



The Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden & Arboretum
Rose Lane, Oxford, OX1 4AZ • 01865 610303 • friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk

31st October 2025

Dear Friend,

As agreed at the EGM on 24th March 2025 the Friends membership scheme transferred to the University of Oxford (OBGA) on 31st March 2025.

Since then, the Friends Charity has been operating as a 'Shell Company' to allow it to continue to receive any donations and legacies made specifically to the Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum Charity. This Shell Company is overseen by the Board of Directors, consisting of independent Directors/Trustees (i.e. non-University employees): Dr Janita Good (Chairman), Professor Sally Shuttleworth, John Leighfield and Richard Deverell, and University employees Professor Simon Hiscock (Secretary), Professor John Geddes and Marius Apetrei (Treasurer). This follows the model set when the Friends of the Bodleian Libraries merged with the University of Oxford in 2018.

From 31st March 2025, all associated activities of the Friends Membership are now subject to the University's legal, financial, and governance frameworks. This change ensures that the scheme is fully integrated into the University's operations and compliant with the standards expected of a registered Higher Education institution and charity. To this end, as communicated previously ahead of and during the last AGM (September 24th 2024) and EGM (March 24th 2025), at the Summer Party and in the Newsletter, OBGA has appointed a Friends and Patrons Manager to oversee the activities offered to Members and Patrons. The holder of this post, Liz Hardingham, joined OBGA on 1st September 2025.

The planning and delivery of all Membership benefits (e.g. events and garden visits) is now managed in-house by OBGA's Friends and Patrons Membership team, overseen by Liz Hardingham. Volunteers are therefore no longer required to plan and coordinate programming, although we welcome suggestions and help from volunteers in delivering events and garden visits. Volunteers are required to enrol using the GLAM Better Impact system and many of you have already done so. These changes to past ways of working ensure that all Membership activities are fully compliant with Oxford University regulations, especially financial and organizational practices. We are confident that a full and attractive portfolio of Membership benefits will be delivered through the Membership team for 2026 and beyond.

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You will have noticed that following the merger the format of the Friends Newsletter has changed to give it a more contemporary look and input from more members of the Garden and Arboretum teams to ensure Members receive news of all the latest and future developments at OBG.

The income received from Friends membership contributes significantly towards delivery of the strategic mission of OBG for research, education, plant conservation, and public engagement so we thank you for your continued support.

In addition to the regular business of the AGM you are invited to vote in favour of a special resolution to adopt new articles of association. This will facilitate administration and the governance of the shell company moving forward. Following the formal business of the meeting you are invited to share your ideas for innovation to help widen our outreach and impact including from younger generations.

Finally, I would like to thank all those of you who donated to and fundraised for the Friends Paths Campaign, which has so far raised over £650,000 towards new and restored paths at the Arboretum. Special thanks must go to Sarah Taylor for leading this campaign, which represents the most successful fundraising campaign in the history of the Friends.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Janita Good (Chairman)