

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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What next for Geilston Garden?

Conservation charity the National Trust for Scotland has started contacting staff, volunteers and community organisations to inform them that it is considering the future of Geilston Garden in Cardross.

The garden is the former estate of the late Elizabeth Hendry, who in 1991 bequeathed it along with her house to the charity on the understanding that it be sold to raise funds. Instead the Trust opened up the grounds as a visited garden, which ever since has been enjoyed as a local amenity.

The National Trust for Scotland's Head of Special Projects, Keith Halstead said:

"Many people will know that there are longstanding issues at Geilston which need to be resolved.

"The property loses £85,000 every year, which is unsustainable to our charity, and we do not think that it will be possible to turn this around while the garden is managed and configured as it is.

"I have been given the task of conducting a feasibility study over the coming months and putting forward any viable proposals to our Board of Trustees by October.

"We are being realistic as to what the options may be but we are also open, honest and upfront about the fact that the status quo is untenable."

One of the central issues is the condition of Geilston House, which has never been open to the public.

The house now has significant structural problems and has suffered from the effects of extensions over time (all of which pre-date the Trust's acquisition), leading to persistent problems with water ingress and dry rot.

The water ingress has been stabilised but the dry rot is still evident. Restoration of the house is unaffordable and the Trust may have to consider alternative uses.

Keith Halstead added:

"If the house is to be saved, we may have to think about its conversion to other uses.

"This may mean working with third parties and possibly some form of enabling development within, or next to, the existing footprint of buildings and infrastructure to make this stack up financially.

"At this stage we simply don't know what is possible, but will work through options during the coming months.

"We are well aware that local people value the garden and surrounding greenbelt and are keen to find options that work for everyone.

"All I can say at present is that no decisions have been taken about Geilston House & Garden's future yet and that we haven't even arrived at any conclusions about the full-range of options we should consider."

Staff and volunteers at Geilston, as well as community representatives, will be updated as the study proceeds.

- ENDS -

National Trust for Scotland Press Office. Contact Sarah Cuthbert-Kerr on 0131 458 0272/ 07713 786277.

Editor's Notes:

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