***1.*** **Please describe your business or organisation**

A charity promoting high standards of planning and architecture in Bath, ensuring its future success through conservation, education and museums.

 ***Strict******word count: up to 20 words 20***

**2.** **What is unique, innovative and distinctive about your business or organisation?**

*How and why do you stand out? Evidence of the distinctiveness of your offering makes up 15% of the Judges criteria.*

Bath Preservation Trust was founded in 1934 as a small pressure group, with the object of protecting the city’s unique architectural heritage. Its first action was to fight plans to pull down parts of the picturesque Georgian city of Bath to make way for a new road. The road was never built. Since this victory, the Trust has saved hundreds more listed buildings from demolition, and has successfully confronted many similar threats to the city. Today the Trust has approximately 1,400 subscribing members from the UK and overseas supporting its work.

The Trust exists **“to preserve for the benefit of the public the historic character and amenities of the City of Bath and its surroundings”.**  In a city with such a wealth of heritage there are inevitably difficult challenges to be faced in reconciling the demands of a modern thriving city alongside the exceptional level of conservation care demanded in a World Heritage Site.

Protecting the unique qualities of Bath maintains a sustainable and buoyant economy. Much of the Trust’s work involves engaging with those whose decisions determine the City’s future, inspecting and responding on planning applications in the conservation area and to listed building consent applications, providing informed statements at planning meetings and expert witnesses at Public Enquiries.

In 2009 the Trust brokered a partnership fund between the World Heritage Site Steering Group, Bath & North East Somerset Council and Bath Preservation Trust. Named the **World Heritage Enhancement Fund** it aims to initiate and organise minor enhancements to Bath's heritage, helping and encouraging others to undertake such work – including finding volunteers.

The Fund has organised or participated in over 50 projects across the World Heritage Site.  These projects are almost always in partnership with other organisations, from community groups to national bodies such as the National Trust.

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**3.** **What makes 2019 a stand-out year for your business or organisation?**

*Please quantify! Our Judges are looking for examples of success: figures, increased headcount, new products, services, openings, any particular recognition.*

2019 marked the 10th anniversary of the **World Heritage Enhancement Fund**. The projects it funds are highly visible and of great historical importance but yet remain unsung. The tide is turning, however, and on 1 Oct 19 the WHEF won a most prestigious Georgian Group Architectural Award for its on-going work **restoring Bath’s historic street signs.**

Repairing and reinstating historic signs in Bath began in 2010, with 54 being completed by the end of 2019. The work entails sensitive cleaning of the signs, carefully preserving the existing original letters, meticulously matching lime mortars and inserting new pieces of Bath stone for repair. Missing or worn letters are re-carved and re-painted. Signs that are not incised but simply painted on to the wall are re-painted in the existing style, using mineral paints to match the existing colours.

Georgian Bath is a city which was built by hand and the historic street signs, many incised in a bold and flowing English Vernacular, are the handwriting of those skilled stonemasons. Restoration of the signs, some on the verge of extinction, has rescued and preserved the authentic touch of those hands. The work of three carefully selected historic conservation experts who have worked diligently over the years means that the signs continue to add character and beauty to Bath’s terraces. They are at first floor level in order that carriage-drivers could see them clearly even without street lighting. So, the signs continue to fulfil their practical role and preclude the need for modern metal signs to be attached on top of them to maintain street identification. The restored signs, as with much of the WHEF work, are noticed and very much appreciated by local residents – and also by visitors who can be spotted photographing them.

Other 2019 projects included:

**Sydney Gardens**: help funding the repair of the Grade II listed Edwardian cast-iron Ladies and Gents loos.

**Octagon Chapel in Smallcombe Cemetery**: suffering from neglect, damp and stone decay the WHEF found volunteers and part-funded the installation of a French drain, new stone carving for the belfry and the reinstatement of a bell.

**John Wood Trail**: a map and trail to celebrate the lives and achievements of the two John Woods is being drafted, modelled on the World Heritage Site City Trail.

**Firs Field Memorial**: help funding an inscribed stone bench installed near an old access shaft to Ralph Allen’s mines in Combe Down.

**Railings at the Countess of Huntingdon’s Chapel**: Volunteers from Stourbridge College cleaned and painted the gates and railings with the paint funded by WHEF.

**Gravel Walk Telephone Box**: restoring the Grade II listed ‘K9’ box which was allowed to be painted grey (rather than red) because of its sensitive setting – and installing an interpretation panel inside it.

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**4.** **Why should you win a Bath Life Award?**

*Why does your business or organisation deserve to be recognised? What are the key qualities that set you apart from the rest?*

Projects completed by the WHEF have amassed sufficiently, and in so many areas of Bath, that the Fund, its operators and volunteers deserve recognition from the very people who benefit most – Bathonians.

The Fund is a vital source of conservation and enhancement work. Although its projects are often minor in scale and funding sums are restricted, works have included some historical gems such as restoring Queen Charlotte’s Coat of Arms above Hales Ltd at No. 8 Argyle St and St. Alphege’s statue at 43 Church Rd, Weston. Restoring historic street signs remains its longest on-going project. Not as apparent – but as significant – are its investments in major new projects (such as Archway (£10k), Footprint (£5k) and Bathscape (£5k)). In its ten years operating it has spent £193,000 but leveraged that up to nearly £700,000 with the support of charitable trusts, various sponsors and local residents.

Rarely today do we see a project that is funded from only one source and instead the trick is to gather together partnership contributions. The Fund often provides an up-front service, where initial costs of statutory permissions are funded (such as the Shakespeare Monument), or in the case of the Lansdown Crescent iron-work project moulds for the finials were made. These contributions can give confidence to larger funders (such as the National Heritage Lottery Fund at Smallcombe Cemetery) or encourage private contributions. They help harness the considerable contribution of volunteers and encourage, promote and teach craft skills that are vital to conserving this unique city.

***Strict wordcount: up to 250 words 250***

**5.** **How does the business or organisation contribute to and benefit the local area?**

*Think about partnerships, charity, and civic involvement? Any new initiatives with your team?*

Cleveland Pools is an example of a project where the pledge of financial assistance from the Fund has helped the project successfully bid for significantly larger amounts of funding. It also provides an example of where the Fund is asked to help with conservation work that struggles to attract donations because it is unglamorous. Such was the case with ‘stripping-back’ work at the listed cottage at Cleveland Pools: the Fund allocated £5,000 and found volunteers to remove layers of alterations before a fully informed restoration could be costed. Cleveland Pools was awarded a £4.7m grant from the NHLF in December 2018.

A 2019 example is funding the Elim Pentecostal Church Quinquennial Survey. This is an essential first step for the church to identify and quantify repairs for which funding will be available once the need is proven.

In 2019 the WHEF supported a conservation scheme to repair the stone and ironwork at the head of the Walcot Steps on the Paragon, and the replacement of modern lights with lanterns of a more appropriate historic design. The street signs for Bladud Buildings will also be restored as part of the project. The improved lighting and general tidying up will make the area safer to navigate at night and should deter the anti-social behaviour the area previously attracted. Once announced, local residents came forward with donations in support, with £100 given by the Vineyards Residents Association in August.

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**7.** **Testimonials and Awards**

*Share with us up to five testimonials as an image or text – no links please. The more specific the better. And please make sure all are from the past 12 months.*

**Chairman of The City of Bath UNESCO World Heritage Advisory Board, Professor Barry Gilbertson:**

*“The Bath street signs project restores the chisel-marks of the architects and builders of the 18th Century who understood the importance of good signage. The street signs are at first floor level for carriage-drivers, horse reins in hand, to see the signs clearly even on dull days and gloomy nights.”*

**B&NES’s Councillor Ruth Malloy**:

*“We restore a handful of street signs each year and every time the impact on our World Heritage Site city is remarkable, for residents and visitors alike. For the project to have been recognised by The Georgian Group – arbiters of the best conservation work in the country – is fantastic. The WHEF is one of those vital organisations which diligently organises conservation and improvements to pieces of Bath’s heritage, using a dedicated group of volunteers and drawing on the expertise of specialists. This sort of accolade makes our achievements all the more worthwhile. Partnership contributions from residents make such a difference to the projects we take on.”*

**Bath Preservation Trust’s Ms Ainslie Ensom, Project Manager and Administrator for the WHEF**:

*“We’re so proud to have won this Georgian Group Architectural award, and proud that a different project which we also supported, the restoration of the Great Pulteney Estate Overthrow Lighting, was also a winner. Just like the restored street signs, beautifully brought back to life, the Fund is enjoying a moment in the spotlight again. I can’t thank enough our expert craftsmen who work so carefully on these listed assets.* Thank you to the judges, too, for *recognising the challenges encountered when working in a UNESCO World Heritage site, and to Bath Preservation Trust who support our work in so many ways.”*

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