

FRIENDS OF THE HARRIS GARDEN

England & Wales · Charity number 1171905

Details

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2017-03-06

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address HLS Building
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University of Reading
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Website www.friendsoftheharrisgarden.org.uk

Activities

Objects: TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC IN BOTANY AND HORTICULTURE BY SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GARDEN AS AN AMENITY, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF READING.

Activities: To advance the education of the public in botany and horticulture by supporting the development of the Harris Garden as an amenity, in partnership with the University of Reading. To support and fundraise for selected charities through open days.

Classification

- **How:** Makes Grants To Individuals, Provides Other Finance, Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Sponsors Or Undertakes Research
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Education/training, Recreation, Other Charitable Purposes
- **Who:** Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies

Geography

- Reading
- Wokingham

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£1,045	£235	-	-
2024-03-31	£16,077	£502	-	-
2023-03-31	£629	£399	-	-
2022-03-31	£904	£3,087	-	-
2021-03-31	£1,714	£178	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Dr Jordan Bilsborrow	Chair	2018-05-22
John Edgar		2024-02-22
Sally Foster		2022-03-09

Accounts

Friends of the Harris Garden - Chairmans's Report 2025

The Friends of the Harris Garden had an AGM on 29th January 2026. During the meeting the Chairman, Jordan Bilsborrow, highlighted the challenging circumstances that the Friends have found themselves in since the pandemic. Outlining the following key points:

- The Friends of the Harris Garden are no longer able to provide the benefits previously received by members, such as the Grassroots newsletter, garden open days and events (aside from BBC Gardener's Question time on 14 April 2024).
- As such, subscriptions are now deemed to be voluntary donations. The website has undergone an update to reflect this. It is expected that our income will begin to decrease accordingly. More substantive donations for the Harris Garden can be administered by the University of Reading.
- The University of Reading Grounds department have now taken the leading role in organising and giving appropriate support to the volunteers who work in the garden.
- Despite our best efforts, it has been difficult to recruit new members to the committee, and it is felt that running the charity is no longer sustainable.

It was therefore agreed at the AGM that the Friends of the Harris Garden will be wound up during 2026. The following proposal was made to the 20 attendees.

Dissolution of the Charity

It is proposed that in accordance with clause 29 of the Friends of the Harris Garden constitution that the Friends of the Harris Garden be dissolved in 2026. The trustees would hereby be authorised to take all necessary steps to wind up the charity's affairs and distribute the remaining assets in accordance with the dissolution clause.

The resolution will be enacted following the meeting either:

- a) By a resolution passed by a 75% majority of those voting, or
- b) By a resolution passed by decision taken without a vote and without any expression of dissent in response to the question put to the general meeting.

There were no expressions of dissent. It was therefore accepted that the trustees are responsible for wind up the charity in 2026.

Following the discussion for the dissolution of the Friends of the Harris Garden, the charity funds were discussed. It was proposed that the remaining funds (approximates) are allocated as follows:

Funding towards a permanent structure in the Outdoor Learning Garden (walled garden redevelopment)	£50,000
Funding committed towards plant orders in 2025 (not yet invoiced)	£1,947
Funding placed in the University of Reading Harris Garden account, only to be used to support the Harris Garden and volunteers	£9,719

This did not receive sufficient backing to pass. Clarification and guarantees around access to the Outdoor Learning Garden need to be sought. Reduced funding for the Outdoor Learning Garden was also discussed and therefore new proposals will be made to the membership in the first quarter of the year for a vote.

Jordan Bilsborrow, Friends of the Harris Garden - 30th January 2026

Income and Expenditure

	2024/2025	2023/2024
Income		
Subscriptions	£490	£490
Interest Lloyds deposit a/c	£545	£428
Donations (general)	£10	£103
Donations (legacy)	£0	£15,056
Income Total	£1,045	£16,077
Expenditure		
Transport		
Photocopying and Postage		
Refreshments	£84	£123
Plants	£0	£121
UoR costs		
Web Hosting	£36	£94
Affiliation fees	£65	£65
Auditor fee	£50	£100
Expenditure Total	£235	£502
Income - Expenditure	£809	£15,575

Balance Sheet

	2024/2025	2023/2024
Lloyds Current A/C		
Balance brought forward	£17,596	£846
Transfers from UoR	£0	£2,000
Payments/deposits	£108	£14,750
Transfer to Lloyds Saving a/c	£12,000	
Year end balance	£5,488	£17,596
Lloyds Savings A/C		
Balance brought forward	£40,656	£40,227
Transfer from Lloyds Current A/C	£12,000	
Interest Received	£545	£428
Year End Balance	£53,200	£40,655
University of Reading A/C		
Balance brought forward	£2,575	£4,177
Subscriptions	£373	£398
Transfer to Lloyds	£0	£2,000
Year end balance	£2,947	£2,575
Total assets	£61,636	£60,826
Total assets at year start	£60,826	£45,251
Income minus expenditure	£809	£15,575
Total assets at year end	£61,636	£60,826

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A HASKINS
 15/12/2025

Accounts

During 2024 there have been several challenges recruiting members to the committee and the replacement of trustees. This, together with a lack of venue meant that an AGM could not be arranged in the final third of the year, as is the typical timing. An AGM was therefore postponed until April 2025 to provide a chance to arrange a venue for the meeting and the time to hopefully replace volunteer committee members.

Working with a reduced committee and without replacement members have put a hold to most activities and projects that the Friends of the Harris Garden can undertake. Replacement committee members are required as a matter of urgency, but to date it has been challenging to recruit. That said, the Friends of the Harris Garden remain financially secure helped by a large legacy donation from Constance Michael's Estate. Constance was a former employee of the University of Reading and enjoyed time in the Harris Garden. Some of the legacy will be spent on providing a memorial bench. Some progress has been made to invest in plants for the upkeep of the Harris Garden and the longstanding project to produce signage around the garden to help introduce and educate the public visiting the garden was progressed.

Jordan Bilsborrow
Friends of the Harris Garden Chairman
January 2025

Income and Expenditure

	2023/2024	2022/2023
Income		
Subscriptions	£490	£553
Interest Lloyds deposit a/c	£428	£76
Donations (general)	£103	
Donations (legacy)	£15,056	
Income Total	£16,077	£629
Expenditure		
Transport		-£174
Photocopying and Postage		
Refreshments	-£123	-£99
Plants	-£121	
UoR costs		
Web Hosting	-£94	-£36
Affiliation fees	-£65	-£60
Auditor fee (2022 & 2023)	-£100	
Expenditure Total	-£502	-£369
Income - Expenditure	£15,575	£260

Balance Sheet

	2023/2024	2022/2023
Lloyds Current A/C		
Balance brought forward	£846	£1,113
Transfers from UOR	£2,000	
Payments/deposits	£14,750	-£267
Year end balance	£17,596	£846
Lloyds Savings A/C		
Balance brought forward	£40,227	£40,151
Transfer from Lloyds Current A/C		
Interest Received	£428	£76
Year End Balance	£40,655	£40,227
University of Reading A/C		
Balance brought forward	£4,177	£3,727
Subscriptions	£398	£450
Transfer to Lloyds	-£2,000	
Year end balance	£2,575	£4,177
Total assets	£60,826	£45,251
Total assets at year start	£45,251	£44,992
Income minus expenditure	£15,575	£260
Total assets at year end	£60,826	£45,251

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17/10/24

Accounts



Friends of the Harris Garden Update 2023

It has been a while since you received an update regarding the Friends of the Harris Garden, so I am writing to give you that update for over the last 12 months. There is quite a lot of work behind the scenes so apologies for the lengthy update, but it is worth reading until the end (honestly). After quite a difficult period, during and post-pandemic, I feel as though the Friends are now recovering well.

Harris Garden

In terms of staff updates Duncan Zacks, who was responsible for the Harris Garden and university grounds generally has now left the university, and his replacement Lucy Jellis started a few months ago. Duncan has overseen good transformation and investment in the garden, so it has been great having his input on the committee. Lucy is keen to continue to support the Friends work and will join the committee in Duncan's place. Following the installation of the circular path the garden is now more accessible to the community, which is great, but this has meant that there is a greater need for signage for different areas of the garden and further benches where there has not been a path previously. This is something we are looking into currently.

Friends of the Harris Garden and Committee

The biggest update (or relief for me) is that we now have a treasurer, with Sally Webster joining the committee last year. Sally has done a phenomenal job catching up with the Friends accounts. Unfortunately, Trudi Rehman, who represented the garden volunteers on the committee for some time has stepped down. So, I would like to take this chance to thank Trudi for all her help over the years.

The eagle-eyed amongst you will have noticed that the website has undergone updates over the last few months, and we now have an online payment system in place for ad-hoc donations, and subscriptions to the Friends (which you can see on the left-hand side of the page here - <https://friendsoftheharrisgarden.org.uk/>). This was possible due to the fantastic work of a garden volunteer, Richard Preston, so a huge thanks for his valuable work and input. We are now looking for someone to join the committee to focus on the forward-facing and communication side of our work in light of Richard's updates to continue this work.

With this update to how visitors can make donations, I would like to clarify a few points for those who already pay a subscription to the Friends.

1. If you are paying an annual subscription by direct debit or similar and are happy to continue to do so then nothing needs to change, we are, of course, grateful to anyone who is able to donate money to invest in the Harris Garden.
2. Generally, new visitors who would like to donate money regularly, or as a one-off can use our JustGiving donation method on the website, but if it is easier to arrange a direct debit directly or still pay by cheque then please contact Neil who will help here - (neil.obrien@henley.ac.uk).
3. If you would like to change how to donate to the Friends, then do get in touch with Neil on the email above.
4. These updates to how visitors donate were purely so we can move from what was a formal and rather outdated subscription method, to try and catch one-off donations more easily. This allows us to point visitors to the garden to our website to hopefully capture donations.

Events

Probably the most exciting update I would like to give here is that **BBC Radio 4's Gardeners Question Time** will be hosted by the Friends of the Harris Garden and the University of Reading on **26th March 2024**. The event will be held in the Palmer Building in the centre of the university campus, and the link for tickets below is available to you before it will be circulated more widely. Please do book tickets soon if this is of interest to you as we aim to share the link more widely next week.

More information in the attached letter and link here - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/gardeners-question-time-at-the-university-of-reading-tickets-852307042307?aff=oddtcreator>

Some time has passed since we held an in-person meeting for updates, and therefore the committee plans to reinstate an AGM. We are aiming to hold this in May, and I will let you know closer to the time about further details. We have also been in touch with the Friends of the University of Reading about having joint events where there is an overlap in interests, so hopefully we can begin to have ad-hoc events again for those interested. Once we have a new member of the committee to focus on this, as mentioned above, then more news should follow. If you know someone interested in gardening and communicating updates from the Harris Garden/Friends, then please point them in my direction.

If you have any questions then please feel free to get in touch.

The Friends of the Harris Garden Committee

Income and Expenditure

	2022/2023	2021/2022
Income		
Subscriptions	£553	£750
Lloyds Current A/C	£70	£4
Donations (signed)		£150
Income Total	£623	£904
Expenditure		
Transport	£174	
Photocopying and Postage		£10
Refreshments	£95	
Plants		£210
UOB costs	£30	£2,672
Website costs	£60	£86
Affiliation fees		£10
Audit or fee		£3,087
Expenditure Total	£359	£3,087
Income - Expenditure	£260	£2,183

Balance Sheet

	2022/2023	2021/2022
Lloyds Current A/C		
Balance brought forward	£1,113	£3,808
Transfers from UOB		
Payments/deposits	£257	£2,695
Year end balance	£856	£1,113
Lloyds Savings A/C		
Balance brought forward	£40,151	£90,347
Transfer from Lloyds Current A/C	£75	£4
Interest Received		
Year end balance	£40,227	£90,351
University of Reading A/C		
Balance brought forward	£3,737	£3,220
Subscriptions	£450	£508
Transfer to Lloyds		
Year end balance	£4,187	£3,728
Total assets	£45,251	£44,992
Total assets at year start	£44,992	£47,175
Income minus expenditure	£260	£2,183
Total assets at year end	£45,251	£44,992

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6/2/2024

Accounts

On 18/01/23 The members of the Friends of the Harris Garden were sent the below communication with an update on the charity's situation. Post-COVID-19 there have been many challenges to get the charity functioning again, as we have had several resignations during the pandemic. This was communicated with the membership, as per the Friends of the Harris Garden constitution, with a plan to get the committee and charity functioning again. In part, this will involve amendments to the constitution being made to remove a regular membership fee system that will be replaced by ad hoc donations & events. These changes will be made over the next 12 months and were supported by the membership.

See below for the communication to the membership.

I understand it has been some considerable time since you received an update regarding the Friends and the Harris Garden, and I am therefore writing to you to provide that here.

It is a familiar theme that over the past few years it has been challenging to organise and run events normally and the Friends have been no exception to that. Either during or shortly after the lockdown(s) several of our committee members have stepped down which has had an impact on how things are run. Four members of the committee have stepped down in this time: Catherine Spargo, Aileen Ho, Tomos Jones, and Laura Wells (treasurer). Since I have also left the University of Reading this has meant it has been difficult for me to be involved until very recently.

The committee now remains as myself, John Edgar, Rose Hewitt, Trudi Rehman, Duncan Zacks, and Neil O'Brien. As a group we have met several times recently to try and resolve the issues with the vacancies left in the committee, and most importantly the treasurer, to try to get things moving again. If you are aware of anyone who would like to join the committee then please get in touch.

Importantly, we have decided that for the time being paid subscriptions should stop, as currently we are unable to provide any return for the subscription, and we will re-evaluate this as things start to get up and running again. We believe that many visitors to the garden would still be willing to donate money for investment in the garden, as it is somewhere they enjoy visiting. From emails I receive, and especially during the lockdowns, it was certainly clear that it is a much appreciated and valued local amenity. Therefore, we are looking at ways to make donating to the Friends an easier process which may replace subscriptions longer term.

On that theme, if you have been able to visit the Harris Garden you will see that investment is still ongoing from both the Friends and the University of Reading. There is now a hard path route right around the garden which will make access for people so much easier. I'm sure you will agree that this is an excellent step forward and something the Friends have wanted to do for many years. Investment has also gone into planting and regenerating parts of the garden. The stream and pond area is one example, unfortunately both were leaking quite severely and it was not really sustainable to keep topping the system up with water. The decision was therefore made to stop refilling and replant and rework this area, using grasses and bridges to make a feature out of the stream area. We are also planning to spend

money on interpretation and signage for around the garden as this is something that is currently lacking. The funds that the Friends have will continue to be invested in planting for the garden, as it is expected many plants may have succumbed to the weather extremes of 2022 (and perhaps 2023).

I hope it is clear to see that things have still been moving quietly in the background, and I will update you again in spring as the committee restarts more regular meetings and fills the vacancies. In the meantime, please feel free to let me know your thoughts about subscriptions or just generally and I will make sure to discuss these with the committee.

Income and Expenditure				Balance Sheet			
		2021/2022	2020/2021		2021/2022	2020/2021	
Income	Subscriptions	£750	£704	Lloyds Current A/C			
	Interest Lloyds A/C	£4	£10	Balance brought forward	£3,808	£3,018	
	Donations general	£150		Transfers from UOR			
	Charities Aid Foundation		£1,000	Payments/deposits	-£2,695	£790	
	Income Total	£904	£1,714	Year end balance	£1,113	£3,808	
Expenditure	Transport		-£11	Lloyds Savings A/C			
	Photocopying and Postage	-£10		Balance brought forward	£40,147	£40,137	
	Refreshments		-£66	Transfer from Lloyds Current A/C			
	Plants	-£210	-£178	Interest Received	£4	£10	
	UoR costs	-£2,671		Transfers from Barclays			
	Web Hosting	-£86	-£36	Year End Balance	£40,151	£40,147	
	Affiliation fees	-£60	-£60				
	Auditor fee	-£50	-£50	University of Reading A/C			
	Expenditure Total	-£3,087	-£401	Balance brought forward	£3,220	£2,707	
Income - Expenditure		-£2,183	£1,313	Subscriptions	£508	£513	
				Transfer to Lloyds			
				Year end balance	£3,728	£3,220	
				Total assets	£44,992	£47,175	
				Total assets at year start	£47,175	£45,862	
				Income minus expenditure	-£2,183	£1,313	
				Total assets at year end	£44,992	£47,175	

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21/5/2023

Accounts

Dear Friend of the Harris Garden,

I hope you have been keeping well. I am aware there have not been many updates since COVID and therefore would like to update you all on the changes that have happened in the last year as we have been unable to meet.

Firstly there have been some changes to the committee. Laura Wells, our Treasurer, stepped down in Summer to focus on her studies. Laura will be hugely missed on the committee as she is very knowledgeable and worked hard to keep on top of the charity's accounts for several years. This position now remains vacant, so if you know someone who would be interested to do this role then please do get in touch.

This also brings me to say that in Autumn last year I left the University of Reading, and therefore will step down as chairman due to my time commitments. I hope to still have some involvement on the committee however this will obviously be more limited now.

At our last committee meeting we discussed the fact that we are running a much smaller committee now and this means it does not feel right to ask for a subscription when it is not possible to return anything for our members. We therefore plan to trial a period to remove the subscription fee but will maintain an email list to update you on an ad-hoc basis should there be events or any updates on the garden. If you would like your email removed from our records then you can get in contact at any time.

The committee will now meet quarterly to plan investment in the Harris Garden. With that, the committee plan a much needed update to the website this year and to make it easier for visitors to the garden to make any donations that will 100% be used in maintaining and investing in the garden. I am sure many of you enjoy visiting and walking around the garden and this has been especially important over the last two years. Therefore visitors to the garden are likely to feel the same and the committee believe that replacing subscriptions with any donations from visitors is worthwhile.

If you have any questions on these updates then I'd be happy to hear from you.

Best wishes,
Jordan

Income and Expenditure

	2020/2021	2019/2020
Income		
Subscriptions	703.75	£1,096.25
Tax Relief Gift Aid		
Interest Barclays A/C	0	£0.00
Interest Lloyds A/C	10.43	£19.99
Unpaid Cheque		-£25.00
Open days teas and cakes		
Open days gate money		£263.21
Open days plant sales		
Donation from UOR Women's Club		
Donation Friends of the University		
HMRC Transfer		£192.27
Donation Rev C Searle		
Donations general		124.65
Charities Aid Foundation	1000	
Income Total	£1,714.18	£1,671.37
Op Expenditure		
Transport	-10.8	-£30.00
Retirement Gift		-£25.00
Social Event		-£87.62
Photocopying and Postage		
Refreshments	-66.7	-£290.62
Speakers fees/expenses		-£100.75
Web Hosting	-36	-£83.96
Affiliation fees	-£60.00	-£60.00
Auditor fee	-£50.00	-£50.00
Op Expenditure Total	-£223.50	-£727.95
Cap Expenditure		
Garden benches		
Plants	-177.98	-£254.02
New mower		
Labels, leaflets and first aid kit		-£404.40
Metal Stakes		-£184.00
Open Day Crockery		-£36.08
Open Day Cable Reel		-£12.00
Open Day Spoons		-£7.20
Cap Expenditure Total	-£177.98	-£897.70
Income - Expenditure	£1,312.70	£45.72

Balance Sheet

	2020/2021	2019/2020
Lloyds Current A/C		
Balance brought forward	£3,018.59	£3,555.36
Transfers from Barclays		
Transfers to Savings A/C		
Transfers from UOR		
Payments/deposits	£789.77	-£536.77
Transfer from Petty Cash		
Year end balance	£3,808.36	£3,018.59
Lloyds Savings A/C		
Balance brought forward	£40,136.69	£40,116.70
Transfer from Lloyds Current A/C		
Interest Received	£10.43	£19.99
Transfers from Barclays		
Year End Balance	£40,147.12	£40,136.69
Barclays Reserve A/C		
Balance brought forward		
Transfer to Lloyds		
Interest received		
Year end balance		
University of Reading A/C		
Balance brought forward	£2,707.29	£2,144.79
Subscriptions	£512.50	£562.50
Transfer to Lloyds		
Year end balance	£3,219.79	£2,707.29
Petty Cash		
Balance brought forward	£0.00	£0.00
Transfer to Lloyds	£0.00	£0.00
Income/Expenses	£0.00	£0.00
Year end balance	£0.00	£0.00
Total assets	£47,175.27	£45,862.57
Total assets at year start	£45,862.57	£45,816.85
Income minus expenditure	£1,312.70	£45.72
Total assets at year end	£47,175.27	£45,862.57

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