

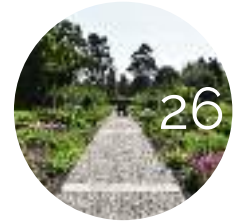
The Horticulturist



Challenges and opportunities in living collections management

PLUS Labour shortages | A growing challenge | Establishing an urban forest | Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Survey

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

After comprehensive research from a wide range of stakeholders including the Chartered Institute of Horticulture (CIH) the House of Lords Horticultural Sector Committee has published its report 'Sowing the seeds: A blooming English horticultural sector'. The CIH contributed towards the inquiry and evidence was heard from over 60 witnesses, and the inquiry also received almost 100 written evidence submissions and visited horticultural businesses at home and overseas.

The inquiry and its conclusions highlight the themes and concerns which the CIH has voiced for the whole industry and for the whole of the UK and Ireland for many years and I'm hopeful that this will act as a catalyst for both action and change at the highest levels.

The response from the Government and the new Secretary of State and the recognition of the whole horticultural industry will be critical. The report highlights many of the challenges known and understood by the CIH and the proper representation of our profession, our members, and their incredible range of skills and talent. The report makes it clear that the lack of a coherent government strategy for the horticultural sector means that the sector is at risk, and we are now at a 'pivotal moment for the future of horticulture'.

The potential for the sector to deliver on the net zero agenda should also be focusing attention on the importance of our industry and with the right support and resources the sector has potential to thrive and as an optimist I see the report as being key to how horticulture is understood and properly valued.

The misunderstanding of what horticulture is remains a challenge but in this edition of *The Horticulturist* you will see that the Institute is making great progress in expanding its Special Interest Groups, establishing mentoring opportunities through Linked-In and running courses and seminars, including the successful Grow Careers Event in Scotland (which took place on 15 November).

We are working on plans for the CIH 40th anniversary – celebrating our success and being ambitious for the future. It may be fortuitous that the House of Lords Report has now been published and that we, too, are ambitious for our industry. Additionally the Irish Government's National Strategy for Horticulture 2023-2027 was recently published by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2a5d5-national-strategy-horticulture-2023-to-2027/>).

My own career in horticulture was very much shaped by the training I had with Peter Thoday at Bath University 40 years ago (see the tribute to Peter on page 25). He encouraged me to work in the amenity sector and pointed me in the direction of a profession I still love.

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Write for *The Horticulturist*

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WORKFORCE Understanding the current state of England's food supply chain is crucial in order to grasp the impacts of successive economic shocks on labour supply from new regulations, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine. **John Shropshire** led an independent review and sets out here the recommendations.

Labour shortages in the food supply chain

I had the privilege of leading an independent review into labour shortages, resulting in the launch, in June, of a comprehensive study exploring the intricate dynamics of England's food supply chain. This exploration has thrown light on the pivotal challenges this indispensable sector faces and how these issues are contributing to food inflationary pressures and potentially increasing labour exploitation as highlighted by Colleen O'Kane in *The Horticulturist* (Vol 32 No 2 Summer 2023).

England's food supply chain is an extraordinary network that is fundamental to the nation's economy and the security of its citizens. However, we face significant obstacles in recruiting and retaining a competent workforce in this vital sector. Low unemployment rates, shifting labour market dynamics, lack of affordable housing and diminished access to migrant workers have exacerbated these challenges.

Essential roles

Migrant labour has historically played a crucial role in filling workforce gaps and our review illuminates the way in which these workforce