

**MEDIA RELEASE - Bath Preservation Trust, 20 July 2020**

## **Bath Preservation Trust sets out next steps post-lockdown**

### **Four-month emergency grant from National Lottery Heritage Fund enables trial resumption of some museum opening**

Bath Preservation Trust, the conservation charity and owner-operator of 4 accredited museums in Bath, has announced its initial plans to emerge from the coronavirus pandemic and to reshape the organisation for a period of lower growth. An independent charity, the Trust does not receive core funding to support revenue costs from national funders or local government and its loss of 90% of its income with the closure of its museums in March has had an immediate and severe impact.

The recent award of a **Coronavirus Emergency grant of £177,000** from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to support the museums, does mean that the Trust will now have sufficient resources to finance the staffing and investment required to trial a COVID-secure opening of No 1 Royal Crescent, and to support some other small-scale activities across our other premises and online. This will include star and solar observing in the garden of the Herschel Museum of Astronomy as well as visits to No 1 Royal Crescent. First and foremost, the Trust wishes to give potential visitors and audiences confidence that it will be safe and enjoyable to visit again. Far fewer visitors are anticipated, partly because of the need to restrict numbers and partly because of the slow recovery of the tourism market. The grant is time-limited to the next four months and therefore does not alter the need for re-imagining the Trust at a different scale going forward.

Throughout the lockdown, the core advocacy and planning-related work of the Trust has continued with staff working from home and participating in Zoom committee meetings with the local authority, developers and householders. In the context of planning reforms, the climate emergency and continuing need for advice, the Trust is committed to carrying on this work. In addition, work relating to the separately Lottery-funded project for the conservation and re-imagining of Beckford's Tower has continued.

The dramatic reduction in the Trust's income has meant that Trustees have rightly focused on the longer-term survival of the Trust. Despite the Trust benefiting from the Job Retention ('furlough') scheme and some other grants and donations, a re-sizing of the organisation is now necessary. The Trust is therefore consulting with its employees about a significantly smaller organisational structure, reflecting both the reduced activity and income level while enabling the organisation to evolve over the coming months and years.

The Trust had already been preparing for change in 2020, with Trustees and staff having started the process of developing a new forward-looking strategy and proposals to diversify the sources of the Trust's income. The impact of Covid-19 has accelerated the

requirement for rapid change and the imperative to plan for a newly-sustainable organisation that continues to offer public benefit to the people of Bath and beyond.

Caroline Kay, Chief Executive of the Trust, said:

‘In the short term we are very grateful, thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to be looking forward to welcoming visitors back over the summer and sharing with them some of the treasures that we have to offer. More widely, there are many cultural and heritage organisations across the UK experiencing similar challenges and we are not alone in taking steps to anticipate a reduced cost-base going forward, however hard this is. We are determined to face up to the scale of further change to come, not only to survive but also to develop the vision that will help us thrive once again. However, determination alone will not be enough; and we will need continued financial support from others to guarantee our future and support the significant contribution we make to the World Heritage City of Bath and its residents and visitors’.

Thomas Sheppard, Chair of Trustees, said:

‘I should like to pay tribute to all the staff and volunteers who have loyally served BPT in the past and during this crisis. We are very sad that we have had to open a consultation on restructure but we must focus on survival. There are still challenges ahead and we know that whatever happens we will have to continue to be adaptable in how we respond to the changing world around us. Our purpose will remain our dual charitable purpose of **protection of heritage** and landscape and **education** through museums. Bath Preservation Trust survived the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the Sack of Bath and multiple recessions: just as then, we are determined to stay part of Bath’s heritage scene both now and into the future.’

**ENDS**

Notes for Editors

1. **Bath Preservation Trust** was set up in 1934 to safeguard the historic city of Bath. Bath is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the only complete city in the UK afforded World Heritage Status. The purposes of the Trust are to encourage and support the conservation, evolution and enhancement of Bath and its environs within a framework appropriate both to its historic setting and its sustainable future, and to provide educational resources, including museums, which focus on the architectural and historic importance of the city. The Trust receives no statutory funding and is supported by visitor income, grants, legacies, donations and around 1200 members who share a passion for the city and its environs. The Trust runs four accredited museums in Bath: No 1 Royal Crescent; the Museum of Bath Architecture; the Herschel Museum of Astronomy; and Beckford’s Tower. All the museums closed on 17<sup>th</sup> March.
  2. **Activity/ opening as follows:** Solar gazing sessions for individual families/households will start at the Herschel Museum of Astronomy from **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July**. No 1 Royal Crescent will be open Wednesday - Sunday **5<sup>th</sup> August** onwards. All events **must** be pre-booked online at [www.herschelmuseum.org.uk](http://www.herschelmuseum.org.uk) and [www.No1RoyalCrescent.org.uk](http://www.No1RoyalCrescent.org.uk).
  3. Photographs of the museums, CEO and Chair available on request.
- For further information contact Caroline Kay, CEO, [ckay@bptrust.org.uk](mailto:ckay@bptrust.org.uk)/07947027308