



# Customer Charter

There are two main ways in which Kew serves individuals:

- a. meeting the needs of visitors to its Gardens;
- b. meeting the needs of people seeking information on areas where Kew has particular expertise.

Both of these are set against the background of Kew's mission, our legal duties and the wide range of activities that we carry out to meet these:

**The Mission of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is**

to enable better management of the earth's environment by increasing knowledge and understanding of the plant and fungal kingdoms – the basis of life on earth.

**Statutory duties:**

The National Heritage Act, 1983, sets out six areas of responsibility which can be summarised as:

- Care of our collections for reference and study.
- Scientific research and documentation.
- Plant related services for UK Government (e.g. quarantine).
- Maintenance of the Gardens as an amenity for the public.
- Increasing public understanding of the importance of plants.
- Preservation of historic buildings.

*We believe that it is particularly important to deliver a good service to our visitors and to other individuals who we are able to help. This document sets out the scope of these services and the standards which we believe we need to maintain.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Crane'.

Professor Peter Crane FRS  
DIRECTOR



**Improving Service**

## WHO WE ARE

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is an organisation of about 550 people based on two main sites - Kew Gardens in Surrey and Wakehurst Place in West Sussex. Originally founded as a Royal garden, since 1841 the organisation has worked both as a public garden and as a scientific institution. Since 1983 we have been a non-departmental public body governed by a Board of Trustees. We are mainly funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs but also raise revenue from other sources including income from visitors.

## WHAT WE DO

Most of Kew's work is about science and conservation - studying plants and their properties, collecting and cataloguing wild plants for scientific and conservation purposes, and working with other scientific and environmental bodies. There is a great deal of communication with scientists around the world as well as governments and non-governmental organisations. This contact also extends to sharing information with individuals who have related interests and to providing an educational service.

Most people are more familiar with Kew Gardens and Wakehurst Place as places to spend an enjoyable time in pleasant, interesting surroundings. Of course, this overlaps with the scientific work because the living collection forms the backbone of our two gardens and is what makes them stand out from many others. Also, Kew's duty to maintain its historic buildings provides the public with another source of interest and pleasure.

## OUR OBJECTIVES AS A VISITOR ATTRACTION

To help the public understand and appreciate our organisation and its work through the Gardens at Kew and Wakehurst Place.

## OUR COMMITMENTS TO VISITORS

We aim to provide an enjoyable visit combined with the opportunity to learn more about plants and our work - a visit which is good value for money. We believe that the following commitments help to ensure that we do this.

### Quality

a. To maintain the gardens and buildings so that visitors see attractive plantings and landscapes - subject to seasonal conditions and scientific collection needs.

- b. To ensure that facilities such as catering, shops and toilets are provided in sufficient capacity and quality to provide a good service.
- c. We will monitor quality by survey and aim to achieve at least 80% of visitors rating their visit as 'very enjoyable' and 60% rating value for money as 'excellent'.

### Access

- a. Days of opening - to be open at least 362 days each year.
- b. Hours of opening - the public areas of the gardens, glasshouses and other buildings will be open from at least 10am until 5.30pm through the Summer months. From September to March closing times will be subject to daylight.
- c. Special needs - to ensure that disabled and wheelchair visitors can enjoy the gardens and at least 90% of the public areas of our buildings. New facilities will always be designed to allow easy wheelchair access. Where the landscape makes wheelchair access dangerous (e.g. parts of Wakehurst Place) this will be clearly signed.
- d. Within the public area of the Gardens there will be no restrictions on walking or picnicking on grassed areas except when weather, conservation or planting considerations mean that access has to be restricted to prevent damage.
- e. Because the Gardens are open 7 days a week, areas or

buildings may sometimes have to be closed to the public for essential work.

- f. In severe weather the Gardens may be closed in whole or part to ensure public safety.

### Information

- a. Visitors will be provided with a leaflet including a map and other information to help them enjoy their visit, to find features and facilities, and to help them understand Kew's mission and role.
- b. Similar leaflets will be provided, for non-English speaking visitors in a range of at least 5 other languages, and in large print for the visually disabled.
- c. Leaflets, explanatory panels and other media will be used in the gardens to provide interesting and educational explanations of particular features.
- d. Notices will be provided at each of Kew's four gates, and at the entrance to Wakehurst Place to advise visitors of prices, closing times and key facilities.
- e. Staff will be kept up to date with information relevant to visitors.
- f. When more than 25% of any major feature or facility is to be closed for more than one hour this will be signalled at the gates.
- g. If any major feature or facility is to be entirely closed for half a day or more this will also be indicated on our recorded information service - tel 020 8332 5655. (Major features or facilities are defined as those

shown by survey to be visited by more than 25% of visitors).

### Courtesy, Customer Care and Complaints

- a. The needs of our visitors will be high amongst our priorities.
- b. All staff who deal with the public will be provided with customer care training and the information necessary to:
  - i. promote a positive attitude towards visitors
  - ii. allow them to work in a polite, friendly and informed manner.
- c. We will identify ourselves by name in all correspondence, on the telephone and in face to face contact with our visitors. Where appropriate staff will wear name badges.
- d. In order to monitor and improve service, impressions and comments will be routinely collected by an ongoing visitor satisfaction survey and by a more detailed annual survey.

These commitments are based on surveys, other views expressed by visitors, and good practice. We also consulted visitors by issuing a draft for comment before publication.

## OUR ROLE IN ANSWERING PUBLIC ENQUIRIES

Kew provides free information to over 50,000 enquiries from individuals each year - ranging from questions about opening times to future events within the Gardens. The number and range of enquiries is so large that it is not possible to provide detailed personal responses to all of them (for

example, enquiries about gardening or household plants). When we are unable to provide a response we will endeavour to refer the enquirer to an appropriate source. We aim to provide efficient, helpful and pleasant responses - and we believe that we can best serve the public by using our available resources as follows:

### Recorded telephone information

**Kew 020 8332 5655**

**Wakehurst Place 01444 894066**

**www.kew.org**

These will be the main numbers published in visitor literature and will provide, on a 24 hour basis, information to meet the most frequent queries we receive:

- a. current opening times and prices for the Gardens;
- b. items of topical interest or concern to the majority of visitors.

It will also include the number of our switchboard. The message will be no longer than 2 minutes.

### Switchboard

**(Business enquiries)**

**Kew 020 8332 5000**

**Wakehurst Place 01444 892701**

This will be manned by an operator during office hours (08.30 - 16.30 weekdays) and at other times by our Constabulary or security officers. During office hours the operator will find out what the caller wants and then contact the right person to deal with the call. If that person is not available the caller may be able to leave a voice message using our telephone answering facilities, otherwise the operator will attempt to find a suitable alternative or ask the caller to try again.

Outside office hours the Constabulary or security staff will:

- a. Provide basic information on visitor matters.
- b. Advise the caller to call Visitor Information Services during office hours for other information.
- c. Respond appropriately to emergency calls

**Visitor Information Services**  
020 8332 5655

This area handles all telephone, e-mail, written and personal caller queries that are not directed specifically to another part of Kew. The unit has four main roles:

- a. To provide direct answers on most matters relating to visitors or public interest in Kew as an organisation.
- b. To provide direct answers to a limited range of common queries about plants and related matters.
- c. To direct other enquiries to appropriate parts of the organisation, or to advise that the enquiry lies outside Kew's range and, if possible, suggest other (e.g. horticultural) organisations who can provide help.
- d. To take bookings for special events.

The unit is normally available from Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) from 9am to 11am, noon to 2pm and from 3pm to 5pm. When staff are not available an answering system is available and calls will be returned within three working days.

## COMPLAINTS ABOUT SERVICE

If you feel that we have not provided a satisfactory service please write to:

**Visitor Information Executive**  
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew  
Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AB

or telephone 020 8332 5655 (24 hour answering system) and leave a message including your name and telephone number or address. We will reply to telephone calls within 3 working days or letters within 10 working days of receipt.

Should you then feel that your complaint has not been properly dealt with, you can write to:

**Professor Peter Crane FRS**  
Director  
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew  
Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AB

Should a reply from the Director still not satisfy you then you should write to:

**Lord Blakenham**  
Chairman of Trustees  
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew  
Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AB

Finally, should the responses from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew not satisfy you then you should write to the Minister who is ultimately responsible for our public funding:

**The Department for  
Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs**  
Nobel House,  
17, Smith Square,  
LONDON SW1P 3JR

## IF WE HAVE DONE WELL

The Charter Mark award scheme rewards excellent public service. If you have had excellent service and want to put us, or anyone else, forward for the Charter Mark Award please write to:

**The Charter Mark Awards**  
Charter Mark Beacon Unit  
Room 3.16  
The Cabinet Office  
Admiralty Arch  
The Mall  
London SW1A 2WH  
Tel: 0845 304 0430  
(local rate)

## FEEDBACK

Each year we will look at how well we have done against these standards and we will provide the results in our Annual Report which is published by July.