ROYAL
BOTANIC
GARDEN
EDINBURGH

Head of Estates and Sustainability Candidate Pack

October 2026



A MESSAGE FROM THE REGIUS KEEPER

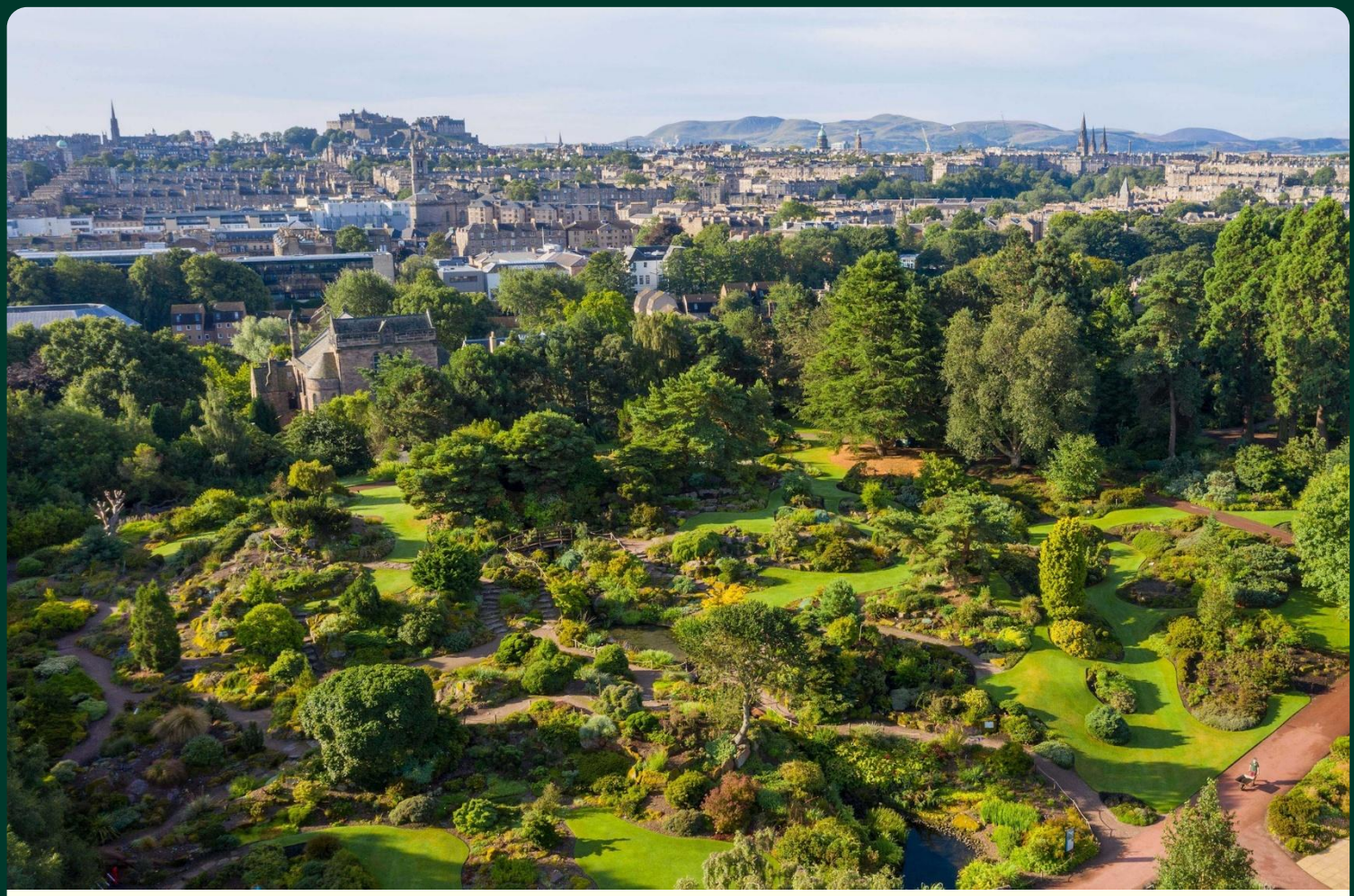
Thank you for taking an interest in the role of Head of Estates and Sustainability at The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is home to one of the richest living plant collections on Earth and is Scotland's scientific centre of global excellence in plant science, horticulture, education and conservation. In addition, we welcome nearly one million visitors annually to our four gardens - Logan in Dumfries and Galloway, Benmore in Argyll, Dawyck in the Borders and Edinburgh. We also have a number of exciting capital projects including the refurbishment of our iconic Palm Houses and a new renewable energy centre.

This exciting and fast-moving role involves being at the very heart of our vision of a positive future for plants, people and the planet, and ensuring that our estate and infrastructure support our goals for sustainability, net zero and protecting nature. If you have the experience, expertise, ambition and drive to provide strategic and operational leadership and attention to detail across our estates and facilities in Scotland, we would love to hear from you. In return, we will offer you a competitive salary, generous pension, excellent training, and one of the most incredible working environments, based in Edinburgh with oversight of the estates of our four stunning botanic gardens.

Thank you in advance for considering applying.

Julia

Dr Julia Knights
Regius Keeper (CEO), Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh



OUR ORGANISATION

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is a world-leading centre for plant science, horticulture, and conservation, education, and public engagement. Founded in 1670 as a physic garden for the study of medicinal plants, it attracts over one million visitors each year and holds one of the world's most diverse botanical collections.

Through a wide network of national and international partnerships, we pursue our mission to Explore, Conserve and Explain the World of Plants, addressing global biodiversity loss and climate change.

Funding is drawn equally from Scottish Government Grant-in-Aid and self-generated income, reflecting our dual role as a public institution and an enterprising organisation. The continued growth of commercial activity, philanthropic support, and consultancy work is a key strategic priority for ensuring long-term sustainability and impact.



OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Guided by the strategy *Responding to the Biodiversity Crisis and Climate Emergency (2021-2026), our* work focuses on:

- **Understanding plant and fungal diversity for the benefit of society:** our scientific research seeks to understand the threats facing species and biomes, and how they respond to environmental change. We develop strategies and actions to conserve biodiversity both in Scotland and around the world.

- **Conserving and developing botanical collections:** we curate and enhance the National Botanical Collection as a living scientific and cultural heritage resource, and we support the development of botanical collections globally – particularly in partnerships with countries across the Global South.

- **Engaging and educating people:** we build global capacity to respond to the biodiversity and climate crises by sharing scientific, horticultural and conservation expertise through education and public engagement, inspiring people of all ages to value and protect the natural world.



OUR COLLECTIONS AND COMMUNITY

At the heart of our mission are the National Botanical Collections - the Living Collection, Herbarium and Library and Archives – which underpin science, horticulture, learning and conservation. The Living Collection is curated across four Gardens – Edinburgh, Benmore, Dawyck and Logan, spanning Scotland's varied climates. Together they hold around 13,500 plant species, many rare or threatened, making us a global leader in conservation horticulture and ex situ plant conservation.

- Edinburgh: a 72-acre garden just a mile from the city centre showcasing nearly 60,000 plants, at features including the world-renowned Rock Garden, Chinese Hillside and network of historic and modernist public Glasshouses, sitting alongside the crucial research houses, currently being restored through the Edinburgh Biomes Project.
- Benmore: set in the dramatic Argyll landscape, this 120-acre mountainside garden is famed for its rhododendron and conifer collections of global significance and is a key visitor attraction for the west coast, sitting at the gateway to Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.
- Dawyck: in the heart of the Scottish Borders, is the most continental of our four sites and is an internationally renowned arboretum, playing a key role in conservation and climate resilience.
- Logan: on the mild Rhins of Galloway, in Dumfries & Galloway showcasing tender southern hemisphere plants, not generally seen growing outdoors this far north, alongside other temperate and maritime species in a striking and exotic setting.

Science, Conservation and Learning

Together, our Horticulture and Science teams collaborate to understand and conserve biodiversity, restore habitats, and develop sustainable plant management practices. The Living Collection provides the foundation for discovery science, conservation translocations and climate adaptation.

Training and skills development are central to our work. Through specialist degree and diploma programmes, short courses and online learning, we nurture professionals who go on to lead in horticulture, plant science, conservation and del-research education worldwide.

Community and Visitors

The four Gardens within the organisation are places of beauty and tranquillity, where visitors experience the restorative power of nature. From moments of quiet reflection to vibrant seasonal displays, they promote health, wellbeing and inspiration, deepening people's connection with the living world. The Gardens also inspire curiosity and creativity through education, art and community engagement.

A dedicated community of horticulturists, scientists, educators and volunteers share a passion for plants and a commitment to public benefit, conservation and environmental stewardship. Together, they create welcoming spaces that celebrate the diversity of life and the vital role plants play in sustaining it.

Our Estate

Our four Gardens are set in over 270 acres of land, with several historic Grade A listed buildings, heritage glasshouses and other structures of significance. We have a complex portfolio of over 130 buildings ranging from administrative offices and scientific laboratories to education facilities, visitor centres and horticultural buildings, covering a footprint of more than 3,000 square meters.

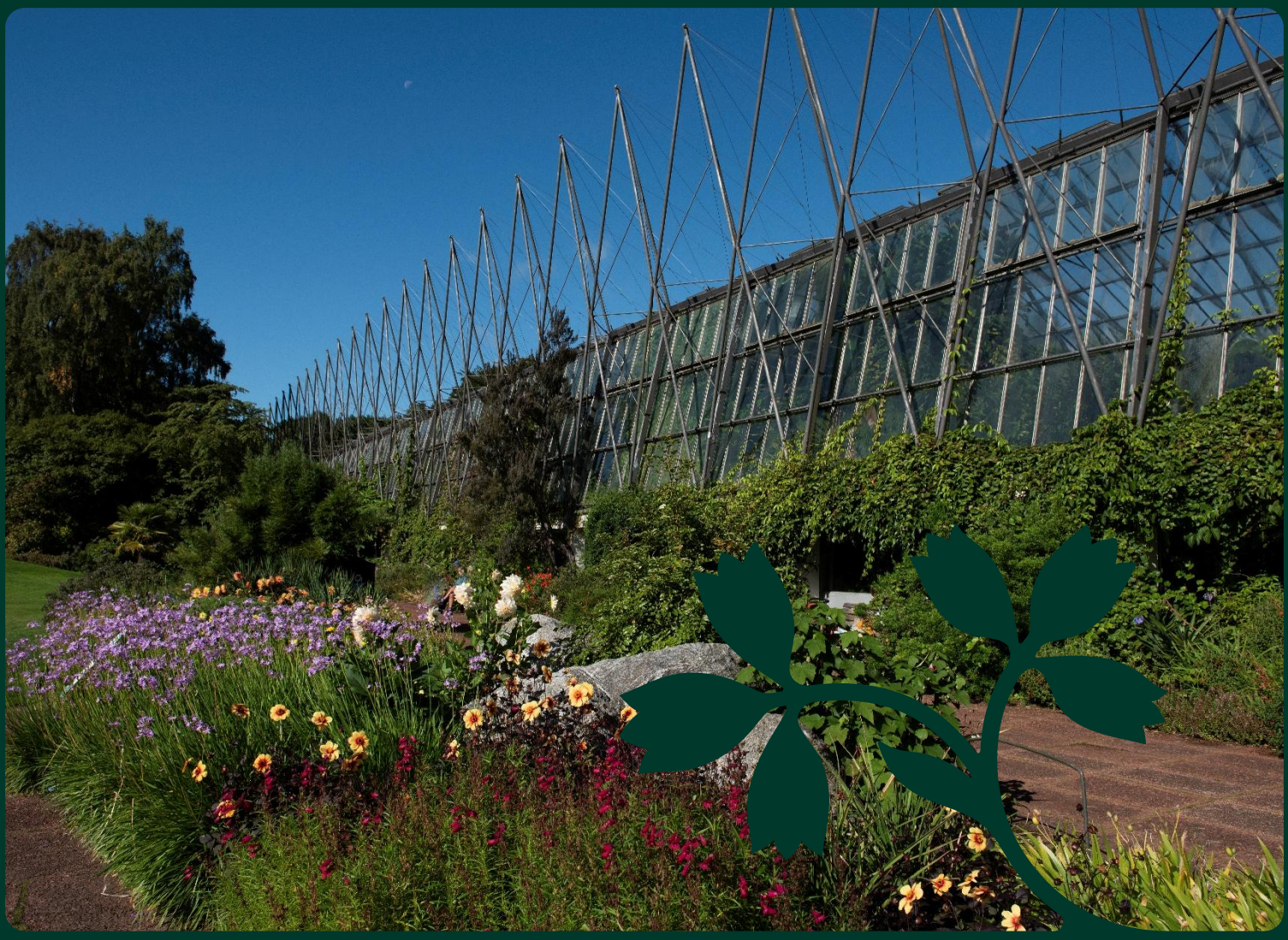
For further details visit rbge.org.uk

Vision

A positive future for plants, people and planet.

Mission

To explore, conserve and explain the world of plants.



THE ROLE

The Head of Estates and Sustainability ensures that RBGE's estate and infrastructure support its role as a world-leading botanical institution and visitor attraction.

Reporting directly into our Executive team and with responsibility for the Estates and Sustainability department, the post provides strategic and operational leadership across estates and facilities, ensuring all sites are secure, resilient, compliant, and aligned with RBGE's environmental mission.

Main Duties

Leadership and Management

- Provide strategic leadership for the Estates function, ensuring high-quality, forward-looking operational services.
- Represent RBGE on estates matters across external networks and internal planning.
- Oversight of large and minor capital works, including working with external project managers to oversee the delivery of the Edinburgh Biomes programme – which includes glasshouse restoration and replacements, and construction of a sustainable energy centre and plant quarantine facilities.
- Contribute as a senior leader to the delivery of RBGE's Corporate Strategy through effective cross-organisational collaboration.

Estates and Facilities Management

- Ensure all RBGE gardens deliver safe, clean, and high-quality facilities, maintaining 5-star visitor grading standards.
- Develop an institutional wide Estates Masterplan.
- Lead space optimisation initiatives to support organisational efficiency and the needs of staff, students, and volunteers.
- Take overall responsibility for maintenance, repairs, environmental controls, and building services to ensure reliability, compliance, and fitness for purpose.
- Contract management including cleaning, waste management, and canteen catering, and a range of external suppliers and contractors with a focus on cost control and quality.

Sustainability

- Support the implementation of RBGE's Sustainability Strategy and Carbon Management Plan, embedding sustainability across RBGE's estate.
- Champion the integration of Nature-Based Solutions to climate change across RBGE sites.

Strategy, Finance and Planning

- Lead the development and implementation of the Asset Management Plan, Estates Strategy, and Masterplan to enhance RBGE's property portfolio.
- Oversee operational planning, risk management, capital planning, and business case development for the RBGE estate in line with institutional financial processes.
- Maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders and ensure clear communication on estate-related change programmes.
- Manage departmental budgets and procurement processes in line with regulations and value-for-money principles.
- Identify and secure external funding opportunities that support estate development, sustainability goals, and long-term resilience.
- Lead resilience planning, including capital programmes, business continuity, disaster recovery, and implementation of audit recommendations.

Health, Safety and Compliance

- Oversee Health and Safety planning, reporting, and coordination with Health and Safety Advisors in partnership with the Head of People and Organisational Development.
- Ensure legal and statutory compliance across the Estates function and embed a culture of accountability.
- Manage compliance with lease agreements between Scottish Ministers and RBGE.

Stakeholder Management and Team Development

- Build strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders, including neighbours, contractors, regulators, and funders.
- Lead and develop the Estates team through clear work plans, effective performance management, and a coaching-based approach.
- Undertake any other duties commensurate with the role as organisational needs evolve.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential skills

- Demonstrated leadership and people management capability
- Proven ability to build and sustain strategic relationships and partnerships
- Strong stakeholder focus with the ability to understand and respond to organisational priorities
- Customer service orientated with attention to detail
- Experience developing and delivering multi-site estates strategies, including asset, service, and budget management
- Experience planning and delivering maintenance programmes in complex organisations
- Strong contract and project management experience, from inception to completion
- Senior management experience within a multi-disciplinary environment
- Commercially astute and with experience of complex budget management
- Proven line management experience
- Sound knowledge of health and safety legislation relating to the built environment
- Knowledge of environmental policy and best practice, particularly in relation to carbon reduction
- Demonstrable commitment to environmental sustainability

Desirable skills

- Hold a recognised Facilities / Estates / Building Services Management qualification
- Chartered status with a relevant professional body



TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

This role is based at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's HQ in the capital with regular travel to our gardens at Benmore, Dawyck and Logan. Hybrid and flexible working are also possible, with the role holder being present on site at least 4 days per week.

We offer a generous employment package:

- Annually alongside your starting salary of £65,964 - £72,658, the organisation contributes 28.97% of this towards you being a member of the defined benefit Civil Service Pension scheme. Your pension pot in this scheme will grow by 2.32% per year.
- 25 days holiday entitlement on appointment, increasing to 30 days after 2 years service, with the option to buy additional holidays.
- 11.5 days of public and privilege holidays annually.
- A range of staff support mechanisms, including an employee assistance programme, cycle to work and staff discount schemes.
- A number of family-friendly options to support work-life balance, including flexible working arrangements, enhanced contractual maternity, paternity, adoption, and shared parental leave, and career breaks.
- Discounts in our shop, restaurants, and cafes.



HOW TO APPLY

To apply, please email recruitment@rbge.org.uk with:

- Your CV
- A covering letter outlining the skills, knowledge and experience you would bring to the role
- A digitally completed equal opportunities questionnaire*: EOQ form

The closing date for applications is 13 November 2026 at midday (GMT). Interviews will be held in Edinburgh on 27 November 2026.

To arrange an informal discussion about the role, please contact Tammi Abey at tabey@rbge.org.uk

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