



Stories of the hills

Sharing Bath's heritage landscape





Bath's UNESCO World Heritage status is celebrated and shared with locals and visitors alike, but lift your eyes from the city centre and the heritage of the hills above remain somewhat a secret to many.

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. The research and consultation found that whilst most people felt they knew something about the area, many said they would like to know more about it and be more up-to-date, and would welcome more information and opportunities for activities and events.

Partners identified common themes such as an aspiration for active management, connection, inclusivity, partnership and encouraging inspiration and enjoyment.

Activities to research and effectively communicate Bathscape's stories via a wide range of engaging media, relevant to the target audiences has been a major strand of work for the scheme, aiming to:

- Help people to enjoy finding out about their heritage and that of others
- Provoke people into learning, discovering and exploring places and ideas
- Relate places and ideas to people's own awareness and understanding
- Reveal new meanings and relationships.

In addition to this, the scheme set out to develop the skills of individuals and groups to help care for and share Bathscape's heritage.

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

When I think back to my early days in involvement with the World Heritage Site, the green setting was only given a brief mention, but this now feels absolutely central to understanding of the city and plans for the future.

Bathscape partner



|| The green spaces around Bath are so important because they encircle the city in green - wherever you are in Bath you can see a green skyline. It's a constant backdrop and I think many of us take it for granted. ||

Local resident

How understanding was delivered

The partners developed an overarching theme and five supporting messages (below) to guide how they fostered understanding of the landscape:

‘The landscape around Bath, the Bathscape, has profoundly influenced its settlement, development and use over millennia, resulting in a city that has an intimate connection with its natural setting.’

A wide range of media, events, training and resources have helped to deliver these messages.

For example, one way to connect people with the natural setting was through a programme of walks on biodiversity themes including bats, trees, bird song, wild food and archaeology, making bat boxes and bug hotels, and running activities including bug hunting, moth trapping, pond dipping, fungi forays, bushcraft and eco art.



Participants at a map skills class © Cotswolds National Landscape.

The five Bathscape interpretative themes

1 Shaping the land

The underlying rock and its erosion have significantly influenced the ways people have used and lived on the land, resulting in a landscape that is both harmonious and varied.

2 Settling the land

People have settled in the valley of the Avon for six thousand years using the natural resources of the river and the hills for food, building materials, defence, recreation and wellbeing.

3 Working the land

People have exploited the natural resources of the river valley and surrounding hills to transport goods and people, rear their livestock and quarry Bath's distinctive golden limestone.

4 Enjoying the land

Bath is a city built on leisure and pleasure, where people have gathered to take the waters and enjoy the landscape rich with rural walks, far-reaching views and fresh air.

5 Conserving the land

The hills and valleys have a diversity of habitats, including grasslands, ancient woodlands, riverside meadows and wetlands, offering refuge to a rich variety of species, some of which are national rarities.

Key ingredients

Fostering an awareness and understanding of the Bathscape and its heritage has had the following key ingredients at its heart:

1 Unlocking the story of the landscape

The Bathscape scheme has been a valued way-in for local people to being able to 'read' the landscape and its heritage for themselves, for example, from map reading skills to species identification.

By building individual knowledge, the scheme has equipped a range of audiences and communities with skills that they can use for their own personal pleasure and satisfaction, to share with others or to help better record or care for local heritage and nature.

Participants speak of how they have used the skills, how the experience has built their confidence, applied them to their work, volunteering or hobby, or inspired them to get out and discover more heritage.

I just wanted to thank you for organising such a fun and informative walk at Bath meadow last week. I'm so excited to revisit it soon and see if I can identify a few species that he pointed out to us. I thought it was a lovely atmosphere and everyone was made to feel very welcome.

Participant

2 Getting out into Bathscape

Facilitating first-hand experiences of Bath's green setting has been core to the Bathscape place-based approach to deepening understanding.

These immersive landscape experiences provide in situ learning opportunities, from guided walks and activities to training and bespoke tours, promoted trails and interpretation. This dovetails with the scheme's work on reducing barriers to accessing the Bathscape.

On a sunny Tuesday afternoon..., several of our clients were led around Snow Hill to see the range of trees it holds... It was lovely to notice a different aspect of Snow Hill and appreciate how many trees call it home... it too is a unique environment with a tour of its own.

Genesis Trust (working to alleviate homelessness)

3 Utilising local expertise

The Bathscape scheme has drawn in knowledge and skills from both those formally recognised as experts and from those with lived experience to help shape and deliver the programme to increase understanding.

The pool of expertise has included partners, community-based organisations, volunteers, educational institutions, Land managers and enthusiastic local people.

I attended the Circuit of Bath weekend this weekend and I wanted to share my feedback. I am so pleased to say that I had the most amazing experience. The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens...are professional, welcoming, personable, passionate and proud of Bath and they made us all feel very welcome and at ease. They shared really interesting information throughout the walk.

Participant



Spotlight:

Podcast helps us to listen to the landscape

The Bathscape podcast, 'Footprints', is hosted and produced by walking and podcasting enthusiast Pommy Harmar.

It is designed to inspire residents to get out and explore Bath's beautiful natural landscape - with its hills and valleys, grasslands and woodlands. From forgotten history to the greatest places to walk, over 40 podcast episodes take listeners out and about.

Season 1 focussed on providing a flavour of the Bathscape scheme walking festival through interviews with special guests, a recorded local walk and top-tips from the festival organiser.

Season 2 delved deep into the rich diversity of the Bathscape, its culture, heritage, landscape and people.

It is an expansive work in its own right – helping to uncover the social, natural and environmental heritage of the area and how it is cared for.

As well as being nominated for Audio and Radio Industry Awards (ARIA)¹, Footprints has been warmly received by its over 7,000 strong audience. Listeners have reflected on how the podcast has revealed deeper layers of the heritage of the Bathscape, introduced new places to explore and spotlighted the work and lives of local people and organisations caring for the landscape.



Recording a podcast in progress

The podcasts are a huge asset to Bathscape and the wider cultural heritage of BANES.

Stakeholder

A brilliant programme, very informative and well put together. Love the editing.

Heritage venue

A big thank you to Bathscape for giving me the opportunity to make this lovely podcast. I get to meet extraordinary people who care and know so much about their particular part of nature/landscape/heritage. Making each episode month by month has really brought home to me how beautiful and precious the landscape around Bath is and that it's not just about the Georgians and the Romans. I hope the listeners get that too by now!

Podcast Host and Producer

I do really enjoy the Footprints podcast (I have been working my way through back episodes on and off). Pommy is very good and easy to listen to. It is very calming.

Local Resident

Spotlight: Remembering the Workhouse dead

Thousands of people pass along the Wells Road every day but wouldn't have given a second glance to the seemingly unloved stretch of rough grass at Odd Down.

However, tireless volunteer research at Bath Record Office revealed over 4,289 unmarked burials there – over 3,000 burials from Bath Workhouse (now St Martin's Hospital) between 1858 and 1899 and an earlier count of over 1,000 buried around the chapel on Midford Road.

Archaeology volunteers undertook geophysical investigations of the site. The site was being maintained, but as yet had little official recognition and no clue to the public of the use of the field in Victorian times.

A successful exhibition at the Museum of Bath at Work (2017) and booklet was followed by the Bathscape recruiting volunteers, planting trees and bulbs, adding an information board and benches with memorials to the Workhouse dead with the motto: 'Their Only Crime was Poverty'.

A small but determined band decided to walk every inch of the field and to read out the names of all 3,182 women and men, children and babies buried there.

Artist and walker on 'Naming the Names' which happened during the pandemic

[It's] not just dead paupers, but human beings just like you and me.

Volunteer researcher



New interpretation panel at the Workhouse Burial Ground.

With the enthusiastic help of the Parks Department, a new mowing regime allowed part of the field to develop as a wildflower meadow. While another part is kept short to allow for children's games and there are benches for people to sit and read, picnic and chat.

Bathscape team

Deepening understanding of Bath's landscape and heritage

One scheme success factor was 'Bathscape' to be commonly used to refer to the World Heritage Site's landscape setting – synonymous with the idea of a landscape city and therapeutic landscape.

Partners have been peeling back layers of significance; revealing the cultural heritage and social and natural histories of Bathscape. The creative arts, events, programmes and interpretation have all provided new 'gateways' into these aspects of the landscape – tempting people to get out, supporting them to explore or explore further, and to learn.

Beyond this, learners in more formal settings have been given opportunities to experience the landscape first-hand, to question and enquire, develop skills, and build understanding.

Teachers have been supported to develop their skills and confidence in using their local landscape as a living resource to enrich learning. For their classes, this has provided a valuable opportunity for learning outside the classroom and applying it to the real-world.

For university students this has been a stepping stone to further study and careers – increasing employability.

Whilst there is work still to be done, there are strong signs of a deeper audience understanding of landscape beginning to be implicit to the character of Bath – adding to sense-of-place. Furthermore, Bathscape has carefully woven how the landscape is cared for through every opportunity and highlighted how to protect it. For some this has led to getting involved for the first-time, extending their volunteering or advocating for Bathscape.



|| I just wanted to say a HUGE thanks to everyone for the amazing year I have had. I have learnt so much and really grown as a person, and it is all the more sweeter because I got to do that with all you amazing people. I remember being very unsure about whether or not to do a placement year when I was applying to courses; I didn't even really know quite what that meant at the time! But after this year, I can proudly say that was one of the best decisions I took. ||

Placement student

|| We've got a few new teachers who would benefit from your expertise in taking the curriculum outdoors. For example, how to use nature in art, science, maths. ||

Teacher



|| Last night was a fantastic evening with such excellent viewings of bats (close up) of noctules and pipistrelles. One lady and her son came twice and did some homework in between to impress us with her 'best bat facts.' If there was a prize, she would have won! ||

Volunteer
walk leader

Outcomes achieved:



People have learnt about heritage



People have developed skills



More and a wider range of people are engaged with heritage



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



Beautiful vistas, spectacular views, interesting facts about wildlife and social history context.

Visitor



First and foremost, thanks for your wonderful website and podcast. I recently learned about your partnership from the Bath Tourism website and am so excited to find such a wealth of resources!

Local resident



[I got] into walk leading because of helping with the Bathscape walking festival, and was very motivated and inspired by it, and the breadth of work that Bathscape does.

Volunteer



Top left: Participant at the city-wide Festival of Nature.

Top right: SEND pupil exploring Entry Hill.

Bottom right: Bathscape exhibition at the Forest of Imagination.

Opposite page: Insect identification training © Avon Wildlife Trust.





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
Somerset Council

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www.bathscape.co.uk

Top: Tower community advisory group taking in the view at Beckford's Tower.

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