

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Environment and Climate Change Committee

Does this report require to be approved? Yes No

Ref LR/VA

Date 30/04/25

Down's Syndrome Scotland garden at Palacerigg Country Park

From Lyall Rennie, Chief Officer (Community Operations)

E-mail renniely@northlan.gov.uk

Telephone 07855 193500

Executive Summary

This report outlines plans to host Downs Syndrome Scotland show garden, designed and built for Chelsea Flower Show 2025, to Palacerigg Country Park, in partnership with local charity Watch us Grow. The relocation is funded by the charity Project Giving Back and will take place during summer and autumn 2025 with plans for a garden opening in spring 2026.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Environment and Climate Change Committee:

- (1) Supports the proposal to locate the Down's Syndrome Scotland show garden in Palacerigg Country Park, in partnership with Watch us Grow.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority	Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities
Ambition statement	(16) Transform our natural environment to support wellbeing and inward investment and enhance it for current and future generations
Programme of Work	Sustainable Futures

1. Background

- 1.1 Down's Syndrome Scotland are building a show garden at the RHS Chelsea Garden Show in May 2025. The garden is fully funded by Project Giving Back, a grant making charity that supports gardens for good causes.
- 1.2 Following the garden show, Project Giving Back supports the costs of relocating the garden to its charity partners. Down's Syndrome Scotland approached Watch us Grow, (a North Lanarkshire charity based in Palacerigg Country Park, that supports adults with additional support needs to thrive) to host the garden. Community Operations staff identified a suitable location adjacent to the existing Watch us Grow house and garden.

2. Report

- 2.1 Down Syndrome Scotland will be displaying their garden at this year's Chelsea Garden Show from 20th – 24th May 2025, and thereafter relocating it to Palacerigg Country Park. The Greenspace and Country Parks team worked with the charity partners to understand the requirements of the sponsors and identify a suitable location adjacent to the existing Watch us Grow site. The site was previously used for goat grazing and the new garden will repurpose the site and be fully open to the local community and visitors at all times of the day.

The Garden

- 2.2 The Down Syndrome Scotland Garden is designed by Nick Burton & Duncan Hall from Burton Hall Garden Design. The garden takes visitors on a journey through the life of someone with Down's syndrome and highlights their many unique qualities, while also challenging visitors to better understand the barriers that people with Down's syndrome still face as they strive to live their best lives.

- 2.3 Garden features include:

A Hug in Nature: 'Old School Fabrications' based in East Lothian, Scotland has been commissioned to design, fabricate and construct at the show an organically-shaped garden building made from locally sourced sustainable timber. The shape and material of the garden structure are designed to feel like a comforting 'hug' and reflect the compassion, kindness and joy that come naturally to so many people with Down's syndrome.

Breaking Barriers: The ground-level water pool with a submerged bridge located on the main path subtly references the barriers often faced by members of the Down's syndrome community and speaks to their resilience and determination to overcome challenges to achieve their full potential. A Scot's Pine, a Gaelic symbol of durability, will sit on the other side of the water pool.

Celebrating Difference: Down's syndrome is caused by a third copy of chromosome 21 and these numbers are subtly reflected within the garden. For example, there are 3 water features and 3 seating areas, including bespoke benches made by traditional craftsman Laurence McIntosh from Edinburgh with 3 feet and 21 slats. Additionally, 21 tiles by ceramic artist Frances Priest and a playful water feature evoke a sense of fun and mischief, whilst a bunting display of 21 'odd, knitted socks', chosen because they look like chromosomes, will be hung inside the garden building to celebrate difference and provide a sense of fun.

Playful Water Features: There will be three water features; two above-ground water containers, made by Bronzino, which are based on a Scottish Highland cauldron design, whilst a ground-level pool located across the path symbolising societal barriers faced by people with Down's syndrome. There is also a secret water spray that can be activated by depressing a decoratively patterned Frances Priest ceramic tile to incorporate some fun and mischief into the garden.

Pathways of Joy: The 21 playful and curious tiles by ceramic artist Frances Priest are inlaid into the paving, contributing to the garden's sense of joy as visitors enjoy the artful playfulness beneath their feet.

Gaelic Proverb Symbolism: One of the bespoke benches by Laurence McIntosh of Edinburgh will have the old Gaelic proverb "*Cruaidh mar am fraoch, buan mar an giuthas*" which translates to "*Hard as the Heather, Lasting as the Pine*" engraved on it and will sit under the Scots Pine. This proverb acknowledges the strength, resilience and endurance that people with Down's syndrome display in their everyday environments.

Sustainability: The plant-dominated garden incorporates minimal hard landscaping, sustainable construction methods (e.g. screw foundations and cement-free mortar) and planting grown in peat-free compost. The footprint of the garden will be larger than the show garden at Chelsea and all features will be adapted to ensure that its fully accessible for all users.

- 2.4 The service will work with partners to install interpretation alongside the garden to explain the garden and its journey and promote the work of Downs Syndrome Scotland and Watch us Grow.

Wider benefits

- 2.5 Community benefits have already begun, with part of the site preparation being carried out by restorative justice; with an enhanced opportunity for collaborative working between the council, Watch Us Grow, Down Syndrome Scotland and Palacerigg Community Trust on volunteers' ongoing maintenance and nurturing of the garden providing opportunities to young people to develop and hone their gardening knowledge and skills.
- 2.6 The council has a long-standing relationship with Watch Us Grow. This opportunity is a positive step to develop further the relationship with Down Syndrome Scotland within Palacerigg Country Park, recognise the fantastic work carried out by the young adults who use the services at Watch Us Grow, and celebrate this community.
- 2.7 The addition of this unique attraction to the Country Park, and the recent works on improved pathways, more accessible play areas, signage and soundscapes all being in line with Country Parks For the Future and the Master Plan for Palacerigg Country Park, all helping to increase the number, diversity, geographical base and experience of the visitors to Palacerigg, all having a positive effect on health and wellbeing of the local community of Cumbernauld.

Next steps

- 2.8 Progress on building the garden can be followed on the Down's Syndrome Scotland website [#Down's Syndrome Scotland Garden at Chelsea Flower Show - Down's Syndrome Scotland](#) The Chelsea Garden Show runs from 20th – 24th May
- 2.9 June 2025 - Following the show the garden will be taken down and Burton Hall will bring all the hard landscaping, trees, hedging, and most of the plants to Palacerigg Country Park
- June – autumn 2025 Once the hard landscaping has been carried out in early June by Burton Hall Garden Designs, it will take a period to plant out the garden and get it ready to open to the public in spring 2026.
- 2.10 The service will work with Down's syndrome Scotland, Watch us Grow and Corporate Communications to ensure the garden launch has high visibility

2.11 A Memorandum of Understanding will be agreed for the full management of the garden between the council, Watch Us Grow and Down Syndrome Scotland.

3. Measures of success

3.1 Downes Syndrome Scotland show garden successfully located to Palacerigg Country Park and opened to the public.

4. Supporting documentation

Appendix 1: Artist impression of garden

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Lyall Rennie', is positioned above the printed name.

Lyall Rennie
Chief Officer (Community Operations)

5. Impacts

<p>5.1 Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p> <p>If Yes, has an assessment been carried out and published on the council's website? https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.2 Financial impact Does the report contain any financial impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts been discussed and agreed with Finance? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.3 HR policy impact Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts been discussed and agreed with People Resources? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.4 Legal impact Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.5 Data protection impact Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.6 Technology / Digital impact Does the report contain information that has an impact on either technology, digital transformation, service redesign / business change processes, data management, or connectivity / broadband / Wi-Fi? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>

Where the impact identifies a requirement for significant technology change, has an assessment been carried out (or is scheduled to be carried out) by the Enterprise Architecture Governance Group (EAGG)?

Yes No

5.7 Environmental / Carbon impact

Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

The project will have a positive environmental impact on the country park

5.8 Communications impact

Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

The council will use its communications channels to promote the garden and the partner organisations. Corporate communications are involved in the working group.

5.9 Risk impact

Is there a risk impact?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the key risks and potential impacts, highlighting where the risk(s) are assessed and recorded (e.g. Corporate or Service or Project Risk Registers), and how they are managed?

5.10 Armed Forces Covenant Duty

Does the report require to take due regard of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty (i.e. does it relate to healthcare, housing, or education services for in-Service or ex-Service personnel, or their families, or widow(er)s)?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the provision which has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the particular needs of the Armed Forces community to make sure that they do not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.

5.11 Children's rights and wellbeing impact

Does the report contain any information regarding any council activity, service delivery, policy, or plan that has an impact on children and young people up to the age of 18, or on a specific group of these?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact and the provision that has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the relevant Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

If Yes, has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) been carried out?

Yes No

Appendix 1: Artists impression of the Down Syndrome Scotland Chelsea Garden 2025

