



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

President: The Countess of Harewood

Vice-presidents: Lady Legard, Peter Goodchild, Nick Lane Fox

Chair: Christopher Webb

www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

29 September 2020

Dear Hilary McGrady

I am writing on behalf of the Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) in response to your developing 10-year strategy. In writing, we are mindful of the response to you from our sister charity, The Gardens Trust, which we endorse in all respects.

YGT's role is analogous to that of the NT: we work to conserve and foster this county's garden and designed landscape heritage for the benefit of present and future generations; our aim is to improve awareness and appreciation of the value of parks, gardens and designed landscapes as part of our local and national inheritance, and, like the NT, we do this through education, conservation and research. We work closely with experts and professionals in the county and beyond, and we particularly value our work with NT's own experts. You will know that there are 126 registered parks, landscapes and gardens in our area, which include the Studley Royal/Fountains Abbey World Heritage site, a landscape of special concern to us at the moment given your present, unacceptable proposals for development at its Studley entrance.

We understand and acknowledge the problems caused by the pandemic now and in the coming years, and recognise the opportunity and responsibility we all have to consider how to address them. We agree with you that NT has to act to face these problems; inaction and failure to change would be a poor response to this crisis.

We contend, however, that NT's present response is neither sensible nor appropriate. In particular, we are concerned that NT's plan pays insufficient regard to the golden thread running through NT's history from its foundation to the present: that thread being the obligation to preserve and conserve what has been passed down to us by previous generations, to interpret and make that legacy accessible to the present generation, and to pass it on intact and enhanced to our successors.

In the NT presentation of its reset (by Tony Berry, May 2020) this golden thread makes no appearance: the word preservation does not appear at all and conservation appears only in the sense of the NT being a 'nature conservation charity'. It is next to impossible to imagine how NT's ambitious plans are to be realised unless they are founded upon preservation and conservation, and the expertise (developed only over time and in close contact with historic assets) that's required to care for them. We are disturbed that your presentation makes no reference to the international importance of the designed landscapes you care for, nor does it differentiate between gardens created by NT *ab initio* (some of which are very successful, and should be encouraged) and those of historical significance where tampering with the design would destroy the very thing that makes them important, beautiful places where people wish to spend time. Far from 'living museums' (slide 14), these designed landscapes and gardens are *already* delivering the aims you think they should aspire to. But they can only do this because of the skill, expertise and knowledge, developed over time, of those staff you pay to curate them.