

Bradford on Avon In Bloom 2023



Photo by the Bradford on Avon Photography Group



**BRADFORD
ON AVON**
TOWN COUNCIL

Welcome to BoA

Foreword

Over the past year, Bradford on Avon Town Council has taken on green spaces management from Wiltshire Council under an Asset Transfer & Service Delegation. In April 2022, we took ownership of the land and in December, as the previous grounds maintenance contract ended, we took on those services which included emptying litter bins and grass cutting.

To meet this challenge we hired new Town Wardens and a Supervisor. Since then we have not stood still for a single second. In the last year we used nearly £100,000 of Forestry Commission funding to plant over 3,500 trees across the town. This project saw us heavily invest in the future of one of our largest green spaces, transforming it for future generations.

Following years of fundraising with SkateBoA, a new skatepark is under construction at Poulton Park. This will be a fantastic centrepiece for the first phase of investment in the green space and an invaluable community facility.

It's been a tough start. We took over grass cutting during an exceptional year for grass growth and have planted trees in advance of a very hot and dry spring season. Now, we are on top of the grass cutting (including wildflower meadows) and have introduced a robust watering plan for trees — including the use of tree watering bags.

Everything we do takes into account our declaration of the climate and ecological emergencies, such as not using peat, not using herbicides where possible and carefully selecting our plants and trees.

In Bradford on Avon we are blessed with dedicated volunteers who help us achieve so much and keep our spaces rich in nature, tidy and beautiful. We know you will enjoy your tour of Bradford on Avon and that you meet some of the people involved in its care.



Climate & Ecological Emergencies

In March 2019, Bradford on Avon Town Council declared a Climate Emergency, declared an Ecological Emergency in December 2020 and committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

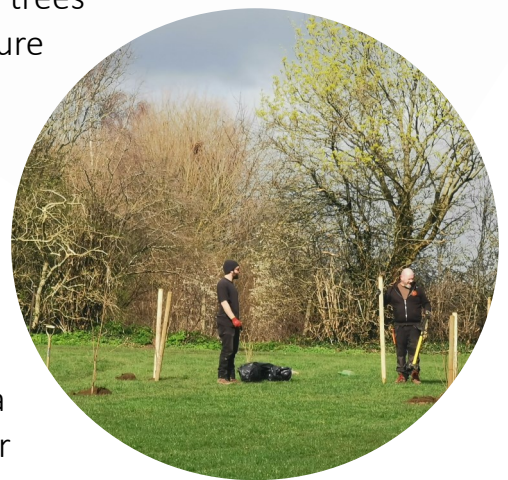
As a result, we have continually demonstrated our strong commitment to being an eco-conscious town council. Part of this is the ceaseless search for new and exciting opportunities to strengthen our green resolve. Much of which you will see on your tour of the town.



Tree selection

We have carefully selected both the species and varieties of trees planted this year. In doing this, we take into account the future form of the tree, current soil pH, moisture and other important factors such as the current and future climate.

For example, across areas rich with wildflowers, such as the meadow in Poulton Park, we have planted trees to form a subtle avenue with a path meandering between. Trees such as field maple and birch have light low nutrient leaves to avoid smothering and enriching the soil. The field maple is a fastigate variety to limit the shade cast across the wildflower meadow.



St Margaret's Hall

St Margaret's Hall is a wonderful venue in the heart of Bradford on Avon. It is the perfect venue for meetings, private parties, weddings, theatre, film and community events.

The venue started life in the late 18th century as a specialist dyers house before becoming a cinema in 1904 and more recently a community hall and the former home of the town council.

Solar panels

As part of addressing the urgent issue of climate change, the town council installed solar panels on the south facing roof of St. Margaret's Hall in early 2019.

The 78 panels were unveiled on Sunday 3 March 2019. We invested £30,000 in the panels and the public has responded to the solar panels positively.



Illuminating facts

In 2022 alone the solar panels generated 25.18MWH (MegaWatt Hours) in electricity, saved 7.3 tons of CO2 and saved the town council over £2,000.

Hanging baskets

This year we've also taken hanging baskets inhouse and added more self watering baskets – especially in areas of hard landscaping to address long periods of hot and dry weather. All of the hanging baskets are planted with peat free compost and feature nectar rich flowers. You will see the fantastic installations in areas across the town such as the town bridge, the Shambles and St Margaret's Hall.





Community Fridge

The Community Fridge was launched to tackle food waste.

Since then, we have seen a clear demand and have increased the opening hours to every day from 9am to 5pm.

On average the Town Warden team collects 1 to 2 bags of food from the Co-op daily weighing around 5kg.

We also collect from Sainsbury's twice every week with around 4 crates donated on each visit. Each crate weighs around 10kg each – which saves a further 40kg of food waste from going to landfills each week.



Riverside beds

The raised beds along the riverside have been taken over from Wiltshire Council and planted as demonstration beds. This is so that people can use the beds as an example of how to plant in their own gardens, allotments or even window boxes. The beds were set up using the no dig method — where we stripped the weeds from the ground using cardboard and compost.



We do not use peat and the compost here is created using garden waste. The planting, led by volunteer gardener Anna Hislam, is carefully chosen to appear informal. It does, however, combine the successful growing of vegetables and herbs, as well as perennial and annual pollinating flowers.





Dementia friendly planter

We are working with the local Dementia Action Alliance group to create a new planter. We have had chats with the group to select plants with scents people would remember — as smell is an important and powerful trigger for memories. It is also planted to be interesting year round.

The group that planted the beds also looks after the planter themselves.



Swimming pool beds

Our dedicated Town Warden team has cleared the beds outside the town's swimming pool. What were once plots filled with weeds now have a new lease on life.

Churches

The grounds of Holy Trinity Church and Christ Church are now managed by the town council as closed churchyards. The churchyard in Holy Trinity is, however, maintained by the church with a grant from the town council. These areas are cared for by the gardener and volunteers as a meadow and for wildlife, including a healthy population of slow worms.

At Christ Church, the town council has taken over the management of the churchyard from the previous contractors and has been working closely with the parochial parish council to keep on top of its important grassland habitat. We have part funded, alongside the National Lottery, a project called Discover Christ Church. This involved renovating the churchyard — involving school children to improve biodiversity.



At Christ Church CofE Primary, we part funded the restoration of the pond which can be found across from the church which is important for creating a wider and more diverse habitat.



Flower & Produce Show

Every year, St Margaret's Hall hosts the Flower & Produce Show. In 2022, 83 entrants battling it out over 91 categories.

Nearly 400 more people came through the doors of St Margaret's Hall to enjoy one of the town's most popular annual events — around 100 more than in 2021.

This year, we're sure that the Flower & Produce Show will continue to grow — as it is one of the favourites in the town calendar.

Bristol & Avon RiverBlitz

Some of our councillors, alongside fellow citizen scientists from Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon, took part in the Bristol Avon River Trust RiverBlitz.

The RiverBlitz is a yearly event where volunteers across the country collect water samples during the same week in July from their local rivers to test nitrate and phosphate levels.

Observations about the sample sites are also recorded. This helps give a snapshot of the water quality. We took samples at 8 different sites throughout Bradford on Avon from above the town weir to below Avoncliff Weir with some very interesting results. The data collected is entered into the Bristol and Avon Rivers Trust (BART) website, analysed and plotted on a regional map by the RiverBlitz team.



Town Centre



Living Green Wall

Our green wall is a vibrant part of the town centre. The green wall project started in 2019 with the idea of turning a grey wall into something lush, colourful and beautiful — with the added aim of reducing air pollution from the nearby streets.

It does this by trapping and absorbing the pollution from its surroundings. Crowdfunding and community donations were supported by contributions from the Arts Festival Group, Wiltshire Council and Bradford on Avon Town Council.

And in July 2022, the green wall was fixed into place and planted by ANS Global, living wall and green roof specialists. Studies have found that living walls cool their surroundings by as much as 5C.

What you can expect to see on your visit: Allium Schoenoprasum, silene shafta, autumn catchfly, heart-leaf bergenias and more... The plants are selected for the specific conditions each season brings.

CLuB volunteers

CLuB (Clean Up Bradford on Avon) is a hardworking group who meet on Monday mornings. They spruce up the town through various jobs such as cleaning the chapel at the cemetery. CLuB has been working with us on a new approach to managing weeds in hard landscapes.

In short, they clear the vegetation on paths in the autumn and winter seasons — removing perennials but allowing annual wildflowers typical of the limestone-walled town to flourish. However there are exceptions to this where public safety is concerned.

We expect this approach to effectively manage vegetation without the use of herbicides to protect local biodiversity. We have a herbicide policy, where it is only used in exceptional circumstances such as against Japanese knotweed.



Millie's Garden

Millie's Garden was renovated with the eponymous sculpture unveiled at the turn of the millennium. Since then, the garden has become overgrown with persistent weeds but we are planning to rejuvenate the space over the next year. We will use our proven method of no dig beds — a brilliant example can be seen at our riverside planters. Larger shrubs and trees will be kept and the stems of these have been surrounded with reusable plastic matting. This will help deal with weeds before the redesign and replanting next spring.

Westbury Garden

The first tree planting we did was in Westbury Garden. Next to the Tourist Information Centre we planted a guelder rose (kalyna tree), given by the town's Ukrainian community to thank the town for their support.

This was included as part of the Ukrainian folk festival, Masnytsia, which was also a day of reflection on the anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine.

The event, organised by the Ukrainian community, raised £1,800, with half of the funds used to support educational and social activities for Ukrainians in Bradford on Avon and the remainder supporting charities supplying medical and protective equipment in Ukraine.



Barton Farm Country Park

As of last April 2022, we have taken ownership of Barton Farm Country Park from Wiltshire Council. Since then, we have been making improvements to the grass cutting regime, replacing bins, repairing benches, planting trees and restoring incredible features such as the willow labyrinth.

We have our own Nature Volunteers to help as well as visiting groups such as the Wessex team of Natural England and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's Wellbeing Group.

The Tithe Barn is owned by English Heritage and the remainder of the more modern (but historic) buildings and ground is owned by the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust.

The Nature Volunteers with the Preservation Trust have sown an area of wildflowers here.

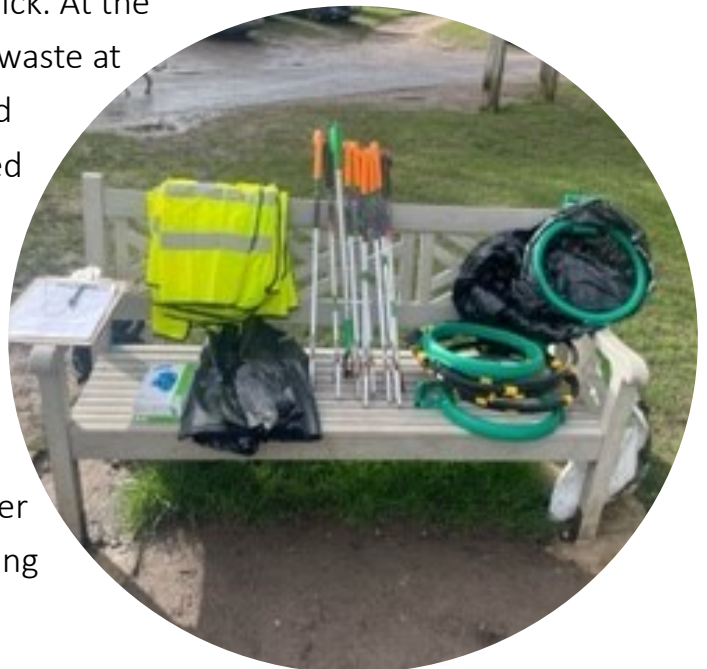
And, adjacent, there is a heritage orchard, with local varieties of fruit trees, a wildflower meadow and mown paths, popular with visitors and residents.

Healthy River project

When ownership transferred to the town council we began putting together a long term plan for the future of the green space — including the river bank.

This year we supported Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon with its part in the Great Avon River Pick. At the event, the volunteers collected 11 full bags of waste at Barton Farm Country Park. The bags were filled with cans, bottles and surprisingly an unopened bag of rice, as well as lots of shredded plastic.

We have also ringfenced £2,000 for community training and education from the Bristol and Avon Rivers Trust. The town council has started taking water samples to test the nitrate and phosphate levels in the river which are then submitted to a national recording scheme.



The grass is much greener now

In December 2022, we took over the management of grass cutting in Bradford on Avon, including highway verges in 30mph areas for Wiltshire Council.

To manage this responsibility we have expanded our Town Warden team, given them training and bought improved kit. With our climate and ecological commitments in mind we bought battery powered strimmers, hedge cutters and brush cutters.



To cut and collect grass we bought a ride on mower to move toward cut and collect regimes. In the long term this will save fuel, money and time as the nutrients removed from the ground will stop the grass growing as quickly.

This method also lets us establish more rewilding areas which will increase our network of such spaces across the town and thus increase biodiversity.



Examples of this can be seen in Barton Farm Country Park, Bearfield, the cemetery and at Poulton Park which you will see on your guided tour.

Nature Volunteers

The town council now oversees the long established Barton Farm Country Park group of Nature Volunteers. Over the years their jobs have expanded to cover more and more areas of the town.

They meet once a month on Saturdays and occasional ad hoc sessions. Their activities include tree planting, caring for the meadow, removing invasive plants like Himalayan balsam, orchard pruning and more.

At the Strips, the Nature Volunteers coppice trees to install hurdles on hills to help address water erosion.



Working with Natural England

As well as the volunteer groups we help to coordinate, we have also worked with other groups and organisations.

In February, we hosted Natural England who helped in the restoration of the willow labyrinth. Once they reached the heart of the country park, the team was given a brilliant demonstration on willow weaving by Sally Heselton, a local horticulturist and volunteer.



Working with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

This summer season we are hosting Wiltshire Wildlife Trust who are clearing Himalayan balsam in Barton Farm Country Park. They will be doing this starting from as far off as Avoncliff. This links in with our Healthy River project nicely as Himalayan balsam can be detrimental to the health of our river banks.

We are also working with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's Wellbeing Group who have been out in Barton Farm Country Park twice so far installing tree guards.

Royal tree planting

To commemorate Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's 70 years of service we planted a memorial Rockhampton Red hornbeam. The ceremony was attended by councillors, members of the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust, volunteers as well as Councillor Katie Vigar, the Mayor of Bradford on Avon and the Deputy Lieutenant for Wiltshire, Air Vice Marshal David Couzens.



Poulton Park

Planting Poulton Park

Our Plant Poulton Park events were a massive hit with residents who took the future of the green space into their own hands.

Over 70 people joined us at Poulton Park and helped us plant around 1,200 whips using the Miyawaki method.

Miyawaki forests are miniature forests (often planted by community groups) where dense planting aims to allow trees to grow more quickly, improve biodiversity, and absorb more CO₂ (carbon sequestration).



The trees planted included alder, silver birch, hornbeam, hazel, holly, dogwood, beech, hawthorn, crab apple, English oak, sessile oak, bird cherry and wild cherry.

As well as planting thousands of whips, the Forestry Commission funding allowed us to buy and plant 149 substantial trees. In Poulton Park alone, we have planted many trees to give the impression of a future arboretum.

New skatepark for BoA



At the end of 2022 we reached our goal of raising £250,000 to build a new skatepark.

This could not be done without the help of SkateBoA which organised well attended community events, Derrick Hunt who helped close the funding gap and the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust for its donation which gave the project the final push.

Maverick Skateparks is now building the skatepark which is likely to be finished before the end of the summer holidays.



Town Cemetery

The town council has also taken on the management of the Bradford on Avon Cemetery from Wiltshire Council from this spring including grass cutting at the site.

In the area of Victorian burials, we moved to a meadow cut. This has revealed a good wildflower sward. We have made lots of small adjustments, such as using the removed turf from interments to seed meadows elsewhere, to increase biodiversity.



In Your Neighbourhood

The Three Horseshoes

It's a local pub that attracts residents and visitors who enjoy regular live music and events. There is a lovely beer garden next to the local train station.

The pub garden is cared for and managed by landlord Sean and the hard work of Tony. The garden is grown for the enjoyment of visitors, but with a twist – including flowers, herbs and vegetables, as well as a beehive on the roof of the pub.

Station volunteers

The Friends of Bradford on Avon Train Station keep the area and its gardens neat and tidy. Two teams of volunteers meet up 1 weekday morning a week. One team looks after the westbound platform and the other the eastbound. This is all done with Network Rail's approval and high safety standards.



Secret Gardens

The Secret Gardens of Bradford on Avon opened its gates for the first time since the pre-pandemic years in 2023. Gardens large and small welcomed visitors on Sunday 28 May and Sunday 25 June. Money raised from the sale of tickets will go towards funding green community projects.

Wiltshire Heights

Wiltshire Heights has valuable outdoor space, where residents can get a breath of fresh air and feel the therapeutic power of nature, gardening and companionship.

Other volunteers

The Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust

Gardening volunteers

Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon's Biodiversity Group and Swift Group

Bradford on Avon Cricket Club

Bradford on Avon Bowls Club

BoA Youth

Kennet & Avon Canal & Rivers Trust



Your Tour

When you arrive in Bradford on Avon team will guide you through everything found in this portfolio and more.

Please see the outline map of your tour. We hope you enjoy your visit to our beautiful town.

BoA tour timetable

When you arrive, shortly before 10am, you will be greeted by Chris Hogg, Green Spaces officer.

10am — we will start of tour from Holy Trinity Church

12.30pm — the main tour will be completed

12.30 to 1.30pm — Mayor's reception with Volunteers in Holy Trinity Church

1.30pm — Secret Gardens

1.45pm — train station volunteers

2pm — Three Horse Shoes

2.30pm — Wiltshire Heights

3pm — conclusion

Parking

You can park at St Margaret's Hall (BA15 1DE). There are reserved parking spaces (pictured) beside the venue which we will mark out for your arrival.

