



Unlocking the landscape

Helping people to access Bath's green setting





Bath was ranked 12th in the 'European Best Places to Travel 2025'...described as best for outdoor activities and walking trails {and mentioned} 'serene countryside walks'.

European Best Destinations, The Sun

Cover Image: Bathscape summer picnic 2022. © Anna Barclay.

Top left: Bathscape Access volunteers attending a 'thank you' event for their contribution to helping people enjoy the landscape.

Right: Walkers above the city at Smallcombe.

The proximity of the countryside from the city centre is tantalising but accessing it not always simple or a regular occurrence for everyone.

The Bathscape partnership was born from a shared recognition of Bath's value as a landscape city, the threats it faces if neglected and the opportunities it affords for improving the lives of residents and visitors. Partners identified common themes such as an aspiration for active management, connection, inclusivity, partnership and encouraging inspiration and enjoyment.

70% of those consulted said they had experienced some barriers to accessing the countryside around Bath, ranging from a lack of time or information to difficulty getting to green spaces.

Improving access to Bath's landscape setting, and the natural environment has therefore been a major strand for the Bathscape scheme, aiming to:

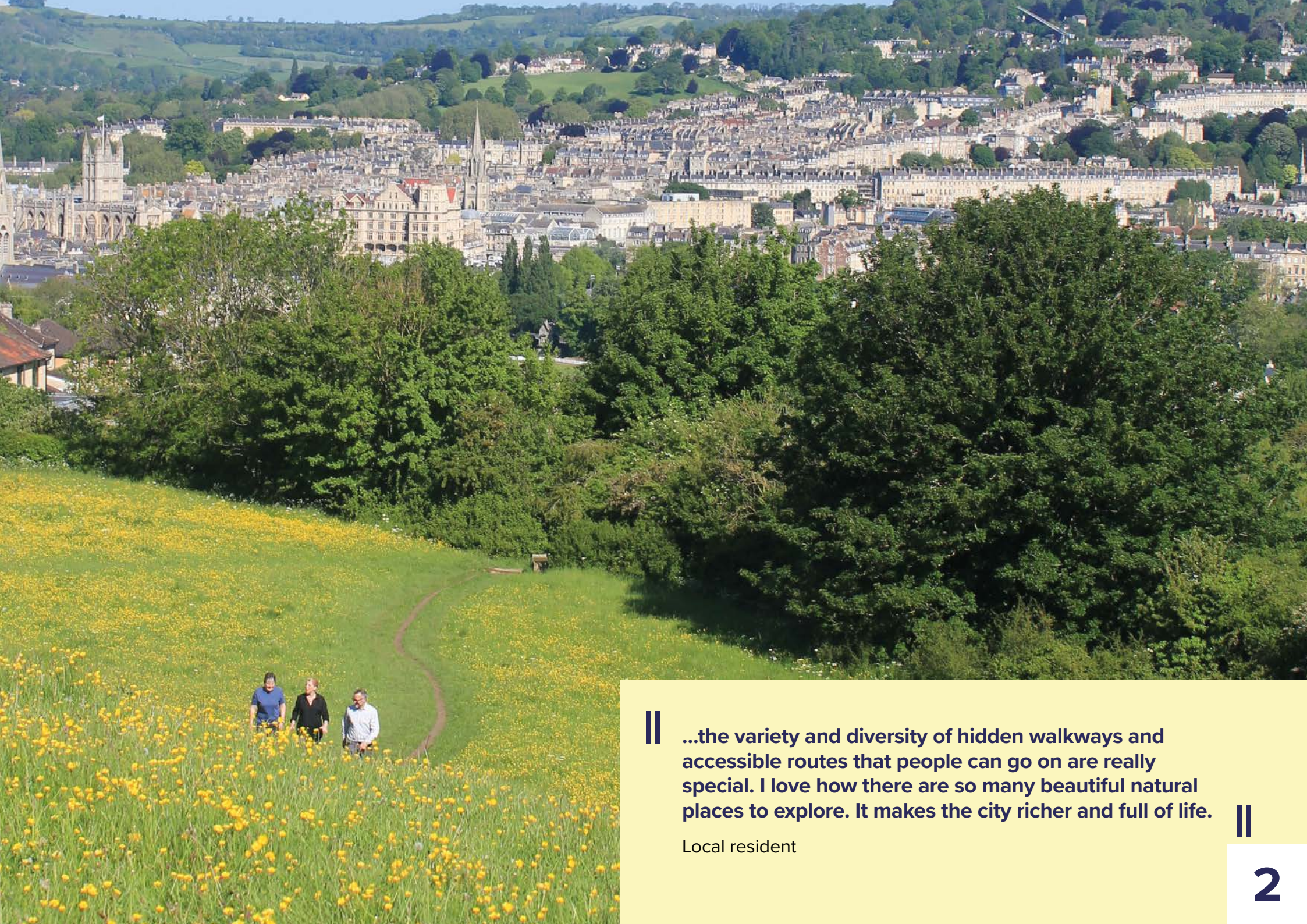
- Identify and begin to reduce barriers to getting out into the Bathscape
- Increase and improve opportunities for people to access the landscape
- Increase confidence in accessing the countryside and nature.

This Pathways to Impact report gives a flavour of what has happened as a result.



It's mine. A slice of green.

Local resident



||

...the variety and diversity of hidden walkways and accessible routes that people can go on are really special. I love how there are so many beautiful natural places to explore. It makes the city richer and full of life.

Local resident

||

Connecting people with Bath's fantastic landscape

A pre-project survey found that being outdoors was a key consideration for local residents when choosing leisure time activities – second only to having fun.

However, only half (51%) of residents in the city's most disadvantaged areas were spending time in Bath's green spaces weekly or daily. Overall, 40% of the city's residents were infrequent visitors or didn't use green space at all.

Spending time in green spaces is linked to lower stress levels, decreased feelings of anxiety and depression, and improved gratitude and self-worth as well as increased physical activity, helping to reduce rates of obesity, heart disease, and Type 2 diabetes.

This was a clear call to action to partners and the Bathscape Scheme has delivered an integrated programme of path and access improvements, signposting and developing easy-to-follow walk guides and supported opportunities including a huge number of guided walks.



Key ingredients

Improving access to the Bathscape has had the following key ingredients at its heart.

1 Weaving heritage through everything

Developing led and self-led walks has been an opportunity to add layers of interpretation about the heritage of Bath's special landscape.

This has provided added interest for walkers but also attracted different audiences, for example, those interested in local landmarks and landforms, archaeology, social history or nature. In this way, heritage has been woven implicitly throughout the access programme.

I don't exercise as a rule, and walking and learning at the same time is well worth it.

Walking Festival participant

Felt accepted, supported, listened to and part of a group for a day.

Walking Festival participant

2 Encouraging access by all

The work of the Bathscape Scheme to improve access has taken into account the needs of all ability levels of users and where people have additional access needs.

A suite of accessible walks and experiences have been delivered from nature connection safaris with SEND schools to level access routes into the landscape. Self-guided walks and accompanying videos provide an invitation for individuals, families and groups to continue to access the landscape after a led experience.

At the beginning I didn't think that I could do it, but I did, and this has helped me to have more confidence.

Young person experiencing difficulties

3 Providing a supported environment

Linked to encouraging access for all, guided and accompanied walks have provided a supported environment for those who may not feel confident in their own ability, or in venturing into green spaces or new locations alone.

Feedback highlights how important this has been for helping some people to participate, try new things and push beyond their comfort zone.

Helped me escape from stressful situations at home and make me smile and feel good.

Walking Festival participant

I felt safe, informed and had a really fun time on each walk.

Participant

Spotlight: Festival gets people out into the landscape

The Bathscape Walking Festival has been a centrepiece of the engagement programme and perhaps its most visible element – with many stakeholders citing it as the greatest success of the Scheme.

Held in September each year, a curated programme of walks are led by incredible volunteers, professionals and organisations drawn from a wide range of experiences and expertise.

In addition to more traditional guided walks, the Festival has included opportunities to try out Nordic walking and walking football, Urban Treescape walks, walks led by members of the Deaf community, accessible sensory and wellbeing walks, an Interfaith pilgrimage and map reading skills.

One highlight has been 500 walkers taking a 22-mile Circuit of Bath in aid of Julian House who support people experiencing homelessness.

Festival walks have created an ‘appointment to visit’ the Bathscape, and a safe, inclusive and supported space in which to explore the local area and heritage. As a result, 7,500 walkers have taken part across 6 Festivals.

Participation from target Wards made up a small proportion of attendance but increased with targeted marketing and a taster walk booklet, as well as partnerships with local groups and walks exploring these communities.

As well as very high enjoyment ratings (97%), evaluation shows that participants joining a walk benefit in a range of ways:

- 78% say the walks helped them to connect with their local area
- The Festival strongly supports all five NHS Ways to Wellbeing
- Connecting with new people interested in the same things and the opportunity for side-by-side conversations which can be a less intimidating way to socialise with strangers
- Three quarters of attendees said that the Festival had inspired them to explore the area further, attend more group walks or find out more about local heritage – with walk booklets, videos and online routes to help
- Walks promote mindful questioning, conscious curiosity, and encouraging observation.



|| **I had stopped going on group walks because of health problems and lack of transport, but on one of the walks another walker invited me to join their group which uses public transport.**

I now feel encouraged to go on regular long group walks again, which will be good for my physical and mental wellbeing, all thanks to the Bathscape walking festival. ||

Walking Festival participant

|| **I learned things about the history of Bath I would never have found out/noticed otherwise, and that has inspired me to find out still more, which is good for my wellbeing because it gives me something new and challenging to think about.** ||

Walking Festival participant

A lot of delight at going down streets/paths etc that people had never done so before – and a couple of people weren't [living] too far from the route we took, and yet hadn't discovered those paths!

Bathscape partner



This is such a wonderful idea and the whole experience was easy to access and participate in.

Walking Festival participant

Improving access to Bath's landscape

The landscape partnership has made a concerted effort to make the Bathscape more accessible to a wider range of people.

For example, Bathscape's dedicated team of Community Action for Nature volunteers, Cotswold Voluntary Wardens and Bath Ramblers Maintenance Team have together tackled upgrades to paths, installing steps and keeping walkways clear and accessible amongst other vital tasks for ensuring easy access to green spaces.

The Scheme has employed creative ways to tempt people out into the landscape and connecting with nature and heritage. This has ranged from a traditional Wassail and a socially distanced immersive pollinator experience to walks exploring Bath's uncomfortable past – exploring the city's relationship with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Cumulatively these efforts amount to a substantial contribution to how easy it is to get information about venturing up and out of the city centre to the surrounding

countryside, and ease of navigation and access once local residents and visitors are out and about. Special consideration has been given to ensuring access is available for those who are differently abled.

This work goes beyond physical access to improvements to sensory and intellectual access. The Scheme's work to provide opportunities to get out and prompts to notice nature have made a valuable contribution towards nature connection. The Festival of Nature and the Whiteway to Englishcombe family trail are just two examples of this.

Self-guided and led heritage walks shed light on important historical features and fascinating stories that walkers may otherwise have strolled by oblivious.

Overall, it's easier to get out into the Bathscape and to soak in the views, vistas, heritage and wildlife than it has ever been.

It was the best walk I have ever been on.

Young person
experiencing difficulties



One lady said that she came along because she sat at a screen all week for work and needed to get out and spend time in nature, she saw that the walk was supporting two great charities so she decided to come along.

Wellbeing Walk Volunteer

A joy to come and Wassail with you today at the City Farm! A grand celebration of spring, saucepan banging and slices of toast in trees. Thank you for spreading your enthusiasm for life. It works!

Participant

Top: Eggventure family activities.
© Anna Barclay.

Bottom: A walk with the Black Families Support Group. © Cotswolds National Landscape.

Opposite page: Walking out from Combe Hay.





**Something magic
about this place.**

Local resident



Outcomes achieved:



More and a wider range of people are engaged with heritage



The local area is a better place to live, work and visit



The bat walk was sick, they flew right past my head and we could hear them too.

Young person



[The couple] Were very nervous about joining the walk as didn't know whether they'd manage 5km, particularly with an uphill – but really pleased they managed it and will now seek out other walks they can do.

Wellbeing Walk Volunteer



I was so happy looking forward to a walk, and the memories of being out with a group of people. I made friends that I have since contacted and we plan to go on walks together. I have encouraged my sister to join me on some walks now that I know where some are that she'll be able to do (she is mobility challenged.)

Walking Festival participant

Right: Walkers at Bath City Farm enjoying a walk led by Cotswolds National Landscape.
© Cotswolds National Landscape.

Top left: Lyncombe Hill Fields volunteer working to help improve the site for visitors and wildlife.

Top right: A Bathscape student placement accompanies care workers and people with complex needs from Carrswood Daycare Centre on a visit to Carr's Wood.

Opposite page: Walkers stretching their legs on the Solsbury Hill stretch of the Circuit of Bath.





[My client] has come a long way by managing to make it there these past two weeks... Although I offered to walk to the allotments with him next week to meet you all, he thinks he will be fine to come on his own.

Specialist Social Prescriber (Autism)



The Bathscape Landscape Partnership Scheme is made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Thanks to National Lottery players, the partnership has delivered 25 interconnected projects and brought together partners around a shared vision to ensure Bath and its setting are better recognised, managed and experienced as a landscape city, with the surrounding hills and valleys enhancing the World Heritage Site and actively enjoyed by all.

This Pathways to Impact report has been created by external evaluators, Heritage Insider, as part of the Bathscape end-of-Scheme evaluation. It has been built from mixed-methods evidence independently reviewed and synthesized.

Verbatim quotes have been used throughout this document in order to include stakeholders' own voices.

For authenticity, the spelling and grammar of these have not been corrected. [] denotes a deletion. ... denotes a partial quote.

Bathscape Partnership Board:

Bath & North East
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www.bathscape.co.uk

Top: Carrs Wood Daycare Centre clients exploring Rainbow Woods.

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Graphic Design: Genie Creative