

# Annual Review 2024



*Helping communities across  
Greater Bristol to thrive*

# Contents

<b>Welcome</b>	3	<b>The Clifton and Durdham Downs</b>	25
<b>Education</b>	4	<b>Social Enterprise and Sustainability</b>	28
<b>Collegiate School</b>	5	Bristol & Bath Regional Capital	29
<b>Venturers' Academy</b>	8	<b>Connecting Entrepreneurs</b>	31
<b>Venturers Trust</b>	10	<b>Care for Older People</b>	32
<b>Youth Strategy</b>	11	One Wish Project	34
<b>Outward Bound</b>	12	St Monica Trust	35
<b>Endowment Fund</b>	14	<b>Charitable Giving</b>	38
<b>Black South West Network</b>	16	<b>Merchant Venturer Spotlight</b>	41
Creative Power Town	16	<b>New Members</b>	43
The Free Talk Intervention	17	<b>Emeritus</b>	44
Jerk King	18	<b>In Memoriam</b>	45
<b>The Power of Partnerships</b>	19	<b>Looking Ahead</b>	46
<b>Responding to Our History</b>	22	<b>Our Partners</b>	47

# Welcome

Welcome to the 2024 edition of the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV) Annual Review. I hope that you will enjoy reading about some of the organisations and individuals whom we have had the privilege of working with in pursuit of our mission to help communities across Greater Bristol to thrive.

In several ways, this year has been transformative for SMV, marked by moments of deep reflection, and underscored by the principles of renewed commitment and collaboration.

Whilst a great deal has happened over the past twelve months, there have been three standout moments: publishing the independent [history report](#) that examined our organisation's role in the trans-Atlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans; completing the transfer of all eight Venturers Trust schools to [E-ACT](#); and mobilising our resources to develop a new Youth Strategy.

Publishing the history report led to many honest, sincere and often difficult conversations with the descendants of those who were trafficked into slavery. Members of the African Heritage Communities have generously engaged with us and are helping us to navigate a way forward. Our apology is sincere, and our ongoing discussions are aimed at crafting a path together towards genuine repair.



Michael speaking with Ashley Burrowes at the Entrepreneurs Event.



Michael Bothamley, right, with guests at the Legends Lunch. L-R: Lois Harris, Constance Higgins, Dr Guy Reid-Bailey OBE and Marti Burgess.

Completing the transfer of eight schools to E-ACT was a significant achievement, made possible through the collaborative efforts of our co-sponsor the [University of Bristol](#), along with the [Department for Education](#), Trustees, Governors, school leaders and staff, all united in a shared goal to enhance educational opportunities for young people and to support the communities served by the schools. We are incredibly grateful for the efforts of everyone who made this possible.

Equally, as SMV steps back from its role as the co-sponsor of a multi-academy trust, our centuries-long commitment to supporting young people in the Greater Bristol region will continue through our new Youth Strategy, and our continued support of [Collegiate School](#).

The strategic repositioning of the support we can offer young people through the skills, knowledge, energy and resources of our members will ensure that SMV has a positive impact on youth provision and life outcomes for many more years to come.

Of course, none of the work we do would be possible without our members, and as we strive to achieve ever more ambitious social purpose objectives, we actively seek new members who will bring time, energy, expertise and resources to help us amplify our impact.

Thank you to the great many individuals and organisations across the region who help and support us to achieve our mission. Together we will shape a more inclusive future for everyone who lives and works in Greater Bristol.

*Michael Bothamley*

Michael Bothamley, Master 2023-24



# Education



Chris Curling DL

SMV has been supporting young people in the Greater Bristol region for more than 400 years, continually evolving to meet the social, economic and academic needs of the time. Education has been the vehicle through which our members have consistently provided support – through governance, funding, and more recently by introducing opportunities and experiences that improve outcomes for young people.

In line with broader changes in the Education sector, we've been working towards a strategic recalibration of SMV's support. Building on our experience and using the collective entrepreneurial skillset of our members, we want our support for young people to deliver greater impact and make a difference where it's needed most.

While our long-term support for [Collegiate School](#) will continue as it has since 1710, in our role as trustee, our broader support for young people has transitioned from multi-academy trust sponsorship to a more strategic, partnership-based approach. We are focusing more on the provision of broader co-curricular/enrichment opportunities, these being the main ingredient which increasingly is missing from state school provision and most differentiates them from successful independent schools.



[Fairlawn School](#) retained its Good rating from Ofsted.

In this year's Annual Review, as well as reading about the many accomplishments and successes of Collegiate School, who achieved a glowing report from the [ISI](#) (Independent Schools Inspectorate), you will find out about the aims and objectives of our new and evolving Youth Strategy.

But first, we can take a moment to look back on our journey from 2006, when SMV was asked by the then Government to take over the failing and dilapidated Withywood Community School, build an entirely new school on the site, and breathe new life and opportunity into the school provision of what became [Merchants' Academy](#). From the beginning we worked with the [University of Bristol](#).

We also converted [Montpelier High School](#) (at the time Colston's Girls' School) from an independent school for 350 students to a thriving state-maintained academy of 930 students with GCSE and A-level results consistently at the top of tables both locally and nationally.

Over time, the Regional Schools Commissioner asked SMV to take responsibility for five primary schools, all in challenged areas of Bristol and all of which now reflect significant improvement in their broader education offering and in the strength of their support to local communities.

We also created [Venturers' Academy](#), which has grown to 259 students with a primary diagnosis of autism, and this year was recognised as one of the top three schools in the world for its ability to help young people with autism overcome adversity.

Throughout, we have been supported by so many people, for example as governors and trustees, including our own members, staff from the University of Bristol, and others from the wider community. Bringing their knowledge, skills and expertise, all have given generously of their energy and time, working collaboratively to achieve better outcomes and to create potentially life changing opportunities for young people. We thank them all.

In choosing to transfer the eight Venturers Trust schools to [E-ACT](#), we have been able to ensure that students will continue to have access to the best possible education, supported by the best teachers and leaders, and with an enhanced package of support that will accelerate improvement. We're pleased that our association with the schools that were previously part of Venturers Trust will continue through our trusteeship and administration of the SMV Endowment Fund, which provides grants for co-curricular and enrichment experiences for students – an area that shares great synergy with our Youth Strategy.

**Chris Curling DL**  
Chair of SMV's Education Committee





Jeremy McCullough

# Collegiate School



**T**his has been an excellent year for Collegiate – not that we can use that word in isolation, of course. Following a change in the inspection reporting procedure, it is no longer appropriate to award single-word judgements to schools, and so our ISI visit in March 2024 shone a light on many different areas that could be commented on, such as:

*A strong sense of community pervades the whole school.*

*The community values personal responsibility.*

*The staff know the students well.*

*Student wellbeing underpins the school's approach.*

*Safeguarding our young people is effective and at the heart of all we do.*

*Our young people are brave and confident, and they are proud of their school.*

This was reflected by the overwhelmingly positive feedback from our parents: 93% of their responses were Agree/Strongly Agree.

We were delighted that the team of inspectors agreed with our own understanding of Collegiate School – that we are holistic, hard-working, busy and diverse. Indeed, by any other measure, 'Excellent'.

Our students are supported by conscientious staff and, of course, by their parents. This sense of all parties working together to help our young people develop into the best version of themselves is what makes our school such a happy place to attend, and to work.

The school year began with a fully attended Whole School Open Morning – a key event in our calendar. Hot on its heels came the production of the Queen-based musical We Will Rock You.



Sienna shines in We Will Rock You.

Those in attendance were amazed, not just by the high-quality acting, singing and dancing, but by the teamwork on display, the dedication to the cause and the smiles on faces. It was a production that will live long in the memory, especially for one grandparent who revealed before the final show that they had seen Freddie and co. perform live in 1977, whilst he was at university.

Our music department quite literally moved to new heights when they hosted a concert at the fabulous Clifton Observatory. It was a magical night, marking the first time the school band, The Collegiate Collective, had performed off the school site.

The U14 squad listen to their skipper at half-time of the National Rugby Cup Final.



Moving from music to sport, as so many of our pupils do on a daily basis, our U14 rugby team had considerable success, reaching the National Rugby Final, just losing out to a hugely talented King's, Macclesfield team. Indeed, that was the U14s first, and only, defeat of the season. Well done to the boys, coaches and staff for a fantastic season.

Our first teams also put on a great show at the Collegiate 7s tournament in late February, where we welcomed 15 other schools in the rugby events and 11 other schools for netball. A cold day was made enjoyable by the quality of sport on display. Next year's 7s is already on course to be bigger and better than ever.

Talents of a different kind were on display at the Collegiate's Got Talent evening, from poetry to comedy to singing, all raising funds for charity in the process, before more singing took centre stage at the hotly-contested House Music competition. Well done to Roundway for winning with their rendition of Can't Stop the Feeling, and congratulations to King's for lifting the overall House Cup following their victory on Sports Day.



King's were House Cup winners for 2023/24.



Pupils roar each other on during Sports Day.



The summer term was soon upon us, bringing with it 'exam season'. Our Year 11s and 13s performed brilliantly in their GCSEs, A-levels and BTECs, far surpassing national averages and it was great to see them feature prominently in picture spreads in our regional press.

As ever, though, those grades remain only a small part of the personal and professional development that our young people achieve during their time with us. Our social media tagline [#WeAreCollegiate](#) has never been more apt.

**Jeremy McCullough, Head of School**



Roundway celebrate their House Music victory.



# Venturers' Academy

## Top 3 Finalist in World's Best School Prizes 2024

The first Bristol-based school ever to become a finalist in the global education awards, the [World's Best School Prizes](#), [Venturers' Academy](#) has certainly had a thrilling year. In June it was revealed that the school had been shortlisted in the Top Ten Schools in the World, in the category 'Overcoming Adversity', and in September, that list narrowed to just three.

The five World's Best School Prizes are the most prestigious education awards in the world, and to make the top three is an incredible achievement, well-deserved for a trailblazing school for autistic children where pupils and staff live and breathe the motto 'Where Everything's Possible'.

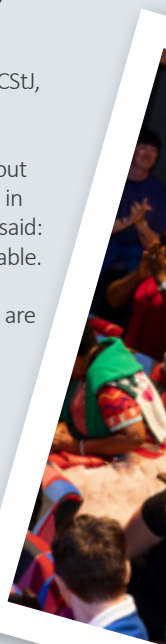
When the [Bristol Beacon](#) heard about the school's top three achievement, they immediately offered the use of their magnificent auditorium so that the entire school community could celebrate together.

The exciting event included musical performances from the school's talented students, with a further student taking to the stage to read an original poem. Polar explorer and former Royal Marines Commando Alan Chambers MBE gave an inspirational address, and students from [The Big Act Academy](#) of Theatre Arts in Bristol wowed the audience with a fantastic performance of Step in Time from the musical Mary Poppins.

The audience of over 400 included pupils, staff, parents, carers and special guests, including members of [SMV](#), representatives from the [University of Bristol](#), and His Majesty's official representative, Peaches Golding OBE CStJ, the Lord-Lieutenant of Bristol.

Describing the reaction when pupils and staff found out that their school is now one of the top three schools in the world, Executive Headteacher Trystan Williams said: "The joy and excitement in the room was unbelievable. Our wonderful pupils are amongst the most vulnerable children in the region, where the odds are all too often stacked against them – but with the unwavering support of their parents, carers and teachers, they firmly believe that everything is possible, and they embrace every opportunity and challenge with a positive mindset.

"Receiving this international recognition really shows our pupils what they can achieve and how amazing they all are. It's also a testament to the dedication, resilience and unwavering commitment of our





Venturers' Academy students and staff react to the news.

entire school community, including our incredible staff, parents, carers and everyone involved in making our school a beacon of hope and excellence.”

With 259 pupils aged between four and 19, located across three sites in Withywood and St Anne’s Park, Venturers’ Academy opened in 2016 through sponsorship from **SMV** and the University of Bristol.







Gail Bragg

## A new and exciting chapter

Following many months of collaboration between the two multi-academy trusts, the transfer of all eight Venturers Trust schools to the E-ACT family was completed in September 2024. I'm thrilled that the students and staff will now benefit from all that E-ACT has to offer, including access to broader resources, enhanced opportunities, and the support of a nationwide network committed to educational excellence.

The move to E-ACT will accelerate the improvement and growth of the schools, building on the strong foundation laid by the dedicated teams that have been part of Venturers Trust since 2017. The successful transfer is a testament to the hard

work and commitment of everyone involved, from trustees, governors and leaders to teachers and support staff; and as the schools embark on this new chapter with E-ACT, there is a shared optimism for the future. I have no doubt that the strong moral purpose that guided Venturers Trust will continue to drive the success of the academies as they move forward.

As the Chair of Trustees for six years, I had the privilege to work with so many inspiring people, whose commitment and passion I witnessed in abundance. Together we have achieved what we set out to do, and almost 4,000 young people across Greater Bristol will now continue to flourish under the strong and capable leadership of E-ACT.

**Gail Bragg, Chair of Trustees 2018-2024**



Montpelier High School students celebrate another set of outstanding A-level results – pictured with Headteacher Vanetta Spence, centre.





Tracey Killen

## Youth Strategy

**T**he launch of the new Youth Strategy is an exciting development in the forward journey of **SMV**, continuing a centuries-long commitment to help communities across the region thrive. The strategy is being developed through detailed consultation with SMV's members and with a wide range of invaluable partner organisations rooted in the Youth sector who are helping us ensure that our approach is evidence based. Their insight and advice will remain a crucial component of the Youth Committee's vision and objectives as we continuously evolve the strategy to meet the needs of young people across the region.

The primary objective of the Youth Strategy is to help ensure that all young people have equal access to opportunities and experiences that enable them to thrive and succeed. Underpinned by a partnership approach, the strategy focuses on collaboration with grassroots organisations already working successfully in this space, and who understand the challenges young people face. Together, we are determined to:

**BROADEN** access to enrichment activities and experiences in areas such as sport and the outdoors, the arts and music, that help to build confidence and self-belief.

**CREATE** future leaders by supporting the development of key life skills including self-management, taking control of choices, empowerment and helping others.

**BRIDGE** the gap between education and the workplace by supporting young people to better understand and prepare for the technical and personal skills required in the world of work.

As well as building strong, long-term partnerships with youth-led and youth-focused organisations, the voice of young people will be central to shaping the strategy as it evolves, and crucial to its success. It's an enormous privilege to be leading such an important strand of SMV's work, and to be listening to, and learning from, energised, inspirational young people and the diverse community organisations who share our vision of a brighter, more equal future for the next generation.

**Tracey Killen, Chair of SMV's Youth Committee**



Residential trips help to build self-belief, resilience and team spirit.



# Outward Bound

Following last year's successful residential visit to the **Outward Bound** centre in Aberdovey, 38 students from Merchants' Academy (**MA**) and Montpelier High School (**MHS**), age 13-15, were enthusiastic to find out for themselves what all the excitement was about. Joined by their teachers, and other students from **Bridge Learning Campus**, the group of young adventurers left Bristol for the four-hour journey by coach to reach the southern edge of Snowdonia, the largest National Park in Wales.



Students prepare to set off for Aberdovey. Adults, back row, left to right: Bob Jennings from Avon Outward Bound, former Mayor of Bristol Marvin Rees OBE, Michael Bothamley and Robert Bourns DL from SMV.



The experience was delivered by the **Outward Bound Trust**, an educational charity that inspires young people to take on adventures, overcome challenges and develop confidence and self-belief, preparing them to embrace all the opportunities that life will offer them. Students spent the week at a fully equipped residential facility with experienced instructors who oversaw a wide range of activities such as hiking, rock climbing, abseiling, river walks, canoeing, kayaking, camping and star gazing.

Alongside a subsidy and grant from the Outward Bound Trust and Avon Outward Bound Association, full financial sponsorship was provided by **SMV** for all participating schools from Bristol and Weston-Super-Mare.

The story is best told through the experiences of the young people who took part...

**Layla, MA:** *The trapeze was scary but everyone else went for it so I couldn't really say no. Everyone cheered me on and it felt amazing to complete the challenge.*

**Taysir, MHS:** *Some of the activities are quite daunting, but I took part by choice which felt empowering. We jumped from four metres into the sea. No one wanted to do it at first, but we all had a second go!*

**Taylor, MA:** *We had a campfire on the beach, played games, toasted marshmallows and watched the sunset.*

**Israa, MHS:** *Everyone was really respectful and supportive of Ramadan. We all looked out for each other.*

**Tegan, MA:** *I really enjoyed the team challenges, and it turns out I'm great at strategising!*

**Esha, MHS:** *I'm a lot more likely to say yes to things in the future. But not camping, I probably won't do that again!*

**Madison, MA:** *We climbed a mountain and I was looking forward to the view at the top, but we were so high up, we were actually inside the clouds. Not the view I was expecting, but it was awesome!*

**Husna, MHS:** *We all grew much closer as a team, it would be a lot harder by yourself. Now I've done this, I think 'what else am I capable of?'*

**Mason, MA:** *It was a great opportunity that we might not have again, so I wanted to try everything.*



# Endowment Fund



Trevor Smallwood OBE DL

**T**he Endowment Fund, administered by **SMV** for the past 15 years, is used to provide additional opportunities for young people in education.

Originally derived from member donations, legacies and trusts, the fund today is worth approximately £2.5 million, generating around £108,000 each year, made up from its investments, various trusts and ongoing donations made by SMV members.

This year, the endowment fund has made 195 individual grants to schools totalling over £140,000.

Up to and including this year, funds have been allocated equally amongst the state schools sponsored by SMV, based on pupil numbers. With Venturers Trust having now transferred its schools to **E-ACT**, in the year ahead the Endowment Fund will continue to support those schools while also exploring potential additional beneficiaries.

Bristol is still a city of great inequality and when young people don't have equal access to opportunities and experiences that develop their love of learning or increase their social capital, some will be in a position of disadvantage even before they leave school. The Endowment Fund makes it possible for schools to provide additional activities and resources that help to level the playing field and ultimately broaden horizons.

Schools identify where the Endowment Fund will have the greatest impact, and they apply to the Committee for funding. We meet three times a year, in October, January and May, to allocate money to each school in support of specific activities or experiences, such as residential trips, visits to museums, science centres, theatres, places of interest, workshops, in fact the options are endless!

It's a real privilege to be part of a process that supports young people in so many different ways.

**Trevor Smallwood OBE DL**  
**Chair of the Endowment Committee**

Oliver Laken with children on top of Crook Peak.



Oliver Laken, Headteacher of Bannerman Road Community Academy (**BRCA**) in Easton, shares two examples of how the Endowment Fund has a positive impact on pupils.

## Barton Camp 2024

**B**For many of our Year 6 pupils, this year's three-day residential visit to Barton Camp in Winscombe was the first time they'd been away from home without family.

Deep in the Mendips, and a world away from the city-living they're used to, children enjoyed an action-packed adventure that included bushcraft, cooking, den building and swimming. The evening's entertainment comprised of quizzes, bingo and even a talent show. All 40 pupils grew in confidence and independence, which helps prepare them for secondary school.

Funding residential trips is always a challenge because schools have ever-decreasing budgets and so do parents and carers, so the fact that this was paid for by the Endowment Fund meant that all Year 6 children could attend, and they all benefitted hugely from their experience.



MHS students explore the school's history through fashion.

Vanetta Spence, Headteacher of Montpelier High School (MHS), describes the focus of funded activities this year:

### Mental health and community

The Endowment Fund supports an extensive enrichment programme at MHS, funding over 40 activities throughout the year. This year, a particular focus was placed on music and the arts due to their proven positive impact on mental health and fostering a sense of community.

Highlights include the Big Noise Orchestra, offering students the chance to develop ensemble performance skills; Harmonious Voices, a chamber choir designed to enhance vocal technique; Dance with Kenzi introduced students to the joy of African dance; and the Colston to Phoenix Fashion School, which incorporated music, textiles, art, and history, explored the school's history through fashion. Its second show, which raised funds for the St Pauls Carnival, exemplified the school's strong connection with the local community.

### Two-time winners in drama festival

Another activity that significantly helps to build confidence for our pupils is taking part in various drama productions throughout the year, one of which this year was Matilda.

As well as receiving countless emails and words of praise regarding pupils' self-confidence, new-found love of drama and the quality of the productions, from parents, carers and members of the wider community who saw the show in school, we also won both of the categories we entered in this year's Mid-Somerset Festival.

We were even invited back to perform at the closing ceremony as one of the highlights of this event that is usually dominated by pupils from fee-paying schools. The Endowment Fund has helped us bridge and overcome this gap.

BRCA pupils proudly lift the trophies.







# Black South West Network

In 2024 [SMV](#) continued its collaboration with Black South West Network ([BSWN](#)), providing mentoring advice to nine Bristol-based Black and Minoritised entrepreneurs working in media, healthcare, education and technology. As well as working in pairs over a six-month period, mentees and mentors share experiences and ideas at regular 'Mentoring Mingle' events.

Managed by Derek Tanner, BSWN Enterprise Manager, the programme connected the entrepreneurs with SMV members who have achieved success across a range of industries. Derek says: "Entrepreneurs share many common attributes, however, where they may differ is in their ability to access knowledge and skills, market opportunities, finance and networks or structures that put their talent at a societal disadvantage."

Entrepreneurism often highlights local issues and targets specific solutions, the success of which can have a significant impact in communities. Derek believes the richness of the mentoring programme is its ability to advance understanding, whilst leveraging the skills, knowledge and networks of an established and respected enterprise community to unlock the potential of another.



Mentees and mentors catching up at the spring Mentoring Mingle.

We spoke with two of this year's entrepreneurs, as well as catching up with one of the mentees from last year's programme to find out about how their work is making a difference.

## Creative Power Town

Omari Cato is the founder of [Creative Power Town](#) (CPT), a multimedia hub that provides opportunities for young people to learn skills for future careers in a broad range of creative arts, including acting, fashion, dance, music production and podcasting.

In 2023, CPT projects saw over 200 young people sign up, where they took as much inspiration from each other as from the project organisers. "I love that we're creating young leaders who develop their own ideas and work collaboratively," says Omari, who sees this as the central element of why he founded CPT. "They may arrive as individuals, but they find a collective identity to create together and build their own networks."

At CPT young people are encouraged to tackle social issues that affect their communities, such as knife crime. "We're working to give them a new narrative in their lives, to replace the violent one that might exist. We want them to see that we're embracing them and looking to elevate them."



Derek Tanner (pictured right).



*Even if you're helping just one person, it can make a difference not just for them, but potentially to a whole community.*

BSWN's mentoring programme matched Omari with Andrew Nisbet, founder of multinational catering equipment distributor [Nisbets](#), and non-executive trustee of [The Nisbet Trust](#). Andrew has been advising Omari on business planning and structuring his ideas so that programmes are managed effectively and sustainably. "When you're trying to build," says Andrew, "it's so easy to take on too much. I'm encouraging Omari to prioritise his ideas so that they are more likely to be successful."

A recent project was short film *Unjust Stop*, a young person's perspective on the impact of a police stop-and-search. Created in partnership with Avon & Somerset Police, the film explains the rights of young people around police stop-and-search powers.

In April, members of the Unjust Stop team spoke at the Race and the City Conference, attended by 200 stakeholders whose work involves tackling racial inequity in local service provision. They gave an insight into the production process and the skills they learnt whilst filming, and received a standing ovation; and in June, the film premiered at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre.

Omari sees Andrew's mentoring as reflective of his work with young people, and the impact of supporting others. "Even if you're helping just one person, it can make a difference not just for them, but potentially to a whole community. Everybody's working towards the same thing – this is how real change happens."

Omari Cato presenting at a Mentoring Mingle.



Shadene Keeling

## The Free Talk Intervention

With a background in criminology, youth justice, and health and social care, Shadene Keeling founded [The Free Talk Intervention](#) CIC (Community Interest Company) in response to growing levels of youth violence and youth deaths in Bristol. Based in St Pauls, the company provides support to adults and young people who are vulnerable, have complex needs or are in the criminal justice system.

Shadene's holistic programme incorporates Epidemiological Criminology (EpiCrim), marrying public health principles with criminal justice issues, such as violence and substance use, and is an effective way of referring victims to local authority and other third sector service providers. The programme for young people has adopted the Child First approach which recognises that young service users are children and treats them accordingly.

The team sees 50-80 service users every day, helping them access benefits, food and sheltered accommodation, join sessions that target improved mindset, and talk with one of the volunteer social workers. Shadene says: "We're helping disadvantaged people in our community, and that's what makes us work harder."

Shadene was matched with former solicitor Robert Bourns DL, who has helped her focus on a business model to develop The Free Talk Intervention into a self-sustaining operation, contracted by statutory bodies. Central to this is implementing an administrative function dedicated to procurement, that would also free up existing staff to focus on the support needs of the service users.

6 *Mike helped me turn my ambitions for growth into a strategy, and the event catering side of the business is still growing.*

“Our biggest challenge,” says Shadene, “is setting ourselves up to be paid for the work that we do. None of the team are experienced in procurement and yet it’s a full-time job and the cost of employing a specialist procurement officer has been a major barrier.”

Instrumental in the growth and development of law firm [TLT](#), Robert is aware of the financial issues facing small organisations: “It’s difficult for start-ups to be sustainable alongside the necessities of compliance and regulation, but Shadene has developed an effective programme that deserves to succeed. She has a genuine concern for people and a real drive to make a difference to underserved communities, and her philanthropy goes above and beyond the delivery of the programme.”

The winter Mentoring Mingle.



## Jerk King

Ashley Burrowes runs event catering firm [Jerk King](#) and he was part of the 2023 mentoring programme, in which he was matched with Michael Bothamley.



Ashley Burrowes

“Mike helped me turn my ambitions for growth into a strategy, and the event catering side of the business is still growing. In fact, we haven’t had one bad review in ten years,” says Ashley. Jerk King has a food kiosk at Bristol Rovers FC home games and is a regular fixture at the St Pauls Carnival.

Earlier this year, Jerk King took over the kitchen at [Malcolm X Community Centre](#) in St Pauls, which enabled the business to obtain its five-star food hygiene rating, opening up opportunities to secure pitches at festivals. Keen to have a more regular presence in St Pauls, the kitchen is also open every Friday to sell directly to the public.

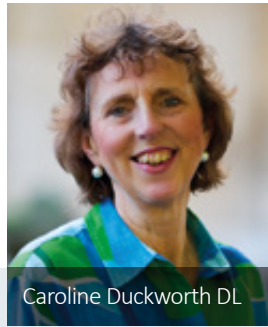
Ashley is also focused on giving something back to the local community and has recently set up a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) with local CIC [Mwanzo](#). “We’re teaching cookery skills to young people who have been in trouble with the police,” says Ashley. The classes are designed to be an early intervention tool for young people from the age of 11 and feature planning, budgeting, buying ingredients and cookery skills.

Ashley felt a call to arms in response to the incidents of knife crime in Bristol that have claimed multiple teenage lives. “The violence is devastating and a drain on our community. Some of these kids might not have positive male role models, so if we can tackle problems early and offer them something that’s missing, it could change their lives.”

Derek Tanner sees significant value in the ongoing partnership between BSWN and [SMV](#). “We have experienced many positive impacts through this programme that have helped nurture the confidence and ability of the mentees”, he says.

“Mentoring at its best is a deep and mutually beneficial experience that can last way beyond the bounds of any programme, and we’re looking forward to new possibilities as the initiative develops into the future.”





Caroline Duckworth DL

## The Power of Partnerships

### Q&A: How and why do long-term strategic partnerships deliver more?

Building equitable partnerships lies at the heart of **SMV's** mission – *Helping communities across Greater Bristol to thrive*. Effective partnerships achieve a far greater impact by fostering collaboration, pooling resources and amplifying the reach of initiatives; and complex challenges can be addressed more effectively when like-minded organisations are willing to share expertise, skills and resources, often leading to more sustainable, long-term solutions.

Furthermore, joint efforts build trust and strengthen the social fabric of communities, creating a sense of shared ownership because the needs and voices of all members of the community are represented. This collaborative approach not only enhances the immediate outcomes of projects but also creates lasting, positive change.

**Caroline Duckworth DL, CEO of SMV**



Babbasa staff and trailblazers at the Babbasa Impact Event in May.

### Babbasa

As a small social enterprise, collaboration is key to **Babbasa** achieving impact for the underrepresented young people we support.

Sometimes this collaboration can be a one-off, something transactional in nature, with a partner providing finances and Babbasa delivering activity. However, Babbasa's preference is to partner with organisations in a more long-term strategic way.

Multi-year partnerships create benefits for both parties over an extended period of time, helping Babbasa transform the lives of low income and ethnic minority young people in a meaningful way, achieving a deeper impact than simply scratching the surface.

The foundation of a successful strategic partnership is alignment between partners, including a good match in terms of shared values and ongoing communication between both parties – the relationship is key.

Organisations like SMV who partner with Babbasa, not only build trust and credibility in their brand within local communities, they also add value to the city through becoming part of the innovative **OurCity2030** systems change initiative in Bristol to break the cycle of deprivation for the next generation.

It is only through this kind of collaboration that we can address some of the world's most pressing challenges and bring about positive economic and societal change.

**Kevin Millwood, Chairperson, Babbasa**

LaToyah McAllister-Jones  
Photo credit: Jon Craig

### St Pauls Carnival

Partnerships are an essential part of the **St Pauls Carnival**, and to deliver an event of its size and scale, we work year-round with partners who share our principles and values.

With a core team of just four people, the strength of the partnerships we build leads not only to a one-day event attracting an average of 120,000 visitors, 70 artists, 140 traders,

four stages, and of course the procession, we also reach over 6,000 students through our education programme, and we inject over £9.2 million into the local economy.

Effective systems leadership underpins a successful Carnival, and all of the community cohesion benefits that are achieved as a result.

## The Power of Partnerships

By joining the dots across the ecosystem of the city and beyond, we're able to bring together a coalition of the right partners who share our values and will match our effort and energy.

St Pauls Carnival brings together communities from all over the world to celebrate Caribbean heritage. Some of our partners are a really logical fit for us, and others are less obvious. SMV has been a partner of Carnival for over six years and we've had some uncomfortable conversations to get to a place of trust and transparency.

Real partnerships are based on earned respect, and we're in that place with **SMV**, whose support is far beyond financial, but neither is it one-way. We share expertise and networks that are beneficial to both organisations and our partnership works because we're moving forward together over the long-term.

**LaToyah McAllister-Jones**  
Executive Director of the St Pauls Carnival

### Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership



Melanie Monaghan

Long-term strategic partnerships offer numerous benefits, with transparent communication and openness essential elements that help establish trust over time. In the voluntary and community sector, strategic partnerships often involve transactional aspects. We've been working closely with SMV since 2018, during which time their support has been financial as well as strategic.

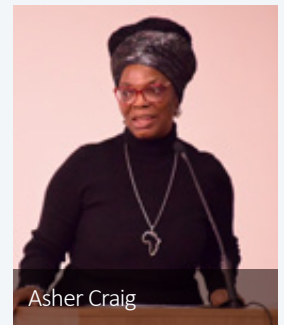
Taking the time to move beyond a purely transactional relationship has been important for us to build trust with SMV and work towards our shared objectives. Both organisations have made a long-term commitment to the area, and together we are supporting a range of community-led initiatives and programmes. There's so much potential here, and the community itself knows what it needs to thrive and flourish, so our role is to listen and respond.

**Melanie Monaghan, Executive Director, Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership**

*Joint efforts build trust and strengthen the social fabric of communities.*

### Bristol Legacy Foundation

From the perspective of reparatory justice and working with African Heritage Communities (AHC), long-term strategic partnerships are crucial for delivering meaningful reparations and supporting AHC. Through sustained collaboration, organisations such as SMV can develop a deeper understanding of the needs of AHCs and build trust, which is essential for addressing historical injustices. Partnerships allow for the co-creation of programmes that are culturally relevant and responsive, rather than imposing top-down solutions. This is the approach we are taking with our British Legacy Foundation partners.



Asher Craig

In addition, long-term commitments enable the consistent flow of resources, skills and knowledge transfer to empower local leadership and build community capacity. This facilitates sustainable change, rather than short-term interventions.

Crucially, partnerships rooted in reparatory justice principles acknowledge historical harms and centre the voices and agency of affected communities. This collaborative approach is far more likely to deliver transformative, community-driven outcomes compared to transactional, time-limited engagements.

Ultimately, strategic long-term partnerships are a vital mechanism for delivering substantive reparations and supporting the self-determination of African Heritage Communities.

**Asher Craig, Chair, Bristol Legacy Foundation**

*Partnerships allow for the co-creation of programmes that are culturally relevant and responsive.*



*Great partnerships are built on the strong foundations of a transformational and mutually beneficial relationship.*



### South Bristol Youth

Humans are intrinsically social beings, and when we find common ground with others our lives are enriched in unpredictable ways. Organisations, whether they're public, private or third sector, are an extension of the people who run and are involved in them, and as such, the enriching benefits of collaboration remain the same.

Strategic partnerships take informal relationships one step further, and over time they produce ideas and actions with benefits way beyond each organisation, impacting positively on communities locally, regionally, nationally and even further.

The long-term strategic partnership that we have developed with **SMV** is about working together across a number of fronts to help create possible solutions to some of the longstanding intractable issues in South Bristol. For example, SMV and South Bristol Youth (SBY) both strive to provide the right combination of experiences and activities that will help young people to achieve their goals.

SMV helps us to meet and build relationships with businesses and organisations across the city, forging valuable connections that often lead to work experience and even employment opportunities for young people. SMV also provides funding to support a variety of SBY programmes focused on building the knowledge, skills and confidence of the young people who take part, preparing them for a successful life after school or college; and various members of SMV volunteer their time to become more closely involved on an operational level, such as Karl Tucker, who is our Chair.

The knowledge and expertise in both organisations is amplified by the partnership we've built and we are, without a doubt, better together.

**Camilla Chandler-Mant, CEO, South Bristol Youth**



Heather Frankham from SMV, and Brett Dickinson, Project Coordinator for SBY, working with delegates at SBY's Elevating Excellence event for young people, held at Merchants' Hall in October.

### Black South West Network

Racial Justice lies at the core of **BSWN**'s mission. We realise that to achieve our aim of a more equitable and ultimately just society, we need meaningful engagement, open dialogue and equitable collaborations with a variety of actors and allies across our socio-economic and political ecosystem.



Sado (standing, right) with team members and attendees at Access to Justice.

In essence great partnerships are built on the strong foundations of a transformational and mutually beneficial relationship that delivers progressive learning and change. Building relationships that are transformative and intentional, rather than short-term and transactional, lie at the centre of our approach to collaboration. We seek deep and strategic engagements based on trust, honesty, shared learning, understanding, appreciation, and mutual respect. Our learnt experience is that failing to embed these fundamental elements of a relationship from the outset often results in an investment of time that rarely extends beyond diminishing returns.

BSWN and SMV have embarked on this journey. It has required an exploration of shared values and a commitment to embrace differences as well as common objectives. We believe that both organisations appreciate the growing benefits of our collaboration and fully recognise that as critical friends and collaborators we can unlock and leverage capabilities that deliver fairer and more equitable outcomes for all within our society.

**Sado Jirde, Director, Black South West Network**

## Responding to Our History



Michael Bothamley

As an organisation whose past is entangled in the abhorrent trans-Atlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans, **SMV** is committed to acknowledging, addressing, and responding to these historical injustices; including understanding their impact on present and future generations of the victims' descendants.

Working with the **Bristol Legacy Foundation**, and with the generous support of many other organisations and individuals with lived experience of the legacy of slavery, we are

developing and implementing an ongoing series of restorative actions and initiatives aimed at healing and repairing past harms.

When the Colston statue came down, we commissioned an independent **history report** to answer key questions that were put to SMV that, at the time, we couldn't answer. Receiving and publishing the report triggered an intense period of internal reflection and a programme of external events, activities and conversations focused on understanding and healing. We're very grateful to the many individuals and organisations from African Heritage Communities who continue to help us learn about reparative justice and co-create initiatives to deliver it.

## Legends Lunch

**S**MV was honoured to welcome members of the **Malcolm X Centre**, Bristol Golden Agers Club and Evergreens Social Club to the Legends Lunch, a special event to mark the

anniversaries of two important events in modern British history: the arrival of the Empire Windrush in 1948 and the Bristol Bus Boycott of 1963.







Roger Griffith MBE making a speech at the Legends Lunch.

Among the guests was Dr Guy Reid-Bailey OBE, one of the key contributors to the fight for employment parity. The Bristol Omnibus Company had banned Black and Asian people from working as bus conductors and drivers in 1955, forcing a group of activists known as the West Indian Development Council (WIDC) to campaign for equal employment rights.

Aged just 18 and well-qualified for a vacancy as a bus conductor, Guy was put forward for the position in April 1963, but as a Black man he was denied an interview.



Mr and Mrs John and Onya Thomas.

Michael Bothamley, this year's leader of [SMV](#), paid tribute to the Windrush generation, some of whom were in attendance: "You left your home countries to help rebuild a Britain shattered by the Second World War, and in Bristol, you grew the city to become the vibrant and diverse place that we all proudly call home today."

Michael also acknowledged the appalling treatment that many of those who came to Bristol experienced on arrival, when they were subjected to hostility, as well as employment and housing discrimination.



L-R: Jacqui Wilson, Dr Guy Reid-Bailey OBE, Tina Martin and Anndeloris Chacon.

In response, the WIDC called for a boycott of Bristol's buses that lasted four months and attracted international attention. On 28th August 1963, the same day that Martin Luther King Jr made his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech, the Bristol Omnibus Company announced it would end its policy of racial discrimination in employing bus crews. The boycott was a watershed moment in the British Civil Rights Movement and helped pave the way for the UK's 1965 and 1968 Race Relations Acts.





Dr Richard Stone

*They are actively engaging in projects and initiatives framed by a genuine desire to deliver reparative justice.*

## Independent History Report

Three years ago, I was commissioned by **SMV** to investigate a series of questions relating to the historic role of the Society of Merchant Venturers in the trans-Atlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans; the involvement of its past members in both trafficking and enslavement; the extent to which members and the institution benefitted financially; and also the attitude of the Society, and its members at the time, to the abolition campaign.

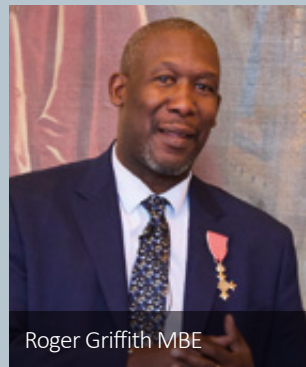
What I found has been fascinating, shedding light on a long-obscured history and revealing the complex relationships between a group of people whose opinions on slavery and the trans-Atlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans varied widely.

All too often with projects such as this I have heard of attempts to meddle, or even to shape the presentation of the findings. This was emphatically not the case with SMV. Once the questions had been agreed on, I was left completely to my own devices, although there was a continued interest in hearing more about what I was finding. Indeed, SMV even facilitated independent feedback on my initial draft by members of the Black communities, which was invaluable in shaping the way the **final report** was written.

As a historian, this has been an opportunity to conduct research of great academic interest, but it is certainly sobering to reflect on the figures, which we must remember represent the devastating loss of human life on an enormous scale. The numbers you see on a page relate to individuals and whole families, all of whom had stories of their own that go untold.

Looking forward, I believe that the impact of the report will continue long into the future. It's important that today's members of SMV are responding to the facts by speaking openly about the past. They are actively engaging in projects and initiatives framed by a genuine desire to deliver reparative justice.

**Dr Richard Stone, Historian, University of Bristol**



Roger Griffith MBE

## Commitment to Equality and Shared Understanding

I first met Michael Bothamley at the St Pauls Carnival in July 2023, and his passion to work with local communities was evident. He followed up our encounter by hosting a Legends Lunch at Merchants' Hall for eighty Caribbean Elders to celebrate the Windrush Generation, whose efforts paved the way for racial equality and an inclusive future. It was a memorable occasion, and I will treasure the warmth and hospitality our brave Caribbean pioneers were afforded.

During this decade, SMV has increased its transparency and profile, such as taking part in a historic interview on **Ujima Radio** and contributing to the success of the **Bristol Legacy Foundation**. As this year's leader of SMV, Michael has earned the respect of several African-Caribbean leaders, negotiating a difficult path from the past to envision a shared future that reflects different perspectives. It has been great working with him and other SMV members to improve race and community relations in Bristol, and together we are building a path forwards.

**Roger Griffith MBE**  
**CEO Creative Connex CIC and Writer**



## Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project

The **Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project** is 25 years old this year. It was originally set up to secure the outstanding wildlife interest of the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge and Clifton and Durdham Downs, and to raise awareness and understanding of this unique location and its importance for people and wildlife.

The organisation is a partnership between **Bristol City Council**, **Bristol Zoological Society**, the **Downs Committee**, **Forestry England**, **Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge**, the **National Trust**, **Natural England**, **SMV**, and the **University of Bristol**.

As well as undertaking the important role of surveying and monitoring wildlife, the Project also manages the habitat, which includes protecting rare plants. Engagement is another key area of focus, with regular opportunities throughout the year for people of all ages to discover, learn about and enjoy the wildlife and nature of the area.

This year, **1,662** young people aged four to 25 have engaged in educational activities on the Downs; with outreach activities connecting with a further **4,065** people across a huge variety of Bristol-based festivals, and through project events and talks. Dedicated sessions for families with pre-school-age children reached an additional **344** mini-conservationists.

## The Clifton and Durdham Downs



Photo credit: Denice Stout



Volunteers and visitors have taken part in a variety of events such as a Dawn Chorus, a Butterfly Heaven Walk, a Ramble with a Woodland Ranger Walk, and a Bat Talk and Walk adventure at dusk.

On the monitoring front, a special survey in July helped to explore whether there is a significant difference in pollinator species diversity between areas with high and low human impact, and the engagement team have helped carry out dormice and silky wave moth surveys in the Avon Gorge.



Photo credit: Cathy Mayne

Anna Stevens, Biodiversity Engagement and Learning Manager for the Project believes that welcoming more people of all ages to take part in engagement experiences about the area helps raise awareness about how everyone has a part to play in protecting the Avon Gorge & Downs:

“We’ve had some fantastic wildlife engagement this year with different groups, but increasingly we encounter challenges caused by misuse of the Downs through fires, litter, tents, waste, van dwellers and travelling communities, particularly during the late spring to early autumn, when the teaching spaces we use are impacted. It would make such a difference if everyone who uses the Downs, for whatever reason, tried to minimise their impact on the biodiversity, for example by taking away their own rubbish.”

## Meet the Downs Development Manager

**L**uke Mackenzie is the Business Development Manager for Clifton & Durdham Downs, a position created by the [Downs Committee](#) following the public consultation in 2022.

He started in March 2024, and his role includes sourcing new revenue streams to fund improvements that will benefit the many users of the Downs.



Luke Mackenzie

As well as looking at the potential for National Lottery and Football Foundation funding, Luke is also exploring new ways to generate income through leases for leisure facilities such as mini golf, padel courts and cricket nets. He believes this would have the added benefit of encouraging greater intergenerational and family use of the open green space so precious to Bristol.

Luke would also like to improve the [Downs League](#) facilities, including the changing rooms, which could benefit other groups that use the Downs too.

Liaising closely with different stakeholders is a key part of Luke’s role. As well as the Downs Committee, the [Parks Department](#) and the [Downs Advisory Panel](#), Luke is in close contact with the Downs Maintenance Team, led by the Downs Area Supervisor. The various different groups need to co-exist in a way that avoids one having a detrimental impact on the other; for example there are ecological considerations to any event, sport or community activity taking place on the Downs.

Balancing the shared vision of all stakeholders with the inevitable budgetary constraints and legal restrictions make this an interesting role, and Luke is up for the challenge. He has lived in the area for 25 years and has been a regular visitor to the Downs throughout that time. This close connection fuels his determination to improve the area for both current users and future generations.



## Downs Advisory Panel

Following a public consultation in 2022, the Downs Committee set up the Downs Advisory Panel (DAP) to assist and support the Committee in the day-to-day management of the Downs.

Comprising a diverse mix of experienced volunteers and professionals, DAP members meet regularly to discuss issues raised by Downs users. The DAP reports directly to the Downs Committee and offers advice and recommendations to assist in the good governance of the Downs.

Liaising closely with other Downs interest groups and with local residents associations, the DAP ensures that a broad range of views and opinions are considered, and is often the first point of contact for anyone wanting to ask a question or raise a concern about the Downs. To date the DAP has fielded over 300 enquiries and has advised the Downs Committee on policy with regard to topics including major events, the future use of the north car park, the licensing of boot camps and on a range of possible commercial opportunities.

The DAP has also received Committee support to encourage minority ethnic groups to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered by the Downs, and to create a brand new geology trail. The near future will see recommendations for improvements to the Gully steps and an exciting initiative to reinstate Green Flag accreditation for the Downs.

**Robert Westlake, DAP Chair**

The Downs Advisory Panel can be contacted at [downspanel@gmail.com](mailto:downspanel@gmail.com).



Robert Westlake on the Downs.

## Ladies' Mile book reprinted almost 50 years on

The Victorian toilet building on Durdham Down is the only public convenience in this area of Bristol, and is notable for its Blue Plaque, one of the highest civic honours, which was awarded to Victoria Hughes.

A cloakroom attendant between 1929 and 1962, Victoria befriended and cared for many of the people she encountered, which often included women working in the sex trade. She was well known for being kind and non-judgemental, always offering compassionate support to those in need of a hot cup of tea and a friendly face who was willing to listen.

Victoria kept diaries of the comings and goings during her time as the attendant, which she published in her 1977 book *Ladies' Mile*. The book provides a remarkable and sometimes shocking insight into the twilight hours of one small area of Bristol during the Great Depression and post-war years. Sadly, Victoria died just a year after the book was published.

Out of print for many years, a successful crowdfunding campaign, organised by Kerris Harrop, allowed the book to be reprinted last November. Avid supporters of improving the Downs, many of SMV's members contributed to this fantastic community-driven project. Available from [BristolRead Books](#), the new edition retains all of Victoria's text, as well as the original front cover. Proceeds will help support the refurbishment of the Victorian cloakroom so that it can be used by visitors to the Downs for many more years to come.



*The book provides a remarkable and sometimes shocking insight into the twilight hours of one small area of Bristol.*

# Social Enterprise and Sustainability



David Powell

**T**he newly formed Social Enterprise and Sustainability Committee brings together a range of different people who are already doing great things in this space, such as Andrew Garrad CBE, who this year was awarded the Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering, and Ed Rowberry, Chief Executive of Bristol & Bath Regional Capital (BBRC).

The dynamic combination of skills, expertise, knowledge and connections that the Committee's members bring to the mix allows us collaboratively to explore exciting opportunities and emerging initiatives that could potentially have a huge impact on the region, and on the planet.

As we consider a wide range of different projects against our ten-year strategy, we're very grateful for the support of various experts, including from the [University of Bristol](#), the [University of the West of England](#), and BBRC, where the theme of sustainability threads through so much of what they do.

Amongst the initiatives that we're exploring together is the design and development of eco-friendly, affordable social housing across the city; as well as how we can continue to support community-led initiatives such as [Ambition Lawrence Weston](#), where a community-owned wind turbine is proving transformational to the socio-economic success of the area.

Closer to home, we're acting on the results of an internal audit to reduce the carbon footprint of SMV's own activities. Every decision can make a difference, and we're looking at the various suppliers we work with to ensure that collectively we're using sustainable resources and sourcing locally, whether that's print, materials, food or services.

In this section of the Annual Review, I invite you to read about the trailblazing work of BBRC, of which [SMV](#) is a founding member; the sustainability focus of the SMV committee members who help to manage the [St Monica Trust](#) Endowment in our role as trustee; and about this year's [Bristol Social Impact Awards](#), delivered by [Voscur](#), and where SMV was honoured to be one of the event sponsors.

**David Powell, Chair of SMV's Social Enterprise and Sustainability Committee**

## Bristol Social Impact Awards

**H**eld in February at South Bristol Skills Academy in Hengrove, the Bristol Social Impact Awards, also known as the Voscur, is an annual awards ceremony that recognises the work of individuals, groups and organisations that contribute to Bristol's community.

The awards are hosted by [Voscur](#), an organisation that supports and develops Bristol's voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

SMV was honoured to sponsor this year's [Environmental Award](#), which recognises the work of a social purpose organisation that has either taken actions to contribute to the target of a carbon neutral Bristol by 2030, or supported collective climate action in their community or city-wide. Congratulations to the winner of this award, [Sparks Bristol](#), who re-purposed the former Marks and Spencer Building in Broadmead and is celebrated for its community efforts to bring sustainable shopping and environmental education to the city; for catalysing a movement for change in the high street; and for regenerating the building into an inclusive hub for creatives, and diverse communities alike.

The other inspirational organisations shortlisted for the award were [Avon Needs Trees](#) and [Bristol Climate and Nature Partnership](#). Based at FutureLeap on Gloucester Road, Avon Needs Trees has over 1,000 local volunteers who plant and care for trees each year; and Bristol Climate and Nature Partnership is a network of 1,100 organisations united by the vision to achieve a zero-carbon, nature-rich, socially-just future for Bristol.



Photo credit: Sparks Bristol.





Ed Rowberry

## Bristol & Bath Regional Capital

**B**BRC is a place-based impact investor in the South West of England, focused on unlocking investment, impact and support for purpose-driven businesses, housing, charities and social enterprises. In the last year, we have continued to make significant progress to improve the lives of people and local communities across the region.

Since our inception nearly ten years ago, deploying a combination of public and private finance, we have mobilised £71 million into the region, investing in best-in-class businesses and projects that deliver impact outcomes and attractive investor returns.



The BBRC Team.

### Net zero

BBRC invests in projects in the South West that reduce carbon and contribute to inclusive, sustainable communities. Investment through [City Funds](#) in Bristol-based organisations focused on environmental impact has saved around 50,000 tonnes of carbon.

In September 2024, the West of England Combined Authority ([WECA](#)) announced a decision to initiate a £100m investment fund to drive the green economy. WECA has committed £10m investment to attract £90m of private investment to create growth and jobs in local businesses and projects tackling the climate and nature emergencies. The Green Growth West Impact Fund will be delivered in partnership with BBRC.



Residents of Elderberry Walk.

### Responsible homes

BBRC is committed to tackling the housing crisis in the South West, with a focus on key workers and low-medium income households. Our solution is to bring sustainable, affordable and well-managed homes to the market.

Our flagship housing project Elderberry Walk was completed at the end of last year. The site is located in Southmead, an area ranked among the 20% most deprived regions in the UK according to the [IMD](#) (Index of Multiple Deprivation). We now have residents living in all 161 homes, including key workers from Southmead Hospital, and the scheme was awarded 'Best Large Scheme in Planning' at the National Housing Awards and recognised by the [World Economic Forum](#).

In March, £2.5m of public and private investment was brought together in a unique partnership to deliver 12 new high-quality sustainable homes for Ukrainian refugees in Bristol, which will help to pave the way for similar future local affordable housing schemes.

**361**

people living in sustainable, well-managed homes.

**125**

people living in homes managed by BBRC directly.

**2,500**

Aiming to deliver 2,500 low-carbon affordable new homes in the South West by 2035 and an additional 2,500 through housing association partners.





24

The number of community projects BBRC has invested in through City Funds.

241

jobs created by the projects.

300,000+

The number of people served by our investees.

48%

of people helped were from an underrepresented community.

Community and wellbeing

We have now fully deployed our £10m place-based investment fund **City Funds**, which was created to support impact-driven businesses in the Bristol region.

Notable investments in the last 12 months include:

- ▶ **Great Western Credit Union** – a local financial co-operative providing accessible and affordable financial services to people across Bristol, Bath, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset.
- ▶ **Urban Pursuit** – an alternative education provider reintegrating local young people back into education through a highly successful mentoring programme with a package of personal and social development activities.
- ▶ **Wake The Tiger** – an immersive visitor attraction ‘amazement’ park committed to developing education and training pathways that empower underrepresented communities to access the creative sector.

Ed Rowberry, Chief Executive, BBRC



Urban Pursuit participants and team members.

Impact in numbers

Over £13m

Total investment made by City Funds.

£10m

Invested into 29 organisations.

£2m

Invested into 5 net zero projects.

£700K

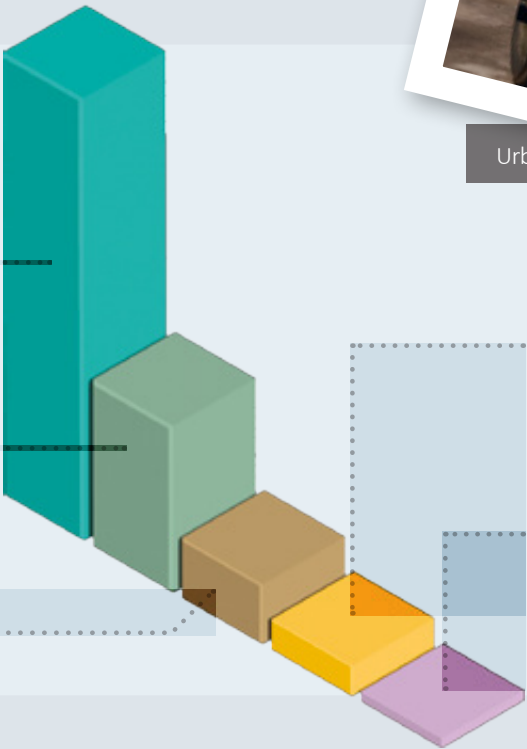
Invested into Great Western Credit Union.

£350K

Invested into Wake The Tiger.

£55K

Invested into Urban Pursuit.





# Connecting Entrepreneurs

In October, [SMV](#) held an event dedicated to connecting entrepreneurs, specifically those who have a strong social purpose agenda to create positive impact across the region. Over 40 entrepreneurs joined 15 members of SMV at [Merchants' Hall](#) to explore how philanthropic activity is driving business benefit and creating lasting change.

The objective of the event was to encourage conversation about how entrepreneurs can successfully embed social purpose and responsibility into business, and to facilitate new networks of individuals and organisations who can achieve even greater social impact by working together.

A lively panel debate headlined 'Entrepreneurial Philanthropy: A virtuous circle of mutual benefit' explored how the act and the impact of philanthropy goes far beyond simply writing a cheque.

The panel discussion was chaired by Anita Kimber, an independent financial services expert who has made a huge contribution to the UK's growth as a global fintech leader.

Three successful entrepreneurs sat on the panel, representing a range of business sectors. Heather Frankham is a teacher turned business leader and philanthropist; Martin Thatcher DL is the managing director of [Thatchers Cider](#) and founder of the [Thatchers Foundation](#); and Marti Burgess is a commercial lawyer, business owner and international ambassador for Bristol.



Questions put to the panel included:

- ▶ What can charities learn from the commercial sector, and vice versa?
- ▶ How can businesses effectively cascade their social purpose mission to engage their teams?
- ▶ Why does incorporating ESG (environmental, social and governance) into a business model positively impact its culture?

Following the panel session, conversations continued over networking, and feedback overwhelmingly called for more events of this nature, where entrepreneurs can learn from each other and work together to deliver ambitious social purpose objectives alongside equally ambitious business goals.

The event catering partner was [Square Food Foundation](#), a Bristol-based charity that aims to reduce hunger, improve health and teach people from all ages and backgrounds to cook. Square Food is also a highly respected event catering business, that ploughs all profits back into the charity to fund its food education outreach work.



The panel L-R: Anita Kimber, Heather Frankham, Marti Burgess and Martin Thatcher DL.



# Care for Older People



Dr Jacqueline Cornish OBE

“Promise you won’t forget about me, ever. Not even when I’m a hundred”.

This quote from The House at Pooh Corner by A A Milne underpins our entire philosophy of care for older and disadvantaged people. Far from being forgotten, their physical and mental health, welfare and happiness are pivotal to the objectives of both the [Cote](#) and [Almshouse Charities](#).

This has been a successful year, with sound achievements and the anticipation of exciting developments for the future. After two years of careful research, scrutiny of national and local health and social care data, and meetings with relevant groups, the Committee has completed its strategy. This is dynamic, live, multi-focused and evolving as we remain vigilant and responsive to national and local initiatives. We recognise that our mission is to enhance the quality, safety and experience of compassionate care to individual residents and their families.

Leanne Thorne, the manager of [Katherine & Griffiths House](#), supported by her deputy Sue Thorne and the whole team, have yet again surpassed themselves in the delivery of inspiration,

sensitivity and watchful vigilance in the carehomes. There has been the most wonderful programme of uplifting events delivered with enthusiasm by the Wellbeing Team, as evidenced by the colourful and heartwarming newsletters which chronicle the joy and happiness these have brought to the residents. Gratifyingly, the maintenance of high standards has again been recognised by the [Care Quality Commission](#).

Looking to the future, we are exploring the possibility of providing additional dementia care and extra care housing while continuing to search for almshouse re-provision opportunities.

There is much to celebrate, given that our priority will always be to provide safe and high-quality care to our residents and safeguard their unique individuality.

**Dr Jacqueline Cornish OBE**  
**Chair of SMV’s Care for Older People Committee**



Leanne Thorne

As the Care Manager for [Katherine & Griffiths House](#), both part of the Cote Charity, I experience first-hand and on a daily basis, the impact of truly compassionate care on the lives of older people. Visitors often comment on the joyful atmosphere here, and if you follow us on [Instagram](#), you’ll know how much fun our residents and staff have together.

We all agree that age is just a number, and every member of our team takes the approach that our residents don’t live in our workplace, but instead we work in their home. Quality of life for our residents is everything here, and we have a brilliant team who are always making the extra effort to ensure that this is a happy and welcoming place to live and to work.

We all enjoy listening to the fascinating stories and memories that our residents share, but we also love making wonderful new memories together. A regular source of excitement is the [One Wish Project](#), which you can read about over the page; and our richly diverse activities and entertainment programme is designed afresh each month with significant input from our residents.

Some of the highlights this year include celebrating inspirational women on International Women’s Day, discovering the scientists among us during Science Club and learning about the life of William Wordsworth on his birthday.

During National Storytelling Week we invited children from a local nursery to join us for story time, and it was plain to see the value of intergenerational contact as everyone joined in with We’re All Going on a Bear Hunt.





Members of the Katherine & Griffiths House team.



Another highlight was the countryside adventure in Frampton on Severn onboard an accessible canal boat. Run by the [Willow Trust](#), the charity provides therapeutic days out on the water, and the boat has a lift to the wheelhouse with an adjustable steering unit so that all guests can take a turn at the helm.

Our annual summer party, which this year had a medieval theme, was once again a big hit amongst residents, family, friends and staff. We enjoyed dramatic fire performances from the Inferno Sisters, nail biting fencing matches from University of Bristol students, a performance from medieval musicians Caliban's Dream, an animal petting area with lambs, sheep, donkeys and rabbits from Kelly's Donkeys, as well as face painting and a bouncy castle for the many children who attended. The event was such a huge success that it was covered by BBC News.



Of course, none of these things happen without the imagination and hard work of our wonderful team members, and we were all thrilled to see our very own Sabina Greene collect the Wellbeing Co-ordinator of the Year Award at the recent [Care & Support West Awards](#), held at Ashton Gate.

The [Cote Charity](#) is also responsible for the Almshouse on St Michael's Hill, where we strive to support our 12 residents to live independently within a community setting for as long as possible. We also encourage residents to take part in various social events throughout the year, such as coffee mornings and a carol service in the Chapel at Christmastime.

**Leanne Thorne, Care Manager for the Cote Charity**



## One Wish Project

**D**etermined to help residents make even more wonderful memories to share with family and friends, the Wellbeing Team pulls out all the stops to grant a special wish for every resident. Aptly titled the One Wish Project, here are just a few of the dreams that have come true this year:



The Wellbeing Team L-R: Sabina Greene, Oliver Wilde and Sharon Gittings.



### All that jazz!

In his younger years, Leonard was a professional jazz singer who performed with a prestigious orchestra and was well known in the city's music clubs, where he also met the love of his life, Meera. A magical trip down memory lane saw Leonard take the stage once more to perform at [Katherine & Griffiths House](#) with the talented jazz duo Maya and Jonathan, also known as [Rendezblues](#). The audience was thrilled to see Leonard shine, and the applause that followed was incredible!

*What an honour to perform for everyone. My wife and I were both transported back in time and we're still glowing from this wonderful experience.*

### The yellow brick road

Pat's 'One Wish' was to go on a special outing to see the Wizard of Oz ballet at the [Redgrave Theatre](#) with fellow residents. A fan of musical theatre and ballet since she was a child, one of Pat's earliest memories is seeing the Wizard of Oz when she was just three years old. Seated in the theatre, happy memories came flooding back as Pat and her friends watched the fantastic production, with such graceful dancing, elegant costumes and a stunning set. Pat found the beautiful music very moving, and she couldn't stop smiling from beginning to end.

*The show was beautiful, I can't wait to tell my daughter all about it.*



### Wild at heart

Simon has been a huge fan of all things flora and fauna since he was a child, and his wish was to visit the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition at [Bristol Museum & Art Gallery](#).

Accompanied by fellow residents and members of staff, Simon enjoyed a tour of the many fascinating exhibits at the museum, and then VIP entry into the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition, which featured soundscapes, videos, expert insights and stunning photography that captured animal behaviour, spectacular species, and the breathtaking diversity of the natural world.

*Oh it was wonderful! I enjoyed every minute of it and the exhibition was truly fantastic.*





Tim Ross

## St Monica Trust

**S**t Monica Trust opened its first Home of Rest overlooking the Downs in Bristol in 1925. Its fine buildings, with facilities well ahead of their time, were designed to provide light and airy accommodation for hard-working people who had been unable to save enough in their lifetimes for a comfortable retirement.

Members of the Garden House team celebrate their Good rating following the latest CQC Inspection.



The original home was the brainchild of Dame Monica Wills, keenly supported by her husband. Without children of their own, they provided for the residents' long-term future by setting it up as a Charitable Trust. It has 15 trustees, six of whom are nominated by **SMV** and three of whom are appointed by the local Bishops, with the remaining members drawn from the wider community. These 15 people have primary responsibility for running the entire Trust, ably assisted by SMV, to whom the founders specifically entrusted management of the Trust's significant financial endowment. The endowment, and the income it generates, belongs entirely to the St Monica Trust. Not a conventional governance structure perhaps, but one that has worked admirably for the last 100 years – which will be celebrated next year, with a Centenary Service in **Bristol Cathedral** – and there's a lot to celebrate.



Resident Joyce celebrates her 100th birthday.

Over the last century, the Trust has steadily grown, from those first 75 female residents to an organisation today with 1,200 residents and 1,500 staff, spread across five care villages, most of which enjoy attractive gardens, in line with the founders' evident appreciation of nature and green spaces. The founders would presumably have greatly approved of SMV's decision, 25 years later, to invest the greater part of the endowment in agricultural property.

St Monica Trust continues to support the founders' environmental inclinations, maintaining the grounds of its care villages to a high standard and having already completed ESOS (Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme) audits for all its villages. The Trust is also highly supportive of SMV's interest in pursuing a net zero carbon approach to the agricultural holdings.

The Trust also has a growing apprenticeship scheme for young people, providing practical training for a rewarding career. Now approaching the completion of its first year, 100 apprentices are enrolled on the scheme, a number that is set to grow in the year ahead.

**Tim Ross, President of St Monica Trust**

## St Monica Trust nurse ‘lights the way’ for adult social care nursing

A St Monica Trust nurse had the honour of being the Lamp Carrier at the Florence Nightingale Commemorative Service, held at Westminster Abbey in May, with 2,000 guests in attendance. Known as ‘the lady with the lamp’ as she made her rounds at night, Florence tended to the soldiers wounded in the Crimean War. The service is an annual celebration of thanks for nurses and midwives from across the UK who continue her legacy.

Emily Pimm was nominated from hundreds of Florence Nightingale Scholars and is the first nurse from the adult social care sector to be chosen as the Lamp Carrier. Emily qualified as a nurse in 2006 and works as a Social Care Deputy Manager at St Monica Trust’s John Wills House Care Home in Westbury-on-Trym.

She was awarded a Florence Nightingale Foundation Leadership Scholarship in 2022 and has gone on to become a co-chair for the South West’s Social Care Nurse Advisory Council. Emily said: “I feel very honoured to have been the Lamp Carrier at such a special service. There are thousands of amazing nurses out there, but social care is not always at the forefront of people’s minds when thinking about career pathways or educational development. This is a real opportunity to build on all the work being done to promote the social care sector.”

Emily Pimm carries the lamp in Westminster Abbey.







Ben Knight

## Environmental Sustainability in Farming

As the Endowment Trustee, **SMV** is responsible for ensuring that the agricultural land owned by the St Monica Trust (**SMT**) not only provides income over the long-term to support the Trust's charitable activities, but that it also works towards ambitious environmental and biodiversity targets.

Ben Knight is the SMV Land Steward and, with his team, works closely with tenant farmers to ensure that the estates are managed and run well. Ben is responsible for setting rents, overseeing developments on the farms and managing succession planning where relevant. He also works closely with members of the SMV Estates Committee to review and drive development opportunities for land which becomes vacant or is available for purchase.

Joined by members of SMV's Estates Committee, Ben recently visited the 18 farms on the 6000-acre Lilford Estate that are owned by the St Monica Trust, to allow the Committee to see how the tenant farmers are adapting their practices to ensure environmental sustainability.

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (**DEFRA**) drive for environmental improvement is creating new opportunities for agricultural land, and farmers are being incentivised to maintain food production whilst enhancing the resilience and environmental credentials of their businesses.



Tim Hankins, who farms on this Estate, has actively engaged in the Government's **Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship** scheme. The scheme encourages farmers to dedicate land to environmental protection, in this case protection of the River Nene which has been identified by **Natural England** as suffering from excess phosphate, nitrate and sediment.

**Anglian Water** recognises the value of water protection in the region and is supporting the cost of cover crops (short-term crops that are grown after harvest and before winter drilling) because they hold nutrients and water in the soil, as well as improving soil structure and reducing flooding.

Water protection is not the only focus however, biodiversity enhancement is being driven from two separate angles. Other Lilford farmers have recently entered into the expanded **Sustainable Farming Incentive** scheme which dedicates land to biodiversity provision, such as areas of pollen and nectar or wild bird strips. When used together, these ensure sufficient feed for wild birds during the 'hungry gap' at the end of winter, and then protein rich, insect feed for chicks in the spring.

These opportunities are being embraced by the SMT tenant farmers as they can see the benefit of protecting the environment for the long-term whilst combining this with local food production.

**Ben Knight, Land Steward, Savills**

Tim Hankins, standing, gives a tractor-trailer tour of his farm.



# Charitable Giving

**H**aving been a member of the Charity Committee for over four years, I recognise that the grants we make are just the tip of the iceberg, in terms of the broader charitable efforts of our members.

Most give privately, and many have established their own charitable funds and foundations, in addition to the enormous amount of time and energy that all members give to help achieve our social purpose objectives.

**SMV** makes a series of charitable grants four times each year, and the funds come from the income generated by our charity endowment, along with the generous response from SMV's members to our annual appeal.

While the grants largely focus on key themes, we also remain attentive to the wider challenges that communities face. Many families and individuals across Greater Bristol are grappling with significant concerns related to the cost of living and other health and welfare issues.

The difficult decision as to how best to apply limited funds is helped by the invaluable work of **Quartet Community Foundation**, whose expertise we employ to advise us where support is needed most and where our grants will have the greatest impact.

Across the region, there are countless charities and community groups dedicated to addressing specific needs with passion and insight, and our grants help to support their essential work. We learn so much by working with these amazing organisations, gaining knowledge that we use to shape our future strategy for charitable giving so that we can continue to help the many diverse and dynamic communities across Greater Bristol to thrive.

I hope that you will enjoy reading about just a few of the incredible charities that we've had the privilege to support this year.

**Robert Bourns DL**  
Chair of SMV's Charity Committee



Robert Bourns DL

## South Bristol Youth

**South Bristol Youth** (SBY) provides targeted programmes to help young people in South Bristol understand the benefits of staying in education, make the most of their personal qualities, learn new skills, and develop knowledge that will open doors for them in the future.

In the past year, SBY has delivered a total of 640 activity days for 1,750 young people, in collaboration with ten local colleges and universities, 23 schools, and 15 employers.

Programmes include Learning to Lead, which this year has supported 174 children in Years 4 to 7 from eight primary and secondary schools, who attended 200 activity days, such as drama workshops at the **Bristol Old Vic Theatre School**, Your Community sessions led by **Avon and Somerset Police HQ** and **Avon Fire and Rescue**, and team building through kayaking in Bristol Harbour.

Discover Maths engaged with 98 children in Year 8 from seven schools, who undertook 63 activities that showed how maths is used in the real world. Visits to **Coutts Bank**, **Gloucestershire County Cricket Club**, **Aerospace Bristol**, **Warner Brothers Studio Tour** and **Clifton Suspension Bridge** helped bring the learning to life. Students also participated in workshops with the Circus of Physics and **UWE Bristol**.

Insight into Apprenticeships engaged with 99 students in Year 9 and 10 from seven schools, who took part in 66 activities, ranging from communication workshops, a team building day run by the **Royal Navy**, and visits to local colleges, universities and employers, such as **Boston Tea Party**, the **Bristol Port Company**, **Platform Rail**, **PwC** and **Burges Salmon**. In July all the young people visited London and the Houses of Parliament to meet their local MP.

Young people kayaking in Bristol Harbour with South Bristol Youth.







Music for all generations at the Bristol Beacon.

## Bristol Beacon

SMV made a grant to support **Bristol Beacon's** Creative Learning and Engagement programme that supports musical initiatives for Bristol residents of all ages.

30,000 young people receive immersive access to opportunities to learn and make music, and perform in orchestras and ensembles on a world-class stage; bursaries are awarded; and bespoke initiatives are delivered to primary schools located in disadvantaged parts of the region.

Emerging musicians aged 18 to 25 who are financially disadvantaged, or facing barriers to engagement because of ethnicity or physical disability, can access a dedicated talent development programme.

For older people and those living with dementia, the Bristol Beacon provides opportunities to experience the joy of live music performance, boosting their social and emotional health and wellbeing.

## The Southmead Project

Since 1994 the Southmead Project has provided trauma-focused one-to-one counselling and support for survivors of abuse and addiction across Bristol and surrounding areas.

SMV made a grant towards the provision of eight professional counsellors who work with clients to process the abuse they have experienced and move on with their lives.

## Babbasa

**Babbasa** is behind the **OurCity2030** initiative, which aims to support 2,030 young people from low income households in Bristol into median salary roles by 2030, increasing representation in the workplace and creating a new generation of role models for society.

SMV helped to fund the Employers' Forum which provides professionals working in HR, recruitment and EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) roles, with an opportunity to troubleshoot their challenges around inclusion and recruiting diverse talent; and the Youth Practitioners' & Educators' Forum, which in May held an event in Hengrove in direct response to the incidents of knife crime.



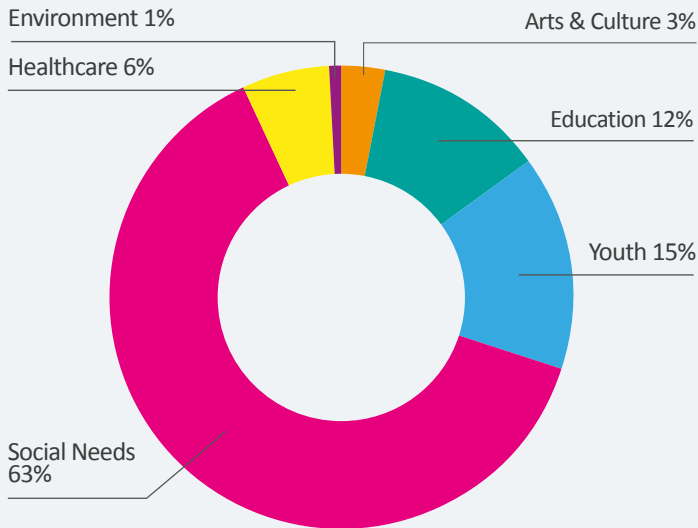
Babbasa's Youth Practitioners' & Educators' Forum held an event in Hengrove.

## Unseen UK

Unseen UK supports survivors of exploitation and modern slavery to recover from their trauma and build a positive future. The charity's front-line support includes providing safe housing and outreach to access health services and navigate the immigration and asylum system.

SMV funded a special project to support activities for survivors that help to build positive social connections, including a gardening club at the women's safehouse, and the purchase of gym equipment for the men's safehouse.

Already this year, SMV's Charity Committee has awarded 74 individual grants totalling more than £250,000. Across six key sectors, the donations have directly supported over 20,000 people.



## Hartcliffe City Farm

This community farm in South Bristol provides therapeutic outdoor activities that reduce social isolation and encourage healthier living for volunteers and visitors who learn skills in gardening, food growing and harvesting, as well as caring for the farm's collection of goats, pigs, chickens and guinea pigs.

SMV funded a new coordinator role tasked with recruiting 37 new volunteers and running the programme's wellbeing sessions. Amongst the many activities delivered by the team of volunteers, the market garden was completely replanted and now provides a wide range of vegetables that the volunteer groups enjoy at shared meals. The Spring Fayre, which volunteers helped to deliver, welcomed 500 people from the wider community for music, maypole dancing and sheep shearing demonstrations.



## Easton Jamia Masjid

Easton Jamia Masjid is one of the largest mosques in the south west of England. SMV provided a charitable grant to support its Mosque Adult Care Support Activity Day project, designed to address food insecurity and social isolation among older members of the local community.

The project provided weekly meals and transportation for 25-30 participants, ensuring they had reliable access to healthy food and opportunities for social interaction regardless of mobility issues. Regular attendees of the sessions reported feeling less isolated and more connected to their community and benefitted from improved mental and physical health and wellbeing.

## The Rock Centre

Located in Lawrence Weston, the Rock Centre offers resources and services to help the community stay healthy and feel connected.

SMV funded a series of sessions that offered a range of activities, such as arts and crafts, befriending groups, gentle exercise, sociable coffee mornings, healthy eating, and even chiropody. Between 80 and 100 people attend each week, and the feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive.





Our members share a determination to help make Greater Bristol a place where all communities thrive; and through the collective time, energy, expertise and resources they commit, [SMV](#) is able to set ambitious social purpose objectives. In this section, we shine a spotlight on a few of our members to find out what drives them.

## Merchant Venturer Spotlight



### Marti Burgess

I feel passionate about helping to improve equality and inclusion for people from all backgrounds, and I support organisations that share these values such as [Black South West Network](#), the [Bristol Legacy Foundation](#), [91 Ways](#), the [International Board](#) and the [Bristol Music Trust](#).

I joined the Membership, Search Group and Communications Committees during my first year with SMV in 2020 and I find it particularly rewarding to be part of the Search Group. Identifying prospective new members has highlighted how many fascinating people live in the region who are already working so fiercely to improve the health of communities. I've also witnessed a real determination to diversify the

membership and I'm looking forward to playing my part in ensuring SMV's future by onboarding new members from a range of professions and backgrounds as I take on the role of Chair of the Search Group from November.

I will also be joining the Standing Committee, which is similar to a board of directors, and whose members are ultimately accountable for SMV's strategy and actions. Across the breadth of SMV's activities, there are 15 committees and sub-committees that meet regularly to develop and implement our strategic aims. All of these committees report to Standing Committee, which has 15 members who are elected by the wider membership.



### Andrew Garrad CBE

Earlier this year, Andrew Garrad CBE was awarded the 2024 [Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering](#), alongside Danish wind turbine pioneer Henrik Stiesdal, and they both become QEP Laureates. This global prize champions bold, ground-breaking engineering innovation which is of global benefit to humanity, which in Andrew's case recognises the pioneering mathematical approach that he has taken to wind turbine and wind farm design.

Andrew said: "Wind energy has been with us for millennia, but in the last 50 years, it has entered a new era. The 10m diameter turbines of my early professional life have become the 250m giants of today.

I am just one of a great many scientists and engineers who have made wind energy an essential part of our zero-carbon future.

In 2023 renewables' share of total UK power generation achieved both an annual record of 47.3%, and a quarterly record which, at 51.5%, was the first time over half of all generation came from renewable sources. These significant achievements have been made possible by revolutionary improvements in the generation of electricity from wind energy. Prestigious awards such as this one help to raise the profile of the industry and the actions we must all take to address the climate crisis."



## Rob Crews

Rob has been a keen supporter of the [King's Trust](#) (previously the Prince's Trust) for over ten years and his long-term support for a charity that helps young people aged 18-30 develop the skills and confidence they need to find a job or start a business is reflected in his professional work too.

He's a founding partner of [Momentum Corporate Finance](#), an advisory firm that guides entrepreneurs on driving growth in their business, and it's one of the leading independent practices in the region.

Having become a member just 18 months ago, Rob is already involved in a number of [SMV's](#) core activities. He's one of the six SMV-nominated trustees of the [St Monica Trust](#) and he's a member of SMV's Membership Committee.

Rob said: "I joined SMV because the organisation's mission and values align with my own and I believe that more can be achieved when determined individuals work as a team."

When you bring together different people who want to improve diversity and inclusion, want to support charitable work, others who want to help entrepreneurs, or create better opportunities for the young and old – what they all have in common is a determination to deliver change. Get them all together, ask them to work really hard, and ambitious objectives become achievable.

"Across the various roles that I have as part of my membership of SMV, sometimes it feels like having a full-time job, and I already have one of those! But the driving force is being able to see the impact of what SMV can achieve when its members work together, and crucially, the impact that has on communities across the region."



## David Powell

For a long time, I've felt passionate about sustainability, social enterprise and education – three areas in which SMV wants to make a difference, so I'm pleased to be chairing the new [Social Enterprise and Sustainability Committee](#). The scope of what could be achieved is really significant, not just across the region, but across the world, as more and more people become consciously aware of the impact our actions have on the planet.

SMV's new Youth Strategy is also a thread that I will be following with great interest. I went to school in South Bristol and, until recently, was a trustee of [The Park](#).

I know firsthand that the lack of support and investment for that part of the city is nothing new. It feels as though the area has been left behind, the deprivation is extreme, and the community has been neglected for too long.

But I also understand the huge potential in South Bristol, and in other deprived areas of the region, and I believe that the Youth Strategy is going to deliver opportunities for young people that will be game-changing for individuals and for whole communities. I'm excited to see what happens next.



## New Members



### Will Allen

Will has worked in the Financial Services sector for almost 30 years, and he's currently CEO of [Newbrook Capital Solutions](#). Having successfully launched three start-up advisory businesses over the last 22 years, Will has a huge amount of expertise to share with budding entrepreneurs.

He's also a Governor for four schools in the South West, and he has a particular interest in supporting

school leavers as they transition into higher education and the world of work.

Since supporting both entrepreneurs and young people are two key areas in which [SMV](#) strives to make a difference, Will is looking forward to working collaboratively with SMV's members and partners to deliver real impact to communities across the region.



### Sue Blatchford

Sue joined the family business in 1990, which had been founded by her grandfather in 1947. Based near St Mary Redcliffe, [Denman Electrical Supplies](#) was the first of several businesses founded by the family. Sue is currently Managing Director of one of the family electrical businesses, [Eterna Lighting](#). Her career to-date has been spent gathering experience across a wide range of industries including retail and wholesale lighting, contract furniture, housing development and even farming and forestry.

A Trustee of the [Denman Charitable Trust](#) since 2008, Sue has had the privilege of supporting a wide range of charities in the region. In 2018 she also became a Trustee of [BRACE](#), a local dementia research charity, and she's the past Chair of [Quartet Community Foundation's](#) Finance and Investment Committee.

Sue is looking forward to becoming involved in SMV's social purpose activities, and she is excited about the new Youth Strategy. With deep roots in Bristol, particularly Knowle West, Sue is keen to get involved with SMV's place-based work in South Bristol.



### Harry Destecroix

Harry is a scientist, entrepreneur and investor, and the founder of the [Science Creates](#) ecosystem. During his chemistry PhD, Harry co-founded [Ziyo](#), a biotech start-up, which he led to a potential \$800m staged acquisition in 2018. Prior to this, he launched Bristol's first deep tech incubator and is set to open a third site in 2025. Harry began angel investing in 2018, then co-founded [SCVC](#), the venture arm of Science Creates, in 2020, now with over £50m in assets under management.

Harry also co-founded the [Science Creates Foundation](#), an education charity aimed at inspiring future scientists and entrepreneurs. His efforts have earned him awards including the 2023 Royal Society of Chemistry's Entrepreneur of the Year and Barclays Icon of the Year in 2021.

He currently serves on several government steering groups, advocating for deep tech's potential to drive positive change through STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) entrepreneurship. Harry is particularly keen to support SMV's initiatives that benefit communities by encouraging and empowering entrepreneurship.

## New Members



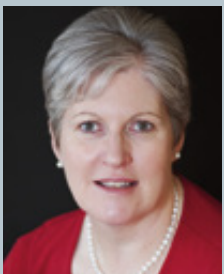
### Anita Kimber

Anita was born in Bristol to a Bristolian father and Italian mother, both of whom ran their own businesses, and she has always felt energised by the multicultural and entrepreneurial nature of the city.

Anita forged her career in Financial Services, working to inject innovation into the sector to better serve consumers and small businesses. A Partner at [EY](#) until this summer, she is proud to have played an active role in supporting the UK's growth as a global leader in fintech.

Now a mentor for a range of fintech small businesses, she's also a regular judge at fintech industry awards. Anita currently serves on the government task force for encouraging women into digital careers in finance, and she is the Chair of [Women in Banking and Finance](#) which connects women across South Wales and the South West region to support career progression.

For [SMV](#), Anita is passionate about supporting partnerships such as with the [St Pauls Carnival](#), and she's already joined SMV's Audit and Membership Committees.



### Catherine Look

Catherine is the Managing Director of her family business, [Oak Tree Parks](#), which develops and manages park home estates in North Somerset and Devon. She is also Director of the family's sister company, [Acorn Parks](#), which owns and manages holiday parks in Cornwall.

A long-term supporter of the [Young Farmers](#) youth organisation, Catherine has delivered numerous training programmes and regularly judges local and national public speaking competitions. She's passionate about providing opportunities for young people, both through education and co-curricular activities, that will help them to thrive.

Catherine is the Chair of Trustees for the [Royal Bath & West Society](#), which supports rural life, including agriculture and food production. In this role and through her work with SMV, she is especially keen to promote engagement and education about the rural environment to both children and adults, and the concept of farm to fork, which focuses on sustainable agricultural practices and technologies.

## Emeritus

**E**meritus membership allows long-serving members to retain their connection with SMV, but with a reduced level of commitment on their part. Emeritus status is extended to members who have made a significant contribution to SMV's work over a sustained period of time.

### James McArthur

James joined SMV in 1983 and he was a member of the Standing Committee from 2010 to 2013. A long-term supporter of SMV's care home provision, he served on both the [Cote Charity](#) (2010-2014) and [Care for Older People](#) (2013-2016) Committees. James was also a member of the Collections & Heritage Committee between 2014 and 2020, and the [Downs Committee](#) between 2016 and 2018.

James' community and charitable interests include [Bristol Zoo Project](#), which he has supported for over 20 years, Broad Plain and Riverside Youth Project, the [Antient Society of St Stephen's Ringers](#) and Alderman Steeven's Charity.

### Charles Densham

Having joined SMV in 1994, Charles sat on numerous Committees over 30 years, including the Standing Committee, Estates, [Downs](#), Membership and [Charity Committees](#). He was also a member of the [Care for Older People Committee](#) for more than 15 years, including three years as Chair; and for over ten years Charles served the [Edmonds and Coles Scholarships Charity](#), latterly as its Chair, which provides financial support to schools and pupils across North Bristol.

Prior to becoming a member of SMV, Charles was President of the [Grateful Society](#), he chaired the Bristol branch of the [RNLI](#) and the Avon [Outward Bound Association](#), and he was a school governor.



## Tim Pearce

Tim became a member of [SMV](#) in 1994, serving as Master in 2006-07. He has sat on many of SMV's committees, including the Standing Committee, [Almshouses Charity](#), [Cote Charity](#), Estates & Property, and [Care for Older People Committees](#). Tim was also a school governor at [Collegiate School](#) and [Merchants' Academy](#).

A Freeman of the City of Bristol, Tim is also a past President of the [Grateful Society](#) and the [Gloucestershire Society](#), and a past Master of the [Guild of Guardians](#). He is also a former member of the [University of Bristol](#) Board of Trustees.

Over the years, Tim has used his property expertise to good effect to deliver new buildings for charities and schools, including at [Merchants' Academy](#) in Withywood, the new hospice in Brentry as Chairman of [St Peter's Hospice](#), and the new building of the [Bristol Urology Institute](#) as Trustee and latterly Chairman.

## Rob Davis

Born, educated and having spent most of his life in Bristol, Rob joined SMV in 2005, serving on the Standing Committee between 2012 and 2015. He was a member of the [Care for Older People Committee](#) from 2010 until 2021 and during this time he was involved in helping to deliver [Griffiths House](#), a specialist care home for residents with dementia, co-located

alongside [Katherine House](#). He was also part of the Venturers Trust Endowment and Fundraising Committee, which directs charitable funds to support extra-curricular activities and experiences for students; and he was a governor of [Merchants' Academy](#).

Over recent years Rob has been a volunteer adviser and mentor to start-up businesses in the Bristol area and across the South West, where he's helped fledgling companies to scale up and become market-ready. Rob has also advised much larger companies within the region, including as a Non-Executive Director of [Bristol Water](#) and [Thatchers Cider](#).

## Mary Prior CVO MBE

Mary became a member of SMV in 2008. She sat on the [Care for Older People Committee](#) for seven years and was a Trustee of [St Monica Trust](#) for nine years, during which time, alongside her membership and past presidency of the [Dolphin Society](#), she actively promoted prolonged independent living through the use of technology. Mary was a member of the [Charity Committee](#) for 15 years, and outside SMV, she is a past Lord-Lieutenant for the City and County of Bristol, and a past Trustee of [Quartet Community Foundation](#), where she continues to serve as Vice-President.

Mary was awarded an MBE in 1996 for services to [Bristol Cathedral Trust](#) and in 2017 she was appointed CVO by The Queen. She served as Pro-Chancellor of the University of Bristol from 2014 to 2020 and was awarded Honorary Doctorates by both the [University of the West of England](#) (2013) and the [University of Bristol](#) (2017).

# In Memoriam

## Alan Tasker 1929 – 2024

Alan became a member of SMV in 1977 and for over 45 years he contributed his time and expertise to numerous committees and initiatives. He served on the Standing Committee between 1986 and 1997 and held office as Master in 1990. With a keen interest in Education, Alan also sat on the Court of the [University of Bristol](#), and he was a governor for various schools.

As a young man, Alan's first passion was motor racing. He raced at Goodwood, Silverstone, Brands Hatch and Castle Coombe, competing against Britain's top drivers, including Sir Stirling Moss, whom he once beat. He then founded a series of companies in Bristol, became President of the [Bristol Chamber of Commerce](#), and Treasurer of the Bristol Conservative Association. In 1987 he was elected councillor for Clifton, serving until his retirement in 1995 when he was made an Honorary Alderman.

Alan's charitable work helped to raise millions of pounds for local organisations, including [Young Bristol](#), where he was Vice President, and the [National Eye Research Centre](#), where he was a Trustee. In recognition of an extraordinary life of public service, Alan was made a Freeman of both Bristol and London.

## Brigadier Hugh Pye OBE 1938 – 2024

Hugh was the Treasurer (Chief Executive) of SMV from 1992 until 2003, the first person to hold the position who had not been a Merchant Venturer and Master.

A regimental soldier to the core, Hugh served in the British Army for 34 years. He was commissioned into the 12th Royal Lancers, later 9/12th Royal Lancers, and deployed around the world, including to Northern Ireland twice during the Troubles.

After leaving the Forces, his formidable managerial skills were used to support many local charities, including [CLIC](#), the charity for cancer and leukaemia in childhood, which at the time needed reorganisation and finance. Hugh was appointed Chairman, and with his energy and influence, he assembled a new trustee board, put the charity on a sound financial basis and established its international role.

In 2002, Hugh was an official pall bearer at the funeral of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and in 2003 he was awarded an OBE for services to the community in the South West, and honoured with a Doctorate of Laws from the [University of Bristol](#).

# Looking Ahead

In 1957, to an audience in Montgomery, Alabama, Martin Luther King Jr. said: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”

This core principle drives so many of the organisations and individuals who we have the privilege to work with, all of whom share our determination to make life better for others. From the vast number of charities and community groups across Greater Bristol, to the great many organisations supporting youth, older people, minority ethnic groups, refugees, families, the list is endless – and when determined individuals and organisations build partnerships and work together, the impact of their work, and the positive change they can deliver for their communities and for others, is extraordinary.

Building partnerships is at the heart of **SMV**’s mission to help communities across the region to thrive and will continue to be a key focus of the year ahead. Setting and achieving ambitious objectives requires the energy, skills, and resources of many, and we remain extremely grateful to the pioneering change-makers that help us. For example, the **Bristol Legacy Foundation** whose insight guides us as we respond to our history, **South Bristol Youth** and **Babbasa** whose support is helping us shape our new Youth Strategy, and the **Downs Advisory Panel**, who bring community voice and fresh ideas to the **Downs Committee**, the guardians of the Clifton and Durdham Downs – and of course, there are many more.

These dynamic partnerships and networks enhance our collective impact by empowering all of us to understand the broader challenges faced by communities across the region and to map a forward path where we can deliver positive change together.

As is so often the case, our future is shaped by our past, and for SMV, responding to our history has become integral to many strands of our work, more so than ever over the past few years. I’m determined to maintain the momentum that has been achieved, and I’m grateful to Michael Bothamley for agreeing to stay



Robert Bourns DL with residents and guests at the Katherine & Griffiths House summer party.

on as Chair of a dedicated working group whose focus is to ensure that conversations about reparatory justice continue to involve the descendants of people who were trafficked into slavery.

Our partnership with **Black South West Network** has led to a thriving mentoring programme, which in turn has overlapped with our various initiatives to support entrepreneurs, social enterprise and sustainability. This is an area with so much potential, and in fact our members are learning just as much from the entrepreneurs they are mentoring, as the mentees are learning from our members.

I have long recognised the strength and energy that an organisation generates from bringing together diversity within its membership, including background, experience, culture and faith. Organisations that listen to the different perspectives that each person brings are undoubtedly more effective.

In summary, the theme for the year ahead is centred on collaboration – developing new partnerships and initiatives that bring together the skills, expertise, resources and vision of people and organisations from right across the region who, by the nature of their values and their work, can offer an outcomes-focused and meaningful response to a slightly reframed question, ‘*What are we doing for others?*’.



**Robert Bourns DL, a member of SMV since 2015, will be leading the organisation in 2024-25.**



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