

Sowing

the

seeds

of future

success



In 2009 Oxford University Consulting identified an expert with the right mix of scientific credentials and management experience to join a team for an independent review of one of the UK's most respected public institutions, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Oxford University Consulting provides access to Oxford experts by setting up consulting arrangements with businesses and governments worldwide. In the last financial year, OUC managed over 150 consulting agreements.

Emeritus Professor Hugh Dickinson, former Sherardian Professor in the University of Oxford's Department of Plant Sciences, was science and education consultant to the "Independent Review of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew" commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Its report was released in February 2010.

Dickinson, a former Trustee of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Keeper of the Oxford Botanic Garden, brought to the project considerable experience gained from a distinguished career managing large research departments. A member of the Governing Council of the renowned John Innes Centre, Dickinson has also sat on the boards of several Research Council committees, including the BBSRC's Integrated Epigenetics Initiative.

Over a period of four months, Dickinson met with a wide range of stakeholders and staff at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Benchmarking other botanic gardens was particularly valuable in that it put the challenges faced by Kew into an international context.

"An institute as large as the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is highly complex, and under very different pressures from a wide range of stakeholders," said Dickinson. "Our overall view was that Kew should focus on its core business - developing its excellent collections, carrying out high quality research, and providing a first-class 'public face'."



"Identifying these priorities should help Kew to focus and thrive. Kew's collections are truly world-class; in addition to the better known collections of living plants, seeds and herbarium specimens, they include paintings, books and manuscripts and ethnological artifacts. For this reason they need to be curated and researched by specialists who are in turn well managed and resourced."

The report outlines fifty recommendations, including a proposal that the Natural History Museum, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh share resources to develop and maintain their plant collections in an integrated fashion. Other recommendations cover research strategy, visitor experience, horticulture,

management and Kew's Millennium Seed Bank.

The team was led by Sir Neil Chalmers, Warden of Wadham College, Oxford and former Director of London's Natural History Museum. Dickinson said Oxford University Consulting provided a smooth service in setting up the contracts, administration and financial arrangements for his consultancy, allowing him to focus on the review itself.

"It's the breadth and depth of experience of people such as Professor Dickinson here at Oxford which allows OUC to provide the right person to enhance a business or government project such as this," said Steve Lee, Head of Oxford University Consulting.



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