



BOA in Bloom Recovery & Resilience



Welcome to Bradford on Avon

Bradford on Avon is a picture perfect town nestled on the edge of the Cotswolds. It's home to beautiful parks, green spaces and meadows cherished by residents and visitors alike. After the transfer of assets from Wiltshire Council, it's been our privilege to care for and look after these green spaces.

Flooding in 2024

In November 2024, Bradford on Avon experienced significant flooding. While the immediate impact of Storm Bert made national and even international headlines, the longer term consequences are still felt today. One of the worst affected buildings was St Margaret's Hall, which was overwhelmed with over a foot of river water.

Since then, we've been working hard to strip out, dry and reinstate the hall. It has been a complex project, but while no one would ever choose for a building to flood, the restoration has given us the opportunity to upgrade the kitchen and toilet facilities.

We've also made a number of subtle improvements to help reduce the impact of any future flooding. These include raising power sockets higher on the walls and replacing carpets with durable vinyl flooring, making the hall easier to clean and quicker to recover should it flood again.

This isn't the end of the journey, however, and we'll continue exploring ways to make the community venue even more resilient to future flooding.

Westbury Garden wall

Another major consequence, was the damage to the riverside wall alongside Westbury Garden.

The damage to the wall during the aforementioned flooding was partially caused by the growth of the veteran London Plane tree (*Platanus x hispanica*) above ground level and partially by the water flowing



work at the riverside wall at Westbury Garden

through the wall as river levels receded post-storm. We have carried out work to make the tree more resilient, adding cobra bracing to hold the branches should the old cable braces fail. We are now removing the damaged masonry to lower the wall to the level of the park. This will allow the tree to continue growing without putting pressure

on the wall, while also enabling floodwater to drain from the garden more freely without causing further damage. We also intend to install an attractive fence to protect people falling into the river. This work is being carried out under an Environment Agency licence, with specialist engineers and contractors delivering the project.

In Your Neighbourhood entries

The **Railway Station Volunteers** are a dedicated group who work with Great Western Railway to maintain the station planters, and are restoring a former railway allotment with new planting and wildlife-friendly features.

BOA Secret Gardens open twice each spring fundraising toward horticultural projects across the town, including the schools and the riverside planters maintained by our volunteer gardener using no-dig

gardening principles.

If you stop there for long enough, you're bound to hear compliments from passers-by.

The parent volunteer-led **Christ Church Primary School** kitchen garden is now in its fifth growing season and is tended entirely by the children who plant, sow, weed, water and harvest at a weekly garden club. The garden uses no chemicals, synthetic fertilisers or mains water and the children learn about soil health, companion planting and

encouraging biodiversity.

Holy Trinity Church has a closed churchyard. With volunteer support, they've taken an ecological approach – managing some areas as meadow grass while maintaining pockets of scrub cared for with the benefit of wildlife in mind. They've also worked to encourage native wildflowers, while meeting the wishes of families and others who prefer a "tidier" churchyard.

Tony Smith has cared for

the garden at **The Three Horseshoes** for many years, creating an eclectic mix of plants and ornaments.

Designed to delight and inspire visitors, the garden also embraces permaculture, with fruit and vegetable plants woven throughout.

We also have incredible **Nature Volunteers** and the children of **Fitzmaurice Primary School** who are detailed more on page 2.



■ Fun Dog Show & Spring Fete at Poulton Park

Annual events at our BOA green spaces

Each year we organise a variety of vibrant community events to bring people together to play, learn, share and celebrate.

Many of these events are hosted on our green spaces and help to foster positive memories for families and make the most of the spaces.

Our events are clearly loved by residents, as audience figures grow year on year. Our annual events include:

- Pancake Race
- Duck Race
- BOA Live Music Festival
- BOA Fireworks Display
- Christmas Lights Switch On.

In addition to our annual events, we also host one-off community events – such as the Fun Dog Show & Spring Fete, Play Day and a Skate Jam, all held at Poulton Park.

Our role is not only to care for these spaces and enhance their biodiversity, but also to ensure they remain welcoming places for our community. It's always wonderful to see the green spaces brought to life through events such as youth football, the RUH's Walk of Life, Lions Club activities, cricket and the Green Man Festival.



Help for Girl Guides

Earlier this year, we teamed up with the local Girl Guides troop on a couple of biodiversity projects at Bearfield.

As well as helping to care for Bearfield Orchard, the Guides created a mud scrape to support local House Martins as they build their nests.

We're delighted that the project helped the Guides earn their biodiversity badge.

Volunteers make Bradford on Avon

Meet the town's Nature Volunteers

New faces are welcome to join the Nature Volunteers who meet once a month to work in Barton Farm.

The park extends from the Tithe Barn area along the River Avon towards Avoncliff and includes North Meadow – the land between the boat club and railway line.

Led by Chris Hogg, our Green Spaces Officer and your SWIB guide, activities vary from month to month and include creating wildflower areas, pruning and deadheading, planting and protecting trees, removing invasive Himalayan balsam and helping at the tree nursery.

Kate Nicholls, a volunteer with the group for the past 20 years, says it's a rewarding way to learn countryside skills and become part of the community.

"I've learned an awful lot about plants, care of trees, why weeds are good," she told us.

"It's so nice when people say we're doing a good job and we can share what

we're doing and why.

"We want to inspire people to learn a bit more about the countryside bordering our town and to feel they are part of it.

"We love to have new people join and they don't need to know anything.

"They will learn just as we have done.

"One of the lovely things about the group is meeting with like-minded local people."

Caroline Watson who took her two children to the group when they were young said:

"The children loved it – a morning spent in the undergrowth, wielding loppers and saws, eating far too much chocolate cake and not minding how grubby we became.

"Lifelong skills were learnt during those Saturday mornings and they also created very many happy memories."

■ Nature Volunteers meet on the second Saturday of every month.



Fitzmaurice Primary School

■ Our newest In Your Neighbourhood feature highlights **Fitzmaurice Primary School**. Material from our Willow Labyrinth at Barton Farm Country Park was provided by one of our Nature Volunteers, who also works with pupils at the school. As part of the school's forest school activities and vegetable garden, the willow has been used to create raised beds, giving the natural material a new purpose.



■ Barton Farm willow labyrinth

Becoming a Watermark Town

Bradford on Avon is working with Wessex Water to become a Watermark Town after the idea garnered unanimous councillor support.

The Watermark Town initiative aims to help communities use water more efficiently, protect the natural environment and improve local water services.

Safe water and wastewater services are an essential part of our daily lives, wellbeing,

and the health of the natural world.

If approved, Bradford on Avon may receive grant funding to support community projects which promote better water use and reduce wastewater. Following successful trials in Chippenham and Bridport in 2024, Bradford on Avon was invited to take part in the scheme, thanks to its environmental projects such as the Healthy Rivers Project and the Wild Waters Festival.

Horticulture in Bradford on Avon



■ hanging baskets in Westbury Garden

Every year, we install hanging baskets around Bradford on Avon, choosing resilient plants to provide nectar and flowers throughout the summer. During the recent extreme heat, we've temporarily taken the baskets down to protect them. They're watered using our borehole, providing a resilient and sustainable water source.

Millie's climate garden journey



■ Town Wardens working at Millie's Garden

Millie's Garden is being transformed into a climate resilience demonstration garden, inspired by landscapes that have adapted to climate change over thousands of years.

The planting will combine drought-tolerant Mediterranean plants, species linked to the Caucasus-Hyrcanian refugia and resilient native British plants.

The garden will demonstrate biodiversity, sustainability and adaptation while being an attractive resting spot in the town centre.

A large fig tree (*Ficus carica*), damaged in a storm last autumn, has been retained and managed as a compact coppiced plant.

Other existing plants have either been relocated or retained in the garden, including the Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*).

We're hoping the renovation demonstrates recovery, resilience and adaptation to changing conditions, including new planting from appropriate climate zones.



BOA Library car park

We are taking a longer term sustainable approach to developing our planting. With 2 years of mulching with cardboard and seasoned woodchip from our estate to reduce persistent weeds such as bindweed, we can then use sustainable low maintenance planting. In the library car park, this will include plants with a circular theme, as Bradford on Avon is defined by a 1 mile radius from the Swan Inn.



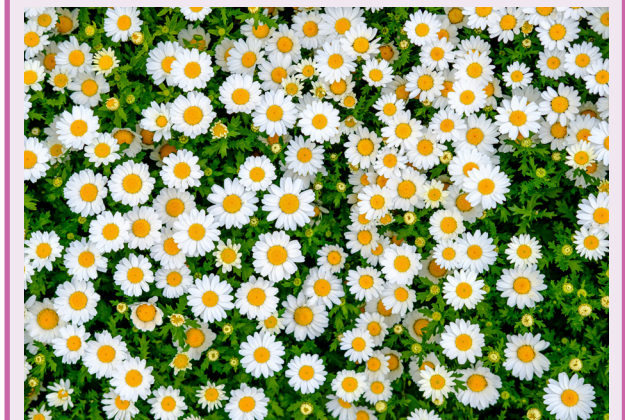
Westbury Garden

We will take the same approach when renewing the planting in Westbury Garden. We'll select species that thrive in the shade of the green space's magnificent mature trees, while also being resilient to periodic flooding. This builds on the planting of guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*) for our Ukrainian community – a plant that embodies resilience.



Christ Church primary

BOA's primary schools both brilliantly get involved in environmental action. The children at Christchurch have annual outings where they join in with the community – supported by our volunteers. Some join CluB volunteers to pick litter around the town, while others helped plant Oxeye Daisies (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) at Sladesbrook Park this spring.



Your route around Bradford on Avon



Our Neighbourhood Plan review

As a community, we're reviewing Bradford on Avon's Neighbourhood Plan which was adopted in 2017.

The review is being led by a steering group made up of members of the Bradford on Avon community and the town council.

Detailed work across five key topics is being completed by topic groups (with each group supported the steering group)

The topic groups are looking at the following:

- Sustainable Development & Climate Change
- Built Environment: Conservation & Design
- Living and Working: Housing, Jobs & Community Wellbeing
- Natural Environment: Biodiversity, Green & Blue Infrastructure
- Transport.

The town council is the Qualifying Body responsible for the Neighbourhood Plan review.

Becky Addy Wood

Becky Addy Wood is an ancient woodland, the town council purchased in 2020. The woodland has suffered with extensive Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*). We are now implementing a new woodland management plan which aims to restore the woodland by planting a mix of resilient species that will grow to replace the woodland canopy lost to disease. This project carefully considers the woodland's current and future ecological value as well as its role within the town's network of biodiversity sites.

Phyllotaxis exhibit

Following David Attenborough's 100th birthday celebrations at the Royal Albert Hall, we obtained some of the stage set for reuse in BOA. The phyllotaxis pattern, shown on the panels, is an exhibition in Millie's Garden. This pattern links the maths of the Fibonacci sequence, nature and the sustainable reuse of material from one-off events. You might also see it repeated throughout this programme.

Box-tree moth

This year, we have kept the Box hedge (*Buxus sempervirens*) alive after an infestation of the caterpillars we used leaf blowers to dislodge the caterpillars for birds to eat. We did this early in the year before the buxine chemical makes the caterpillars unpalatable to the birds. We're watering and feeding the hedge to recover.

Christmas Lights

Every Christmas, we install lights around the town – including along the riverside path. In recent years these lights have been deliberately cut. We're now working with ecologists to design a permanent light run along the riverside path. Our aim is to minimise light spill or disruption to the bat habitat. We hope this project will become a great example of how thoughtful lighting design can support nature recovery.

Siberian Elm

During Storm Darragh, a Siberian Elm (*Ulmus pumilla*) fell in Barton Farm. Rather than removing it, we reduced the tree, laid it back into the ground, mulched around it and protected its root area. Larger sections were retained for future timber use, while smaller branches were chipped and spread beneath the tree. Eighteen months later the tree is doing well.

BOA Nature Chain

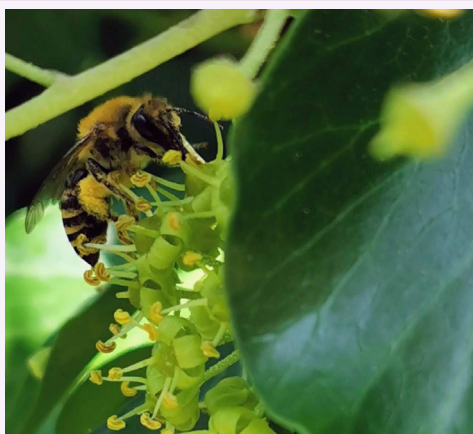
We know the world is facing a climate and ecological emergency. The loss of biodiversity and wildlife in recent decades has been significant, but together we can make a positive difference.

Gardens and outdoor spaces play an important role in supporting local wildlife.

They can provide food, water and shelter for birds, insects and other animals, helping nature thrive.

We've launched a survey to help build a picture of the green spaces across the town and the wildlife habitats they provide.

The responses will help inform a



new Green & Dark Corridors Policy, as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, as well as support plans for a future Rewild Gardens project, inspired by the successful Freshford Nature Chain.