TRINITY

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Saving Jacobs Wells Baths

National Lottery Heritage Fund Development Phase Evaluation Report





Cast Light by Squid soup, image credit Khali Ackford

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Executive Summary

The Development Phase has demonstrated significant public appetite for Jacobs Wells Baths as a heritage asset and a future community cultural venue.

Through consultation, creative engagement, heritage learning activities, stakeholder workshops, school partnerships, artist-led projects and accessibility-focused research, 1284 people have been consulted/engaged over the 15 month project.

We have been learning about what matters most to local communities to help inform decision-making, with targeted consultation to strengthen core relationships to ensure communities play an active role in shaping the building's future.

From June 2025 – Sept 2026 NLHF investment and match funding provided an opportunity to reflect on **how evaluation is undertaken**, through evaluation training and engagement with best practice supported by **Harriet Hand, University of Bristol & Trinity's resident researcher**.

Outcomes from the Development Phase include increased awareness of the building and our plans and a growing sense of collective ownership expanding explored the future possibilities for the building. Participants consistently moved beyond discussing the building's history, contributing ideas, stories, design recommendations, programming proposals and future stewardship ambitions. The process also generated a creative thematic framework focusing on **Resistance**, **Rhythm**, **Reflection**, **Flow** and **Imprint**, connecting the building's heritage and evolution with its potential future as a cultural and civic hub.



What Did We Learn?

Key findings shaping the Delivery Phase Activities Programme and Evaluation Framework:

1. **The strength of connection people have with heritage when it is linked to lived experience, memory and creativity.** Participants engaged most strongly when heritage was explored through personal stories, shared memories and creative responses. The strength of attachment to the dance heritage of Jacobs Wells Baths, alongside the response to creative and intergenerational approaches, demonstrated that people connect with heritage through the experiences and relationships that places hold.

2. **Accessibility is understood as a foundation for participation and belonging.** Across different groups, participants consistently identified accessibility as fundamental to creating a welcoming and inclusive space. Accessibility is not simply a technical requirement; it is a condition that enables people to participate, contribute and feel a sense of belonging.

3. **People want meaningful influence over the future of the building.** Across ages and contexts, participants quickly moved beyond sharing feedback about Jacobs Wells Baths and began thinking about its long-term future. The strength of interest in community use, stewardship and ongoing involvement demonstrated a desire to have an active role in shaping and caring for the building.



Dancer taking part in the photography project, by Khali Ackford

Reflections on the Evaluation Process

What Worked Well

- The project generated a rich and multi-modal evidence base, including consultation findings, Local Learning activities report, artistic responses, photographs, surveys, reminiscence activities and stakeholder feedback.
- Consultant-led research, specialist insights and engagement activities produced high-quality outputs and valuable learning to inform the design scheme.
- The consistency of findings across different methods, perspectives and contributors strengthens the credibility of the evidence.
- Digital engagement methods in the form of an online consultation survey attracted around 70 responses.
- Strong documentation of engagement activities provides a solid foundation for future evaluation and learning.
- The development phase has identified practical improvements that can strengthen evaluation processes in future project stages.

> One of the strengths of this Development Phase has been the breadth of evidence gathered through different modes (online and offline), methods, and forms of participation. While this can present challenges for aggregation and analysis of data, the consistency of themes emerging across consultation, creative activity, reminiscence work, accessibility research and stakeholder engagement strengthens confidence in the findings. An important area for future reflection is also where experiences diverge. Exploring both common themes and differences in perspective may provide a richer understanding of how heritage, belonging and participation are experienced across different communities and contexts.
>
> The value of this phase lies not only in what was measured, but also in the quality of conversations and relationships developed. The process has foregrounded listening, curiosity and exploration, generating rich insights into what matters to communities at this stage of development. This aligns with Trinity's learning-focused approach to evaluation, where evaluation supports understanding rather than simply validating predetermined plans. This learning can now be carried forward to inform and shape future engagement.
>
> **Harriet Hand, University of Bristol & Trinity resident researcher**

Challenges / Areas for Development

- Evidence was collected using a range of formats and methodologies, making it difficult and time-consuming to aggregate findings and demonstrate outcomes consistently.
- Changes in project staffing reduced continuity in monitoring processes and project knowledge.
- Evaluation expectations were not always consistently understood across staff, freelancers and consultants delivering activities.
- Roles and responsibilities for evidence collection, monitoring and evaluation were not always clearly defined between delivery staff and external evaluators.
- Future phases would benefit from standardised templates, digital feedback tools, clearer guidance and ongoing support to embed evaluation within day-to-day project delivery.
- Evaluation requirements should be built into recruitment, induction and consultant briefs from the outset, ensuring all delivery partners understand their responsibility for gathering evidence and tracking outcomes.
- Build sustained community involvement so that trusted relationships and continuity of participation provide ongoing challenge, reflection and feedback throughout delivery.

> A challenge of participatory evaluation work is balancing consistency of evidence collection with responsiveness to different communities and contexts. While greater consistency in monitoring would undoubtedly make future reporting easier, it will be important that this does not come at the expense of the flexibility and relationship-based approaches that appear to have generated some of the richer learning during this phase.
>
> A challenge moving forward is developing evaluation practices that help surface and interpret participant contributions as an embedded part of day-to-day activities, whilst remaining proportionate to the scale and nature of the activity. Co-designing evaluation approaches with communities may be one way to achieve this. By sharing Trinity's evaluation principles and involving participants in shaping how learning is gathered, interpreted and shared, evaluation can become more meaningful, transparent and people centred.
>
> **Harriet Hand, University of Bristol & Trinity resident researcher**



Brandon House drop-in flexible family-friendly activities to build local links.

Purpose

This report outlines the evaluation activities undertaken during the Development Phase of the Saving Jacobs Wells Baths project against the National Lottery Heritage Fund Investment Principles and Trinity's Evaluation Framework. The phase has been about iterative learning, identifying what has been discovered about participation along the way to inform future heritage engagement and stewardship plans.

Evaluation Question

The principal evaluation question that has been shaped through the Development Stage and will be taken forward into the Delivery Stage is: **How is Jacobs Wells Baths broadening who participates in heritage and who gets to shape its future?**

Investment Principle	Emergent evaluation themes relating to Evaluation Question
Saving Heritage	How can different approaches to participation and engagement at Jacobs Wells Baths generate heritage knowledge and build a sense of belonging?
Inclusion, Access & Participation	How is the project enabling more people to participate in heritage and shape future stories?
Organisational Sustainability	How is the project building the ownership, citizen influence and shared decision-making needed to sustain Jacobs Wells Baths?
Environmental Stewardship	How is Jacobs Wells Baths helping people understand the relationship between heritage conservation, reuse and environmental sustainability?

Involvement

Types of Involvement

The evaluation considers evidence across a range of programme strands, which represent different types and levels of involvement. These range from creating opportunities to connect with Jacobs Wells Baths, through to participation in activities and opportunities to influence decisions. The strands often operate across more than one type of involvement, reflecting the different ways people have contributed to the project.

Type	What it means	Examples
Connect	People become aware of Jacobs Wells Baths, are invited in or encounter the project. This is about **reach, visibility and access**.	Communications, invitations, visits, open days, exhibitions, social media, information sharing
Engage	People **take part and begin to build a relationship** with the project, building, programme or people involved. This can be a one-off experience or the start of longer-term involvement.	Attending events, volunteering, joining activities, becoming an audience member, repeat visits, relationship-building
Participate	People actively **contribute their knowledge, experience, ideas or creativity** to shape activity and learning.	Workshops, consultation, co-creation, storytelling, reminiscence, reflection, learning activities, focus groups
Shape	People have a **meaningful role in shaping decisions**, with opportunities to deliberate, exercise judgement and collectively determine priorities or actions.	Advisory groups, steering groups, collective decision-making, agreeing priorities, shaping interpretation or programmes

Methods

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach. Evidence was gathered through participant surveys and feedback, interviews and conversations, facilitator and staff observation, reflective practice, attendance and participation monitoring, consultation responses, creative documentation, photography and film, project outputs, and specialist reports. Combining these methods enabled learning to be triangulated across multiple sources, strengthening the reliability of the findings.

Evidence

The Development Phase generated a diverse body of evidence including archival findings, specialist reports, consultation feedback, oral histories, creative outputs, photographs, participant reflections, quantitative and qualitative evaluation data, and digital content documenting the project. Together, these sources provide a rich record of how people understood, experienced and contributed to the heritage of Jacobs Wells Baths, informing both the project's learning and the future design and delivery phases.

Development Stage	Programme Outcomes	Evidence (links)
Connection	**Heritage visits & reminiscence activities** – building relationships with the heritage of JWB and creating opportunities to share experiences and memories.	Oral histories from former users and dance heritage collected through "I Danced at Jacobs Wells and 1-2-1 oral interviews Heritage tours incl work with BSL interpreter to facilitate visits from D/Deaf groups. YouTube content Flyer collage
Engagement	**Artist activations & creative commissions** – creating opportunities for people to encounter and connect with JWB through creative activity.	Creative responses through dance and activations. Art of The Possible YouTube Channel
Participation	**Accessibility & inclusion research** – understanding barriers to access and participation. (WECIL report) **Community consultation programme** – gathering experiences, knowledge and ideas to inform the project. **Learning & participation programme** – workshops, learning and collaborative activity with schools, colleges and universities.	Intergenerational storytelling project documentation. School-based heritage learning outputs incl ceramics and design. Architecture and conservation interpretation from students. (Local Learning report) Community consultation outputs. (PLACED report)
Shaping	**Stakeholder engagement & deliberation** – structured opportunities for stakeholders to consider issues, share perspectives and influence priorities and decisions. (LM Jones report)	Student research and design work. (see Trinity website)

People

The project has achieved significant breadth of reach, while also creating progressively deeper opportunities for engagement, participation and influence.
See S1-engagement-tracking.xlsx

Involvement	Examples	Outcomes	Numbers
Reach	Newsletters, WhatsApp, flyers, social media promotion, Harbour Festival stage	Building awareness of Jacobs Wells Baths, the project and opportunities to get involved.	**20,000+**
Connect	Community sessions, neighbourhood forums, heritage tours, stakeholder visits, reminiscence activity	Developing relationships, sharing information and creating opportunities for people to connect with the project.	**255 adults** **20 children**
Engage	Art of the Possible, Cast Light, public events, creative activity	Directly experiencing or attending a cultural and heritage activity.	**42 artists** **713 attendees**
Participate	Community consultation, school workshops, youth workshops, ideation sessions	Active contribution through consultation, workshops, learning, reminiscence and creative activity.	**141 adults** **48 children** **24 volunteers**
Shape	UWE/Platform Places sharing and emerging advisory group development	Providing knowledge, expertise and perspectives that help shape the project, its design or future activity.	**27 Adults** **14 young people**
TOTAL	**Est Development Phase total engagement (excl Reach)**		**1,284**



Danced at Jacobs Wells reminiscence session.



MA Arch Students.

Reach

From August 2025 - July 2026 we've sent 16 targeted e-shot campaigns including consultation and surveys, project updates, heritage events, creative consultation activity and public communications. This has meant: 3,358 emails sent, 3,034 successful deliveries, 2,124 unique opens and 862 click-throughs. We reached a wider audience of ~3,700 through our involvement with Harbour Festival and The Republic film screening at Watershed. 1,390 people reached through hyperlocal targeted mailers with HCCA, flyer drops to local tower blocks and a neighbourhood WhatsApp. Our feature on Cast Light with Crack Magazine had a ~20,000 distribution and Night Moves was also circulated by partners RWA to their ~3000 mailing list.

Deeper Engagement

Alongside communications and awareness-raising activity reaching ~20,000 people, 1,134 participants have been involved in deeper engagement, including participating in the emerging vision and shaping building development, heritage interpretation and future activity programme.

Key Groups

- **Local residents and community groups** engaged through consultation sessions, HCCA engagement, JW Healing Hub and Brandon House family activity sessions, contributing ideas, priorities and feedback on future uses of the building and community activities.
- **Former users** of Jacobs Wells Baths, including participants in I Danced at Jacobs Wells and reminiscence activity, contributing memories, stories, photographs and archive material to inform heritage interpretation and future programming.
- **Children, young people and families**, including Brandon House families, Hotwells Primary School and Willow Park Primary School, contributing perspectives on youth activity, inclusive use of space and creative engagement approaches.
- **Artists** through creative responses to the space, reflecting the project's commitment to diverse artistic perspectives and practices and alignment with Trinity's programme priorities.
- **Access and inclusion partners**, including WECIL and young people involved in reviewing plans, helping inform inclusive design and accessibility considerations.
- **Students and learning partners**, including City of Bristol College and UWE architecture and urban planning students, contributing external perspectives on community-led regeneration, heritage and the future potential of the space.
- **Sector and strategic partner**s engaged through consultation and site visits, contributing specialist knowledge, challenge and support to shape the development approach, while exploring future opportunities for activity, partnerships and use of the building.

This deeper engagement has generated learning, ideas and practical recommendations that are feeding into both the capital development of the building and the future activity programme **(See Conclusion)**. From this, we have also created some JWB Stakeholder 'Avatars' to help inform future design thinking, including Interpretation and Signage.



Legacy West Midlands learning visit.



> "There's been a really strong element of exploring the way that a Victorian building can be made accessible and inclusive to all... bringing our students into the community, giving them contact with users or people who have memories and the community that surrounds Jacobs Wells to really explore what inclusivity really is... expanding this idea of how a community can become involved and feel ownership and belonging in somewhere that makes it accessible to them."
>
> **Louise Ciotti, Senior Lecturer in Architecture, Retrofit and Conservation, UWE**

Saving Heritage

How can different approaches to participation and engagement at Jacobs Wells Baths generate heritage knowledge and build a sense of belonging?

The Development Phase tested a range of complementary approaches to participation, recognising that people connect with heritage in different ways, that we have split into three different activity types: **Reminiscence & storytelling, Learning & participation and Creative activations**.

Reminiscence & storytelling including sessions led by our Heritage Curator gave space for lived experience, personal memory and local knowledge to be captured alongside more formal historical and archival research. These approaches positioned participants as contributors to the heritage narrative.

Learning & participation activities embedded heritage within structured creative participation so it was experienced as a living and collaborative process. Working with artists and creative practitioners, participants explored the building through making, discussion and shared enquiry, with intergenerational learning enabling knowledge to be exchanged across age groups, as well as with professionals and non-professionals equitably.



Archival image gathered as part of research.

Exploring Place, Heritage and Belonging with Colourful Minds

A series of creative workshops with children from Hannah More, Evergreen and Easton after-school art clubs, alongside contributions from adults who took part in the UWE Open Day at Jacobs Wells Baths.

Led by artist Laura Clifford, the workshops invited children to explore the buildings that shape our sense of place and identity. As part of Bristol's twinning relationship with Bordeaux, children learned about landmarks in both cities before creating their own colourful models using cardboard and recycled materials.

At the Jacobs Wells Baths UWE Open Day in April 2026, adults were invited to respond creatively to the children's artwork to make their own Jacobs Wells Baths, to capture what it has meant in the past, what the building means today and what it could become in the future.

Through heritage, creativity, learning and belonging and the creative responses remind us that heritage is more than historic buildings. It is the relationships we build with the places around us, the memories we create there, and the communities that continue to shape their future. By encouraging people of all ages to observe, imagine and make, the project demonstrates how creativity can help us understand the built environment and strengthen our connection to the places we call home.



Colourful Minds after school workshop.

Partnership working

Learning and participation activities have been underpinned by a strong partnership model, led by Local Learning as our lead partner, helping to establish and strengthen links with local schools, colleges and university departments, creating opportunities for curriculum-linked learning, collaborative research and creative practice that connected learners with the heritage of Jacobs Wells Baths while building long-term relationships to support future engagement.

Local Learning programme

Working with heritage education partner Local Learning, the project documented local memories of the Baths through oral histories, community research and creative responses, including visual arts and storytelling. Intergenerational engagement with schools, colleges, universities and community partners encouraged participants to explore themes of accessibility, inclusion and future uses for the building, with this learning feeding directly into the development of the Phase 2 restoration proposals.

Partners included the University of Bristol, UWE Bristol, Willow Park Primary School, Hotwells Primary School and City of Bristol College, the Heritage Learning & Participation Programme demonstrated the effectiveness of creative practice as a route into heritage engagement. Through movement, storytelling, making and creative interpretation, participants explored the history of Jacobs Wells Baths and its significance as a community asset.

Participants reported increased understanding of:

- The history and changing uses of Jacobs Wells Baths.
- How memories and lived experiences can be preserved through creative practice.
- Ways in which heritage can be interpreted through movement, design and making.
- The importance of conserving and adapting historic buildings for future generations.

The programme demonstrated significant interest in the heritage of Jacobs Wells Baths and highlighted the value of creative, participatory approaches in building stronger connections between people, place and heritage.



MA Arch student exhibition at UWE.

> "The Jacobs Wells Baths project focuses on reusing a 140-year-old Grade II listed building, a former Victorian bathhouse situated in Hotwells, Bristol. Through collaboration with Local Learning, Trinity Community Arts and wider partners, I learned the great impact of assessing the significance of the heritage through engaging with local communities, project leaders, architects, managers and many other project partners.
>
> To turn the building into a safe and welcoming space for the community while respecting its heritage values, accessibility was one of the most challenging aspects. This project has improved my knowledge and perspective of how heritage buildings can be adapted to empower communities while retaining their significance."
>
> **Nghi Tran, MArch Architecture student**

Creative activations led by Trinity's arts team opened the building through performances, installations, exhibitions and public events. These dynamic experiences encouraged people to encounter Jacobs Wells Baths in new ways, generating emotional connections, curiosity and collective ownership. Rather than treating participation as a one-off consultation exercise, the programme created ongoing opportunities for people to contribute, respond and shape understanding over time.



Cast Light Mood Boards.

Registered Charity number 1144770, Registered Company Number 4372577

Example – Past and Future Portrait Series

As part of the engagement programme, photographer **Khali Ackford** created a series of portraits exploring both the history and future potential of Jacobs Wells Baths. The project sought to reconnect people with a building whose doors have been closed for many years, whilst highlighting its continued importance as a civic, cultural and community asset.

The Past portraits celebrated the building's rich social history, capturing former users, artists, dancers, community participants and others connected to Jacobs Wells Baths throughout its many phases of use. These portraits documented personal memories and experiences, illustrating the building's longstanding role as a place for community activity, creativity and connection.

The Future portraits focused on current and prospective users, partners and community members who hold aspirations for the building's next chapter. Inspired by the style of Renaissance portraiture, the images used personal objects, interests and visual storytelling to communicate participants' hopes for the future of Jacobs Wells Baths and the role that community spaces play in people's lives.

Together, the two series created a visual dialogue between past, present and future. By bringing people back into the frame, the portraits demonstrated that the significance of Jacobs Wells Baths extends beyond its historic fabric to the communities it has served and continues to inspire.

The project helped raise the profile of Jacobs Wells Baths, generated conversations about the value of community-owned spaces, and explored what might be lost if such spaces disappear. The portraits also documented the building in its current condition while illustrating the potential for its future revival and reuse.



Fatun, a local resident and her son taking part in the photography project, by Khali Ackford

> "I have been walking the streets of Hotwells, and it seems like a really cool place, but it's but shut and I've been curious what could have been inside. My question is, why aren't we using it? Why can't we be here all the time? There isn't much community spaces where people can chill without phones...We're missing human connection... places like Jacob Well can be and should be used to create that connection, to allow us to be human."
>
> **Luna, Musician & Dancer (Past & Future portrait series)**

Gaps & Challenges

The Development Phase generated a significant volume of stories, memories, research and creative responses. However, generating heritage knowledge is only the first step. The next challenge is ensuring that this material is curated, interpreted and shared in ways that remain accessible and meaningful to future audiences.

While strong connections emerged through dance heritage, swimming memories and personal testimonies, some aspects of the building's history are currently better represented than others. There is an opportunity during the Delivery Phase to continue widening the range of voices contributing to the story of Jacobs Wells Baths, ensuring that interpretation reflects the diversity of communities connected to the site across different generations and experiences.

The project has also highlighted the importance of balancing specialist heritage expertise with lived experience. Participants consistently connected most strongly with personal stories and memories, suggesting that future interpretation will be most effective when community knowledge sits alongside architectural, conservation and historical research.

As activity expands, there will be an ongoing challenge to **maintain opportunities for communities to contribute new stories and perspectives, ensuring that heritage interpretation remains a living and evolving story that involves everyone**.

What has this shown us?

These different approaches demonstrate that heritage knowledge is strengthened when multiple forms of participation are valued. Bringing together lived experience, creative practice, specialist expertise and community perspectives generated a richer and more credible understanding of Jacobs Wells Baths, while fostering a stronger sense of belonging and shared stewardship.

Heritage engagement is strongest when people can see themselves within the story of a place. Participants connected most strongly with personal memories, dance histories, intergenerational stories and creative interpretation. Our work has shown that heritage is matters beyond preservation; it is something communities actively create meaning around. This creates stronger foundations for belonging and future stewardship.

Delivery Phase Learning

- ✓ Prioritise storytelling, oral histories and lived experience.
- ✓ Continue using creative approaches to heritage interpretation.
- ✓ Ensure interpretation is co-created with communities rather than produced solely by specialists.
- ✓ Build opportunities for ongoing community contribution into interpretation systems.

> This phase of evaluation suggests that heritage knowledge is being generated through multiple complementary routes: lived experience, oral testimony, creative interpretation, academic research, professional expertise and community participation. Rather than privileging a single source of knowledge, the project demonstrates the value of bringing these perspectives into dialogue.
>
> This is particularly significant for the Delivery Phase. The opportunity is to continue creating the conditions through which new understandings of Jacobs Wells Baths can emerge through community participation and interpretation. As this phase has established connections with the community, Trinity is now in a position to convene gatherings where diverse representation will generate a collective, informed and empathetic forum for decision-making moving forward.
>
> **Harriet Hand, University of Bristol & Trinity resident researcher**

Inclusion, Access & Participation

How is the project enabling more people to participate in heritage and shape future stories?

The Development Phase successfully engaged a broad range of participants, recognising that inclusion involves both who takes part and the agency, access and opportunities created through participation. Evidence has been grouped into three distinctive thematic areas: **Belonging**, **Access** and **Professional Development**. This reflects the different ways people were included in shaping, interpreting and contributing to the future of Jacobs Wells Baths.

Belonging was shaped through inviting participants to contribute heritage stories, design ideas, accessibility recommendations, artistic responses, consultation feedback and future interpretation concepts through activities including workshops, visits, consultation and artistic interpretation.

> "This building has been here my whole life, and I've done some activities here with my primary school. My friends and I went here for a dance activity, and other activities, and it was the most fun afternoon I had while at school. "I want the building to be inclusive to everyone, but particularly people who have disabilities such as my sister who has autism, I want this space to activities where she'll be able to participate freely. There are lots of elderly people where we live so have a space like this is great so that everyone can come together and enjoy themselves."
>
> **Fatun, Local Resident** (Past & Future portrait series)

Accessibility was embedded throughout the programme through BSL-interpreted heritage tours, collaboration with WECIL/WAIT, the City of Bristol College accessibility review, youth access audits and inclusive/adaptive consultation approaches. Accessibility has frequently arisen across the consultation, partners' evaluation reports and visitor comments. This highlights the importance of accessibility: not only by the physical space, but by the attitudes, relationships and adaptations that enable people to feel genuinely welcomed and included. Key priorities incl improved circulation and lift access, accessible toilets and changing facilities, hearing loops, accessible navigation and welcoming environments and activities that respond to different community needs and interests.

> "Because when you're disabled in any way, it's very important that you should meet other people with the same disability, so that you can talk about how they solve problems, and you learn from other people that are disabled.
>
> "Navigating what the tutor's doing. Because there were three things going on. One, I couldn't see exactly what they were doing, and when I was dancing with Barbara, I'm going this way and she can't see behind her, so neither of us could see which way we were going. And we had to learn to navigate a ballroom without being able to see. And it's good fun, it's all part of learning."
>
> **Alan Dyte, Oral History story, Sep 2025.**

Creative Professional Skills were given opportunity to develop across the programme:

- **Young people** from City of Bristol College demonstrated increasing confidence through vocalising their perspectives as part of creative projects, reporting greater confidence, curiosity and participation (see Local Learning Report)
- **Students** involved in dance projects developed new ways of communicating, collaborating and interpreting heritage.
- **Artists and creative practitioners** brought specialist creative skills while developing their own practice through working with heritage, communities and intergenerational groups.
- **Trinity staff** also developed skills and experience through producing and facilitating activity, including roles such as Production Coordinator, alongside building capacity in partnership working, creative participation and heritage engagement.

Example

Art of the Possible

Pilot creative programme and filmed series developed during the restoration of Jacobs Wells Baths. The project explored how creativity can flourish within a building undergoing transformation, testing how future artistic and cultural activity might be delivered while restoration works continue.

Working with **10 Bristol-based artists** across music, spoken word and movement, the programme invited participants to respond creatively to the building in its current condition. Rather than waiting for a completed venue, the project demonstrated how historic spaces can remain active, inspiring and relevant throughout the restoration process.

The programme functioned as a live research and development exercise, helping Trinity Community Arts understand how artists, audiences and creative activity might engage with the building in the future. The resulting films captured not only artistic performances but also reflections on the importance of grassroots cultural spaces, community infrastructure and the role of creativity in revitalising historic buildings.

By activating the site during restoration, Art of the Possible generated new content, reached wider audiences online and provided valuable insight into the building's potential future use. Participants consistently highlighted the importance of accessible creative spaces in supporting artistic development, community connection and cultural participation. The project demonstrated that Jacobs Wells Baths already has the capacity to inspire creativity and collaboration, reinforcing the vision for the building as a future home for arts, culture and community activity.

Check out our YouTube Channel



Grove music video in Pump Room, image credit Khali Ackford

Cast Light Mood Boards – Summary of Findings

Feedback from the mood boards showed the activation successfully connected artistic participation with heritage engagement, generating strong feelings of calm, reflection, wonder and belonging, while increasing excitement about the building's restoration and potential future uses.

"I Hope..." key messages

Participants agreed with our understanding of the building's creative possibility e.g. more events, more immersive art, camera obscura, more rooms.

Feedback demonstrated enthusiasm for the building's future restoration, accessibility and adaptive reuse, through use of common words incl future, creativity, community, opportunity, immersive, access, possibility, growth, activation.

"I Learned..." key messages

Participation can support wellbeing e.g. common words, healing, soothing, reflection, relaxing, calm.

Sound and light can transform space and artistic experiences link people to significance of building e.g. building words such as preservation, restoration, vision for the building accompanying words expressing wonder and immersion e.g. magical, mesmerising, enchanting, ethereal.

"Grassroots venues are not just important, they are vital. Thy are lifeblood to what we do as artists, to people, to human beings, to humanity, to building community"

Muneera Pilgrim

"These spaces are hugely important; they are where people can grow. They are a place where people can have opportunity, and it also expands people's minds. Free thinking is so important for freedom, culture, tolerance, and grass roots spaces really nurture that kind of way of thinking, They're really important"

Levanna McLean, Bristol Northan Soul Club

"It's great to see spaces like this get reinvigorated, and it's that idea that nothing is waste. We can make something out of nothing"

Rea

"It's really important to me and i love that it's getting rebuilt and remade, It's quite a person space for me, so it's really nice to be able to be back here"

Loz James

"Grass roots venues are so important, and I have so much love for Trinity for what this space is going to be, I'm super excited"

Grove



Filming activations to test use around contractor works.

Gaps and Challenges

Trinity's challenge is less diversity of participation, rather about how to build sustained relationships so people go on a journey: Communication – Engagement – Participation – Influence.

Activities such as our photography project were able to target under-represented demographics, whilst more traditional forms of consultation (e.g. Placed survey) demographic data showed significant over-representation of White British participants and local BS8 residents.

The Development Phase therefore raises important questions about which barriers remain and how future engagement can reach communities beyond existing networks, particularly in relation to informing decisions about the space. Also, to make sense of what we've gathered and heard and document that better across the different strands of activity.

What has this shown us?

The most valuable accessibility learning from the Development Phase is that Community asset building is about lifelong thinking. The best way to build long term engagement is through involving people directly in shaping decisions and ensuring there is an effective feedback loop.

Creative expression and intergenerational connectivity have been key to igniting some of the most striking outputs. Feedback across these offers reflected the value of social connection and there was expressed desire for ongoing provision demonstrating both demand and community ownership of the space.

Accessibility is part of how people participate, contribute and influence the future of heritage spaces. The project has demonstrated that **meaningful participation requires relationships, trust and a range of opportunities for continued involvement over time.**

Delivery Phase Learning

- ✓ Continue co-designing accessibility with disabled people.
- ✓ Improve demographic monitoring.
- ✓ Develop targeted engagement with underrepresented communities.
- ✓ Invest in relationship-building before participation activity.

> Findings suggest that participation deepened when engagement moved beyond consultation and towards contribution, creativity and shared problem-solving. Participants were not simply providing feedback; many were helping to shape understanding of the building, its heritage and its future possibilities. This distinction feels important for future evaluation. The question may be less about how many people participate, and more about the quality of participation, the trust that is built over time and the extent to which participants can see their perspectives reflected in decisions and actions.
>
> **Harriet Hand, University of Bristol & Trinity resident researcher**

Organisational Learning & Impact

How is the project building the ownership, citizen-led decision-making and shared responsibility needed to sustain Jacobs Wells Baths?

The Development Phase tested organisational sustainability through **consultation**, **deliberation** and **programming**.

Consultation led by PLACED engaged 104 participants through workshops, surveys and facilitated discussions with local residents, cultural organisations, community groups, prospective users and existing stakeholders. Rather than focusing solely on the building itself, participants explored questions around future use, accessibility, affordability, programming, food and hospitality, outreach, governance and how local people might influence decision-making over time.

The process moved beyond a traditional audience consultation with citizen-focused sessions in May 2026 to explore how people might experience, access and contribute to the building. Participants identified a range of practical and organisational factors that shape participation, including physical and sensory accessibility, transport, affordability, communication before arrival, welcome, seating, acoustics and opportunities to influence decisions. This consultation also highlighted that people want different levels of involvement, from occasional feedback through to deeper participation in decision-making, and that any future citizen-led approach needs to be clear about where influence genuinely sits.

Findings have contributed toward a shared vision of Jacobs Wells Baths as a community-focused cultural and civic space shaped by the people who use and care about it. The findings have directly informed investment priorities, access improvements, approaches to engagement and the development of a neighbourhood-focused participation model that seeks to build ongoing relationships that will contribute to long-term decision making once the building is fully reopened.

Deliberation has been tested, to involve participants more directly in shaping potential responses to identified challenges.

Working with heritage engagement specialists Local Learning, UWE architecture students collaborated with disabled young people, City of Bristol College students, local primary school children and access practitioners through conversations, site visits, creative workshops and co-design activities. Participants were invited to explore questions of access, movement, interpretation and belonging. The resulting design work informed the next stage of technical development by PH3 Design while also helping establish a foundation for future youth participation and citizen-led governance.

A significant strand of this work focused on young people. In June 2026 guided tours and participatory workshops gave young people the chance to reflect on the experience of arriving at, moving through, taking part in and belonging within Jacobs Wells Baths. Discussions explored accessibility, signage, interpretation, storytelling, future activities and how young people might continue to influence the building over time. The process generated practical ideas around wayfinding, multilingual and multi-sensory interpretation, social spaces, youth-led content creation and opportunities for ongoing involvement in shaping the site.

The deliberative process demonstrated the value of lived experience in informing design decisions and challenged assumptions about how people access and experience shared spaces. It reinforced the principle that meaningful participation is not simply about asking people for feedback but giving them opportunities to influence tangible aspects of a project.

Alongside shaping capital priorities, the Development Stage also identified a strong appetite for participatory heritage activity that connected the building's history with contemporary community priorities. This learning informed the design of the proposed Art of the Possible delivery programme, providing a thematic framework focusing on **Resistance, Rhythm, Reflection, Flow and Imprint**, through which participants can explore heritage, contribute new perspectives and play an active role in shaping the future identity of Jacobs Wells Baths.

The work highlighted both the practical conditions that enable participation and the importance of creating genuine opportunities for people to shape the building's future. This learning directly informs the interim engagement programme which moves beyond consultation towards testing how people can belong to, use and increasingly influence Jacobs Wells Baths through neighbourhood engagement, membership-style participation, co-created activity and the development of a citizen-led advisory structure.

Programming in the venue as part of this stage has set the foundations of establishing Jacobs Wells Baths as a viable platform for future cultural programming and partnership.

See also: **JWB_Investment_Principles_Session_Sheet.xlsx** to capture organisational programming learning.

Example

Dance Development

Dance has provided a powerful means of connecting people with Jacobs Wells Baths, bringing together personal memories, contemporary creative practice and new audiences. The dance reminiscence programme revealed a strong emotional attachment to the building among former users, many of whom expressed a desire to support future fundraising, advocacy and public engagement activity.

Building on this work, a series of filmed dance interventions formed part of the Art of the Possible programme, inviting contemporary artists to respond to the building and helping to raise awareness of its significance within Bristol's evolving cultural landscape. Alongside this, creative activations such as Squid Soup's Cast Light and Melanie Manchot's Night Moves installation demonstrated the potential of Jacobs Wells Baths as a compelling setting for contemporary dance, immersive experiences and interdisciplinary cultural programming.

The success of these activities has generated further external interest, including from partners involved in the British Art Show and Bristol BID, with conversations underway about potential Spring/Summer 2027 programming ahead of the planned commencement of Phase 2 capital works.



Night Moves by Melanie Manchot
Heritage Opens Doors, September 2026

Gaps & Challenges

The process highlighted practical challenges including building access constraints, site conditions, capacity needed to support visits and the challenge of reaching beyond existing networks.

The ambition of the project has highlighted a gap between the breadth and complexity of the outcomes sought and the capacity available to support them. Jacobs Wells Baths is seeking to achieve interconnected outcomes around heritage knowledge, participation, confidence, agency and belonging. Meaningfully developing and evidencing these outcomes requires sustained engagement, skilled facilitation, relationship-building and time for reflection and evaluation.

Within the resources available, there has been an ongoing challenge in balancing these requirements with the practical demands of project delivery. Staff capacity can limit the time available to develop relationships, respond to learning as it emerges and undertake the depth of evaluation needed to understand complex outcomes.

During the development phase, several key JWB staff left the organisation, creating changes in roles, responsibilities and team capacity. Exit interviews highlighted pressures associated with workload, competing priorities, role clarity, internal communication and organisational systems.

Despite these challenges, Trinity has delivered a substantial programme of activity and established important foundations for future engagement, including stakeholder relationships, the advisory group, access and inclusion work, and the archive and reminiscence process.

The experience provided useful learning about the organisational conditions and resources needed to support ambitious community engagement, effective collaboration and meaningful evaluation.

This creates a wider challenge for community-led heritage projects: **expectations around the breadth and depth of outcomes need to be matched by sufficient staffing, skills and time to deliver and evaluate them effectively**.

What has this shown us?

Consultation and deliberation work highlighted the practical and organisational conditions that enable meaningful participation. The youth work showed how different methods can reveal what belonging looks like for a particular group and demonstrated the value of allowing people to shape tangible aspects of the building.

This has formed the basis for the “near neighbourhood” approach: to build a core group of citizens through engagement and participation activities to ultimately develop a citizen-led structure.

The Development Phase has shown that participation creates stronger ownership when people can see how their contributions connect to future decisions.

Engagement worked particularly well when it was relational, creative and sustained over time. Small-scale conversations, repeat activity, trusted local relationships, intergenerational learning and artist-led approaches created deeper connections than one-off consultation.

The message is consistent emerging: **community engagement at JWB needs to be about relationship, belonging and influence, not simply surficial consultation or audience development**.

This experience showed us that meaningful engagement and evaluation need to be understood as core elements of project delivery, rather than additional activity alongside it. The more ambitious and interconnected the intended outcomes, the greater the capacity required to create the conditions in which those outcomes can develop and to capture meaningful evidence of change.

For future phases, this means being more explicit about the staffing, skills and time required to deliver ambitious engagement and proportionate evaluation. It also means prioritising the outcomes that Jacobs Wells Baths is best placed to influence, using methods that generate useful learning without creating disproportionate demands on participants or the delivery team.

We also learned that ambitious, meaningful engagement depends on sufficient capacity, clear roles, effective systems and space for collaboration, reflection and learning, not just delivery time. The experience reinforced the importance of matching project ambition with the resources and organisational structures needed to deliver it well, while ensuring staff have the autonomy, support and clear decision-making frameworks needed to contribute effectively.

This learning will inform future planning and resourcing, ensuring that the ambition of the programme is matched by the capacity needed to deliver it sustainably and demonstrate its impact.

Delivery Phase Learning

- ✓ Establish ongoing community governance and advisory mechanisms.
- ✓ Create visible routes from participation into decision-making.
- ✓ Support volunteers and community connectors to be the advocates.
- ✓ Demonstrate how community contributions influence decisions.
- ✓ Build evaluation and reflection into delivery, rather than treating them as additional activity.
- ✓ Resource sufficient staff capacity for meaningful engagement, coordination and evaluation.

> A key theme is the role communities can play in providing continuity across a long-term project. While staffing structures, partnerships and organisational priorities may evolve over time, communities often hold the longest-standing relationships with a place. This phase has begun to identify individuals and groups who can become important stewards, advocates and critical friends for the project. Future phases could explore how these relationships are sustained and strengthened, recognising community participation as part of the infrastructure that supports long-term sustainability.
>
> **Harriet Hand, University of Bristol & Trinity resident researcher**

Protecting the Environment

How is Jacobs Wells Baths helping people understand the relationship between heritage conservation, reuse and environmental sustainability?

The Development Phase reinforced that caring for historic buildings can also be an environmental action. The work has explored this through three complementary areas of activity: **Networks & Advocacy**, **Talks & Editorial** and **Learning & Practice**.

Networks & Advocacy: Site visits and peer exchange have positioned Jacobs Wells Baths within a wider conversation about **adaptive reuse**, **community ownership and a reuse-first approach**. The Baths has provided a learning site for organisations, funders, heritage specialists, architects and community asset practitioners, including Learning Partnership West Midlands, Platform Places, SPAB, the National Trust, Architectural Heritage Fund, Bristol Old Vic, Bristol Civic Society, UWE and local arts and cultural organisations.

Visits consistently explored the challenges and opportunities of adapting a historic building for contemporary community use, with a focus on **repair**, **reuse** and **long-term stewardship** rather than demolition and replacement. The breadth of interest demonstrates the potential for Jacobs Wells Baths to contribute to wider learning about sustainable heritage regeneration and community resilience.

> "Some of the most exciting investments in Bristol aren't necessarily the newest buildings, instead they're the ones that breathe new life into places with history, purpose and the potential to bring people together.
>
> Our CEO Caroline Duckworth DL was invited to visit Jacobs Wells Baths for a preview of Cast Light, an immersive installation by internationally acclaimed artists squidsoup, presented by Trinity Community Arts.
>
> As well as experiencing the fantastic installation, it was inspiring to hear from Emma Harvey and the Trinity team about their vision for the site's future, and go behind the scenes with the capital development team to see the progress being made.
>
> Projects like this remind us that regeneration isn't just about restoring buildings, it's also about creating opportunities for both creativity and community to flourish. Seeing organisations, funders and supporters come together around a shared vision is really encouraging, and we're looking forward to seeing Jacobs Wells Baths become a destination that benefits Bristol for generations to come."
>
> **The Society of Merchant Venturers, July 2026**

Talks & Editorial Presentations, talks and written/editorial activity have provided opportunities to communicate the wider case for repair and adaptation: reducing the need for demolition and new construction while retaining the social, cultural and community value embedded in existing places.

Learning partnerships have supported practical exploration of environmental sustainability, including engineering and energy considerations. This is developing the evidence base for how Jacobs Wells Baths can combine heritage conservation with improved environmental performance.

Example

UWE Engineering Dept

Interest in the historic cast-iron tanks provides an emerging example of how environmental sustainability, heritage and belonging may connect at Jacobs Wells Baths. Engagement with the tanks generated curiosity about their original function, the spring water system and the possibility of retaining and reinterpreting these features within the future building. This evidence is currently best understood as an **emerging area of interest**: participants' questions and enthusiasm demonstrate curiosity and attachment to the building's environmental and industrial heritage and further work is needed as part of the delivery stage to translate this into a sense of belonging through adaptive reuse.

This will be explored further through the **UWE engineering brief Sep 2026-Mar 2027**, which will investigate the technical and environmental potential of the historic water system, including the tanks, spring, water flows and possible future uses. The work will bring together engineering analysis, heritage considerations and creative interpretation, providing evidence to inform the design and future decision-making. This creates an opportunity to test and develop the emerging learning around environmental sustainability, heritage and belonging during the delivery stage.

Gaps & Challenges

While the Development Phase generated significant interest from across the heritage, arts, community asset and built environment sectors, there remains an opportunity to strengthen the profile of Jacobs Wells Baths as a nationally significant example of heritage-led environmental sustainability and community asset renewal.

The project has attracted attention from practitioners, funders, architects and organisations interested in adaptive reuse, community ownership and stewardship. However, there is more work to do to ensure that the significance of Jacobs Wells Baths, including its early origins, social history and contribution to contemporary debates around reuse and sustainability, is consistently articulated and recognised beyond Bristol. The language used to describe the project also matters. Framing the Baths as a temporary opportunity or a building awaiting a future use can unintentionally

understate its long-term value and potential. The Delivery Phase presents an opportunity to develop a stronger and more consistent narrative around Jacobs Wells Baths as a nationally relevant case study in heritage conservation, community stewardship and environmental responsibility.

What has this shown us?

The Development Phase has shown that communities value Jacobs Wells Baths not only because of its history, but because of its potential future.

Activities have helped shift the narrative from heritage as preservation to climate justice, demonstrating how repair, adaptation and continued community use can contribute to sustainable futures. Jacobs Wells Baths is increasingly being used as a case study for this approach, with learning that can contribute to wider national discussions around adaptive reuse.

People also want to contribute to the ongoing care and stewardship of the building. Environmental sustainability is therefore closely connected to belonging, ownership and the ability of communities to shape the future of places they value.

This learning reflects wider sector conversations highlighted during the Architectural Heritage Fund's 50th anniversary celebrations (June 2026), where speakers emphasised that retaining and adapting existing buildings is one of the most effective forms of environmental action available to communities. As Richard Upton argued in his rallying call to the sector, the greenest building is often the one that already exists. Jacobs Wells Baths has therefore become part of a growing movement that positions community-led heritage reuse as both a cultural and environmental response to the climate crisis.

Delivery Phase learning

- ✓ Develop a clear and consistent narrative around heritage-led reuse as environmental action.
- ✓ Raise the profile of Jacobs Wells Baths through sector learning, advocacy and knowledge-sharing.
- ✓ Position the project within national conversations about adaptive reuse, community ownership and sustainable development.
- ✓ Demonstrate how heritage conservation contributes to environmental sustainability, community resilience and long-term stewardship.

Conclusions

The Development Phase has demonstrated that Jacobs Wells Baths already functions as more than a building restoration project.

It is becoming a platform through which people are contributing stories, shaping decisions, imagining futures and developing a sense of ownership.

The strongest evidence emerging from this phase is that participation in heritage becomes most meaningful when people are invited to create, influence and contribute rather than simply observe.

The key challenge for the Delivery Phase is therefore not increasing participation alone, but creating structures through which participation can genuinely shape the future of the Baths.

Key Learning for Delivery Evaluation Framework

The Development Stage demonstrated that effective evaluation relies on clear expectations, consistent tools and evidence being captured throughout delivery. While the project generated a strong evidence base, including consultation findings, creative outputs, engagement records and stakeholder feedback, the process highlighted the need for a more structured approach during the Delivery Stage.

Trinity's in-house evaluator provided monthly reflection, with the primary observation being **multi-specialist involvement** throughout highlighting the need to balance the breadth of participation with the depth and quality of insight generated.

A key learning is that future evaluation should be **proportionate and focused**, with greater emphasis on qualitative approaches that explore relationships, trust, inclusion and genuine participation in depth, rather than seeking large volumes of responses. This raises questions about what should be standardised, where additional support or training is needed, and where more formal types of data capture could be reduced to create capacity for deeper engagement.

The evaluation learning also highlighted the value of **slowing down**: recognising that meaningful participation and strong relationships take time to develop. Future stages will therefore explore how to do **less, but better**, prioritising the quality and usefulness of learning over the scale of data collected.

Build evaluation into delivery realistically: recognise the changing staff, freelance and partner teams involved in delivery, providing accessible tools and support while using resources proportionately. The **community provides the continuity**: maintaining relationships, knowledge and a sense of ownership that can extend beyond any individual or project stage. **Create space and time to listen** to the emotional and deeply personal connections people hold with Jacobs Wells Baths, and consider how these plural pasts can live on through future decisions, interpretation and the fabric of the building itself.

Key improvements identified:

- Clear roles and responsibilities: Evaluation should be understood as a shared responsibility across the project team, partners, contractors and consultants. Monitoring expectations should be built into recruitment, induction, consultant briefs and project management processes, with the evaluator supporting reflection and analysis rather than being responsible for gathering all evidence.
- Simple, consistent monitoring tools: A small number of shared templates should be used across activities to reduce reporting burden and improve consistency. These should include activity records, participant feedback, photography and consent processes, EDI monitoring and regular project trackers.
- Evidence captured as part of everyday delivery: Rather than relying on retrospective reporting, evidence should be collected routinely through photographs, participant reflections, facilitator observations, attendance information, creative outputs and examples of change. The “evaluation bingo” approach provides a practical reminder that different types of evidence contribute to a richer understanding of impact.
- Getting the balance right between qualitative and quantitative data: Monitoring should capture how participation has influenced the project and the strongest evidence will demonstrate not only who took part, but what people contributed, learned, experienced or changed as a result.
- Deepen participation and response: prioritise fewer, more meaningful opportunities for people to reflect, contribute and shape the project, rather than focusing on volume.
- Translating stories into decisions: Develop simple approaches for analysing and translating stories, reflections and observations into meaningful learning to shape decisions and practice. Or better still to place those decisions in those spaces.
- Regular reflection points: Monthly monitoring and reporting should provide opportunities for the team to reflect on what has happened, who has been involved, what has been learned, what worked well and how this will influence future activity. This will create a clearer narrative of the project’s journey to reduce the burden of final reporting.

> Meaningful participation takes time. The strongest evidence in this report reflects activities that prioritised relationship-building, creative exploration, repeated engagement and genuine listening. As the project progresses, the challenge is to strengthen evaluation systems without losing the qualities that enabled communities to contribute authentic insights in the first place. This may require ongoing collaboration with communities to determine what needs to be standardised, what should remain flexible, and how contributions are documented and shared so that learning held within conversations, relationships and creative activity is not lost.
>
> Future evaluation can help to tell the story of how community knowledge, experience and aspirations continue to shape decisions about Jacobs Wells Baths and its future, making this connection visible, helping communities understand how their contributions have been considered and how decisions have been reached, even where different perspectives cannot all be reflected.
>
> **Harriet Hand, University of Bristol & Trinity resident researcher**

Next Step in preparation for Delivery Stage

Build sustained community involvement: Explore how participants can move from one-off engagement into longer-term relationships, including convening a Community Forum or Community Stewardship Group during the next stage. This could create trusted relationships, continuity and opportunities for participants to act as ambassadors/ changemakers, while providing ongoing challenge, reflection and feedback throughout delivery. See our **Evaluation Framework** for more information.

Sharing Our Learning

All outputs and reports are **published on our website**. Creative content has been shared across our socials and media channels.

Supporting Documents

Local Learning Evaluation Report

See our Website for further supporting evaluation information

> "The Heritage Revival Fund is rejuvenating abandoned treasures up and down the country. I'm delighted that we have been able to support this through our Arts Everywhere Fund and I look forward to seeing the results of these first fantastic projects, including Jacobs Wells Baths being transformed into a community hub for arts, music and education. By restoring these loved buildings, we're ensuring these local assets can thrive for future generations."
>
> **Heritage Minister, Baroness Twycross, Dec 2025**





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