

# Antrim Castle Gardens



**Local Gem To National Treasure**

**Ursula Fay**

**Head of Arts and Culture**

# A Local Gem - Setting The Scene

The team at Antrim Castle Gardens have achieved transformational change through their passion, enthusiasm, talent and effective partnership working and turned Antrim Castle Gardens, a local gem into a national treasure, achieving the prestigious accolade of Best Park in Northern Ireland and shortlisted for the UK Best Park.



# Best Park In Northern Ireland

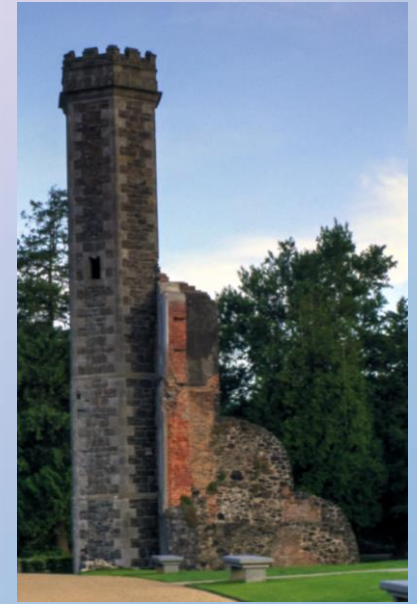
*“This was the place my Grandparents brought me to play as a child, they lived just across the road. Even then it was a special place, the ruins of the castle were ghostly, the ancient motte a challenge to climb, the site of the annual agricultural show where my grandfather was renowned for his bantams and a place where hockey was the king of sports. The history of Antrim and its people is as much the history of this place, its battles and personalities.*

*It's not just that it sits at the heart of Antrim, it is the heart of Antrim.*

*And when the gardens grew tired Council, Heritage Lottery and many others stepped in to revitalise them, to breathe new life into them and bring a new generation to enjoy and value its place in our community. Staff and volunteers go far beyond mere duty to maintain and care for the Castle Gardens.*

*I have watched opera in the ruins of the old castle, old rockers jamming in the studio, summer concerts in the formal gardens, children learning to ride their bikes, dogs chasing balls, families having picnics and brides coming straight from their wedding ceremonies to get the photos they want for their albums. The gardens mean all of this to me and more. In a mad world the gardens are my sanctuary, they are the place to restore my soul.”*

**Stephen Nichol, Antrim Resident & Nominator of Castle Gardens as Best Uk Park**





# A Transformation Tale

- A Potted History
- Background
- Corporate Vision
- Aims and Objectives
- People and Passion
- Establishing Partnerships
- Achievements Vs Objectives
- Awards and Results
- The Future – Shining Brightly

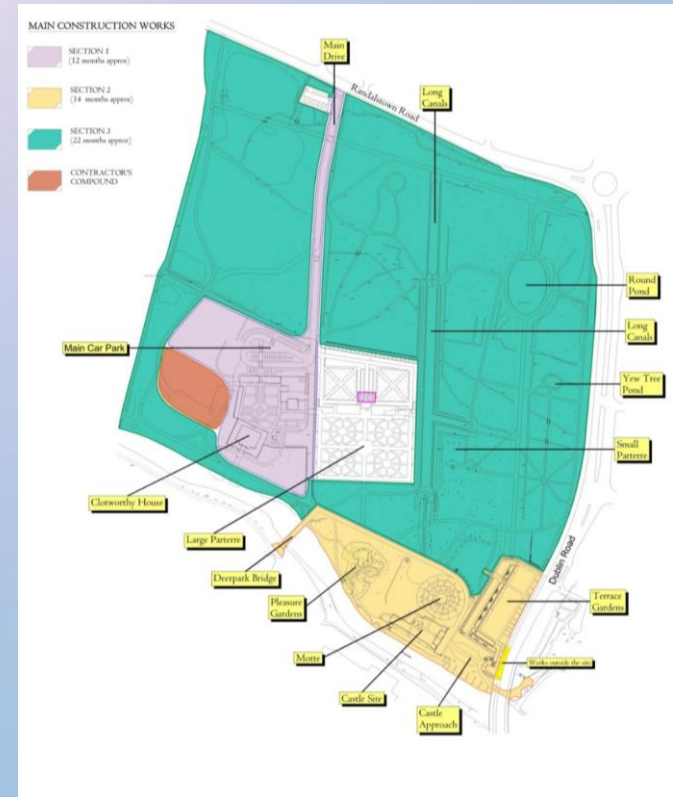
# A Potted History

- Historical Significance
  - Gardens created between 1665 – 1714
  - Most significant historic Garden in public ownership in NI
- Council Ownership
  - Phased acquisition from 1963 - 1991
- Council Vision



# A Potted History

- HLF
  - £6 million capital spend
  - 60% externally funded
- Capital Project
  - Work began in 2009

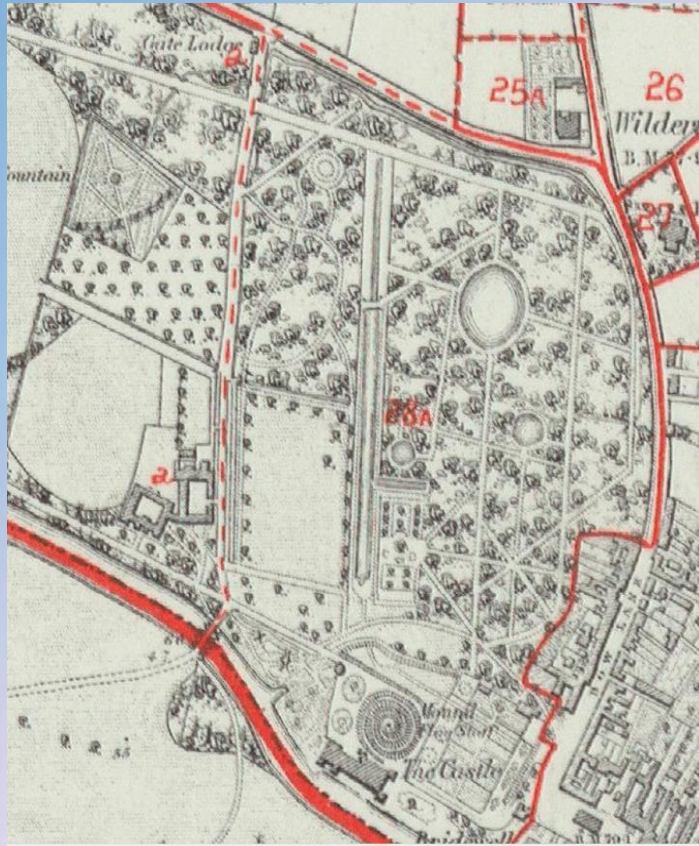


Supported by  
**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund





# A Potted History



# Background

- Problems
- Usage Levels & Low Awareness
- Lack of Partnership
- Transformation Journey
- New Council New Team
- New Challenge



# Corporate Vision



- Place
- People
- Prosperity
- Performance

# Aims and Objectives

- Improve, promote and enhance the cultural and natural heritage of the Gardens and benchmark our performance through accreditation and awards schemes.
- Fully develop effective partnerships with key stakeholders to protect, improve and promote natural heritage and address issues of anti-social behavior.
- Develop ACG as a quality visitor attraction of regional significance with a vibrant programme of events, ensuring it contributes to the economic prosperity of the Borough

# People and Passion

- Service Restructuring
- New Team
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Challenge of Change
- Shared Vision
- Passion and Pride
- All Aboard



# Establishing Partnerships

- Internal and External
- Mutually Beneficial
- Value added
- Shared Vision
- Essential Support



# Achievements Vs Objectives

Improve, promote and enhance the cultural and natural heritage of the Gardens and benchmark our performance through accreditation and awards schemes.



# Achievements Vs Objectives

Fully develop effective partnerships with key stakeholders to protect, improve and promote natural heritage and address issues of anti-social behaviour.





# Achievements Vs Objectives

Develop ACG as a quality visitor attraction of regional significance with a vibrant programme of events, ensuring it contributes to the economic prosperity of the Borough.



# Achievements Vs Objectives

## ***Annual Events***

- Party in the Park
- Enchanted Winter Garden
- Garden Show Ireland
- RSPBANI – Ulster Pipe Band Championships
- Weekly Park Run
- Opera in the Gardens
- Summer Music
- Antrim Summer Festival
- Charitable and Private Events

## ***Special Events***

- Armed Forces Day
- Circuit of Ireland Rally
- River 2 Lough Festival





**Stroke** associated by

**Step Out for Stroke**

Sponsored walk  
Antrim Castle Gardens  
BT41 4LH  
Sunday 21 May  
2pm start

Enter now to join stroke survivors and their friends and families. Every step makes a difference. Sign up at [stroke.org.uk/stepout](http://stroke.org.uk/stepout)

\*All money raised by the Stroke Association's National Fund is spent on Northern Irish stroke research and the National Stroke Survivors Society.

Together we can conquer stroke [f](https://www.facebook.com/stepout) [#StepOut](https://twitter.com/stepout)





# Awards and Results

- APSE Service Awards
- Fields In Trust Best NI Park
- NILGA – Best Team & Employee of the Year
- CIPRNI – Best Event
- Trip Adviser
- Top 5 NI Visitor Attractions
- Green Flag & Green Heritage Award



# Awards and Results

- Sustainable Ireland – Biodiversity Project of the Year - Gold Winner
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) - NI Tourism & Leisure Building Project of the Year Winner
- Federation of Passenger Transport NI – Coach Friendly Award Winner
- LNP Lough Neagh Awards
- Translink Ulster in Bloom - Outstanding Floral Presentation

# Awards and Results

## 2015/16 vs 2014/15

	2015/16	2014/15	Diff	% Diff
April	30919	22501	8418	37.41
May	41639	38205	3434	8.99
June	31792	16115	15677	97.28
July	31328	19313	12015	62.21
August	45306	19588	25718	131.29
September	25434	15176	10258	67.59
October	29227	22070	7157	32.43
November	18548	18280	268	1.47
December	37265	26678	10587	39.68
January	19590	19302	288	1.49
February	23202	19875	3327	16.74
March	27902	26416	1486	5.63
	362152	263519	98633	37.43

# Awards and Results

## 2016/17 vs 2015/16

	2016/17	2015/16	Diff	% Diff
April	25431	30919	-5488	-17.75
May	82879	42237	40642	96.22
June	38734	31305	7429	23.73
July	37639	30273	7366	24.33
August	45625	44226	1399	3.16
September	24630	15176	9454	62.30
October	52470	28023	24447	87.24
November	28897	18548	10349	55.80
December	60148	36823	23325	63.34
January	22645	19590	3054.5	15.59
February	20509	23202	-2693	-11.61
March	24847	30264	-5417	-17.90
	464453	350586	113867	32.48



# The Future – Shining Brightly

- Retention of the Green Flag & Heritage Green Flag Award
- Increased number of visitors annually to exceed 500,000
- To retain Best NI Park Award and challenge for Best UK Park
- To attract new large scale events to the Gardens as a host venue.
- To expand The Enchanted Winter Garden event and increase numbers attending to 50,000
- A minimum 4 Star visitor attraction accreditation in Tourism NI's Visitor Attraction Grading Scheme
- Identify and Develop Income Streams
- To continue horticultural developments throughout the gardens with a focus on indigenous plant species.
- To connect with the Town and act as a driver for regeneration
- Contribute to the Economic Prosperity of the Borough

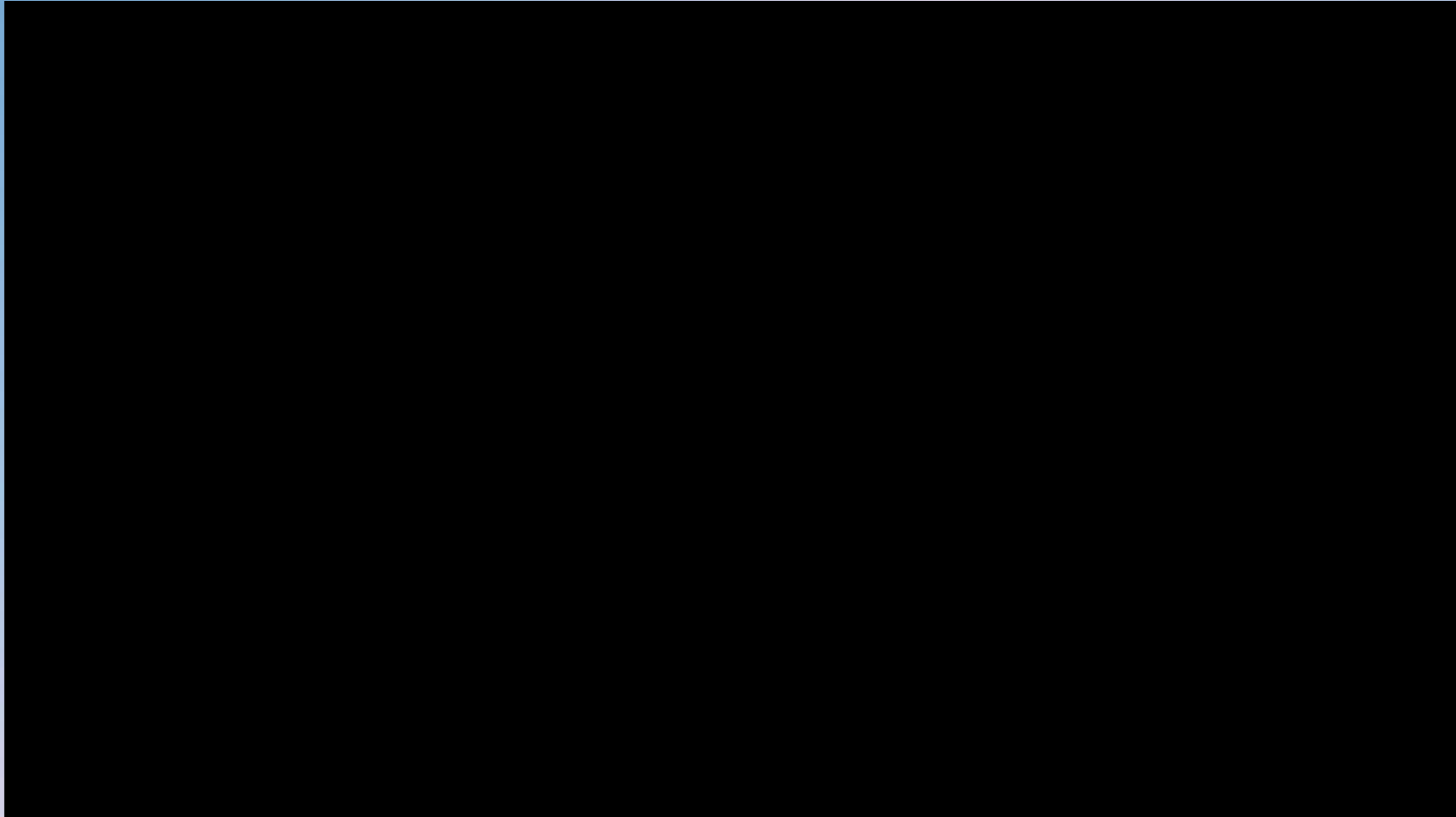
# A National Treasure

The team will continue to play their role in ensuring visitors from all over Northern Ireland and beyond flock to Antrim Castle Gardens and help the Council create a **“Prosperous Place, Inspired by Our People and Driven by Ambition”**

# Enchanted Winter Garden



# Enchanted Winter Garden



# Questions?

