

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Four Seasons in one at Torre Abbey gardens

An award winning horticultural training scheme for students with disabilities will be maintaining and developing the gardens at Torre Abbey during its extensive restoration.

The agreement with Four Seasons, which provides training for students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health issues, follows the unfortunate withdrawal of Dartington Tech from the programme.

Torbay Council's Assistant Director for Cultural Services, Sue Cheriton, said: "The students from Dartington Tech have been working extremely hard in the gardens over the last few months and leave a solid foundation for Four Seasons to build on.

"We were disappointed when Dartington Tech had to withdraw from the programme but are confident that the students from Four Seasons have the knowledge and enthusiasm to develop the gardens in sympathy with the abbey.

"As a major contributor to the cost of refurbishing the abbey, it was a Heritage Lottery Fund requirement that the gardens were developed in sympathy with the house and that there was a strategy for developing and enhancing them.

"Four Seasons has agreed to run an education facility from the site and oversee the renovation of the gardens, whilst providing the opportunity for students to gain some valuable experience. This will enable us to maximise the improvements with the small amount of funds we have available."

Andy Scott, Four Seasons Unit Manager, added: "The gardens at Torre Abbey will provide our students with the perfect environment for the practical elements of the courses they are studying, which include the NPTC Skills for Working Life in Horticulture and City and Guilds NVQ 1 in Horticulture and NVQ 2 in Amenity Horticulture.

"We provide training for students with a full range of abilities studying alongside students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health issues. We are confident that this will enable Four Seasons to develop a closer working relationship with Torbay Council, which will benefit the students, the council and the local community, and help promote people with a disability in a positive light."

Mike Blakeley, Director of Business Development, Dartington Tech, said: "We are disappointed to lose the opportunity to work with Torbay Council at Torre Abbey.

"Our existing learners benefited from four months in the gardens over the summer and during our time there gathered valuable evidence for their qualifications. We will continue to support the training at the gardens and are extremely pleased that a quality training provider will be following on our good work."

Four Seasons is currently based at Parkfield House in Paignton and at Cockington Court in Torquay, and has been responsible for the renovation and maintenance of the gardens at Parkfield House.

The Unit has worked with Torbay Council on smaller projects and students have been accessing work placements with the council for the last two years, but this is the first major project to be undertaken in partnership.

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Notes for Editors

Four Seasons is a part of Pluss, which is a not-for-profit organisation owned by Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council. Pluss provides a number of services throughout Devon enabling adults with disabilities to move closer to, and sustain, paid employment.

For more details about Four Seasons or Pluss contact us on 0800 9177792 or check out the website www.pluss.org.uk

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