

**Press release: 12 July 2018**

## **Eye-catching artworks transform hoardings at Bath Abbey**

A series of colourful artworks are being displayed both outside and inside Bath Abbey – showing that construction hoardings do not always have to be bland or lined with advertising.

Local school children have teamed up with Bath Abbey and local charity 5x5x5=creativity to produce a giant collage that will greet passers-by while building and restoration work is carried out as part of the Abbey's Footprint project. At the same time, a hand-stitched altar frontal by Stitch Friday, a needlework group from St John's Foundation, and designs by pupils from Three Ways School in Bath decorate the hoardings inside the Abbey.

As essential works begin on the Footprint project to repair the Abbey's collapsing floor, install a new eco-heating system using Bath's hot springs, and to create new and improved facilities underground, workers from Bath building firm Emery's have put up protective barriers in and around the Abbey. Rather than leaving these plain and unadorned, staff at Bath Abbey decided to make the most of the hoardings by inviting school children and a local community group to create artwork for these.

Ollie Taylor, Head of Interpretation, Learning and Engagement at Bath Abbey, who worked with the schools and St John's Foundation on the artwork projects, said: "Footprint is very much a project with people at its heart. We're so grateful to the St John's stitching group, the artist, Stephen Magrath, and the pupils and staff from the various schools for their hard work and creativity. They really understood what the Abbey represents, and we hope people enjoy the wonderful artwork they've produced. As part of Footprint, we'll have new learning and discovery spaces that will provide us with even more opportunities where we can work closely with schools and local community groups, and for local people to engage with the Abbey in new ways."

The artwork displayed on the hoardings inside the Abbey, closing off the east end for essential works, is inspired by the service of Holy Communion. It represents an altar frontal combining needlework by Stitch Friday of the sun, an overflowing chalice, and a dove representing the Holy Trinity, and designs of bread and wine by pupils from Three Way School. It took six months to complete with ten members of the Stitch Friday group from The Bubble at St John's Foundation spending over 500 hours cutting, stitching and decorating every element by hand, while students from Three Ways School worked with local artist, Stephen Magrath to create artwork for the top of the altar.

Jill Perry, leader of the Stitch Friday group said: "We were delighted to have this opportunity to work with the Abbey and for our work to be seen by the thousands of people who visit. I'm so proud of our combined efforts, both the students and my fellow stitchers have really worked hard on our different pieces to create something that's bright, colourful and eye-catching but is also meaningful, and we can't wait to see it all come together."

Also inspired by the Abbey's role as a church in the centre of Bath, the artwork outside the Abbey is shaped like its stained glass windows and is made up of many individual drawings representing the Abbey's core values of worship, hospitality, and justice. These gorgeous collages are the combined talents of pupils from the Year 5-6 year group from St Andrew's Church School (Bath), a Year 9 class from Ralph Allen School (Bath) and the Reception class at St Vigor and St John Church School

(Chilcompton). The schools' artwork was supported by a grant from the Theatre Royal Bath Creative Fund.

Charlotte Buckley, a teacher at St Andrew's Church School, said: "The children have really enjoyed working on this wonderful project. Some of our pupils were already familiar with the Abbey having either visited it with the school or their family. However, through this project, they have all learnt more about this beautiful and historic church and the various roles it plays within the city. Above all, the class is proud to see their pictures on display right in the centre of Bath."

In addition to the children's artwork, the external hoardings will also be decorated with information and colourful graphics about the Footprint project. This will include a series of charming characters based on real life Bath residents who are commemorated in the Abbey, from Mr Chilton, a local plumber, to Sarah Fielding, who wrote the first full-length novel for children. The characters help make the connection between the Abbey's past and its present. For example, the plumber tells passers-by about the Abbey's use of the hot spring water to install eco-friendly underfloor heating through Footprint.

Charles Curnock, Footprint Project Director, said: "The Footprint project will preserve one of the most important pieces of Bath's heritage: the Abbey's historic floor. The Abbey's floor is unique and something everyone in the city should be proud of. It is made up entirely of 891 ledger stones (flat grave stones), more than any other church in the country. However, it is important for us that the Footprint project isn't just about bricks and mortar; it's equally about people. For hundreds of years, the Abbey has played a vital role in the city, for those visiting Bath but especially for local residents. The Abbey continues to be a place and community where people gather together for worship and in times of celebration or crisis. I hope that as the Abbey modernises through the Footprint project that people will look at the Abbey with fresh eyes."

The Footprint project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and is a £19.3 million programme to secure the Abbey building and improve its hospitality, worship and service to the city. Work includes repairing the Abbey's historic floor which is collapsing, installing a new eco-friendly heating system using Bath's famous hot springs, and creating new and improved spaces and facilities for all to use.

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to editors:**

For further information, please contact Elaine Teh/Lucy Ryder, Communications Officer, on 01225 303320 or [comms@bathabbey.org](mailto:comms@bathabbey.org).

### **About Bath Abbey's Footprint**

The £19.3 million Footprint project aims to carry out essential repairs to the Abbey's collapsing floor, install a new eco-friendly heating system using Bath's unique hot springs as a source of energy and enlarge capacity by creating 200sq metres of new facilities to fulfil the Abbey as a place of congregation, equal access and hospitality. A programme is also planned to record and interpret the Abbey's 1,200 years of history and this iconic church for millions of visitors including educational visits. Thanks to a grant of £10.7 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund, additional funds from private individuals and trusts, as well as the Abbey's own congregation and visitors, the Abbey now has just over £1 million left to raise. [www.bathabbey.org/footprint](http://www.bathabbey.org/footprint)

For further details about Bath Abbey, please visit [www.bathabbey.org](http://www.bathabbey.org)