



• Candidate Pack

Appointment of Director

Saxton
Bampfylde

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Chelsea Physic Garden Appointment of Director

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Welcome from the Chair



Thank you for your interest in becoming the next Director of Chelsea Physic Garden.

Founded in 1673 by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London, Chelsea Physic Garden has been exploring and demonstrating the power of plants for over 350 years. Today, that founding purpose is more relevant than ever, as we enter an ambitious new chapter focused on the future.

Following 13 years of outstanding leadership from Sue Medway MBE FLS, we are seeking an exceptional Director to build on strong foundations and lead the Garden with vision, strategic insight and commercial acumen. This is a rare opportunity to shape the future of one of Europe's most significant botanic gardens.

Recent achievements include our £3.5 million restoration of the historic glasshouses during our 350th anniversary, accreditation by Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), and pioneering work in biodiversity, climate resilience and horticultural training. Together, these reflect a thriving organisation with growing influence and impact.

Our next Director will lead our work advocating for the vital role that urban gardens and plants play in our lives. Each year, over 75,000 visitors come to the Garden to discover the remarkable relationship between plants, people and wellbeing. From our world-class collections and horticultural expertise to our learning programmes, events and public engagement, we are inspiring curiosity, improving wellbeing and demonstrating the essential role plants play in creating a sustainable future. We are looking for a Director who is passionate about sharing our work and skilled at navigating public engagement, commercial objectives and charitable purpose.

Our new Director will bring the energy and experience to lead us through a period of transformation: we are embarking on an ambitious masterplanning programme to reimagine the Garden for future generations. Our next Director will lead this transformation, bringing people together around a compelling vision, building high-performing teams, inspiring supporters and securing the partnerships and investment needed to deliver lasting impact.

This is a once-in-a-generation leadership opportunity: to champion one of the world's great botanical institutions and ensure Chelsea Physic Garden continues to inspire, educate and flourish for centuries to come.

If you share our ambition and are excited by the opportunity to lead this remarkable organisation into its next chapter, I would be delighted to hear from you.

Sarah Flannigan, Chair

About Chelsea Physic Garden

Founded in 1673, Chelsea Physic Garden is London's oldest botanic garden and one of the most significant horticultural institutions in the United Kingdom. Originally established by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries to train apprentices in the identification and use of medicinal plants, the Garden has evolved over more than 350 years into an internationally recognised centre for horticulture, plant science, education and public engagement. Located on a four-acre site beside the River Thames, it combines a rich historic legacy with a forward-looking commitment to conservation, learning and environmental stewardship.

Today, Chelsea Physic Garden cares for an exceptional living collection of more than 3,450 mapped plants, alongside historic glasshouses, a specialist botanical library, a nationally important collection of botanical artworks and a diverse tree collection representing 158 species. Accredited by Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), the Garden plays an increasingly important role in conservation research, biodiversity monitoring and climate resilience. Its collections, expertise and partnerships contribute to national and international conversations about the future of plants, ecosystems and sustainable horticulture.

The Garden is also a thriving cultural and educational organisation, welcoming more than 75,000 visitors annually and engaging thousands of learners, volunteers and community participants through a rich programme of activities. It combines scientific enquiry with public engagement, offering exhibitions, events, learning programmes and creative collaborations that explore the relationship between plants, people and wellbeing. This distinctive blend of horticulture, heritage, science, education and culture gives the organisation a unique place within the UK's cultural and environmental landscape.

Chelsea Physic Garden is entering an exciting new chapter. Guided by its recently developed ten-year strategy, the organisation aims to strengthen its impact through five strategic priorities: Championing Horticulture, Enriching Experiences, Cultivating Curiosity, Reimagining our Environment and Securing a Sustainable Future. The strategy seeks to increase the Garden's relevance, resilience and reach, ensuring that it continues to inspire wonder, generate knowledge and connect people with the healing power of plants for generations to come.



The role

The Director provides overall leadership for Chelsea Physic Garden, ensuring the successful delivery of its strategy, future development plans and long-term financial sustainability. The role oversees all aspects of the charity's operations, governance and commercial activities.

The Director's main responsibilities will include:

Leadership

- Provide oversight of all areas of the Garden's activities, ensuring they are aligned with the charity's mission and strategic objectives.
- Lead with clarity and integrity, fostering a collaborative, inclusive and high performing organisational culture with shared values and goals, and that supports wellbeing and professional development.
- Support and empower senior colleagues across the organisation, encouraging open communication, shared leadership and collective problem-solving.
- Ensure strong systems for performance, accountability and communication keeping the Board, staff, funders and partners well informed and engaged.

Strategy and Future Development

- Shape the Garden's future strategic work, in collaboration with others, and lead the delivery of the Garden's strategic plan and long-term vision to inspire wonder, wellbeing and curiosity.
- Shape and advance the Garden's masterplan, ensuring it enhances the visitor experience, supports sustainability and strengthens the Garden's impact.

Partnerships and Income Generation

- Build and maintain strong, long-term relationships with donors, supporters, partners and stakeholders.
- Work with the Board and senior team to develop income streams and secure investment in the Garden's future, including major philanthropic and capital giving opportunities.

Advocacy

- Act as an inspiring ambassador for Chelsea Physic Garden, raising its profile and influence across the horticultural, heritage, cultural, education and environmental sectors.
- Ensure the Garden continues to build its reputation in each of its areas of strength, including horticulture and collections management excellence, a superb visitor experience, and a world-class learning offer.
- Champion equity, diversity and inclusion, ensuring these values are embedded in all aspects of the Garden's work

Financial Stewardship

- Ensure the organisation continues to build its financial strength through effective planning, budgeting and resource management.
- Work closely with the Finance Director and Board to support long-term financial resilience and growth.

Governance and Compliance

- Support the Board in maintaining the highest standards of governance, transparency and accountability.
- Ensure compliance with all relevant legal, regulatory and charitable obligations.



The person

Candidates should bring an understanding of, or strong affinity with, botanic gardens, horticulture, heritage, museums, science, biodiversity or related fields and a genuine enthusiasm for the mission, values and future potential of Chelsea Physic Garden.

Candidates should be able to demonstrate all or most of the following:

Experience

- Successful senior leadership experience within a charity, heritage, cultural, horticultural, environmental, educational or other mission-led organisation.
- A track record of developing and delivering organisational strategy and business plans.
- Experience of leading multidisciplinary teams and creating an environment in which colleagues can thrive.
- Experience of working effectively with boards, trustees or other governance bodies.
- Experience of developing and managing strategic partnerships and external stakeholder relationships.
- Experience of fundraising and income generation, ideally including major donors, trusts and foundations, corporate partnerships or capital campaigns.
- Experience of financial management, budgeting and organisational planning.
- Experience of overseeing significant projects, organisational developments or capital programmes.
- Experience of balancing public engagement, commercial objectives and charitable purpose within a visitor-facing organisation.

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Skills

- Outstanding leadership skills, with the ability to inspire, motivate and empower others.
- Strategic thinking combined with a pragmatic and delivery-focused approach.
- Excellent communication, influencing and ambassadorial skills.
- Strong financial and commercial acumen.
- The ability to build productive relationships with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Confidence representing the organisation publicly with donors, partners, funders, policymakers and the media.
- Strong organisational skills and sound judgement.
- The ability to balance long-term strategic priorities with day-to-day operational oversight.
- A collaborative, inclusive and supportive leadership style.
- An entrepreneurial and innovative mindset, with the ability to identify and develop new opportunities.
- Credibility and curiosity in relation to the Garden's horticultural, heritage and collections-based work.





Terms of appointment

Salary:

anticipated range of £85,000 to £95,000, with the possibility of some flexibility for exceptional candidates

Location:

Chelsea Physic Garden, 66 Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London, SW3 4HS

Reporting to:

The Board of Directors

Direct reports:

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Pension:

The Garden operates a salary exchange pension scheme currently with Royal London which means that your gross salary is reduced by the amount of pension contribution made by the employer and employee which is then paid directly into your pension. The equivalent contribution rates are 6% employer and 3% employee at the end of the probationary period.

Working pattern:

The post holder will be required to work an average of five days per week, but the nature of the role means that a high degree of flexibility over the days and hours worked is required to meet the needs of the organisation.



How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency adviser to Chelsea Physic Garden on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at roles.saxbam.com using code **EBZDA**

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on Thursday 13 August 2026.

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

[Read our guide to writing cover letters](#)

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Chelsea Physic Garden

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