

Antrim Castle Gardens



Local Gem To National Treasure Ursula Fay Head of Arts and Culture



Introduction

The transformation of Antrim Castle Gardens from a much loved local gem to national treasure and visitor attraction of regional significance is a story of passion and pride. Transformational change has been achieved by people who had a pride in their place and with their passion, enthusiasm, talent and effective partnership working have turned Antrim Castle Gardens, a local gem into a national treasure.





A Local Gem

"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

















A Transformation Tale

- A Potted History
- Background
- Restoration to Rebirth
- Corporate Context
- Aims and Objectives
- Achievements Vs Objectives
- A Sense of Pride
- The Future



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







Background

- Problems
- Anti Social Behaviour Vandalism
- Usage Levels & Low
 Awareness
- Lack of Partnership
- Limited Tourism Offer
- Risk of Deterioration







Restoration to Rebirth

Three Phases of Transformation

- 2009 to 2012 Restoration Project & Capital Works
 Challenges Faced
- 2012 to 2015 Reopening
 New Challenges
- -Potential Realised
- 2015 to Date RPA
 Challenge of Change
 Accelerated Success



Corporate Context

Antrim and N	ewtownabbey Bor	ough Council
Place A place where people lake pride in their surroundings. A place where people tel sate A place where we protect and orthance, where peosible, our natural habitats and built heritage. We have vibrant and welcoming towns, villages, neighbourhoods, and rural areas and an efficient planning process that promotes positive development. A place where people choose to reuse or necycle their waste	 People Our communities will have access to high quality council services and facilities. The support we will lead to a more active, headthy and empowered community. Ommunities and agencies work together to plan and deliver better services, address and respective the quality of supportive and empowered disact and respect. Our community. Our community. Our community and empowered community. Our community. Our community and empowered composities and the support we and supportive and supportive and supportive and supportive and supportive and support we and telerance, divensity and respect. We will achieve and support we may any support we and support we a	 Prosperity We identify and support antrepreneurship, have a strong competitive business advantage and are a centre of accellence for leading adge companies. We have a world class infrastructure which aftracts inward investment and supports productivity activity to sustain activity to sustain activi

Performance & Community Planning

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 antisocial 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



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





- 2018 TNI Awards Highly Commended
- 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





- 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



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





Partnerships

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

Stakeholder Success

Essential Support









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.





- Large Scale Events
 Party in the Park
 Enchanted Winter Garden
 Garden Show Ireland
 Ulster Pipe Band Championships
 Weekly Park Run
 Opera in the Gardens
 Summer Music and Festivals
 Charitable and Private Events
- Special Events
 Armed Forces Day
 Circuit of Ireland Rally
 River 2 Lough Festival
 Queens Royal Gun Salute



- Established as one of NI's Leading Visitor Attractions 464K annually
- By Royal Appointment
- Economic Return













Sponsored walk Antrin Castle Gardens BT414LH Sunday 21 May Zpm start



Enter now to join strate surveys and their hands and fermion. Every step makes a difference. Sign up at strate angular steppent Viewee state and a surveys descent descent and a survey state of the state strategiest strategiest strategiest.

Together we can conquer shoke 💦 👔 #StepOut









Enchanted Winter Garden





A Sense of Pride

- Civic Pride
- Cross Cutting Service Delivery
- Ownership
- Community Connections
- Communication and Consultation
- Stakeholder Role
- Celebrating Success
- Caring for Our Asset





Securing The Future

- Retention of the Green Flag & Heritage Green Flag Award
- Increased number of visitors annually to exceed 500,000
- To win 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 70,000
- A minimum 4 Star visitor attraction accreditation in Tourism NI's Visitor Attraction Grading Scheme
- Develop the visitor offer with new features such as fairy trail
- Identify and Develop Income Streams and programming
- 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 Gardens will continue to play their role in ensuring visitors from all over Northern Ireland and beyond flock to the Borough and help the Council create a "**Prosperous Place**, Inspired by Our People and Driven by **Ambition**"





Questions?



