

# Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Annual Audit Plan 2023/24



Prepared for Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

March 2024

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# Introduction

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## Summary of planned audit work

1. I, Pauline Murray, have been appointed by the Auditor General for Scotland as external auditor of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh for the period from 2022/23 until 2026/27. The 2023/24 financial year is therefore the second of my five-year audit appointment. A brief biography of the audit team is provided at [Appendix 1](#).

2. This document summarises the work plan for my 2023/24 audit. The main elements of the audit include:

- an audit of the financial statements and an opinion on whether they give a true and fair view and are free from material misstatement
- an audit opinion on regularity and other statutory information published with the financial statements in the annual report and accounts, including the Trustees' Report, Governance Statement, and the Remuneration and Staff Report
- consideration of arrangements in relation to wider scope areas: financial management; financial sustainability; vision, leadership and governance; and use of resources to improve outcomes
- provision of an Independent Auditor's Report expressing my opinions on the different elements of the annual report and accounts and an Annual Audit Report setting out conclusions on the wider scope areas.

## Respective responsibilities of the auditor and Audited Body

3. The [Code of Audit Practice](#) sets out in detail the respective responsibilities of the auditor and Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Key responsibilities are summarised below.

### Auditor responsibilities

4. My responsibilities as appointed auditor are established by the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Code of Audit Practice (including [supplementary guidance](#)) and guided by the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard.

5. Auditors in the public sector give an independent opinion on the financial statements and other information within the annual report and accounts. We also review and report on the wider scope arrangements in place at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. In doing this, we aim to support improvement and accountability.

## Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh responsibilities

**6.** Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is responsible for maintaining adequate accounting records and internal controls, and preparing financial statements for audit that give a true and fair view. They are also required to produce other reports in the annual report and accounts in accordance with applicable requirements.

**7.** Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh has the primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation, and establishing effective arrangements for governance, propriety, and regularity that enable them to deliver their objectives.

## Adding Value

**8.** My team and I aim to add value by: tailoring audit work to the circumstances of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and the audit risks identified; being constructive and forward looking; providing independent conclusions; attending meetings of the Audit Committee; and by recommending and encouraging good practice. In so doing, we will help Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh promote improved standards of governance, better management and decision making, and more effective use of resources.

# Annual report and accounts

## Introduction

9. The annual report and accounts are an essential part of demonstrating Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's stewardship of resources and its performance in the use of those resources.

10. As appointed auditor, I am required to perform an audit of the financial statements, consider other information within the annual report and accounts, and express a number of audit opinions in an Independent Auditor's Report in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) in the UK, Practice Note 10 from the Public Audit Forum which interprets the ISAs for the public sector, and guidance from Audit Scotland.

11. My team and I focus our work on the areas of highest risk. As part of our planning process, we perform a risk assessment highlighting the audit risks relating to each of the main financial systems relevant to the production of the financial statements.

## Materiality

12. The concept of materiality is applied by auditors in planning and performing the audit, and in evaluating the effect of any uncorrected misstatements on the financial statements. I am required to plan my audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement. The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement over both the amount and the nature of the misstatement.

### Materiality levels for the 2023/24 audit

13. We assess materiality at different levels as described in [Exhibit 1](#). The materiality values for Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and its group are set out in [Exhibit 1](#).

## Exhibit 1

### 2023/24 Materiality levels for Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and its group

Materiality	RBGE	Group
<p><b>Planning materiality</b> – This is the figure we calculate to assess the overall impact of audit adjustments on the financial statements. Materiality has been set based on our assessment of the needs of the users of the financial statements and the nature of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's operations. For the year ended 31 March 2024, we have set our materiality at 2% of gross expenditure based on the audited financial statements for 2022/23.</p>	£419,000	£460,000

<b>Performance materiality</b> – This acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of errors identified during the financial statements audit exceeds performance materiality, this could indicate that further audit procedures are required. Using our professional judgement, we have assessed performance materiality at 65% of planning materiality.	£272,000	£300,000
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<b>Reporting threshold (i.e. clearly trivial)</b> – We are required to report to those charged with governance on all unadjusted misstatements more than the 'reporting threshold' amount.	£21,000	£23,000
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Source: Audit Scotland

## Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

**14.** Our risk assessment draws on our cumulative knowledge of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, its major transaction streams, key systems of internal control, and risk management processes. It is informed by our discussions with management, meetings with internal audit, attendance at committees, and a review of supporting information.

**15.** Audit risk assessment is an iterative and dynamic process. Our assessment of risks set out in this plan may change as more information and evidence becomes available during the progress of the audit. Where such changes occur, we will advise management, and where relevant, report them to those charged with governance.

**16.** Based on our risk assessment process, we identified the following significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements. These are risks which have the greatest impact on our planned audit procedures. [Exhibit 2](#) summarises the nature of the risks, management's sources of assurance over these risks, and the further audit procedures we plan to perform to gain assurance over the risks.

**Exhibit 2****2023/24 Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements**

Significant risk of material misstatement	Management's sources of assurance	Planned audit response
<p><b>1. Risk of material misstatement due to fraud caused by management override of controls</b></p> <p>As stated in ISA (UK) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of management's ability to override controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.</p>	<p>Owing to the nature of this risk, assurances from management are not applicable in this instance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the design and implementation of controls over journal entry processing.</li> <li>• Make inquiries of individuals involved in the financial reporting process about inappropriate or unusual activity relating to the processing of journal entries and other adjustments.</li> <li>• Test journals at the year-end and post-closing entries and focus on significant risk areas.</li> <li>• Consider the need to test journal entries and other adjustments throughout the year.</li> <li>• Evaluate significant transactions outside the normal course of business.</li> <li>• Assess the adequacy of controls in place for identifying and disclosing related party relationship and transactions in the financial statements.</li> <li>• We will assess any changes to the methods and underlying assumptions used to prepare accounting estimates compared to the prior year.</li> <li>• Review subsidiary accounts at year end and consider whether management override of controls at a subsidiary level could materially impact the consolidated accounts.</li> </ul>

Source: Audit Scotland

**17.** As set out in ISA (UK) 240: *The auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of financial statement*, there is a presumed risk of fraud over the recognition of revenue. There is a risk that revenue may be misstated resulting in a material misstatement in the financial statements.

**18.** We have rebutted this risk as funding received from the Scottish Government is clearly communicated and can be readily agreed to third party confirmations. In addition, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's other income streams comprise of a high volume of low value transactions, and we have concluded there is limited opportunity or incentive to manipulate the recognition of income in the financial statements.

**19.** In line with Practice Note 10: *Audit of financial statements and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom*, as most public-sector bodies are net spending bodies, the risk of material misstatement due to fraud related to expenditure recognition may in some cases be greater than the risk relating to revenue recognition.

**20.** We have rebutted this risk as the main expenditure streams of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh can be readily forecast based on a predictable pattern of spend and mainly comprise a high volume of relatively low value items. We also consider there to be limited incentive and opportunity for the manipulation of expenditure recognition in the financial statements.

**21.** We have not, therefore, incorporated specific work into our audit plan in these areas over and above our standard audit procedures.

## Other areas of audit focus

**22.** As part of our assessment of audit risks, we have identified other areas where we consider there are also risks of material misstatement to the financial statements. Based on our assessment of the likelihood and magnitude of the risks, we do not consider these to represent significant risks. We will keep these areas under review as our audit progresses.

**23.** The areas of specific audit focus are:

- **Estimations in the valuation of land and buildings** – A desktop review of valuations is planned for 2023/24, consistent with accounting policies. The sensitivity of estimates to changes in key assumptions presents an inherent risk in this area. We will review management's indexation processes to ensure that land and buildings values in the accounts are free from material misstatement.

## Regularity

**24.** Auditors are required by the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 to report on whether expenditure and income were incurred or applied, in all material respects, in accordance with applicable enactments and guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers (generally referred to as the regularity opinion).

**25.** We will adopt an integrated audit approach to meeting this responsibility and use work on the audit of the financial statements supplemented by additional testing for any irregular transactions, where necessary.

## Group Consideration

**26.** As group auditors, we are required under ISA (UK) 600: Audits of group financial statements (including the work of component auditors) to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence on which to base our audit opinion on the group financial statements.

**27.** Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh has a group which comprises component entities, including:

- Botanic Trading Company Limited – component entity which is a wholly owned subsidiary
- Centre for Middle Eastern Plants Limited – a subsidiary which has been dormant for several years



- Botanics Energy Company Limited – a subsidiary established in 2021/22 which has commenced trading in 2023/24.

**28.** Our planned audit approach for the components is informed by our assessment of risk at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and our consideration of the size and nature of assets, liabilities, and transaction streams.

**29.** The audits of the financial information of Botanics Trading Company Limited and Botanics Energy Company Limited are performed by other auditors. We plan to place reliance on the work of the component auditors and review their relevant working papers where required. We will also obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence in relation to the consolidation process and the financial information of the components on which to base our group audit opinion.

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# Wider Scope and Best Value

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## Introduction

**30.** Reflecting the fact that public money is involved, public audit is planned and undertaken from a wider perspective than in the private sector. The Code of Audit Practice sets out the four areas that frame the wider scope of public sector audit, and requires auditors to consider and conclude on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the arrangements in place for each wider scope area in audited bodies.

**31.** In summary, the four wider scope areas are:

- **Financial management** – this means having sound budgetary processes. We will consider the arrangements to secure sound financial management, including the strength of the financial management culture, accountability, and arrangements to prevent and detect fraud, error, and other irregularities.
- **Financial sustainability** – we will look ahead to consider whether the body is planning effectively to continue to deliver services, also comment on financial sustainability in the medium (two to five years) to longer term (longer than five years).
- **Vision, leadership, and governance** – we conclude on the clarity of plans in place to deliver the vision, strategy, and priorities adopted by Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. We also consider the effectiveness of the governance arrangements to support delivery.
- **Use of resources to improve outcomes** – we will consider how the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh demonstrates economy, efficiency, and effectiveness through the use of financial and other resources.

## Wider scope risks

**32.** We have identified significant risks in the wider scope areas set out in Exhibit 3. This exhibit sets out the risks, management's sources of assurance for the risks, and the further audit procedures we plan to perform to gain assurances over the risks.

## Exhibit 3

### 2023/24 wider scope risks

Description of risk	Management's sources of assurance	Planned audit response
<p><b>1. Financial sustainability</b></p> <p>The Edinburgh Biomes capital project is ongoing and is expected to be completed at its earliest in October 2027.</p> <p>Due to Scottish Government's infrastructure investment planning running on a five-year cycle (currently 2020/21-2025/26) the full funding of the project has not yet been guaranteed.</p> <p>There is a risk that project costs will continue to increase due to market conditions, and there could be slippage in the project timelines if funding is not in place to progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project is progressed in line with available funding.</li> <li>• Effective governance mechanisms are in place with involvement from Scottish Government representatives, including dialogue on timelines vis a vis funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess any updates to the medium-term financial strategy</li> <li>• Review any organisation-wide or project-specific scenario planning</li> <li>• Review the financial monitoring reports presented to the Board of Trustees</li> <li>• Ongoing review of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's financial position.</li> </ul>

Source: Audit Scotland

**33.** Our planned work on the wider scope areas is risk based and proportionate, and in addition to local risks, we may be asked by the Auditor General for Scotland to consider specific risk areas which are impacting the public sector as a whole. We have not been asked to consider specific risks for 2023/24 audits, but we will remain cognisant of challenges identified in prior years such as climate change.

## Duty of Best Value

**34.** Ministerial Guidance to Accountable Officers for public bodies and the Scottish Public Finance Manual (SPFM) explain that Accountable Officers have a specific responsibility to ensure that arrangements have been made to secure Best Value. We will be carrying out a high-level review to confirm that such arrangements are in place within Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

# Reporting arrangements, timetable, and audit fee

## Reporting arrangements

**35.** Matters arising from our audit will be reported on a timely basis and will include agreed action plans. Draft reports will be shared with the relevant officers to confirm factual accuracy.

**36.** We will provide:

- an Independent Auditor's Report to Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, the Scottish Parliament, and the Auditor General for Scotland setting out our opinions on the annual report and accounts
- Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and the Auditor General for Scotland with an Annual Audit Report containing observations and recommendations on significant matters which have arisen during the audit and conclusions on wider scope areas.

**37.** Exhibit 4 outlines the target dates for our audit outputs set by the Auditor General for Scotland. In determining the target reporting date of 31 October, due regard is paid to meeting the statutory deadline for laying the accounts of 31 December 2024.

**38.** We will be unable to achieve the target reporting date outlined above. This is due to prioritising the delivery of high-quality audits over meeting target dates as required by the Auditor General for Scotland, and consistent with messaging from the Financial Reporting Council which has made clear that audit quality takes precedence. We are working towards completing audit work by the target date, with a view to taking our Independent Auditor's Report and Annual Audit Report to the next scheduled Audit and Risk Committee after this date, which is 27 November 2024.

## Exhibit 4 2023/24 Audit outputs

Audit Output	Target date	Audit and Risk Committee Date
Annual Audit Plan	31/03/2024	13/03/2024
Independent Auditor's Report	31/10/2024	27/11/2024
Annual Audit Report	31/10/2024	27/11/2024

Source: Audit Scotland



**39.** All Annual Audit Plans and the outputs detailed in Exhibit 4, and any other outputs on matters of public interest, will be published on our website: [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk).

## Timetable

**40.** To support an efficient audit, it is critical that the timetable for producing the annual report and accounts for audit is achieved. We have included a proposed timetable for the audit at Exhibit 5 that has been discussed with management.

**41.** We will continue to work closely with management to identify the most efficient approach as appropriate and will keep timeframes and logistics for the completion of the audit under review. Progress will be discussed with management and finance officers over the course of the audit.

## Exhibit 5 Proposed annual report and accounts timetable

 Key stage	 Provisional Date
Latest submission date for the receipt of the unaudited annual report and accounts with complete working papers package.	30 September 2024
Latest date for final clearance meeting with the Director of Resources and Planning	13 November 2024
Issue of draft Letter of Representation and proposed Independent Auditor's Report	27 November 2024
Agreement of audited and unsigned annual report and accounts	11 December 2024
Issue of Annual Audit Report to those charged with governance.	11 December 2024
Signed Independent Auditor's Report	11 December 2024

Source: Audit Scotland

## Audit fee

**42.** In determining the audit fee, we have taken account of the risk exposure of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and the planned management assurances in place. Fee levels are also impacted by inflation which increases the cost of audit delivery. The proposed audit fee for 2023/24 is £24,480 as set out in [Exhibit 6](#).

**Exhibit 6****Audit fees (including VAT)**

<b>Fee component</b>	<b>Fees (£)</b>
External Auditor Remuneration	40,510
Pooled costs	430
Sectoral Cap Adjustment	(16,460)
<b>Total 2023/24 fee</b>	<b>24,480</b>

Source: Audit Scotland

**43.** In setting the fee for 2023/24, we have assumed that Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh has effective governance arrangements and will prepare a comprehensive and accurate set of annual report and accounts for audit in line with the agreed timetable for the audit. The audit fee assumes there will be no major change in respect of the scope of the audit during the year and where our audit cannot proceed as planned, a supplementary fee may be levied.

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# Other matters

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## Internal audit

**44.** It is the responsibility of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh to establish adequate internal audit arrangements. We will review the internal audit plan and the results of internal audit's work.

**45.** While we are not planning to place formal reliance on the work of internal audit in 2023/24, we will review internal audit reports and assess the impact of the findings on our financial statements and wider scope audit responsibilities.

## Independence and objectivity

**46.** I am independent of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in accordance with relevant ethical requirements, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard. This standard imposes stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors.

**47.** Audit Scotland has robust arrangements in place to ensure compliance with Ethical Standard including an annual 'fit and proper' declaration for all members of staff. The arrangements are overseen by the Executive Director of Innovation and Quality, who serves as Audit Scotland's Ethics Partner.

**48.** The Ethical Standard requires auditors to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the audit team. I am not aware of any such relationships pertaining to the audit of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

## Audit Quality

**49.** Audit Scotland is committed to the consistent delivery of high-quality public audit. Audit quality requires ongoing attention and improvement to keep pace with external and internal changes. A document explaining the arrangements for providing assurance on the delivery of high-quality audits is available from the [Audit Scotland website](#).

**50.** The International Standards on Quality Management (ISQM) applicable to Audit Scotland for 2023/24 audits are:

- ISQM (UK) 1 which deals with an audit organisation's responsibilities to design, implement and operate a system of quality management (SoQM) for audits. Our SoQM consists of a variety of components, such as: our governance arrangements and culture to support audit quality, compliance with ethical requirements, ensuring we are dedicated to high-quality audit through our engagement performance and resourcing arrangements, and ensuring we have robust quality monitoring

arrangements in place. Audit Scotland carries out an annual evaluation of our SoQM and has concluded that we comply with this standard.

- ISQM (UK) 2 which sets out arrangements for conducting engagement quality reviews, which are performed by senior management not involved in the audit to review significant judgements and conclusions reached by the audit team, and the appropriateness of proposed audit opinions of high-risk audit engagements.

**51.** To monitor quality at an individual audit level, Audit Scotland also carries out internal quality reviews of a sample of audits. Additionally, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW) carries out independent quality reviews.

**52.** Actions to address deficiencies identified by internal and external quality reviews are included in a rolling Quality Improvement Action Plan which is used to support continuous improvement. Progress with implementing planned actions is regularly monitored by Audit Scotland's Quality and Ethics Committee.

**53.** Audit Scotland may periodically seek your views on the quality of our service provision. The team would also welcome feedback more informally at any time.



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# Appendix 1: Your audit team

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The audit team involved in the audit of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh have significant experience in public sector audit.

Pauline Murray  
Senior Audit Manager  
[pmurray@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:pmurray@audit-scotland.gov.uk)

Pauline has over 15 years of public sector audit experience and has delivered external audit services to a range of bodies including local authorities, health boards and central government bodies.

Jacqueline Farmer  
Senior Auditor  
[jfarmer@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:jfarmer@audit-scotland.gov.uk)

Jacqueline has considerable experience in planning and delivering audits across the public sector. Jacqueline will manage the team and work alongside the Senior Audit Manager to deliver the audit.

Sarah Dunsmore  
Trainee Auditor  
[sdunsmore@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:sdunsmore@audit-scotland.gov.uk)

Sarah has 3 years of audit experience spanning both commercial and public sector, including central government. Sarah will work alongside the Senior Auditor to deliver the audit.

The local audit team is supported by a specialist technical accounting team, all of whom have significant experience of public bodies and work with accounting regulatory bodies.

# Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

## Annual Audit Plan 2023/24

Audit Scotland's published material is available for download on the website in a number of formats. For information on our accessibility principles, please visit:

[www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accessibility](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accessibility)

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