



UNESCO World Heritage Site Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

The UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, sits at the forefront of global plant and fungal research. Recognised as one of the most biodiverse places on earth, the UNESCO designation provides a global resource for plant and fungal science and work.

For instance, Kew's long-standing collaboration with Ethiopian researchers and important work on Ethiopian food crops including the plant Enset, a staple food source known for its remarkable resilience to changing climate conditions, encouraged an Ethiopian delegation to visit the designation and consult Kew's experts on their climate mitigation strategies.

“We can look at the evolution of plants in a country like Ethiopia over time, sharing what we have done to map the changes affecting coffee production for example and make our data available to support their efforts to make decisions like where coffee will be best produced in the future. That would be an example of how our partnership over time, built with people on the ground and local knowledge matched with Kew knowledge, is able to do something really useful.”

→ Ciara O'Sullivan, Head of Media Relations at RBG Kew



@lilywillowphotography

UNESCO has played a key role in enhancing Kew's capacity and ability to create new crucial knowledge. The UNESCO status has been especially helpful in attracting financial resources and validation against external threats, Georgina Darroch, World Heritage Site Coordinator, tells us:

"It really helps us get the funding, get that support that we need to maintain and continue our activities. That's been very valuable and important for us. It has been really important. We are part-funded by DEFRA. Being a signatory to the Convention is a commitment on the Government's part to protect, preserve and enhance World Heritage Sites. For us, the designation very much sets us apart from the other properties which are in the Government portfolio. And for external funders as well. UNESCO designation does add that stamp of significance."



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Kew Palace

A hidden royal palace in Kew Gardens, once the intimate home of George III and Queen Charlotte. Today, the buildings are in the trust of Historic Royal Palaces.



2

The Hive

Towering at 17 metres tall, The Hive is a striking installation in the heart of a wildflower meadow that recreates life inside a beehive.

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2

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Following a major renovation, the House opened in 2018 to showcase the splendour of the world's temperate zones. It is home to 1,500 species of plants from Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific Islands.

4

Temperate House

Completed in 1762 as a gift for Princess Augusta, the Pagoda was designed by Sir William Chambers and has long been one of the earliest and finest bird's eye views of London.

3

Pagoda

3



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The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council recently awarded Kew with a £1.2 million grant through the Global Challenges Research Fund to study the agrisystems of the southern Ethiopian highlands to help enhance food security. Being a UNESCO designation also signals a sense of significance and value to stakeholders and visitors.

“Just being able to say that we are a UNESCO World Heritage Site in itself helps people to understand the status of Kew and put the site into a global context which is really important. Just that recognition is helpful in opening doors, in placing in people’s minds the kind of value and importance of what Kew is.”

→ Ciara O'Sullivan, Head of Media Relations at RBG Kew

This recognition has helped Kew to develop and strengthen partnerships worldwide. Today, Kew employs 350 scientists who work closely with a wide range of research institutions and organisations in over 110 countries to tackle environmental, social and economic challenges through the power of plants and fungi. ⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Wider Value interview with Georgina Darroch and Ciara O'Sullivan, Kew; 2019, Interview (phone) and Email correspondence