectural historians to conduct condition assessments and conservation work on the stunning Baroque interiors of Hampton Court Palace's Chapel Royal.



Analysing an early 18th-century wall painting by Thomas Highmore and Sir James Thornhill

A bespoke 10-metre scaffold enabled us to carry out essential conservation work on masterpieces by Grinling Gibbons, Thomas Highmore, and Sir James Thornhill. Visitors had the unique opportunity to observe the conservation process from the Royal Pew, offering a rare glimpse into the meticulous work involved in preserving such historic interiors.

This project was made possible thanks to the generous support of The Syder Foundation and The Leche Trust.

What's next?

This year, we launched *Tomorrow's Tower*, our largest-ever fundraising campaign.

Tomorrow's Tower will transform our facilities for school and community visits, improve accessibility and take strides towards Historic Royal Palaces' goal of becoming nature-positive carbon net zero by 2050 – all while continuing to conserve the Tower of London for future generations and share its stories with the world.

With £1.9 million already secured in donations and pledges this year, we're building powerful momentum. Support includes a development grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and a significant £1 million gift from the Sandys Trust.

EXPERIENCES THAT TELL STORIES

Exhibitions, events and live programming

This year, Historic Royal Palaces continued to reimagine the events we host and exhibitions we create. In line with our new ambition, we delivered a vibrant and inclusive programme across our sites.

Every element was designed to offer unique and memorable experiences for absolutely everyone. Our events have brought the palaces' stories to life in bold and moving ways – through exhibitions shaped with communities, powerful installations and immersive experiences.

28,365 visitors
cheered on
Henry VIII's
Joust.

Fearless knights,
royal drama,
and high octane
horseback action
brought Tudor
thrills to life at
Hampton Court
Palace.



Bringing *The Tudor World* to life in the Wolsey Rooms

Set in Hampton Court Palace's oldest surviving rooms – once home to glittering opulence and political intrigue – *The Tudor World* explores the early years of Henry VIII's reign and the lives of the ordinary men and women who helped shape the Tudor dynasty, through extraordinary 16th-century artworks, objects, and interactive displays designed with accessibility at their heart.

Visitors can meet Anne Harris, Henry VIII's laundry woman, who washed his ulcer bandages, negotiated pay rises, and was later gifted a house. They can also discover the story of Jacques Francis, a free-diver from West Africa who salvaged guns from the Mary Rose and became one of the first Black voices recorded in an English court.

Through rare objects and striking artworks, the exhibition traces a period of immense change. Highlights include a gold ring

believed to have belonged to the Boleyn family, Thomas Wolsey's own portable sundial and a brightly coloured silk hat linked to Henry VIII. Three rarely-seen Tudor paintings on loan from His Majesty The King add drama and detail to the Tudor court's global ambitions.

The redevelopment of the Wolsey Rooms was generously supported by the DCMS/ Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund.



Tudor portraits on display in the Wolsey Rooms



Visitor views the new *Tudor World* exhibition



Interactive displays in the *Tudor World*

Honouring the fallen at the Tower of London

Poppy Fields at the Tower was a poignant exploration of loss, remembrance and hope. Set within the iconic walls of the Tower of London, the powerful light installation was created in collaboration with Luxmuralis.

It offered visitors a moving space to reflect on those who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars. The display encouraged a new way of experiencing the Tower after dark.

Archival imagery from Historic Royal Palaces, the Royal Armouries and the Fusilier Museum London was projected across the space, connecting the display to real people and stories from the Tower's past.



Visitors view the Poppy Fields light installation, November 2024
© Historic Royal Palaces/Luxmuralis



The White Tower illuminated during the Poppy Fields light installation, November 2024
© Historic Royal Palaces/Luxmuralis

What's next?

In 2025, we'll mark 80 years since the end of the Second World War with *The Tower Remembers* – a powerful new display of nearly 30,000 ceramic poppies. The installation creates a striking space for visitors to pause, reflect and remember together.

The newly refurbished Medieval Palace at the Tower of London will unveil refreshed displays and rich new storytelling. This immersive reimagining will invite visitors into the splendour of royal life, revealing how monarchs dined, dressed and ruled within these historic chambers. With thanks to Herbert & Ellen Kozlov and Graham & Joanna Barker for their generous support of the Medieval Palace project.



Yeoman Warder Emma Rousell and Yeoman Warder Tracey Machin at the Poppy Fields light installation, November 2024 © Historic Royal Palaces/Luxmuralis

Co-creating the *Dress Codes* exhibition with the Young Producers

Historic Royal Palaces has collaborated with three local youth groups – City Lions, Nova New Opportunities and Harrow Club to invite 25 young people (aged 14–17) to become Young Producers on the *Dress Codes* exhibition.

Working alongside curators, designers, musicians, and fashion experts, the Young Producers helped shape the exhibition's themes and design. They created original music, poetry, fashion and digital artworks inspired by historic court dress, reimagining the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection through their own stories and cultures.

“

We really wanted to show how a collection can speak to a new generation. For us who work in these industries, it's been refreshing, pushing us to consider new angles and stretching our creative minds to explore new ideas of what an exhibition can look and feel like.

Matthew Storey, Curator



The Dress Codes Young Producers attend a workshop at Hampton Court Palace in May 2024

Their creative responses are woven throughout the exhibition, including a striking green overcoat adorned with golden shells that once symbolised currency, and original music blending Afrobeats with classical sounds.

This year-long collaboration demonstrates how historic dress can inspire creativity, self-expression and industry pathways for the next generation. *Dress Codes* has been made possible thanks to the generous support of our Associate Partners, the Blavatnik Family Foundation and Avis Charles Associates.

This is what our Young Producers had to say:

“Basically, what we’ve done is create different ways to show stories through things like video, games or poems.”

“It’s expanded my skills a lot.”

“This is the first song I’ve properly written my own music to.”

“To see so many different kinds of professionals working in one area reminds me of what I imagine a real workplace to be like.”



Dress Codes: Decoding the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection, an exhibition at Kensington Palace



Dress Codes Young Producer Showcase at Kensington Palace, February 2025. Design by Emrakel.

What's next?

In 2026, Kensington Palace will host an exhibition to mark the 150th anniversary of Princess Sophia Duleep Singh's birth.

We're telling her story and that of her family of remarkable royal women who expressed womanhood, power, and royalty in different ways - making us look again at what it is to be a princess. Once forgotten, they are now finding a new legacy as inspiring role models for new generations.

We are working with an intergenerational group of British South Asian women to shape the narrative and contemporary, creative response to these princesses' lives and their legacies.

WRITING THE NEXT CHAPTER

How we're reaching younger audiences

We're passionate about inspiring young people with the power of the past, not as something distant or dusty, but as something alive and relevant.

School pupils across the UK are stepping into our stories – walking through Tudor kitchens at Hampton Court Palace during a study day, unpicking the politics of the past through debate and drama, or meeting a passionate young royal in our touring school shows.

Not every child can make the journey to one of our palaces. So, we're going to them. Through digital resources, teacher training, and outreach workshops, we're helping children create unforgettable experiences.



School pupils visit Kensington Palace as part of the Kensington Palace Schools Enrichment Programme, June 2024.

With thanks to the John Lyon's Charity, Wol & Kerry Kolade and Richard & Harriet Taylor and a dedicated group of donors, we're proud to launch a transformative five-year educational initiative at Kensington Palace. The Schools Enrichment Programme will foster collaborative partnerships with six local schools to broaden horizons and inspire students.

Opening doors to the past with the Schools Access Fund

Our Schools Access Fund helps break down barriers to school trips, offering free entry and inspiring, hands-on learning experiences at the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, Kensington Palace, and Hillsborough Castle and Gardens. For schools travelling from further afield, the fund also provides travel bursaries to make these opportunities possible.

“

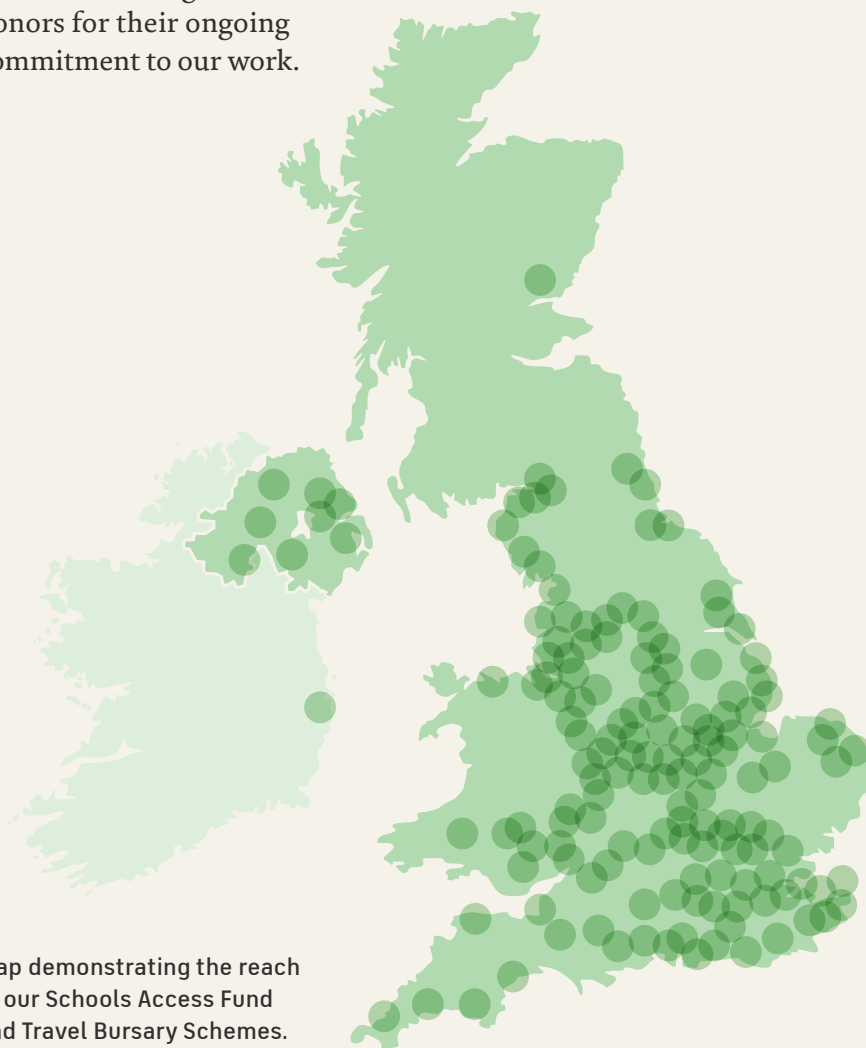
I just wanted to say how much we appreciated the opportunity to visit The Tower of London and how grateful we were for the funding allocated to us. This really was a wonderful experience for all involved and our children learnt so much from the day. It was truly enriching and opened up a world that the vast majority of our children would not typically be exposed to. In a recent review of the year, all of them mentioned the trip to The Tower of London as a highlight.”

Primary School Teacher,
Birmingham

Thanks to the travel bursaries on offer, pupils from as far away as Dundee, Wales, Yorkshire, Devon, and Cornwall have been able to take part in these unforgettable visits.

The Schools Access Fund and Travel Bursary Scheme have been fully funded through charitable donations. Historic Royal Palaces would like to thank all of our generous donors for their ongoing commitment to our work.

**Over 22k student
visits funded through
the Schools Access
Fund and Travel
Bursary Scheme**



Map demonstrating the reach of our Schools Access Fund and Travel Bursary Schemes.

Bringing real stories into the classroom

We created new digital resources that schools can directly access. These include biographies, family trees, timelines, and a virtual tour of the Beauchamp Tower at the Tower of London. We also created films and classroom activities for Key Stage 1, inspired by significant figures from Queen Victoria to John Blanke. To help teachers bring these stories to life, we launched a new YouTube channel: Teach with Historic Royal Palaces.



School pupils visit the Tower of London



Students at the Hampton Court Palace A-Level Study Day, March 2025

What's next?

We want to reach every school in the country in the next ten years.

To achieve this, we're expanding our work on a number of fronts including greater outreach programmes, live broadcasting and producing more digital content.

A major focus of our *Tomorrow's Tower* investment will be on creating world-class education facilities for schools and community groups at the Tower of London.





Historic Royal Palaces Apprentices at Hampton Court Palace

Equipping the next generation through apprenticeships

Our mission is to help everyone find themselves in the spaces and stories we share. As part of our plans, we want to remove barriers and invest in young people. This year, we relaunched our Apprenticeship Programme, bringing apprentices into roles across Historic Royal Palaces, from horticulture and conservation to law, events, and audiovisual production.

Each apprenticeship offers hands-on experience in a live working environment, paired with structured learning that leads to a nationally recognised qualification. Our programme also offers mentoring through recognised training, and peer-to-peer guidance. We take pride in fostering a strong sense of community and mutual support among our apprentices and across the diverse range of standards they are undertaking. Most roles require only GCSE English and Maths, with selection based on passion, potential, and aptitude, not academic background.

The first round saw over 800 applications for just 11 new apprenticeship roles. And interest continues to grow both from external candidates and internal teams eager to host apprentices. We've received award nominations and secured external funding to support its future growth.

Historic Royal Palaces would like to thank The Gosling Foundation and the National Lottery Heritage Fund for their support of our Apprenticeship Programme.

“

We wanted to create new entry routes to ensure that young people aren't excluded from job opportunities in the heritage sector. I'm so excited for the future of this scheme and for the life-changing opportunities it could create.

Jane Crowther, Director of Corporate Services

“

Historic Royal Palaces' working environment is optimistic, friendly, encouraging and overall, everyone shares a genuine passion for the historic palaces and visitors. An apprentice's working day is interesting and varied meeting new people daily.

Mia Bundfuss-Taylor, Quantity Surveyor Apprentice



Oliver Davison, Finance Apprentice

“

Coming in with very little experience, it has been life changing to be involved with processes and insights that were so foreign to me not long ago!

Ricardo Paulo, Financial Planning Apprentice



Rutvi Shah, Solicitor Apprentice



Sara Crouch, Apprentice Preventative Conservation Technician

“

As a Building Surveyor Apprentice based at Hampton Court Palace, I've had the chance to work on real conservation and maintenance projects that help preserve such an iconic site. What I've enjoyed most is how every day brings something different and challenges me to better myself and stay proactive. The apprenticeship has deepened my interest in historic buildings and made me feel like I'm contributing to something meaningful. I'm proud to be part of Historic Royal Palaces.

Christian Silva, Apprentice Surveyor



Mia Bundfuss-Taylor, Quantity Surveyor Apprentice, and Christian Silva, Apprentice Surveyor

CONNECTIONS, FORTIFIED

Our commitment to communities

Our palaces have always been places of gathering, celebration and story, and today, they're no different. We believe that stories are a powerful bridge between the past and the present, between generations and cultures. These historic spaces still have the power to spark connection, joy and belonging.

We work hand-in-hand with hundreds of community partners to bring our sites to life in new and meaningful ways. Our community partners often work with us to collaborate on exhibitions and experiences at our sites. Previous collaborations include *The Indian Army at the Palace*, co-curated with South Asian communities, and *George III: The Mind Behind the Myth*, shaped by men with lived experience of mental ill-health.

The stories of these palaces belong to everyone.



Over 45,000 afternoon teas were sold at Kensington Palace, raising £34,000 for our Community Programme through a £1 voluntary donation.

The 'By You' Tapestry, an international community project led by Stitches in Time, one of our Community Access Scheme partners. Stitched by 190 embroiderers from across the world, the tapestry explores daily life during the pandemic and was displayed in the Welcome Centre at the Tower of London from 14th June – 31st August 2024.





“

Fantastic and intergenerational scheme which opens a new world to those who might normally not be able to enjoy the delights of Britain’s rich and varied history. Learning Events are also very helpful for Group Leaders as you gain insights into current exhibitions which you can then share with your groups.

CAS group leader

Opening doors with the Community Access Scheme

Now in its 12th year, the Community Access Scheme (CAS) welcomes a wide range of visitors to our palaces, including local charities, mental health groups, community centres, and refugee networks. Our regular events, meet-ups, and celebrations help foster a supportive and growing community.

The scheme includes training sessions for group leaders, free tickets to our palaces, support from our team to help connect with the stories, spaces, and collections we care for, and invitations to our year-round events and gatherings.

We have
517
community access
partners

29,000
people visited our
palaces through
CAS

Making memories with Amazing Days Out

For many, a visit to our palaces remains out of reach. The Amazing Days Out programme works to remove barriers and support children and their families to have a joyful, memory-making day out.



We've helped low-income families, single parents, young carers, children in clinical settings, and those with special educational needs and disabilities. We also work with early years groups, looked-after children, and families who are newly arrived in the UK, including refugees.

We run this programme year-round across the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, Kensington Palace, and Hillsborough Castle and Gardens,

working in partnership with a host of organisations.

Our aim is to help visitors build confidence, connection, and a sense of belonging, so they return again and again. The programme includes free tickets to our palaces, support in planning a visit, access to our learning spaces, facilitated activities, light refreshments and more. Alongside regular visits, we also host special moments such as our Christmas at Kensington events.

Some of our Amazing Days Out partners include:

Achieving for Children
Home-Start
Gingerbread
Hackney Virtual School
Sparklers

Venture Centre
Solace
Bracknell Mockingbird
Parent Skills to Go

812

visitors visited our palaces through the Amazing Days Out programme

“

I attended a special community group's visit to Kensington Palace with my friend and her two children, one of whom has complex needs. I genuinely nearly cried, that this wonderful little boy had found a moment to engage with the exhibition, on his own terms, in his own way, in an environment in which, in many places, he would not have been welcome. This event engaged individuals for whom the barriers normally presented are too much and demonstrates that they are welcome, valued and included.

Amazing Days Out
visitor response

Creating Warm and Welcome Spaces at Kensington Palace

Launched in partnership with the health and social care charity Turning Point, Warm and Welcome Space invites local people to experience the palace in a different way. Held weekly in the Clore Learning Centre, it provides a safe, supportive environment for anyone who needs warmth, connection, and community.

The sessions create space for informal conversations with people who might not usually visit our palaces or see them as places for them. This helps us better understand local needs and shape more inclusive, responsive programmes.

Visitors can take part in yoga and fitness classes, mindfulness sessions, games, crafts, and receive practical advice. Over the past year, we've connected with 957 people. We've watched them grow in confidence, discover new skills, and begin to feel a real sense of ownership and connection to our palaces and their stories.

We provide
over 250 hours of
drop-in sessions
annually



What's amazing is that this project is open to all, not just Turning Point clients. Everybody just joins in as one big happy family. There's no judgment. No boundaries. No barriers or anything like that.

Daniel Floyd, Turning Point Manager

Over £1,000
raised by staff
and community
partners through
our Five Palaces
Walk

What's next?

We aim to develop our Amazing Days Out by supporting statutory holiday activities and food programmes across London, helping us reach more people.



Children take part in a bug hunt at the Kensington Palace Community Celebration, August 2024

TOWARDS A GREENER LEGACY

Our approach to sustainability

We act not just for those who currently experience our sites, but also for those in the future. That means addressing our impact on climate change and nature loss and ensuring our buildings, collections, and teams are resilient to the challenges already upon us.

2024/25 marks the first full year of our Sustainability Action Plan and the starting point on our journey to nature-positive carbon net zero. The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and,

as custodians of around 1,000 acres of protected parkland, gardens and outdoor spaces, we take our responsibility to conserve and improve the biodiversity in our care seriously.

Progress against our targets

82% of our staff are aware of our Sustainability Action Plan and 51% are clear in their role in delivering it against a target of 75%.

We've reduced our energy consumption by 24% against our 2019 baseline, we're aiming to achieve a 40% reduction by 2035.

In 2024/25 45% of our electricity came from Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin backed sources. We're aiming to get to 100%.

By autumn 2025 we'll have met our target to have a full emissions baseline for scopes 1, 2 and 3.

Historic Royal Palaces will achieve nature-positive carbon net zero across all three emission Scopes by 2050.

“

Since joining the Historic Royal Palaces Trustee body I have been hugely proud of the commitment of the whole organisation to better understanding the impact of our sites and work in terms of carbon, and then putting that knowledge to great effect holistically to reduce our carbon footprint and ensure the estate is more environmentally, socially and financially sustainable for the next generation.”

Camilla Finlay, Historic Royal Palaces Trustee



The White Tower lit up with the London Warming Stripes showing the capital's average temperature change each year since 1850.

Greener gardens at Hampton Court Palace

This year, we began an ambitious redesign of the Great Fountain Garden at Hampton Court Palace. Our focus is on enhancing soil health, boosting biodiversity, and building climate resilience while preserving the garden's historic character.

Much of the current planting is cultivated in the on-site nursery, which is one of the largest consumers of gas across the estate. By rethinking the planting approach, this project aims to reduce reliance on glasshouses and help lower carbon emissions.

We're proud to be partnering with award-winning garden designer Ann-Marie Powell to bring this vision to life.



Sustainability is at the core of my approach in designing garden habitats that invite an evolving ecology, and I'm looking forward to collaborating with Historic Royal Palaces and their talented gardening team to reimagine the Great Fountain Garden. Together, we will honour the garden's rich history by promoting sustainable gardening practices that ensure it can continue to thrive in the face of future environmental challenges."

Ann-Marie Powell



Digital render of the proposed design for the Great Fountain Garden at Hampton Court Palace
© Historic Royal Palaces and Ann-Marie Powell

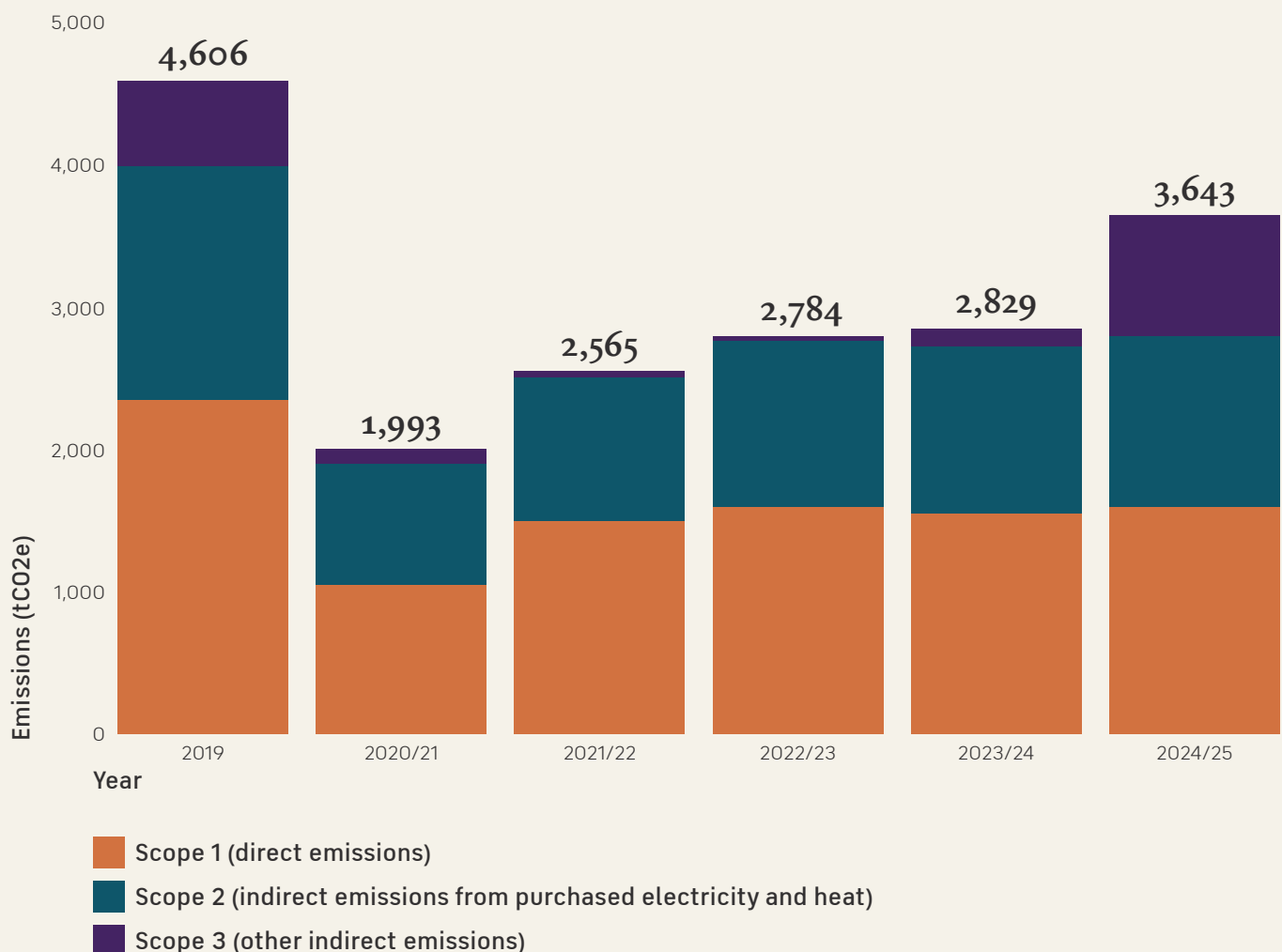
Total emissions and breakdown

Our total carbon emissions for 2024/25 were 3,643 tonnes of CO₂e – a 21% decrease compared to our 2019 baseline. Emissions from heating and electricity (Scopes 1 and 2) have fallen by 31%, mainly through improved management of our buildings and improved efficiency of building fabric and systems.

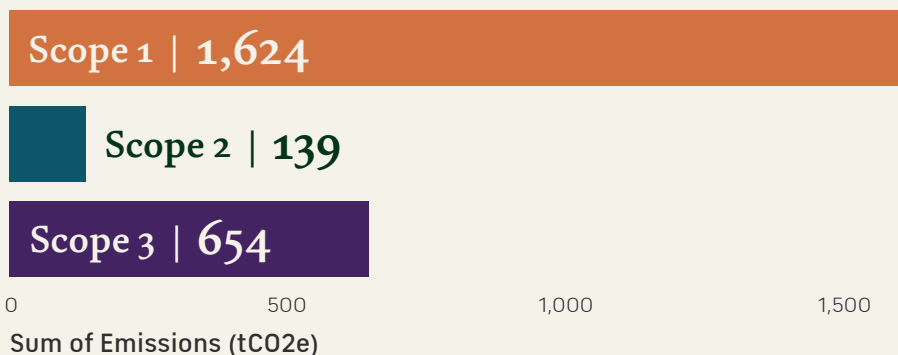
Our largest source of direct emissions remains our gas consumption, used primarily for heating our buildings. We're working hard to deliver plans to electrify our heating systems and equip our buildings for the future.

In 2024/25 45% of our electricity came from sources backed by Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGOs). We've already increased this to 88% for 2025/26 and are working towards 100% by 2027.

Yearly breakdown of emissions by Scope



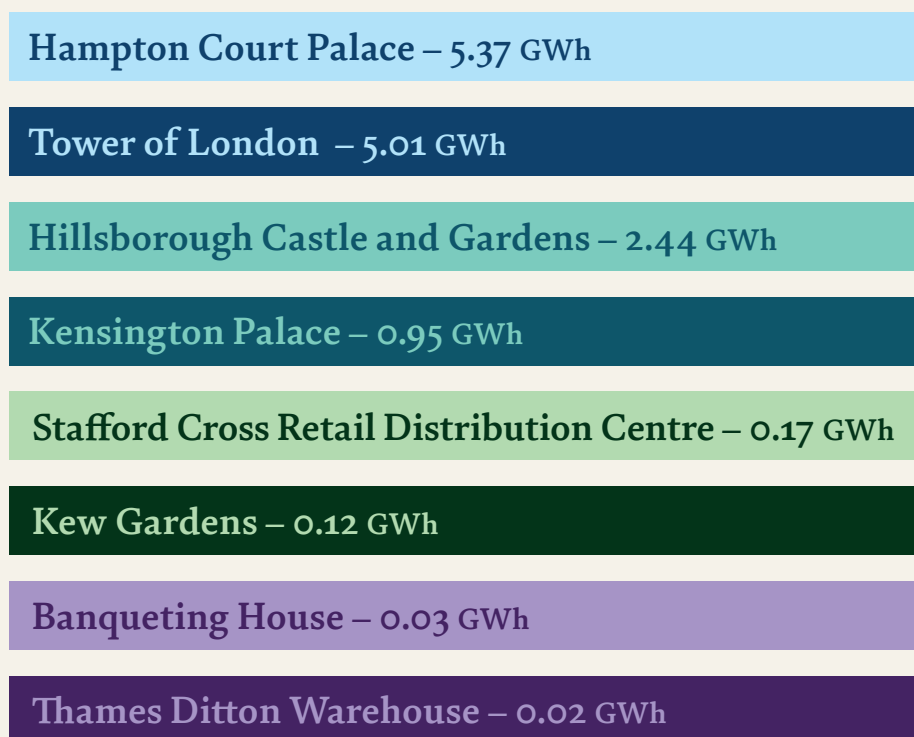
2024/25 Emissions by Scope (Market based)



We've reduced our electricity consumption by 1.5 GWh since 2019. That's the equivalent of **48 million cups of tea.**



Energy consumption at each of our sites



What's next?

Reducing these emissions is the focus of our decarbonisation programme and we'll be tackling some of our biggest users in the next five years.

Like-for-Like emissions and intensity

One of the central goals of our Sustainability Action Plan was to enhance the consistency and quality of our emissions data collection. During the 2024/25 reporting period, we made significant strides – expanding the range of emission sources and improving the type of data gathered. As a result, our reported emissions increased by 30% compared to 2023/24, largely driven by Scope 3 emissions. This rise reflects the inclusion of waste data from our three largest sites, more accurate tracking of business travel, and better reporting of fuel and energy-related activities. We remain committed to refining our tools and deepening our understanding, enabling us to strengthen our reporting processes and focus our efforts where they can have the greatest impact.

The table below shows our like-for-like position compared to 2023/24 with any additional data sets removed for a clearer view of our progress year on year.

Emissions (tCO ₂ e)	2024-2025 (Like-for-Like)	2023-2024 (Like-for-Like)	% Change
Scope 1	1,597	1,549	3%
Scope 2	1,118	1,151	-3%
Scope 3	200	129	55%
Total	2,915	2,829	3%

Experimenting with the State Apartments

We are conducting experiments with the Round Kitchen Court heating system at Hampton Court Palace. This system heats most of the State Apartments and visitor routes in the palace and is home to some of our most significant interiors and collections. The tests we ran included:

- Reducing the operational temperature from 78°C to 73°C, with tweaks to Building Management Systems logic to adjust based on outside temperature and reverse this change if needed.

- Turning off each heating circuit between 23:30 – 00:30 to save consumption, while monitoring environmental impacts using Environmental Management loggers around the palace.

These efforts have resulted in up to 13% savings in gas consumption, and 16% when normalised for temperature. This is the equivalent of nearly 150,000 kWh or 28 tonnes of carbon.



Laying the groundwork for a better future

2024/25 laid important foundations for our sustainability ambitions, with strong progress made across the year and more to come.

In 2025/26 we're continuing to develop our plans for decarbonisation, waste reduction and water management. We're also developing a new internal learning framework to give teams across Historic Royal Palaces the tools and confidence to embed sustainable thinking into their day-to-day roles.



Gardens team member Ichiho Garbutt in the Kitchen Garden at Hampton Court Palace



Decarbonisation Programme:

We're continuing to develop our plans for decarbonising some of our largest gas consumers with projects at the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, and Hillsborough Castle and Gardens.



Climate risk and adaptation:

We're continuing to develop our knowledge of the future climate risks to our palaces and working with expert partners to create adaptation plans to protect them.



Supporting nature:

Throughout 2025 we've been gathering more information about the condition of our natural estate and are beginning to develop plans to support biodiversity even better in the future.



Learning framework:

We're developing a new internal learning framework to give teams across Historic Royal Palaces the tools and confidence to embed sustainable thinking in their day-to-day roles.



Sustainability Champions Network:

We are strengthening our Sustainability Champions Network to increase its reach and impact.



Gardens team member Hilary Theaker in the Kitchen Garden at Hampton Court Palace

BUILDING ON A STRONG FOUNDATION

Closing thoughts from our Chair

To my amazement, I find I have been Chair of Historic Royal Palaces for almost two years. And, like a benevolent godfather to six remarkable children, I am continually amazed by the distinct personalities and accomplishments of our palaces.

The eldest child, the Tower of London, looks sprightly thanks to expert conservation. The glorious Tudor and Baroque Hampton Court Palace has a lively schedule of festivals. Whitehall's Banqueting House has a fresh elegance thanks to new Exmoor oak floorboards. Kew Palace offers idyllic quietude, while Kensington Palace has welcomed record audiences. Our youngest family member, Hillsborough Castle and Gardens in Northern Ireland, charms with beautiful gardens and a stunning art collection.

We're firing on all cylinders. Our renovations include repairs to the Tower of London; Kensington Palace's east facade; the roof of the Mantegna Gallery; Hampton Court Palace's chimneys; the interior of Banqueting House; and archaeology at St Peter ad Vincula, the chapel at the Tower. Then there are our conservation projects of tapestries, uniforms, costumes, and paintings – not to mention sustainability projects designed to safeguard our outdoor spaces.

And our ambition continues to grow. We're opening the palaces to new visitors, including those from less advantaged backgrounds. Our most ambitious fundraising target ever will help us repair and reconfigure parts of the Tower. We aim to be carbon neutral by 2050. And we want to double the number of schoolchildren visiting the Tower, inspiring the next generation to embrace our history.

The six palaces in our care are among the UK's most important historical landmarks. Can you think of more crucial buildings in our island's story than the Tower of London or Hampton Court Palace? I certainly can't. So, our Board of Trustees and Executive Team feel our responsibility most acutely, because the palaces' place in history is priceless.

Sir Nicholas Coleridge, CBE DL, Chair



HOW WE MANAGE OUR MONEY

Our 2024/25 financial summary

We are a charity whose work is made possible thanks to income generated through admissions, commercial activities, and the generosity of our donors, patrons, members, and sponsors.

This year, we've made significant commitments to expand our charitable work, investing in major building projects whilst maintaining a focus on the care of our palaces, collections, and gardens. From welcoming 4.2 million visitors, to hosting palace-takeover events, reopening the Orangery at Kensington Palace, and

launching our most ambitious fundraising campaign to date at the Tower of London, our income-generating activities have been instrumental in driving forward our expanding ambitions throughout 2024/25.

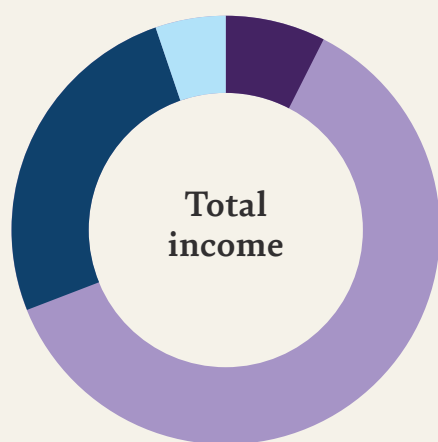
As we look to the future, we will invest more than ever before in our major projects

and conservation programmes, and we will continue to push further with our unwavering commitment to being nature-positive carbon net zero by 2050.

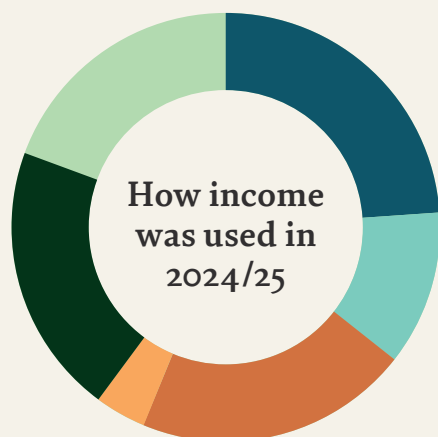
For our full annual report and accounts, please visit our website.



qrco.de/HRP-annualreports



- Donations, grants and membership | 8%
- Admissions | 61%
- Commercial income | 26%
- Investments and other income | 5%



- Caring for our palaces, collections and gardens | 24%
- Interpretation and education | 12%
- Opening the palaces to the public | 20%
- In year projects | 4%
- Future project investment | 21%
- Organisational development and income generation | 19%

WITH SINCERE THANKS TO THOSE WHO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

We couldn't do it without you

We're incredibly grateful to all those who support our work. As an independent charity, Historic Royal Palaces receives no regular funding from the Government. Everything we do is made possible by our visitors, members, donors, legacy pledgers and patrons. Your generous support helps us care for six extraordinary places and bring their stories to life for everyone, now and for the future.

We would especially like to thank the following donors and patrons, as well as those who have chosen to remain anonymous.

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And those that wish to
remain anonymous

GOVERNANCE

Our governance structure is robust in ensuring delivery of our strategy, operational plans, and compliance with our policies, but also agile enough to help us meet emerging challenges and make the most of new opportunities.

Non-executive: *Oversight of strategy, policy, plans and compliance*



Executive: *Development and delivery of strategy, policy and organisational plans*



It's an exciting and important time to be a Trustee of Historic Royal Palaces. There is an ambitious new strategy to deliver, a substantial programme of events and exhibitions to oversee, and a forward-looking educational and sustainable agenda which will position us strongly for decades to come. And to top it all, it is great fun to be delivering this with my impressive and like-minded colleagues on the Board!

General Sir Gordon Messenger, KCB DSO* OBE DL, Historic Royal Palaces Trustee

HELP GIVE OUR PALACES A FUTURE, FOR EVERYONE

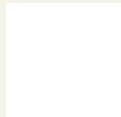
Everything we do is made possible by people like you

We're on a mission to reach further, mean more, and act for the future and we'd love you to join us. Whether you're passionate about conservation, education or community events, there are lots of ways you can offer your support.

How to get involved:

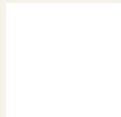
Become a member

Enjoy unlimited entry, exclusive events and behind-the-scenes content, all while helping us care for these extraordinary places.



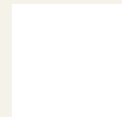
Make a donation

Every gift, big or small, helps us protect these remarkable places and share them with more people.



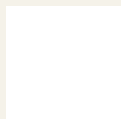
Leave a gift in your will

A legacy gift helps ensure these palaces – and the stories they hold – will be here for generations to come. It's a lasting way to support the things you care about most.



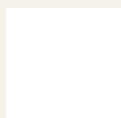
Volunteer with us

Looking for a meaningful way to give your time, develop new skills, and connect more deeply with the stories that shape our past and future? Then consider becoming a volunteer and help to continue the fascinating stories of our palaces.



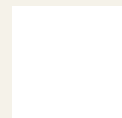
Become a patron

Becoming a patron is one of the most meaningful and fun ways to get involved with our work. Not only will you enjoy a close relationship with the charity, but also exclusive experiences and privileged access to the areas of the palaces not open to the public.



Partner with us

From corporate sponsorship to charitable partnerships, we work with organisations of all sizes to create purposeful relationships that make an impact.



For further information on how you can be part of Historic Royal Palaces, please contact our Development team at development@hrp.org.uk

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Contact us

Email: info@hrp.org.uk

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