

Impact Report 2025-26



ARNOS VALE
CEMETERY TRUST



"This year has demonstrated the extraordinary value that Arnos Vale Cemetery brings to Bristol. Our staff, volunteers, and partners welcomed almost 500,000 visitors, enhanced biodiversity across our woodland and grassland habitats, delivered learning and wellbeing activities, and continued to protect one of the UK's most remarkable Victorian garden cemeteries.

These achievements have come despite growing financial and ecological pressures. Caring for historic buildings and monuments, managing ash dieback and invasive species, and generating income through funeral services, venue hire, the shop and café are increasingly challenging.

As we look ahead to 2027 and the Trust's 20th anniversary, our focus is on strengthening resilience. Through a new Conservation Management Plan and maintaining diverse income streams, we are securing Arnos Vale's future as a place of remembrance, learning, nature and community."



Ann Fiddler, CEO



"As Chair of Trustees, I am immensely proud of what has been achieved at Arnos Vale this year. The impact highlighted in this report reflects the dedication of our volunteers, staff, funders, supporters and wider community, whose collective efforts help Arnos Vale thrive as a place of heritage, nature, learning and remembrance.

Trustees are acutely aware of the challenges facing the charity. Safeguarding a nationally important heritage landscape, caring for historic assets, supporting biodiversity and maintaining financial sustainability are significant and growing responsibilities.

Going forward, our priority remains to protect and sustain Arnos Vale for future generations, guided by a new Conservation Management Plan and a clear commitment to long-term sustainability. We are determined to ensure that Arnos Vale continues to serve as a vital green space, heritage site and community resource, enriching the lives of people across South Bristol and beyond."



Andrew Jenkins, Chair of Trustees



What we do at Arnos Vale Cemetery

Located in the heart of south Bristol, Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust preserves a 45-acre heritage landscape where history, nature, and community come together.

As a registered charity, we protect and care for this unique heritage site to ensure it remains accessible and meaningful for all who visit.

Building on its origins as a place of remembrance, Arnos Vale now provides opportunities for learning, wellbeing, and community.

From guided walks and creative workshops to volunteering and quiet moments among the trees, people come here to meet others, learn new skills, and find calm in nature.

Each year, thousands of visitors shape the life of Arnos Vale – building community in the heart of their city.

Our Values

Compassion

Community

Conservation

Collaboration

Hawthorn blossom in Spring

A Place for Remembrance

Providing burial and remembrance services remains the core purpose of Arnos Vale Cemetery, just as it was when the cemetery opened in 1839. Today, that role continues to connect new generations of Bristol families with this historic landscape.

This year, we supported families at **22 burials, 39 ashes interments, 43 ash scatterings and 42 funeral services and wakes**, helping families mark loss and celebrate lives in ways that are personal and meaningful. As Bristol's only woodland burial site, we continued to offer a distinctive and environmentally sensitive choice for those planning end-of-life arrangements.

Alongside these services, we provided opportunities for remembrance and reflection through:

- A Christmas Memorial Service in the Anglican Chapel for recently bereaved families
- A bulb-planting morning for families remembering loved ones
- A Remembrance Day ceremony, joined by the Royal British Legion and pupils from Hillcrest Primary School
- The Rajah Commemoration, attended by more than 100 people



Remembrance Day, 2025

"Thank you so much for holding my Mum's funeral and wake. You made what was such a difficult day as easy and bearable as possible..."

Arnos Vale is such a wonderful place of serenity in the middle of the urban sprawl. It will always feel like a special place to our family, and it will be cherished."



Laying fresh flowers on a grave

At the heart of the community

Arnos Vale means different things to different people. For some, it is a place to walk, reflect and connect with nature. For others, it is somewhere to volunteer, learn new skills, meet friends or explore Bristol's history.

With almost 500,000 visits recorded, Arnos Vale continues to be a valued community space. Events including the May Fair, Christmas Memorial Service and Bristol Walk Fest brought people together throughout the year.

Volunteers contributed **7,663 hours** across the charity, supporting conservation, visitor engagement, events, café operations and historical research.

In our annual visitor survey*, when asked what they value most about Arnos Vale, respondents most frequently cited the following reasons:

25%

access to
green
space

38%

Preserving
local &
national
heritage

17%

supporting
nature &
conservation

*417 people completed our visitor survey in January 2026



Honouring the Rajah



"We had a wonderful tour led by Mary Wood, who's so knowledgeable about the history and natural history of Arnos Vale. What an extraordinary and special place..."



Christmas gathering in the Underwood



Butterfly amongst the graves



Volunteers talking to visitors about wildlife surveys



26 newly installed boxes for smaller birds

Increasing biodiversity

Arnos Vale is Bristol's largest area of semi-natural habitat, comprising woodland, scrub and species-rich grassland. This year, targeted land management and volunteer support continued to enhance biodiversity across 45 acres of landscape.

Formerly dominated by bramble and invasive weeds, our native wildflower meadows are now thriving, with species such as field scabious and ivy broomrape appearing in new areas.

Sensitive woodland management has supported wildlife, with evidence of nesting in **75% of 26 newly installed bird boxes**.

We continued removing diseased ash trees, helping keep visitors & monuments safe, and historic paths open and accessible.

Volunteer-led bumblebee, butterfly and spider surveys have increased our understanding of how wildlife is responding.

100

diseased ash
stems removed
improving
woodland health

5,065

hours of
hands-on
conservation
by outdoor
volunteers

41

species of
spider
identified
during a Spider
Survey



Bats hibernating in the Lodge Tunnel



Bats roosting in West Lodge basement



New bat homes being chainsawed into deadwood

Bats at Arnos Vale

Arnos Vale provides important habitat for eight species of bat, including the nationally rare Lesser Horseshoe Bat.

Annual surveys continue to show that the resident population is thriving, demonstrating the value of long-term habitat management and conservation.

This year, new bat roost features were created within standing deadwood in Coombe Bottom, increasing shelter opportunities for wildlife while maintaining natural habitats.

Our popular bat walks, led by our resident bat expert & Trustee Dan Flew helped visitors discover the hidden wildlife of the cemetery and learn more about the importance of urban nature conservation.

8
species of bat
detected
including red-
listed Lesser
Horseshoes

The almost full moon shining bright behind the Anglican Chapel was a perfect setting for a brilliant evening with Dan (Trustee & Bat Ecologist). He shared fascinating bat info with insight and humour too!.... '
Visitor feedback on our Bat tour



Developing people, strengthening Arnos Vale

Investing in people is critical to the long-term future of Arnos Vale.

During the year, staff and volunteers completed practical training including chainsaw operation, strimming and barista training.

Specialist advice on monument care & conservation, bat habitat conservation and tree maintenance was offered pro-bono by supporters of the cemetery.

These new skills increase our ability to carry out conservation work in-house, reduce costs and build resilience across the organisation.

Volunteers accessed learning opportunities through guided visits with our expert tour guides, by undertaking ecological surveys, and even an off-site visit to Underfall Yard in Bristol Harbourside to see how they care for their heritage assets.



Volunteering at Arnos vale has helped reconnect me with parts of my family history whilst beginning to learn new skills & knowledge about nature and wildlife – it's a very nice change from the day job!

Connor, Landscape volunteer



"Arnos Vale is a beautiful place to walk, to think... the tour I went on was very good, the guide was very knowledgeable and I really enjoyed it"

Visitor Review, Trip Advisor, 2025



Learning through heritage & nature

Throughout the year, school groups explored Bristol's history, heritage and wildlife through curriculum-linked visits and outdoor learning sessions.

Family events helped children discover nature through activities including bug hunting, pond dipping, den building and nature crafts.

New interpretation panels and our Bloomberg Connects digital guide helped more visitors engage with the cemetery's heritage, stories and wildlife.

Volunteer-led record searches helped **120 families** uncover their history and reconnect with relatives from the past.



"Ruth located the burial information for my Great-great grandfather in a common grave. This is very important because there is no headstone to work from, only the dated document of his burial. I am so grateful for the cemetery care and volunteers who have made this discovery possible!!!"

Diane

1,198

visitors learned from our volunteer-led heritage & nature tours

461

school children explored Bristol's heritage & discovered nature

597

children participating in outdoor nature based activities with their families

Events with purpose

Arnos Vale's historic buildings and beautiful landscape make it a distinctive venue for celebrations, learning and cultural events.

Over the past year we hosted weddings, corporate meetings, festivals, markets, talks and outdoor family activities.

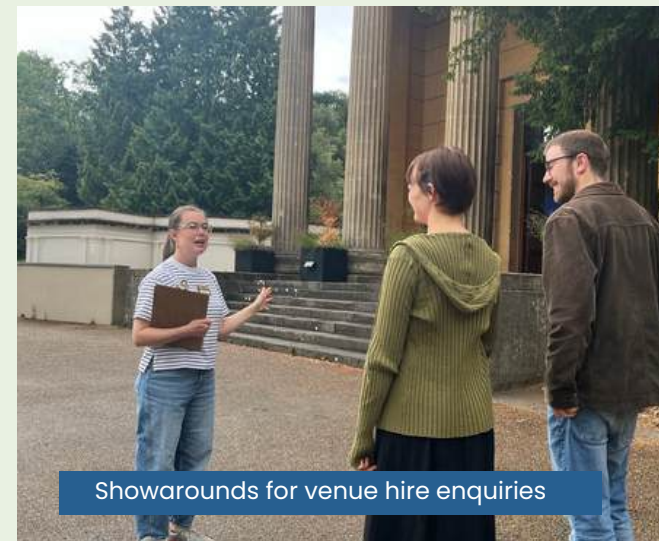
Working with Bristol Film Office, we also welcomed a Netflix production filming scenes for Agatha Christie's Seven Dials.

These events generated vital unrestricted income to support our charitable work. For many people, attending an event is their first experience of Arnos Vale, often leading to future visits, volunteering, donations and support.



We'd like to say a massive thank you for everything you did to help our wedding go so smoothly! We felt in such good hands and it really meant we could just relax and enjoy the day. It was a privilege getting married at such a special venue...."

Hannah and Tom, wedding couple





am, Enterprise Manager & volunteers selling trees

Business for good

Arnos Vale Cemetery is free for all to enjoy, but maintaining a historic site of this scale takes more than goodwill.

Every coffee, gift and ticket sold helps sustain the charity and every pound spent by visitors goes straight back into caring for the cemetery and its landscape.

We are committed to supporting local suppliers wherever possible.

From Bristol-made products in our shop to locally sourced food and drink such as Pieminister Pies and Bristol Distillery Co., visitor spending helps strengthen Arnos Vale and the local economy.

'A huge thank you (as ever!) to the Arnos Vale team for another fantastic couple of nights last week. Feedback has been great, audience numbers were the highest in years, and we had a great time!'

Bristol Film Festival



Sophie, Weddings & Events Manager, at the Autumn Craft Market

293
Christmas
trees sold by
volunteers

2,020
tickets sold for
tours, talks & arts
events

14,990
lattes, flat whites
and americanos
brewed up
in our cafe

Protecting our heritage

Arnos Vale Cemetery is one of the UK's most remarkable Victorian garden cemeteries. Rescued and restored by the local community after decades of neglect, our mission is to conserve this unique heritage site for everyone to enjoy.

Over the past year, we have delivered a range of projects across the cemetery's historic landscape and listed buildings, including:

- Conserving historic Victorian monuments by removing dead, dying and dangerous trees before they fall,
- Starting work on a memorial stability and conservation project to understand risks and issues across the site,
- Upgrading electrical supplies, fire alarms and security systems across our listed chapels and lodges and;
- launching an appeal to raise funds towards the restoration of the Victorian iron gates that guard the cemetery
- Surveying our listed buildings to identify maintenance issues



Felling dead trees, removing risk to monuments



Surveying roofs of listed lodges



Being interviewed by Points West about Gate Restoration Appeal

Securing Arnos Vale's future

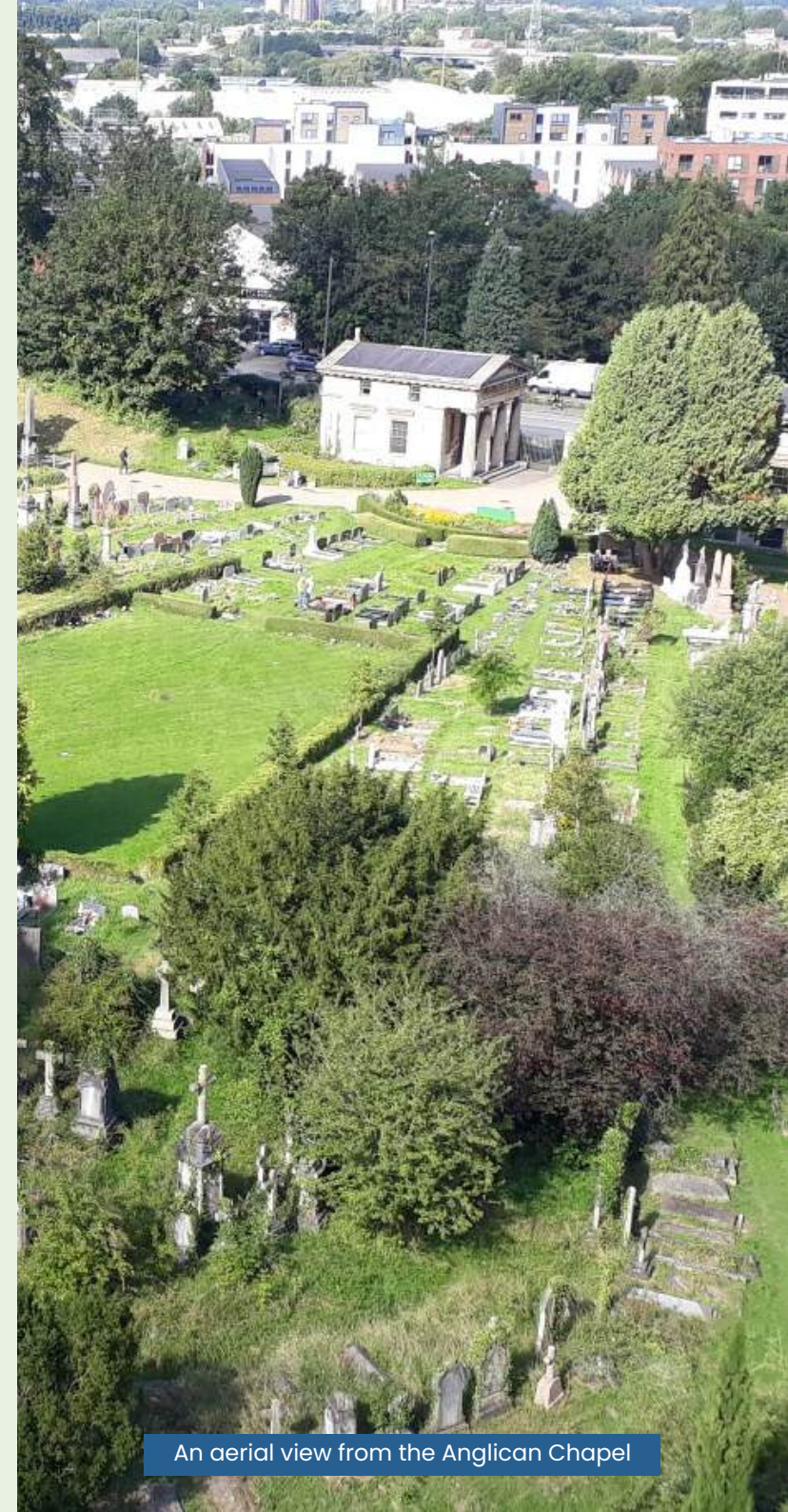
Good conservation requires long-term planning.

This year we began developing a new Conservation Management Plan with Purcell Architects, supported by grants from The Pilgrim Trust and The Pople Charitable Trust.

Through consultation with visitors, volunteers, staff and partners, this work is helping us understand how we care for the site and identify priorities for the next 10–20 years.

The plan will guide future conservation projects, support fundraising and ensure Arnos Vale continues to balance heritage preservation, biodiversity and community use.

This work has been made possible with generous grants from The Pilgrim Trust and The Pople Trust.



An aerial view from the Anglican Chapel



Funders

With thanks to everyone who has helped to make our work possible this year, including:

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Friends of Arnos Vale Cemetery

National Community Lottery Fund

The Pilgrim Trust

The Medlock Charitable Trust

The Michael Marks Charitable Trust

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust

The Anchor Society

HDH Wills Charitable Trust

The Pople Charitable Trust

WO Street Foundation

We are deeply grateful to everyone who donated to Arnos Vale this year. Every gift and grant helps us protect, restore and share this extraordinary place.



Supporters

With thanks to everyone who we have collaborated with and who have supported our work this year including:

Animate Projects
Bath City College
Bloomberg Connects
Bristol Chamber Choir
Bristol Film Office
Bristol Madrigal Choir
Brunel Flowers
Changes Bristol
Companion Voices Bristol
CRBS Scaffolding
Falmouth University
Fears Watches
Hillcrest Primary School
Left Handed Giant Brewery
Mullers
Pupils from Holymead Primary School

On Site Rail Services
Open University
Quartet Community Foundation
Royal British Legion
RSPB Bristol
St Mungos
The IsamBards
The Outdoor Project
University of Bath, CDAS
University of Bristol –
Archaeology and Anthropology
& Geography Departments
University of the West of England
Green Futures Project
Voscur
Westonbirt Arboretum



Local business & makers

We prioritise working with local businesses, suppliers, and makers, keeping money circulating within the Bristol economy. Their products and services support our café, events, shop, and the day-to-day running of our charity.

6 O'clock Gin
Abunoor Foods
Arthur David
Bristol and West
Memorials/Williams-Bath
Bristol Beer Factory
Bristol Maternity Hospital
Bumble Bee Catering
Cakesmiths
Campbells Kitchen
Chapel and Jenkins
Divine Ceremony
FED Catering
Gingerbeard Preserves

Heart of BS13 Flower Farm
Leilia Dore
Lost and Grounded
Pickled Pumpkin Catering
Pikkle
Pieminster
Rose Kentish Catering
Sandy Park Deli
Susan Taylor Design
The Parsnipship
Thomas Davis Funeral Directors
Triple Co Coffee Company
Wild Pizza Co.
WW Memorials



Arnos Vale Cemetery is Victorian garden cemetery in south Bristol, home to historic buildings, monuments, and a thriving wildlife sanctuary. Recognised as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, it serves as both a cultural landmark and a green community space. It is a place for people to come together, hosting regular activities and events for the local community.

It is free to visit and open 365 days a year.

With thanks to the Friends of Arnos Vale Cemetery
whose continued support helps sustain our work.

Registered Charity Commission: 1120210
Company Limited by Guarantee: 06272084

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