



The Waters of Bath

A proposal to fill Bath with the sound and sight of water, through a network of water features across the city.

Birth of an idea

Healing waters were discovered on the site that became known as Aquae Sulis ('The Waters of Sulis'). This place evolved into the city we now know as Bath, an evocative name that is famous around the world.

Water is the city's whole reason for being. You would therefore expect this association with water to be visible throughout the city.

But surprisingly, it isn't.

A photograph of a stone archway in a dark, rocky environment. Water is cascading through the arch, creating a waterfall effect. The water is illuminated with a warm, golden light, contrasting with the dark, shadowed surroundings. The arch is constructed from large, rough-hewn stones.

Over a million litres of water pours out of the Roman Bath's Sacred Spring each day



Imagine instead, if public spaces around the city celebrated this unique connection!

Last year an idea titled 'Waters of Bath' proposed exactly this and was voted winner of a city-wide public competition called Imagine Bath*. This report explores in more detail what the proposal is, why it could be great for the city and how it could be put into action.



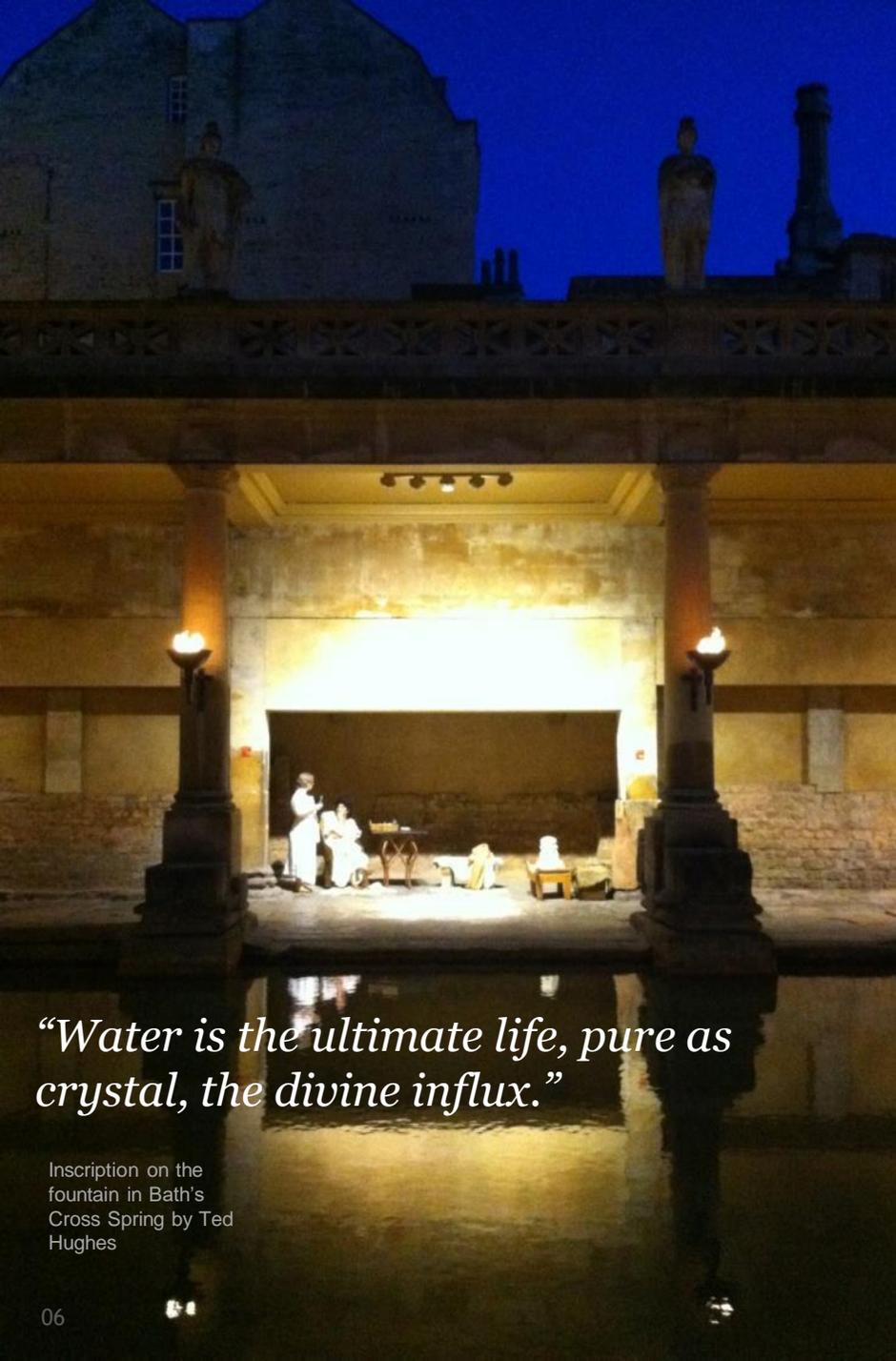
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Water and Bath



The unusually large Circular Bath in the Roman Bath complex. To one side there is an underwater plinth on which a water feature, probably a fountain, once stood



“Water is the ultimate life, pure as crystal, the divine influx.”

Inscription on the fountain in Bath's Cross Spring by Ted Hughes

Beginnings

From its origins as a place of healing, the city has been trading on its waters for probably 3000 years.

The idea of celebrating the importance of water in Bath is not new.

During the 19th and 20th Centuries there were numerous schemes to introduce water features in the city. In 1850 there was even a sixty-member ‘General Committee for Promoting the Erection of Public Fountains in the City’.

Today, as Bath competes with other cities to attract visitors and investment, it could be making much more of its history and unique physical attributes. The opening of Thermae Spa and the drafting of a new city wide riverside Masterplan show how water is playing a hugely important role in regenerating its fortunes. These schemes are making more of the city’s world-recognised unique selling point, its waters; and by doing so they and other water-related projects can make the city even more attractive, healthy and appealing to live and work in and visit.

Creations of a city

According to legend, the city’s origins trace back to Prince Bladud who founded the settlement in 863 BC after being healed of leprosy in the natural hot waters bubbling from the ground.

The springs which fed the site’s steaming marshes became a celtic shrine, named after the goddess Sulis.

When the Romans arrived 800 years later they were drawn to the place’s seemingly mystical waters, which were unique on the British mainland, and named it ‘Aqua Sulis’ or ‘Waters of Sulis’ and constructed bathing houses over its 3 main springs.

In 1850 there was a sixty-member ‘General Committee for Promoting the Erection of Public Fountains in the City’.

Top: Prince Bladud
pigs bathing in the
healing waters
Bottom: Medieval Bath
showing various areas
of water

Medieval times

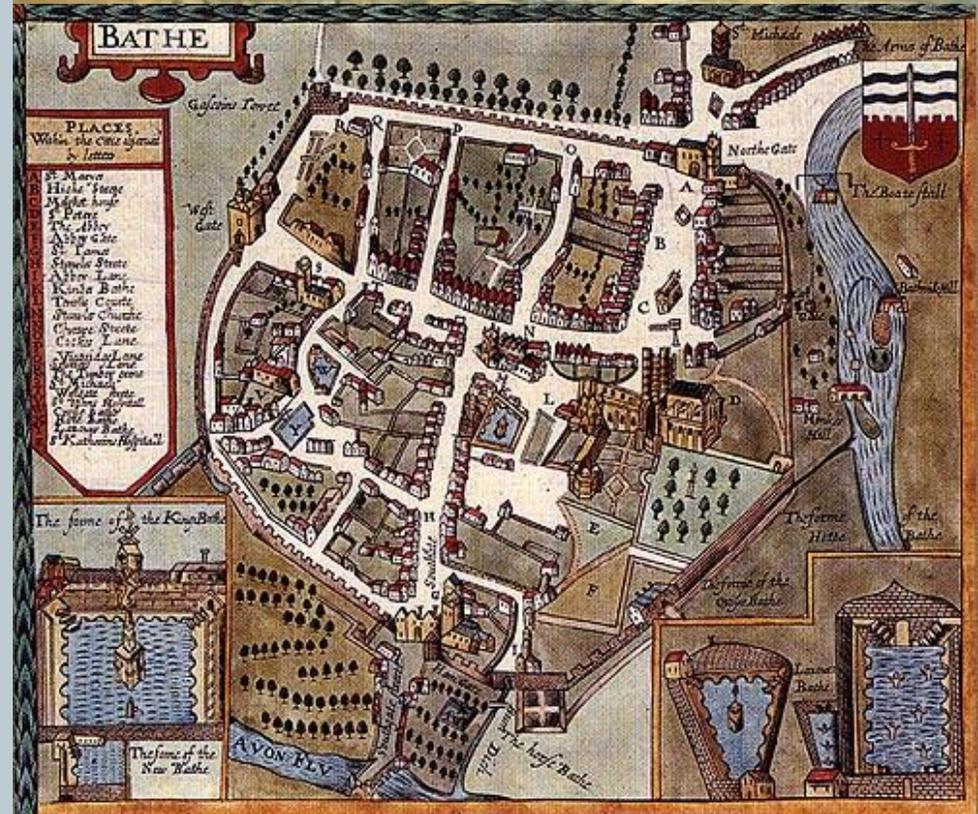
After the Romans withdrew from Britain, the settlement became known by the Saxons as Hat Bathu, meaning 'hot baths', before being referred to as Bathe, and then Bath. A series of new bathing houses were built in the 1100s and a steady stream of visitors were attracted to the city and its healing waters throughout the following centuries.

Also in medieval times, water flowing from nearby cold water springs was collected and diverted to flow in pipes around the city. The outlets for the water were prominently situated in the streets and accessible to everyone.

Known as conduits, the "fountains" were housed in freestanding structures or in wall-mounted niches with basins. Maps from the late 17th century show the diverse forms these distinctive conduits took.

"Sick persons from all over England resort thither... and the fit also, to see these wonderful burstings out of warm water and to bathe in them."

Gesta Stephani, 12th Century



17th to 20th Century – the contribution of water to city life

During the 17th and 18th centuries the city's baths became popular for pleasure, not just for healing, and it was fashionable to take to the waters.

However, over time the public conduits, fountains and water troughs were gradually removed, their usefulness as collective water supply points superseded by direct supplies to each building. As a result the physical presence of water in the streets of Bath steadily diminished.

In the 1800s, as the use of the spa began to wane, it was thought that the general attractiveness of the city could be enhanced in the form of ornamental public fountains and in 1850 a scheme was planned which attracted great media interest. The idea for a series of hydraulic fountains which fed each one in succession was unveiled.

Locations proposed included two in front of the Royal Crescent, and ones in the Circus, Queen Square, Laura Place, Kingsmead Square, Orange Grove and Parade Gardens. Making the supply of clean water across the city available to the general public was cited as one of the benefits.

The original scheme was scaled back due to expense and problems with obtaining permission from landowners for access to some of the springs which would supply them. As a trial, a competition was launched for an 'exemplar' in Laura Place, which would then lead to more in the Grove and Parade Gardens.

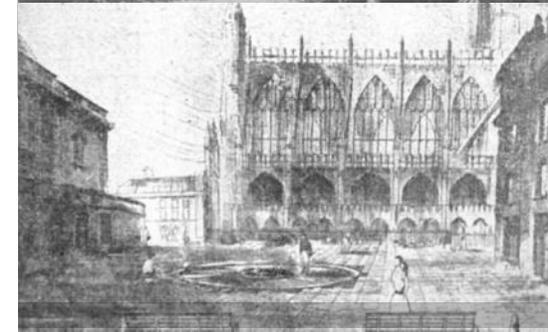
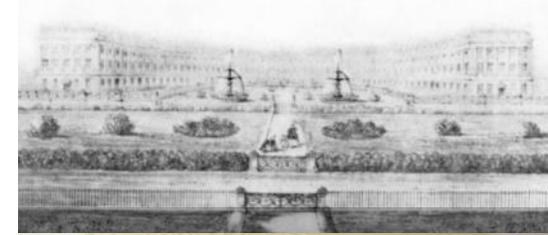
A winner was selected out of 10 entries from architects, artists, designers and craftsmen. It was hoped that the fountains would be ready in time to attract foreign visitors coming to see the Great Exhibition in London.

For various reasons the plans did not come to fruition but a few years later another competition successfully resulted in a fountain in Bath Street. Some nearby businesses were quick to capitalise, one renaming their premises 'Fountain House'. Variations of this spafed fountain lasted in this location until it was removed in 1989 for health reasons.

In the late 1800s other schemes were put forward, including several plans for fountains for Victoria Park. A fountain was eventually built in Laura Place in the 1870s and its opening attracted 6000 spectators. The current fountain that exists in this location today was opened in 1977 to mark the second centenary of the founding of the Bath and West building society.

In 1957 a scheme was drawn up for a new open paved piazza for the area to the south side of the Abbey, Kingston Parade, which proposed a fountain in the centre of the square. When the piazza was constructed the fountain was dropped from the design on cost grounds.

Gradually the public conduits, fountains and water troughs were removed and the physical presence of water in the streets of Bath diminished.



Top: Proposed fountain in front of Royal Crescent
Upper middle: Proposals for fountain in Bath Street
Lower middle: Bath Street fountain in the 1930s
Bottom: Proposals for fountain in Kingston Parade
(Images from The Survey of Bath and District No.22, October 2007)

Recent years – renewed recognition of water as the lifeblood of the city

After many years in which water played an increasingly smaller role in the city's livelihood, a renewed interest in Bath's association with water was rekindled with the opening of the **Thermae Spa** complex in 2006, which has proved to be a very successful attraction for the 4.5 million visitors who come to experience Bath's unique character. The book 'Hot bath. Story of the spa' that was produced at the same time described it as:

'... a revival, a restoration, a reinvention ... the city can look to the future at ease with itself, reconnected to the lifeblood to which it owes its existence.'

In the same year the Council published '**The Future for Bath**' in which it sought to define the essence of the city – its 'DNA'. It identified Water and Wellbeing as the first of five regenerative themes for the city. It proposed that these influences should be reinterpreted and translated into a contemporary context to inspire a distinctive future place, brand and identity.

In 2014 ambitious plans to revitalise Bath's largely ignored river corridor in a **Riverside Enterprise Masterplan** were launched. In the accompanying report a "beautifully inventive" vision for the City was promoted around seven

core values, with one of them being Water, which was identified as being at the 'heart of Bath's identity'. And 'Water-life' as one of 5 key themes to be explored in the proposals.

Another Council publication, **Bath Pattern Book** written in 2015, includes a section titled 'Bath and Water' in which it concludes: *'Today in the public realm of Bath there are remarkably few reminders of the presence of the water which makes the city famous'*. It calls for water to be re-introduced into the streets of Bath, through fountains and other water features, to forge a positive link to its history.

In March of 2015, '**The Waters of Bath**' competition entry, which is the subject of this report, was chosen as the winner of a city-wide 'Imagine Bath' competition run by the RIBA and supported by the Council.

Also in 2015, **Gainsborough Spa** opened its doors, offering paying guests another opportunity to bathe in the city's thermal waters.

And again in 2015, plans were unveiled for the restoration of **Clevedon Pools**, an open air pool that is expected to be open for bathing in 2018.

Today one of Bath's most iconic 'water features' is the 1972 redesign of **Pulteney Weir**. Complimenting the graceful form of the bridge behind, it is a popular photo-stop for tourists and the white-noise roar that the water creates as it flows over its multiple terraces amplifies its presence. Plans to exploit the underused potential of this spectacular water setting, with the conversion the colonnaded space behind it into restaurants, were approved in 2016.

And outside of Bath a resurgence of interest in water features has been taking place. Following the introduction of fountains in Somerset House in London in the late 90's there are now large water feature areas in Kings Cross, in South Plaza in the Olympic Park and a large Mirror Pool in Bradford, all having a positive regenerative effect in these areas.

All of these recent developments and local policies confirm how water can contribute to urban renaissance, particularly in Bath where it is so important to the city's brand and its livelihood. Looking to the future, the city should continue to make more of its world famous connection to water.



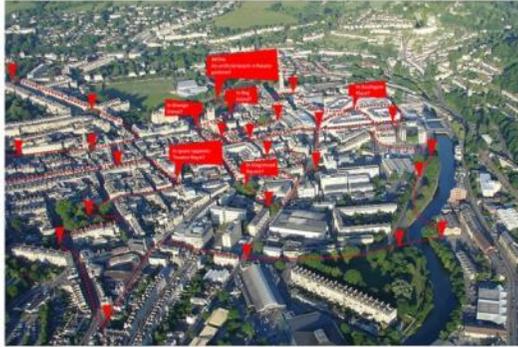
From top: Thermae Spa rooftop pool, Thermae Cross Baths, Clevedon Pools, Gainsborough Spa, & the setting of Pulteney Weir

The Waters of
Bath idea



The Waters of Bath

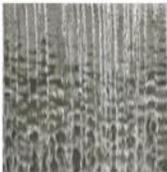
Bath is world-famous. But visitors walking its streets might find themselves asking... where is this water the city is known for? This is an idea to 're-hydrate' the City.



Healing waters were discovered on the site that became known as Aquae Sulis ('The Waters of Sulis')... and a city was eventually created.
 Its whole reason for being is... WATER.
 Bath has given its name to the world.



Water should therefore be everywhere in the city.
BUT IT'S NOT.
 Every public space could be celebrating the city's water connection.



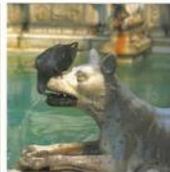
Remember how popular the Bladud pigs sculptures were? Visitors walked the whole of the Bath to see each one.
IMAGINE A CITY MAP OF WATER FEATURES INSTEAD!



Dozens of unique designs that would delight, surprise and connect the city together.
 Some loud, some quiet; some playful, some reflective... A NEW AQUATIC SOUNDTRACK TO THE STREETS.
 Everyone would have their favourite.



An international competition could be set up that would generate global interest and attract the world's best designers.
 They do not need to be implemented all at once but as water feature is added the concept, and the city's identity, would grow ever stronger.



This is not just a single BIG IDEA... BUT A FRAMEWORK FOR MANY SMALLER EXCITING IDEAS.

The idea for Waters of Bath came about by imagining what a visitor might expect to find on their first visit to the historic spa city of Bath. With its world-famous name they might be surprised, even disappointed, to discover very little evidence of water in its streets or squares.

The Waters of Bath idea sought to address this absence, by proposing an initiative to start implementing water features across the city. An international design competition was suggested to kickstart the plan, to attract the best designs and designers, and to create world media interest.

A number of sites around the city would be chosen and once these initial designs had been implemented, more could be added on a year by year basis to keep expanding the network of water features and strengthening the idea; also giving visitors something new to see each time they returned to the city. This slow growth would help keep capital costs down and allow the initiative to evolve and mature.

A map could be created by the Tourist Board so that visitors could actively seek out the various fountains, pools, cascades, spout, springs and jets – which could also be marketed as a water features trail.

The water features would contribute beauty, vitality and in some cases fun to the city's public spaces.

The variety in their designs would help compliment and reinforce the character of different parts of the city, while at the same time connecting the city together.

Not only would the water features be a visual delight but their potentially soothing or exhilarating sound could add another dimension to experiencing the city and help bring it to life.

They would be a fantastic additional attraction for visitors, good for local businesses, and make the city even more liveable and attractive for residents.

Winning entry of the [2015 Imagine Bath competition](#)

Coverage of the competition in the [RIBA](#)
 Coverage of the competition in the [Architects Journal](#)



Why would it be
great for the city?

Introducing more water features to Bath would be good for local businesses – economically, in terms of encouraging more visitors and improving the visitor experience. And also good for the people who live, work and spend time in the city – as studies have shown that even small interventions of water in urban environments bring improvements to health and quality of life.

GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Reinforce brand & identity

Water features would strengthen 'brand Bath'. They would be a physical and visible linkage to the city's history and help celebrate its raison d'être.

Being called Bath, the city should be all about water. And visitors expect it to be, but currently it's not. The city should be trading much more off its evocative name, exploiting its unique selling point.

Many other spa towns in Europe express their cultural heritage through numerous water features.



Above: Water feature in the Belgian town of 'Spa'

Enriched visitor experience

Different water features across the city would make the experience of visiting the city more pleasurable, more stimulating.

The activity of bathing is a highly sensory one - it is about the physical touch of water on one's skin, the sound of water filling a bath or lapping up against the edge of a pool, the sight of water's fluid movement, pouring and flowing... If 'bathing' literally translates as 'immersion in water' then visitors should feel 'immersed in water' when they come to the city. It should be all around them, not just limited to visits to the spa or the Roman Baths.

Walking the streets should offer the chance to touch, hear, see and even taste water – the city would be brought to life. It would make coming to Bath a much richer, more enjoyable, memorable and pleasurable experience.

More child-friendly

Waters of Bath would make the city more attractive to children. Water has a universal and elemental appeal. It's fun. It moves. It makes sounds. It sparkles. It's playful. It stimulates the senses. You can interact with it.

Shopping and walking the streets can be boring for children but fountains and water features across the city would make it more fun for children.

Hunting for a range of different fountains with a map could be very popular in the way that that hunting for all the Bladud pig sculptures was a huge hit a few years ago. They would broaden Bath's appeal; make it more of a family destination.



Top: The Roman Baths

Middle: Water is about touch, as well as sight and sound

Bottom: Children are drawn to water

Improved public realm quality

Many of the famous squares and public spaces around the world include water as a key contributor to the quality and experience of those places.

Water and water sculptures enrich their urban settings; creating life and animation; often reflecting them, literally; creating focal points or emphasising linear routes; and sometimes helping drown out traffic noise or create opportunities for cooling in summer.

Dwell time

It has been proven that people like to spend more time in environments with water in them. We're drawn to water (we are 60% H₂O after all). Research has shown that we have greater preference for landscapes with water compared to those without.

Fountains are congregation points, places where the sound and sight of water is often relaxing or mesmerising and it encourages us to linger longer and to watch others doing the same – they make 'people places'.

This is why you often find busy cafes near fountains. And longer dwell time means more spending time.

Visitor attractions

As well as contributing to the overall character and quality of urban spaces water features can be attractions in their own right. If their design is suitably exciting, dramatic, unusual or beautiful, visitors will seek them out, especially if they are marketed as being part of a water-features 'walking trail'.

This could help entice visitors and shoppers to places off the beaten track, helping increase footfall for businesses and shops in traditionally quieter areas. As discernible landmarks they can also help with wayfinding and promotion of local businesses by association.

“Fountains are hypnotic; as psychological outlets they are enduringly charming.”

Charles W. Moore in 'Water & Architecture', Thames & Hudson

Left: Laura Place fountain – a place of congregation
Right: People enjoy spending time near fountains



GOOD FOR PEOPLE

Stress reduction

Environments with water in them or fountain-type water features generate increased feelings of tranquility and as a consequence lower heart rate and blood pressure. The sound of flowing or falling water and the actual or perceived potential tactile access to water reportedly reduces stress¹.

It has been demonstrated that we can be affected by different frequencies of sound and resonate with it. The white noise sound of falling or moving water is relaxing and calming. That's why flowing water has always been important in the design of gardens, temples and cities during human history. In modern times it can help block out modern urban stress-inducing noise like traffic.

¹ Alvarsson et al., 2010; Pheasant et al. 2010

Concentration improvement and mental & physical restoration

It has been found that mental concentration is improved and memory can be restored by complex, naturally fluctuating visual stimuli, like a fountain. Also that our perception and psychological and physiological responsiveness is enhanced when multiple senses are stimulated simultaneously, for example by the sight, sound and touch of water.

Water can prompt contemplation and heightened awareness. Research has also shown that landscapes with water help counteract fatigue and can contribute to an enhanced immune system and can even help people recover quicker from illness.

Positive impact on mood and wellbeing

Research on response to activities conducted in green spaces has shown that the presence of water prompts greater improvements in both self-esteem and mood than activities conducted in green environments without the presence of water². Water connects us to nature and the benefits of this, through what we now understand as Biophilia, are well documented.

There is a lot of research now into 'blue infrastructure'³ and why this appears to affect our wellbeing even more so than 'green infrastructure'. Much of this might have to do with electrically charged particles (atoms or molecules), which are present in our body and our surrounding environment.

² Barton & Pretty, 2010

³ [theguardian.com/sustainable-business/impact-sea-lakes-rivers-peoples-health](https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/impact-sea-lakes-rivers-peoples-health)

Negatively charged ions, which are given off by many natural phenomena, have been proven to be good for us and enhance our mood. These ions are found in:

- Water waves or flowing water
- Falling waters
- Water evaporation produced by plants
- Photosynthesis
- Summer rains
- Thunderstorms
- Sunny weather
- Fresh snow

This is in contrast to a harmful excess of positive ions which we are often exposed to, given off by many urban influences like electromagnetic radiation from power lines and household wiring, cell phones, computers, TV's, and from pollution from exhausts, smog, cigarette fumes and harmful chemicals and toxins from synthetic materials.

Below: Water prompts improvements in both self-esteem and mood





Summer cooling

Water can have a physical and perceived cooling effect, which is why fountains are common in many warmer climates and cultures. As our cities become warmer through global climate-change and the urban heat island effect, cooling features will become increasingly appealing in urban environments.

Opportunity for drinking water

Fountains in cities like Rome continue to offer residents access to free drinking water in the city, helping to promote healthy consumption of water and the reduction of consumption of overpriced, landfill-generating purchased plastic water bottles. These are particularly topical issues today and places offering ready access to water for refilling bottles are being actively promoted by local initiatives such as Refill-Bath and Refill-Bristol.

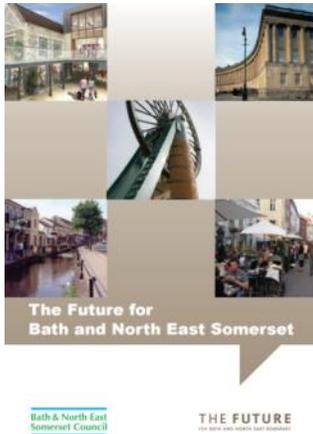
“People hugely prefer the urban environments with more water in them”

Professor Michael Depledge, European Centre for Environment and Human Health, on his research into [‘blue health’](#)



How would it fit with local
policies and initiatives?

There are a number of references within Bath and North East Somerset policy that would appear to strongly support the idea of improving the city's public realm with a series of interconnected water features.



The Future for Bath and North East Somerset - 2006

Although now a decade old this document charts some useful themes and explorations of Bath's DNA that have informed later publications. It starts by saying that Bath is one of the most beautiful cities in the world and that its periods of growth and prosperity are directly related to times when it embraces its water (or specifically its hot springs):

'A study of Bath's history demonstrates a fascinating pattern of evolution linked to the city's 'raison d'etre': its three hot springs and the social and cultural life they have inspired. The development of Bath is not a story of gradual, organic growth but one of bold and dramatic cycles of change which transformed the reputation and physical form of the city centre at peak times in its history and which were, inevitably, followed by periods of inertia and decline.

The key catalyst for each major cycle of revitalisation appears to have been the reinterpretation or reinvention of the hot springs for health, pleasure and commercial gain. These cycles have defined and redefined the city's identity and international reputation over the centuries and have left us the remarkable legacy of today's World Heritage Site.'

It goes on to stress the importance of "brand Bath", which should be careful not to rely on heritage alone to continue to attract visitors and businesses.

In terms of arts and culture it says there is a growing view that Bath is not achieving its full potential as a centre for contemporary arts and cultural activity. It also identifies that there is a strong civic pride particularly with regard to its heritage and built environment.

Specifically relating to water it says that Bath:

'...is recognised around the world as a leading centre for water and wellbeing, pleasure and culture, imagination and design, and knowledge and invention.'

To ensure that its cultural heritage and its inherent potential are at the heart of the plans for its future regeneration it attempts to define the essence of Bath - its 'DNA' which it identifies in 5 key themes:

- Water and wellbeing
- Pleasure and culture
- Imagination and design
- Knowledge and invention
- Living heritage

“Bath ...is recognised around the world as a leading centre for water and wellbeing, pleasure and culture, imagination and design, and knowledge and invention.”

Exploring the 1st theme **Water and Wellbeing** in more detail it says that:

'Irrespective of changing fashions and trends, Bath has the history and authenticity to position itself as the United Kingdom's leading centre for Water and Wellbeing, with attractions that appeal to mind, body and spirit.'

Water is the source of all life and, in Bath's case, its raison d'être. The city's recent reconnection to its hot springs, its location as the headquarters of regional water company Wessex Water and the growing recognition of the role that its river and canal network could play in improving the public realm, ecology and wellbeing of the city and its people represents another major opportunity.

The multi-faceted role and meaning of water in human existence is currently an area of international interest and research and a growing source of inspiration within the fields of science, medicine, wellbeing, art, music and spirituality.

In summary, the Future for Bath Vision proposes the expansion of the holistic concepts of Water and Wellbeing as the foundation of the city's identity.'

In the section on **Pleasure and Culture** it says that:

'Creativity and animation is almost absent from the tired streets and spaces of the city centre. If Bath is to experience a 21st-century renaissance, it must reposition pleasure, culture, creativity and playfulness right at the core of its future regeneration. These themes should be central to the city's potential future identity as a leading exemplar of wellbeing. Elsewhere in Europe a spa town or 'ville d'eau' is far more than a place to drink or bathe in thermal water and receive medical treatment: a spa is a destination that inspires, relaxes and entertains.'

And about **Imagination and Design** it says:

'Imagination and creativity have [like water] a magnetic appeal and where new and original things happen, interested and interesting people usually follow. Bath needs to recapture the radical, adventurous and controversial spirit of its 18th-century incarnation in order to achieve its 21st-century revival. The theme of Imagination and Design should be highly visible in the public realm.'

It later details proposals for a **Water and Spa Culture**, which mentions ideas about a 'water route' and...

'...opportunities to physically express the revival of spa culture and the themes of 'water and wellbeing' and 'mind, body and spirit' with water based attractions.'

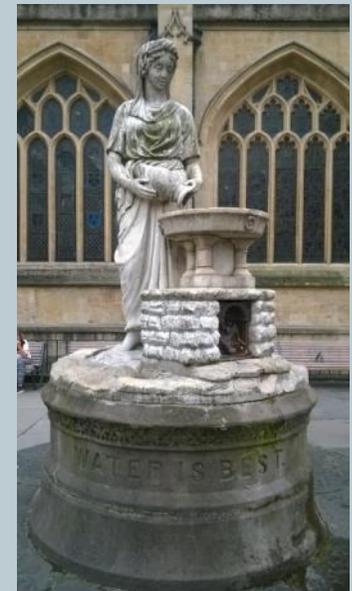
In addition to the resurfacing of streets and spaces, improvements to the public realm might include a series of water features, a dramatic light feature, or high-quality public work of art visually linking the river at Pulteney Weir to the river beyond Green Park Station.'

Under a section titled Public Space and Public Life it proposes:

'A series of new light, water and public art features to enhance and enliven public spaces and streets.'

"... the expansion of the holistic concepts of Water and Wellbeing as the foundation of the city's identity based attractions."

"... opportunities to physically express the revival of spa culture and the themes of 'water and wellbeing' and 'mind, body and spirit' with water based attractions."



'Water is best' inscription on the Laura fountain outside the Abbey



Bath City Riverside Enterprise Area Masterplan 2014-2029 Vision Report

In 2014 ambitious plans to revitalise Bath's largely ignored river corridor in a Riverside Enterprise Masterplan were launched. A "beautifully inventive" vision for the City was promoted around seven core values, with one of them being Water.

It says that:

'Water is at the centre of the identity of Bath: from the thermal spa waters which rise in the city centre, to the way in which the health giving and recreational properties of water have inspired its architecture.'

It also identifies 'Water-life' as one of 5 key themes to be explored in the Masterplan proposals.

Bath and North East Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2019

In the introductory statement the report says that:

'Bath and North East Somerset will be internationally renowned as a beautifully inventive and entrepreneurial 21st century place with a strong social purpose and a spirit of wellbeing, where everyone is invited to think big – a 'connected' area ready to create an extraordinary legacy for future generations.'



Bath and North East Somerset Council Cultural and Creative Strategy Review 2015-2020

This report states that Culture and creativity are vital to the economic and business life of Bath and North East Somerset. It says that:

'Our culture should be visible at street level: it's one of the city's major selling points.'

And that the city should:

'...build on our world-renowned spa heritage and the European spa town networks.'

In imagining Bath for the 21st Century it says that:

'We need to tell our story better, amplifying what we do in a coherent, powerful way: to residents, visitors, business, and investors.'

And we should 'extend access to the health and wellbeing effects of culture and creativity'.

"We need to tell our story better, amplifying what we do in a coherent, powerful way: to residents, visitors, business, and investors."





Bath and North East Somerset Draft PLACEMAKING PLAN 2015

Looking to the future, the plan states that:

'Bath has exhibited a positive genius for reinventing itself and will need to do so again in order to emerge from the economic shocks of the early 21st century as a more environmentally sustainable and economically competitive place that stewards well its remarkable cultural inheritance.'

And:

'The strategy for the city must sustain and refine the critical contribution of tourism to the economy. This means protecting and enhancing the characteristics that make the city special, providing a high quality public realm...'

Under Strategic Issues it says that:

'The public realm of the city centre is suffering from decades of underinvestment.'

Under a section on The World Heritage site and its setting:

'The Core Strategy seeks to promote and reinforce local distinctiveness through high quality design that improves the environmental quality and character of the city.'

It identifies **Life Enabling** as one of the Strategic Design Values within the following Values for new development:

- **Encourage surprise, joy, visual interest and delight**
- **Provide variety, interest, diversity**
- *Enabling public life by creating positive and active relationships between buildings and the public realm, including the provision of wide pavements*
- *Recognising the biophilic benefits of green infrastructure and an enhanced river and canal corridor*
- *Enable creative building design to create new space for wildlife and the natural environment.*
- *The importance of established and created views*

All values that would be supported by water features or 'blue infrastructure' in the city's street.

The report outlines the importance of Bath as being perceived as a desirable and beautiful place, to live and work in and visit and that change within the Central Area should improve Bath's profile and performance as:

- *An important cultural asset for the world.*
- *One of the country's most desirable and beautiful places in which to live and work.*

- *A more dynamic place for business, enterprise, creativity and innovation.*
- *An attractive centre for shopping, leisure and recreation.*
- *A spa town that inspires, relaxes and entertains.*
- *A visitor destination of international renown.*
- *A place that connects people to the natural environment.*
- *A place to, and in which people increasingly travel by walking, cycling or by using public transport*

One of the risks it identifies is that:

'The poor quality of much of the public realm has a negative impact on the experience of the city centre, the World Heritage Site and Bath's external image.'

Bath should improve its profile as a "spa town that inspires, relaxes and entertains."

"The public realm of the city centre is suffering from decades of underinvestment."



Palladian Bridge at Prior Park

Bath Pattern Book - creating the canvas for public life in Bath, 2015

This B&NES publication starts by saying:

'Bath is a spa city which reinvented the concept of streets and squares to create a public realm consciously designed for pleasure and enjoyment.'

This rich and distinctive environment has shaped the city's identity. It forms the setting to the magnificent architectural heritage for which Bath is famous and contributes to the character and values of the World Heritage Site. It is vital to the economic and social wellbeing of the city. It is the setting in which people should feel comfortable to savour the unique character of Bath, to stay and enjoy its many charms. It provides the special places and facilities which will make Bath an attractive, accessible and livable city of the future. For these reasons, the quality of the public realm really matters.'

It includes a section titled 'Bath and Water' which it introduces:

'Bath's historic development is closely linked to the presence of water.'

It notes how in medieval times water was publically accessible in fountains but since this time the presence of water in the city has gradually declined:

'Today in the public realm of Bath there are remarkably few reminders of the presence of the water which makes the city famous'.

As a strategy to combat this it later in the report is goes on to say:

'The lost fountains and conduits of Bath are a fascinating reminder of the importance of water to the city and its history. Water should be restored to become once again an integral part of the street scene in Bath. Water can be re-introduced as free-flowing fountains, fed by the historic wells and springs which are still found on the slopes above Bath, and situated to mark special locations in the city, such as the historic space associated with St Michael's Church and Northgate. In addition, drinking water fountains should be provided through the city.'

It says that:

'Stationary activities are an important indicator of the attractiveness of public space, since people generally choose to stay only when conditions are conducive; they require an agreeably comfortable microclimate, places to stand or sit, and pleasant surroundings.'

Water features help create these sorts of places where people choose to spend longer.

Regarding art and specifically existing water features it says:

'Experiencing public art is an increasingly important part of the culture of contemporary city life.... Art is very much part of the fabric of Bath.'

One of the areas in which visitors to the city encounter public art is through water features.

“Today in the public realm of Bath there are remarkably few reminders of the presence of the water which makes the city famous”

“Water should be restored to become once again an integral part of the street scene in Bath.”

'Fountains and wells are a feature of Bath. They range from wall-mounted fonts and free-standing fountains such as the Laura Fountain, donated to the city by Victorian benefactors, to two stainless steel water sculptures by William Pye installed in Walcot in the 1990's.'

It says that:

'Bath's reputation as a city which combines the best of its past with a forward-thinking, innovative approach to contemporary culture will be enhanced through continued development of its public art and animation programme.'

It concludes that initiatives to renew and regenerate the public realm in Bath have added a distinctive flavour to some parts of the public realm network...

'...but overall are disjointed and lack cohesion across the city centre.'

A network of water features would help create some cohesion.

It says that:

'Over time, the unique features of Bath's public realm such as its fountains and artworks have become increasingly hidden from view; the river has been cut off by new infrastructure. These assets are not contributing to the wider enjoyment of the city as a place to live and visit.'

Bath is a city which has been richly inventive, in which the pursuit of pleasure and enjoyment inspired new ways of city living. Today this sense of playfulness is too often stifled by stuffiness.'

And:

'The public realm in Bath is a vitally important asset for the city with the potential to help it compete for visitors, new businesses, residents and investment. Innovations from other cities around the world show that there is considerable potential for improvements to make Bath's public realm suitable for the requirements of a modern, progressive, livable city. Similarly, other cities show how contemporary public realm initiatives can become an integral and successful part of a city's precious historic and cultural identity.'

It identifies places with different characters in the city which should be developed:

- Tranquil Places
- Passive Places
- Active Places
- Performance Places

Water features could help respond to and help strengthen these different characters.

It also says that:

'Playfulness is closely related to invention; the process of playing is about enjoyment, imagination, exploring, testing boundaries, out of which come new realisations. An important function of the public realm in Bath is the provision of places for play.'

'Bath should enhance its reputation as a fine place for visitors and residents to encounter exciting, challenging and enjoyable happenings ... in its public realm.'

In Part II it says of public art:

'Bath is a city with a long history of patronage of public art.... Permanent public art can stimulate, provoke and inspire people, reinforcing their sense of connection to place and time. Permanent public art should be seen as an investment in the city's future.'



Above: images from Bath Pattern Book

"The public realm in Bath is a vitally important asset for the city with the potential to help it compete for visitors, new businesses, residents and investment."

Bath Tourism Plus Marketing Plan

April 2016 – March 2017

“The concept of Wellness encapsulates the very essence of Bath.”

“It’s said that the origin of the word ‘spa’ is as an abbreviation of ‘salus per aqua’ – health through water.”

Bath Tourism Plus Marketing Plan

Bath continues to attract visitors despite the slowing economy but the strategy for marketing Bath warns:

‘...we cannot afford to be complacent. In a changing world – and increasingly competitive marketplace – we must ensure that the Bath brand, as well as how we position the city and wider region, continues to appeal to our key visitor markets.’

Bath’s brand is key to the city’s attractiveness to visitors. The theme of ‘wellness’ is an important part of this and will form the backdrop of all marketing campaigns going forwards.

[The Art of Feeling Good. Bath Tourism Plus Marketing Plan appendix](#)

This report says that Bath continues to evolve as a destination...

‘...not just for bathing, but for exercise, relaxation and rejuvenation in the broadest sense...for wellness of mind, body and soul.’

It identifies its water as the inspiration for the city’s built environment:

“The phenomenon of one million litres of mineral-rich, hot water emerging from deep below the ground is, of course, the

most tangible element of Bath’s therapeutic landscape. But the wellness tradition is broader than just the waters. The natural springs have also inspired a beautiful built-environment around them.”

Refill Bath

Refill Bath is a campaign that will build on the success of Refill Bristol by making refilling water bottles convenient and inexpensive through refill points on every street. Thus reducing the plastic bottle throw-away culture. It is doing this by getting businesses and shops to allow members of the public access to fill up their bottles at their premises. Dedicated drinkable street fountains as part of a Waters of Bath initiative would also help support this campaign.



Water Space Study

This initiative, which is set to go consultation in Jan 2017, focusses on Bath’s river and canal. There is scope to widen its remit to explore opportunities for other types of water space.



Hydrocitizenship Project

This is a collection of projects started by Bath University and other Universities exploring our relationship with water. Bath risks losing impetus to its neighbour which has already developed a project called [Water City Bristol](#).



What would the water features be like?



The water features could, and should, take many different forms, and be inspired by the locations for which they are proposed.

Although a set of objectives and design criteria should be set out for each installation, the detailed nature and precise location of their design should be left for the designer to propose.

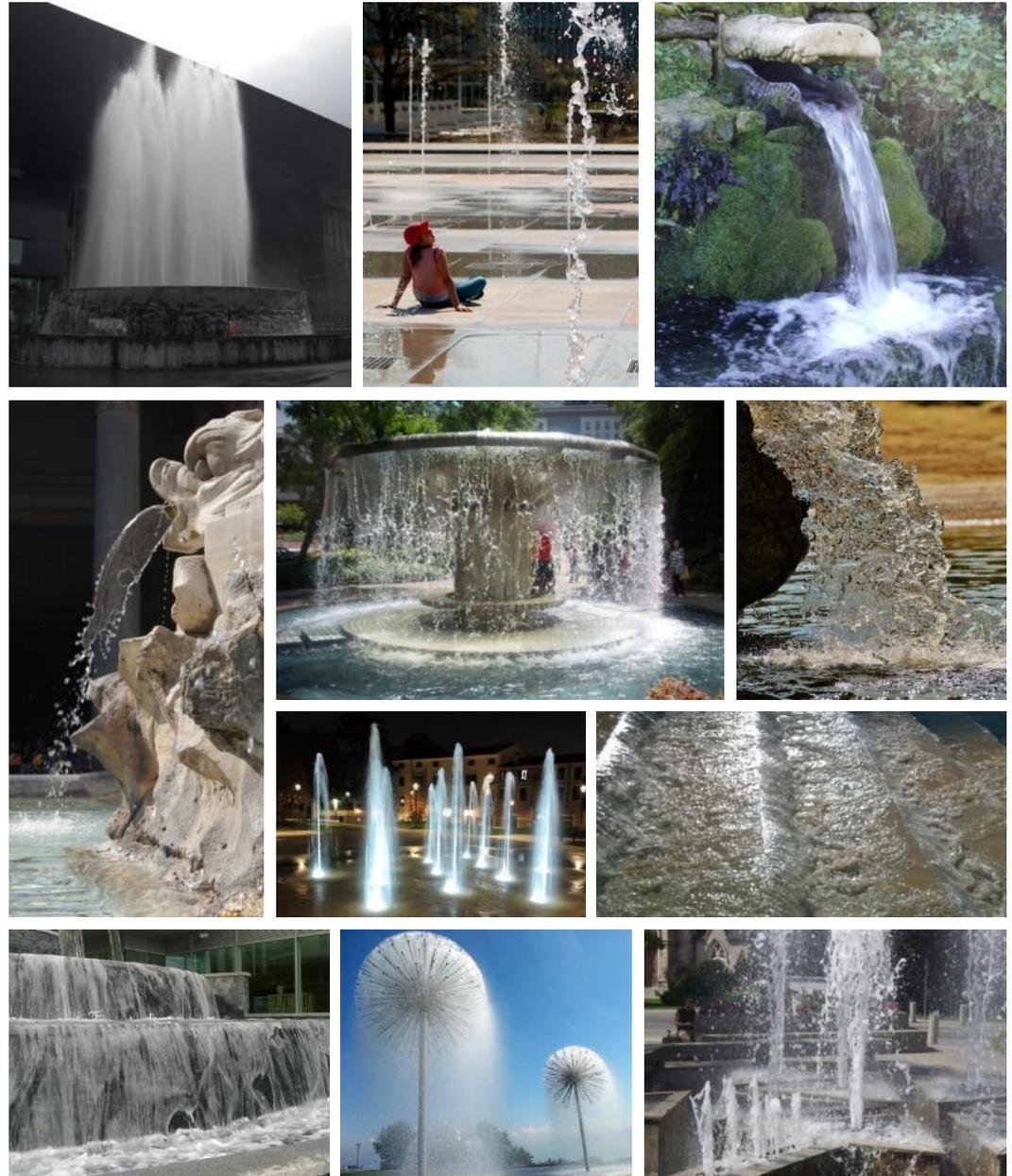
Depending on location, some features could be larger, bolder, noisier, while others could be smaller and quieter but no less interesting or appealing. The Bath Pattern Book publication characterizes different parts of the city as:

- Tranquil Places
- Passive Places
- Active Places
- Performance Places

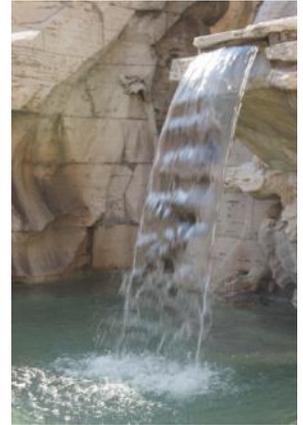
These would be a starting point to consider what types of water feature would be appropriate where.

There would undoubtedly be an opportunity to reference Bath's history in some of the water features. And one might expect at least one installation to interpret the legend of the city's origins and King Bladud's pigs bathing in the site's healing springs.

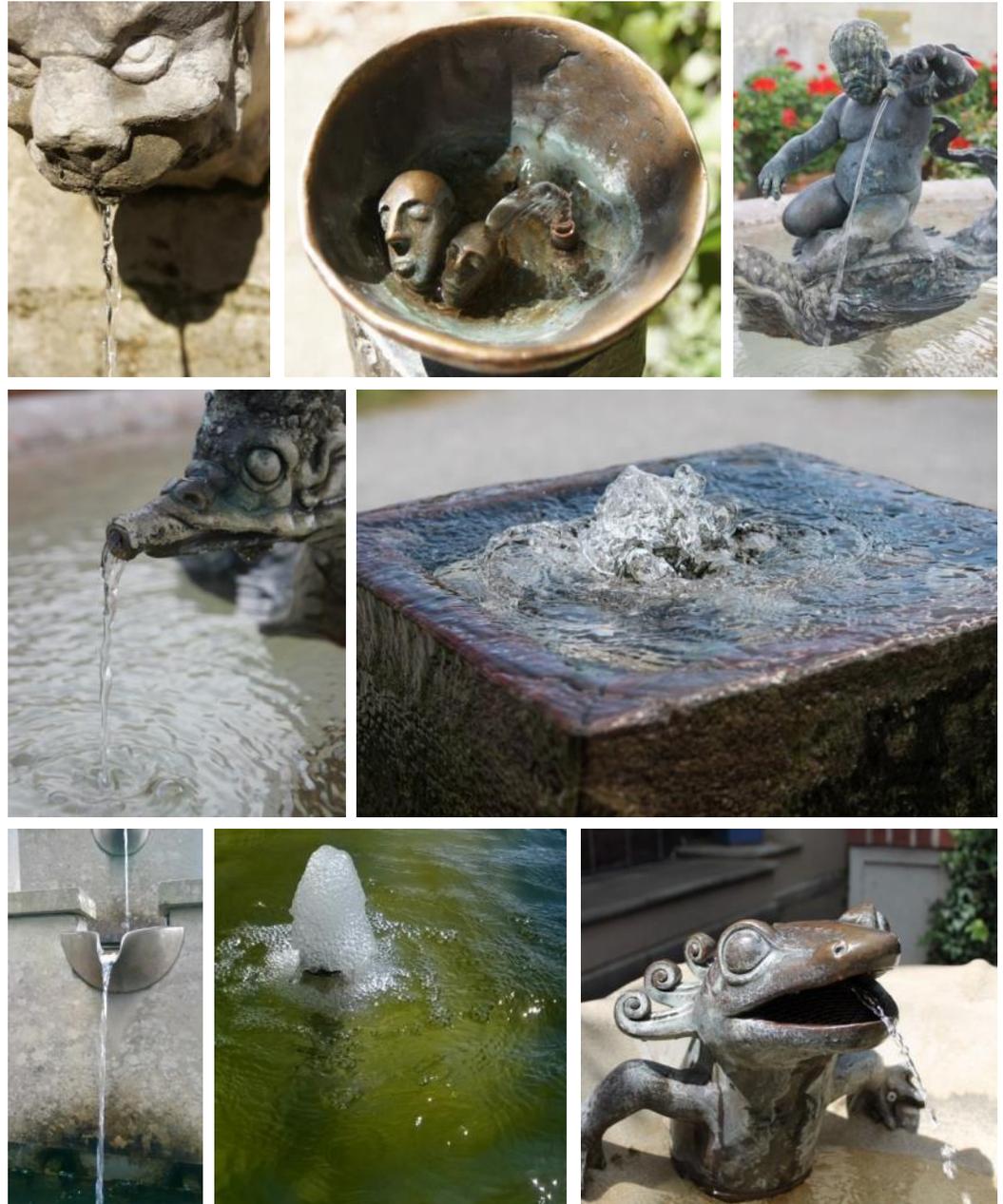
*Gushing, fizzing, splashing,
squirting, exciting, roaring,
thundering, foaming, shooting,
spraying, erupting, surging,
soaking, invigorating...*



Above: Examples of exuberant water features



*Flowing, eddying, gurgling,
cascading, sloshing,
enticing, swirling, cooling,
refreshing...*



*Tinkling, whispering, babbling,
sparkling, pouring, surprising,
sprinkling, dripping...*

Above: Examples of gently flowing water features



*Calming, reflecting, rippling,
lapping, mirroring, mesmerising,
glistening, ebbing, shimmering,
hypnotising...*



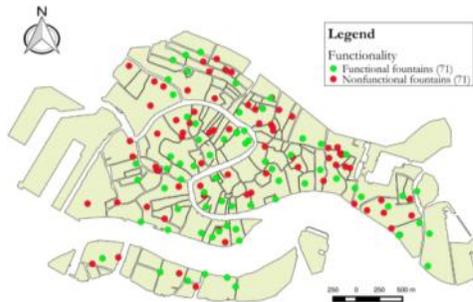
Above: Examples of calming, quiet water features



Where would they be sited?

The choice of locations of the water features needs careful consideration and should be subject of a more detailed review.

Some investigation has already been undertaken on this subject in the **Bath Pattern Book**. From this study the adjacent map (right) identifies locations of existing fountains (in orange), locations of former hot springs (in blue) and historic locations with opportunities for new interpretation (in green).



Above: The many fountains of Venice



Above: Drinking fountains in central Rome



Figure 6.07
Bath City Centre showing hidden assets which should be revealed

Map from Bath Pattern Book

Also from **Bath Pattern Book**, a map identifying the character of different parts of the city.

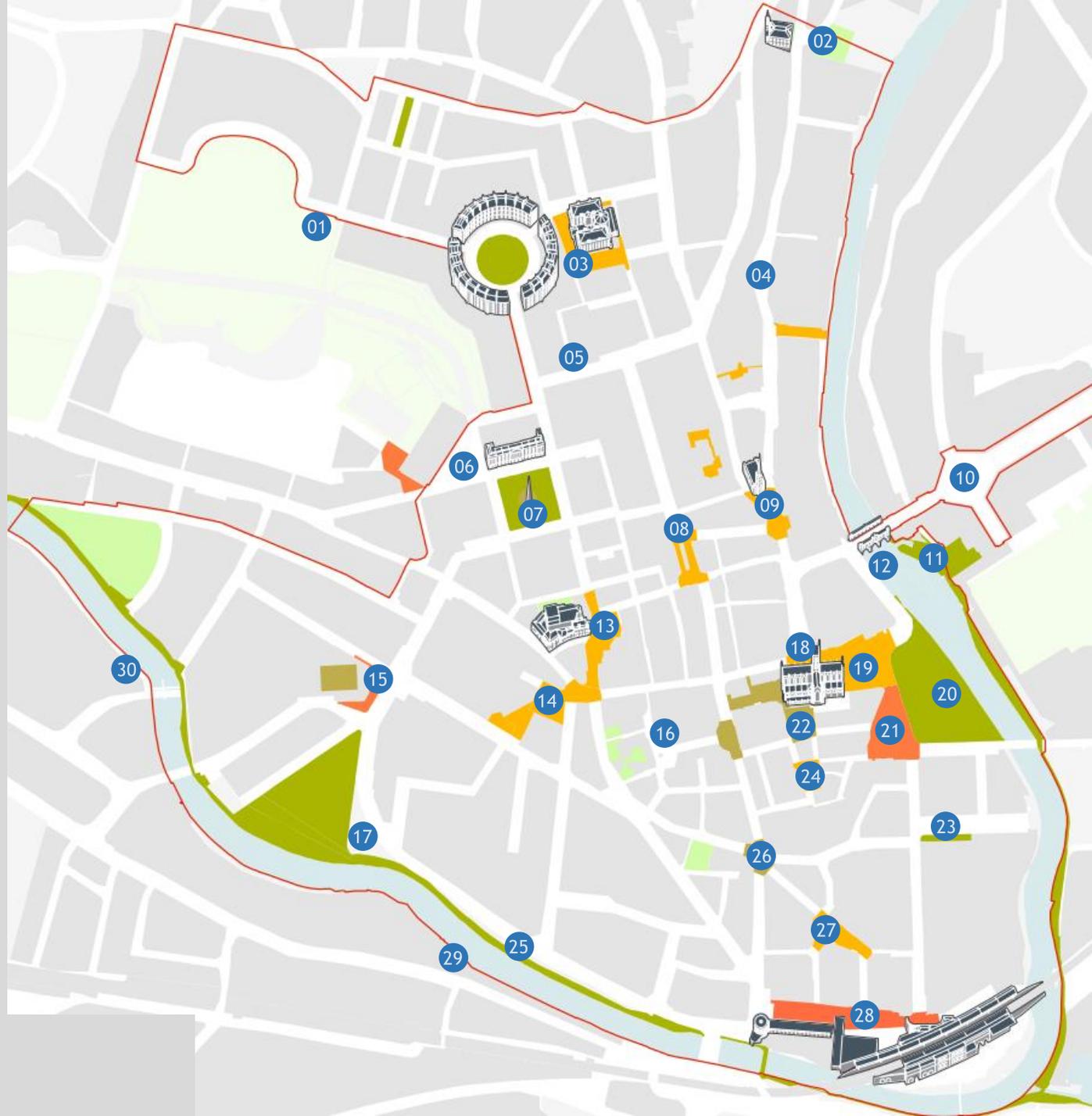
This could help determine the type of water features in these locations; whether they should be boisterous or calming. At some point in the future, a water features map could look something like the map on the following page, giving a few details about every installation, enough to entice visitors to seek each one out. The names and exact locations are indicative.



Above: Map from Bath Pattern Book

Following page: Imaginary water features map using Bath Pattern Book map as a base

- 01  Crescent fountains
- 02  Walcot Gate spout
- 03  Assembly pools
- 04  The Old Horse Trough fountain
- 05  Miles spray
- 06  Station steps
- 07  Queens fountains
- 08  Old Bond spray
- 09  St Michael's spout
- 10  Laura Place fountain
- 11  Pulteney jets
- 12  Pulteney weir
- 13  Saw Close fountains
- 14  Kingsmead cascade
- 15  Green Park Station fountain
- 16  Hot baths fountain
- 17  Green Park falls
- 18  Rebecca's fountain
- 19  King Bladud springs
- 20  BATHEe
- 21  The Mineral Fountain
- 22  Kingston Parade fountain
- 23  The South Parade Plume
- 24  The Abbey Green trickle
- 25  North Quay cascades
- 26  New Orchard spray
- 27  Southgate plumes
- 28  The Bath Spa jets
- 29  The South Quay spout
- 30  Mulberry jets



The Waters of Bath

How could their
installation be
implemented?





A plan would need to be developed to address the technical issues of the concept's delivery. It might look something like the below:

1. **Preliminary financial appraisal** – early assessment of the likely costs, using precedent information provided by water feature design and installation companies
2. **Undertake stakeholder consultation** – identification of prospective stakeholders followed by initial discussions to establish levels of support and potential challenges
3. **Set up steering group** – comprising B&NES and interested parties who would oversee the process
4. **Consider mechanisms for funding** – although the first water features could be commissioned by B&NES, after that, possible funding streams could be via:
 - Development and S106 monies
 - Sponsorship by local businesses
 - Available grants e.g. arts, lottery
 - Other e.g. crowdfunding
5. **Identify technical installation obstacles** – These might include archaeology, cellars, services access. Review of available data. Discussion of possible solutions with water feature installer
6. **Confirm suitable locations** – site locations proposed for placemaking reasons will be analysed against the obstacles identified above
7. **Agree programme** – which locations, by when. And longer term objectives
8. **Undertake public consultation** – review of the Waters of Bath concept and proposed locations, establish water features character
9. **Develop design brief** - based on public consultation and technical solutions required
10. **Launch design competition** – invite design proposals potentially via open competition; media opportunity
11. **Appoint designers / installers & develop technical proposals** – steering group assess designs and select winners. Work with designers and installers to overcome technical issues, seek any necessary permissions
12. **Install water features and unveil designs** – engage media, plan grand opening



Who's potentially involved?



Rob Delius produced the Waters of Bath Imagine Bath competition-entry. As a Bath resident, architect and the Head of Sustainability for local practice Stride Treglown, he is keen for Bath to meet its full potential as a beautiful and appealing city to visit and a great place to live.



The international organisation which recognises and safeguards some of Bath's unique qualities.

Bath & North East Somerset Council

B&NES were one of the Imagine Bath competition partners. They are ultimately responsible for the streets and public spaces of Bath and are in a position to support the Waters of Bath concept in new development in the city. As stewards of Bath's economy, the quality of experience that visitors enjoy when they visit the city will be of the utmost importance.

visitBath

Organisations whose purpose is to encourage visitors, by promoting Bath and the region as a world-class destination with wide appeal.



RIBA 

National and local organisations promoting good design and great places. They are also advocates of local distinctiveness. The RIBA and Landscape Institute were partners in the original Imagine Bath competition.

Landscape Institute
Inspiring great places



Companies whose livelihood is associated with the region's water in one way or other.





Part of Bath Bridge’s mission is to nurture, promote and help grow radical, creative and inventive projects that exist in the city. From their website:

Bath will be internationally renowned as a beautifully inventive and entrepreneurial 21st century city with a strong social purpose and a spirit of wellbeing, where everyone is invited to think big – a city ready to create an extraordinary legacy for future generations.



Creative Bath promotes Bath as a creative and inspiring destination.



The Cultural Forum is an independent coalition of arts, heritage and creative organisations.



Organisations like Invest Bristol and Bath, Business West and Bristol & Bath Cultural Destinations, support entrepreneurial initiatives that promote the region



One of the Bath BID Company’s main priorities is to promote Bath to increase footfall and dwell-time. Its main focus is on attracting visitors from the South West region as well as highlighting to residents what is on offer in the city.



Both Universities could be involved in researching the role of water in our urban environment. The University of Bath Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering were one of the Imagine Bath competition partners.



Implementing a network of water features across the city would be a positive news story that would generate a lot of interest in local media and in lifestyle and travel publications around the world.



And everyone who lives and works in Bath!



The most important groups who are potentially involved are **Bath's residents and businesses**. Waters of Bath will be good for their economic and physical wellbeing and their input is vital in making the idea a success.



Conclusion



This document has demonstrated that there is a strong economic, social and historical justification for the re-introduction of water into the streets and public spaces of Bath.

Bath's history and its raison d'être is intrinsically linked to water.

There is now a recognition in the city, and the Council's policies, that its economic prosperity is aligned to the reinterpretation and reinvention of this connection. It is fundamental to 'brand Bath'.

The Waters of Bath idea provides a framework by which fountains or water features in their many different forms, could be introduced.

These would contribute hugely to the quality of Bath's public realm; they would be attractive to visitors and residents alike; they would be good for our physical and mental wellbeing.

There will be obstacles but the Waters of Bath idea is imminently deliverable. For it to happen it will need the support of a number of key groups in the city and the public themselves.

“Bath will be internationally renowned as a beautifully inventive and entrepreneurial 21st century city with a strong social purpose and a spirit of wellbeing, where everyone is invited to think big – a city ready to create an extraordinary legacy for future generations”

Bath Bridge vision statement



“Bath needs to recapture the radical, adventurous and controversial spirit of its 18th-century incarnation in order to achieve its 21st-century revival.”

B&NES publication 'The Future of Bath'

For more information about Waters of Bath or to support the proposal:



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www.watersofbath.org



[@WatersOfBath](https://twitter.com/WatersOfBath)