

THE Alnwick Garden is generating almost £7m per year for the county's economy, according to a new study.

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Figures show that every £1 of income generated by the attraction results in an additional 85p being spent in the area.

The garden is said to be paying salaries amounting to £1.5m, of which £1.3m is to people living in Northumberland.

Payments to suppliers come to £2.3m, with £700,000 going to those based in Northumberland and £1.6m to those outside the county.

Overall analysis shows that total income generated directly for the local economy of Northumberland from the garden's activity is £6.9m per annum.

The results come from a project called LM3, established by the North East Centre of Excellence and Northumberland County Council in 2004, which aims to assess actual and potential benefits to a local economy from public sector procurement.

The measuring process follows how an organisation's turnover is spent and then re-spent within a defined geographic area. The methodology used to make the assessment was based on salaries to staff and how and where they spent the money, and payments to suppliers and how they subsequently spent. The garden's fundraising manager Elaine Inglis said: "We found this report extremely insightful and really useful in thinking about how and where money is spent.

"It clearly shows the impact of sourcing local suppliers and in doing so, the huge financial benefits this simple option brings to both the local and regional economy.

"We are delighted to see that the development of the Alnwick Garden has brought increased revenue to local businesses and has helped to generate new business opportunities which might not have been apparent without the garden."

Barry Mitchell, of the North East Centre of Excellence, said: "The investment in the garden by the regional development agency and other sub-regional funders is a key part of their regeneration policies in delivering more sustainable and prosperous communities and contributing to an enterprise and business start environment.

"As a social enterprise, the garden also has an important role to play in demonstrating the role of the third sector in regeneration policy.

"For all of these reasons, it is crucial for both the garden and its funders to be able to produce objective evidence of the efficacy of those investments, not just for their organisation but for the community and region in which it sits."

The garden was officially opened in 2002 by its patron HRH The Prince of Wales, at completion of

the first phase of development. The attraction has an annual turnover of £4m.

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