

ADEPT President's Awards 2025

Entry form

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Award category Shaping Places for People

Project Title Somer Valley Rediscovered

Local authority entrant Bath & North East Somerset Council

Headline summary (150 characters max.)

The Somer Valley Rediscovered Greenspaces Project (SVR) is restoring and enhancing the Somer Valley area for people and nature.

Please note we need at least one supporting image per award submission. Upload your image/s below.









Video - please paste links to any video evidence here. (Leave blank if not relevant.)

https://youtu.be/VP1XNEeY9gQ?si=9bN2myf0GQ1b0Y_B

https://youtu.be/BYyjJMF_tVw?si=9qWZFB98zsGAlkRF

Shaping places for people: How was this project an innovative response to a significant concern? (150 words max.)

The Somer Valley, in sharp contrast to other areas in B&NES, has high health need with childhood obesity, poverty, physical inactivity and poor mental health. It is also an area where biodiversity has been lost, particularly species-rich grasslands.

SVR was created to bring together the nature recovery agenda and look at ways that could stem biodiversity loss while creating accessible and welcoming greenspace, bringing benefits to people's physical and mental health. After scoping and developing projects with local town and parish councils, the local Primary Care Network (PCN), environmental organisations and local community a successful bid was made to the WECA Green Recovery Fund.

Alongside the improvements to greenspaces there is also an extensive programme of community engagement which ranges from Green Social Prescribing to volunteering opportunities and free events to help people rediscover their natural environment, heritage and local walks, positively influencing change for communities and nature.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the quality of outcomes obtained from the project (for example improved/more efficient services, increased inclusivity for residents, futureproofing the service). (150 words max.)

The project has significantly enhanced 5 local greenspaces, delivering masterplans across five sites. Key achievements include managing 37m of hedgerow, 15,000m² of scrub, and 22,000m² of grassland, alongside creating or improving 180m of paths. This has resulted in more accessible and enjoyable walking routes, rich in wildlife, fostering nature skills among users.

Volunteer engagement has been outstanding, with over 40 volunteers contributing 1,500 hours. All volunteers are motivated by environmental conservation, with 80% also seeking to gain new skills and knowledge about biodiversity.

The project has also excelled in promoting health and wellbeing through 89 events, attracting over 3,000 attendees and 6,600 website visits. The delivery of 20 Green Social Prescribing courses, totalling 1,627 hours, has been particularly impactful. Ninety-two percent of participants expressed a likelihood to revisit the greenspaces, and many reported improved mental health and understanding of nature.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of collaboration between place and people services (both within the council and with external partners/providers). (150 words max.)

SVR works across the council with different teams including Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery,

Regeneration, Public Health, Parks and Sustainable Travel. Outside of the council we are working in partnership with 3 town and parish councils as they own four of the five greenspaces we are working on. We have developed masterplans and management plans for those sites to ensure the ongoing future management. We work closely with The Active Way project, a walking and cycling social prescribing project based in The Somer Valley.

The SVR Partnership has been established to provide coordination of projects that enhance ecological connectivity of terrestrial and aquatic networks to increase

biodiversity, improve climate resilience, and increase health and wellbeing in the Somer Valley. Including B&NES Council Strategic Transport and Regeneration Team, Bristol Avon Rivers Trust, Avon Wildlife Trust, University of Bath, Bath Spa University, Bath College, West of England Nature Partnership and Environment Agency.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of buy-in to the project or its goals from members of the local community, health and social care and external organisations. (150 words max.)

The project has attracted over 60 people to sign up as volunteers, with 40 of those taking a regular active role. Between them they have delivered over 1500 volunteer hours to date. Training courses arranged for volunteers are enthusiastically taken up.

Of the 90 events and activities that have taken place many have been fully booked. The feedback received from participants has been overwhelmingly positive with some people going on to become volunteers or take part in other events.

The relationship with the educational institutions has become stronger, particularly with Bath College where SVR has become involved with the Kings Trust programme (formerly Princes Trust). Some of the young people from the Kings Trust have taken up work experience opportunities with SVR

A local wildlife group has been inspired to work with us and their volunteers provide invaluable wildlife expertise and they inputting to management plans.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the use or consideration of new sources of investment to fund projects. (150 words max.)

In 2022, the WECA Green Recovery Fund awarded £923,246 to SVR, which was matched by £436,384 from project partners, creating a 3-year project with a total budget of £1,359,630. The match funding includes contributions from Natural England, Town and Parish Councils, CIL funding, S106, and volunteer time. Additionally, the project secured £211,000 in extra Section 106 funds for greenspace improvements. SVR also successfully applied for further WECA funding to appoint a new Landscape Advisor and expand the project to incorporate two additional greenspaces.

This strategic approach to funding demonstrates a robust partnership model and innovative use of diverse investment sources, ensuring sustainable development and enhanced community spaces.

SVR is now considering future funding options for 2026 – 2030 including exploring links with landscape projects such as the The Big Chalk, The Limestone Landscape Link and considering approaches to funders such as WECA and National Lottery Heritage Fund.

All categories: please add anything else that supports your award entry

Somer Valley Rediscovered is led by a small team of staff – Miriam Woolnough / Jess Taylor Project Manager (jobshare), Phoebe Webster, Project Officer, Stephanie Sharkey, Volunteer Co-ordinator. We are based in the project area making us easily accessible to project partners and the community.

Our recent Wassail event put Midsomer Norton on the map with an article in the New York Times!
<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/13/world/europe/england-wassailing-cider-tradition.html?smid=url-share>

The team has successfully built relationships with project partners, “without SVR, we wouldn’t have the masterplan in the first place.” Another commented “The SVR team’s enthusiasm is infectious”.