



Beautiful Burial Grounds

End-of-project evaluation report

This project was delivered by Caring for God's Acre,
with funding from:



This evaluation was commissioned by Caring for God's Acre (CfGA) and has been researched and written by Heritage Insider.

All photos © CfGA unless otherwise stated.
Front cover photo: Beautiful Burial Grounds
event at Christ Church, Cressage in Shropshire.

Completed December 2022.



Contents

Abbreviations	3
Executive summary	4
1. Background	7
1.1 Burial grounds; hidden heritage jewels	7
1.2 The project.....	8
2. Methodology.....	9
3. What the project delivered	12
3.1 Project management and resourcing	12
3.2 Partnership-working	13
3.3 Project delivery	15
4. What difference did the project make?	18
4.1 Delivering intended outcomes	18
5. Successes, challenges and lessons learnt	33
5.1 Facilitators and successes	33
5.2 Blockers and challenges	35
List of Appendices	39

Abbreviations

BBG – Beautiful Burial Grounds project

CfGA – Caring for God's Acre

CHC – Church Heritage Cymru

CHR – Church Heritage Record of England

NBN – National Biodiversity Network

PCC – Parochial Church Council

Executive summary

Burial grounds are filled with wonderful **built, natural and social heritage**. Yet despite offering such rich biodiversity and being filled with cultural significance for the communities around them, little data was available about the burial grounds in England and Wales. The Beautiful Burial Ground project (BBG or 'the project') has been developed to specifically address this issue.

Since 2018 Caring for God's Acre¹ (CfGA) has delivered the £1.57m project with the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). The project team have done this through delivery in three main areas of work:

1. Creating a bespoke database where individual burial sites can be mapped, linking biological records all and linked to national systems
2. Encouraging citizen science, historical and cultural recording and research to give a picture of the whole range of heritage present
3. Establishing regional partnerships in England and Wales, supported via events, workshops and other resources.

Despite operating through the pandemic and encountering other challenges such as access to data, this award-winning project has achieved impressive results which are very well-evidenced. Stand-out outcomes are:

- **More and a wider range of people have engaged with heritage** – the project successfully engaged large numbers of people, for example, **808 places of worship** nationwide took part in Love Your Burial Ground week, helping local people to come together, discover and explore their local burial ground. The project targeted **under-represented audiences** to introduce them to this rich heritage

resource and reduced barriers to accessing burial grounds for all, for example, through interpretation, events and accessible information and support resources.

- **People volunteer their time** – the project has **mobilised a much larger team** of people to record, care for and share burial ground heritage. Most of these are 'hyper-local' to their burial ground, which is a major achievement for a project which spreads across two nations. The project has inspired and supported a staggering **18,380 people** to record the natural, social and built heritage in their local burial ground – many of whom were first-time recorders. Of these, 647 people were deeply engaged and regularly submitted records.
- **Heritage is better identified and recorded** – the project has made a landmark achievement by establishing an integrated portal for burial ground heritage data. This is now fully operational, with over half a million records freely available. The team has secured a significant amount of existing data and mapping, which has been migrated to the new system, and inspired individuals and communities to submit over **87,000 new heritage records** across **6,273 burial grounds** in England and Wales.
- **People have changed their perceptions and behaviour** – this is perhaps the most important outcome of the project, which supports all others. The project has provided an effective focus for burial ground heritage, raising awareness of its value and helping to change perceptions, for example, ensuring **people feel welcome** to visit and enjoy their local burial ground, and changing perceptions of their role within the community. Furthermore, the project has begun ensuring

¹ Caring for God's Acre is a non-religious charity dedicated to conserving and celebrating burial grounds and encouraging a holistic approach to their management.

burial ground managers and owners recognise the value of heritage and therefore **manage positively** for it. This is having encouraging results, for example, on the way in which burial ground heritage is managed, and its condition.

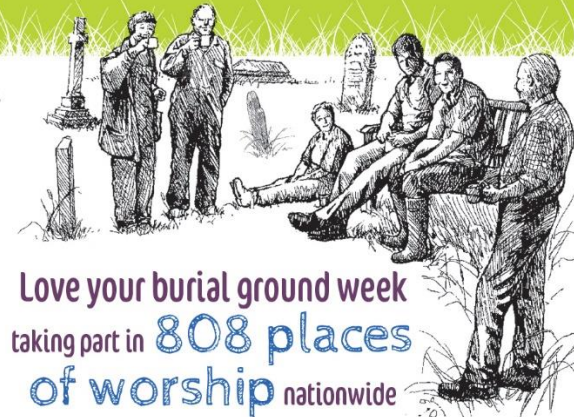
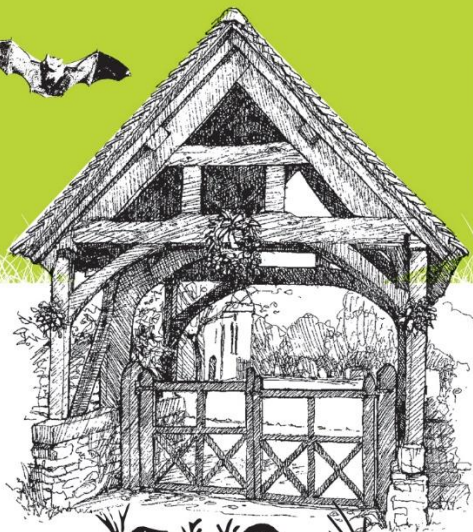
Overall these outcomes have made local communities a better place to visit, live and work, for example, by bringing together people from different backgrounds within a community to care for their burial ground and by providing valuable green space as a haven for both people and wildlife.

Finally, **national partnership-working** has helped to shift strategic approach from a deficit-based model to an **asset-based model of management** where the heritage of burial grounds is recognised as a significant resource, for example, for community engagement and climate change mitigation.

Beautiful Burial Grounds has begun to unleash the potential of burial grounds as **heritage assets at the heart of communities across England and Wales**. This high-achieving project has established a foundation for informed decision-making and heritage-positive management of burial grounds, mobilising and engaging an even greater number and wider range of people to care for their local heritage.

Caring for God's Acre has grown as a charity as a result of this project and is **'investment-ready'**, with increased visibility, support, capacity and partnerships. Given Beautiful Burial Grounds has been such an accomplished project, it will be fascinating to see what this organisation can achieve next.

Beautiful Burial Grounds in numbers



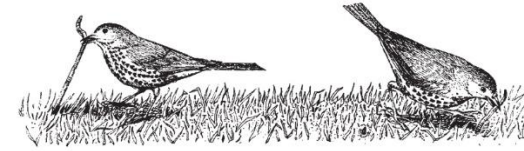
Love your burial ground week
taking part in **808 places**
of worship nationwide



18,380 people recording wildlife
and giving **£857,115** worth of time



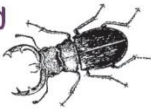
Wildlife
better recorded
at **6,273**
burial grounds
across England
and Wales



87,242 new sightings of wildlife recorded



20,325
burial grounds
mapped



1,020 training sessions across **68 counties**
in England and Wales plus greater London & Birmingham

Built heritage better recorded
at **548** burial grounds
across England and Wales



890 people taking part in **53 accessible**
sessions from 'gentle' sessions in small groups, sign language
interpreted sessions, accessible sessions and fun sessions for families



18,477 people
polishing their burial ground natural,
built or social heritage skills



Gwneud yn bosibl i gan
Cronfa Treftadaeth
Made possible with
Heritage Fund

1. Background

1.1 Burial grounds; hidden heritage jewels

There are about 20,000 burial sites in the UK and this represents a significant land-holding, with sites occurring in every area. Burial grounds are often at the heart of our communities, both urban and rural. and are of unique social and community value, providing a sense of time, place and inspiration.

Burial sites illuminate our **social heritage**, often going back over a thousand years. Memorials reflect tastes and fashions, revealing customs and practices. Cemeteries can give an insight into the history of immigration in Britain and may contain areas dedicated to a particular faith or nationality.

The **built heritage** of burial grounds is valued. Many features have designations, and there are a wealth of non-designated features, important to local communities, family historians and experts.

Beyond the obvious social and built heritage, burial sites are often **havens for biodiversity**. Areas where management has been unchanged for centuries have a unique importance for biodiversity, and the oldest burial grounds may have been enclosed for over a thousand years, with



Figure 1 Roe deer in a cemetery on the Surrey heaths

many unlikely to have been exposed to either intensive management or chemical use.

They contain features of local, national and international importance, in particular veteran yews, lichens and species-rich grassland plus a range of other flora, fauna and fungi. Furthermore, burial grounds are important green spaces within urban and rural landscapes, but despite this importance, are rarely designated.

It is the coexistence of natural, historical and cultural features that creates the unique character of burial sites and their value to the local community.

However, burial sites are **at risk from a range of factors** including:

- Neglect, under-management and inappropriate management, for example, due to lack of finances and time, or a lack of understanding
- Dispersal and sale of burial sites, change of use or management, e.g. from church volunteers to local authority contractors
- Lack of data, leading to an absence of understanding, designation and protection
- Lack of community awareness, capacity and local involvement
- Climate change – veteran or ancient trees, and small or fragmented areas of habitat, are particularly affected by climate change
- Built heritage is at risk from inappropriate management, lack of routine maintenance and knowledge about deterioration
- Vandalism, theft and other forms of anti-social behaviour.²

Caring for God's Acre (CfGA) is a national charity dedicated to the conservation of burial grounds.

² Adapted from the Round 2 NLHF application.

1.2 The project

The Beautiful Burial Ground (BBG) project was developed and delivered by Caring for God's Acre,³ supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

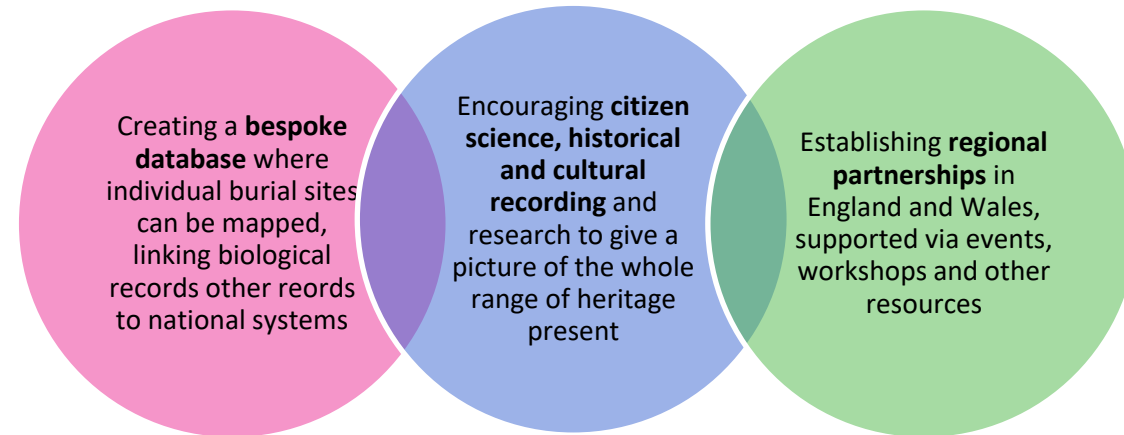
The project focussed on the natural, built and social heritage of burial grounds – churchyards, chapel-yards, cemeteries and green burial grounds

The project vision was to:

'inspire, engage and support interest groups, communities and individuals to learn about, research and survey the heritage of their local burial grounds.

This will encourage more people to understand and appreciate the unique importance of these sites, leading to engagement of a new audience, better **understanding, management, interpretation, protection and designation.**'

The project's ambitious goals were focussed on changing the way burial grounds are recorded and to literally put them onto the 'heritage map' by:



The project aimed to inspire, engage and support interest groups, communities and individuals to learn about, research and survey the natural, built and social heritage of their local burial grounds.

³ Caring for God's Acre is a non-religious charity dedicated to conserving and celebrating burial grounds and encouraging a holistic approach to management.

2. Methodology

Specialist independent evaluator Heritage Insider Ltd was appointed in March 2018 to evaluate the project. This support was guided by an Evaluation Plan in line with National Lottery Heritage Fund evaluation guidance.⁴

What does this evaluation process seek to find out?

The following Key Evaluation Questions were formulated to assess the successes of the project and identify the challenges it faced:

Project delivery and outcomes

1. Have outputs been achieved? [Section 3.3](#)
2. Have aims and objectives of the project been met for each of the three aims (see Logic Model)? [Section 4](#)
3. What have been the key facilitators and blockers for this work? [Sections 5.1 and 5.2](#)
4. Who has benefited and how? Has the project encouraged a wider range of people to become involved with the heritage of burial grounds? Has the organisation been successful at engaging under-represented groups? [Section 4](#)
5. To what extent is site-level recording of natural, built and social heritage of burial sites now better joined-up as a result of the project? [Section 4](#)
6. To what extent has the level of records available for site-level recording of natural, built and social heritage of burial sites been tangibly improved as a result of the project? [Section 4](#)

Project systems

7. Have project management systems been appropriate and effective? [Section 3.1](#)
8. How effective has partnership-working been? [Section 3.2](#)

Project impacts, legacy and learning

9. Has the project improved the recognition of the value of the importance of burial grounds to heritage? [Section 5.1](#)
10. What are the longer-term impacts of the project? [Section 5.1](#)
11. To what extent has improving the recording and telling the story of natural heritage positively impacted the management and understanding of the importance of burial grounds to heritage and their future? [Section 4](#)
12. What have the impacts been for the wider sector and what are the implications for future work on understanding, sharing and safeguarding the heritage of burial grounds? [Section 5.1](#)
13. To what extent did the Beautiful Burial Grounds Project help Caring for God's Acre to meet its organisational vision? [Section 4](#)
14. How can lessons learnt feed into future projects? [Section 5.1 and 5.2](#)

Each of these Key Evaluation Questions is answered within the following sections of this report. The following page comprises a Logic Model for the BBG project. It sets out that grant input from funders will lead to delivery of key outputs, which will result in outcomes, and ultimately attainment of the vision. This evaluation also seeks to test this model.

⁴ <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance/evaluation-guidance>

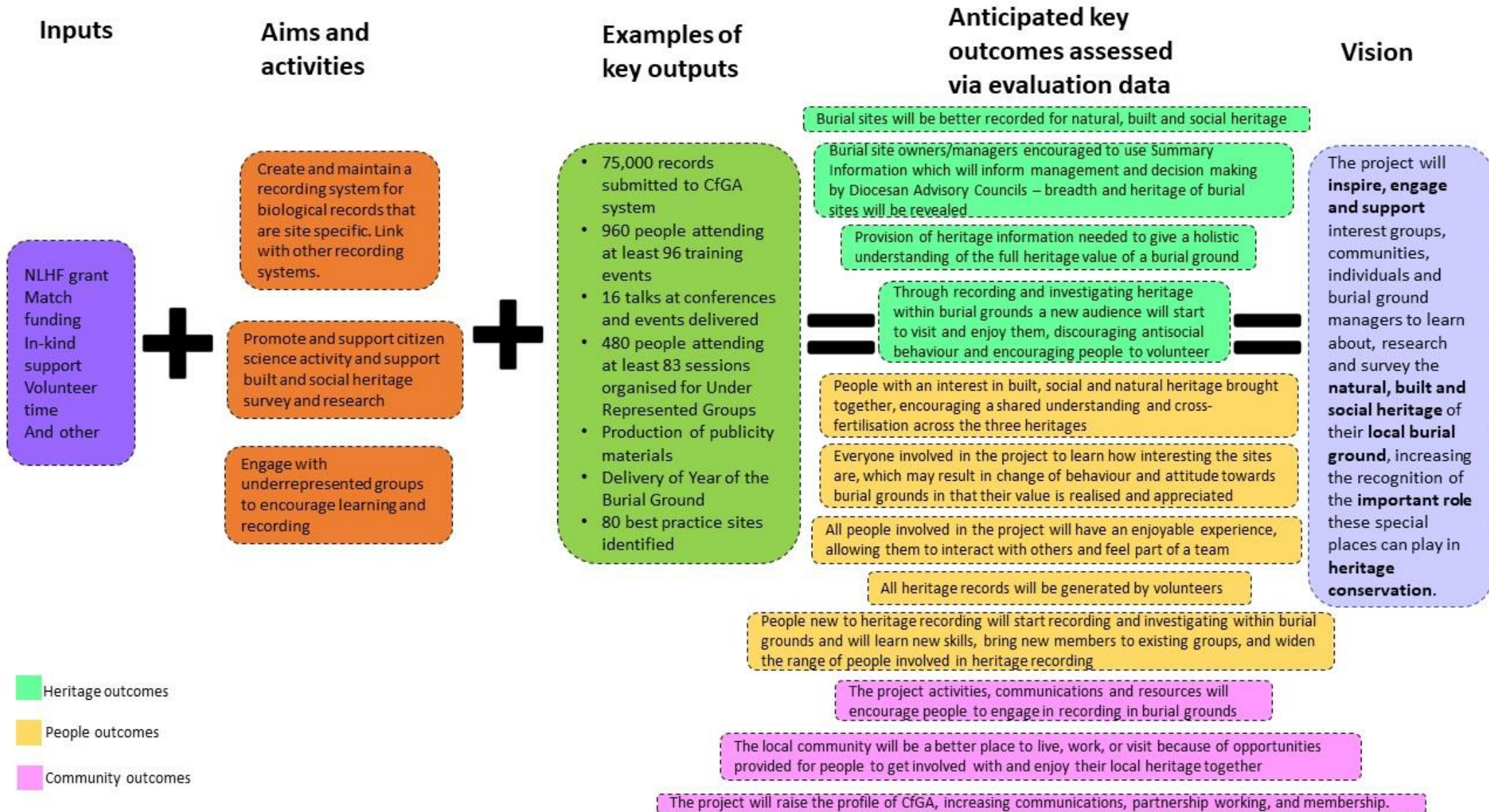


Figure 2 BBG project Logic Model, 2019.

How was the evaluation undertaken?

A range of data collected by the project team has been drawn upon, in addition to independent data collected by the External Evaluators. This has allowed triangulation⁵ of data to create a robust and rounded view of the project's journey, including what has been delivered (outputs) and what difference it has made (outcomes and impact). This approach also enabled investigation into the extent to which the aims and outcomes have been delivered. Data collection methods are listed below:

1. Review of original project plans and documents
2. National Lottery Heritage Fund quarterly progress reports
3. Review of monitoring data collected against outputs and other monitoring data such as web and social stats (see Appendix 2)
4. M and E data from activities e.g. Churches Count on Nature (N=63 see Appendix 3 for summary of results), and the interim eval.
5. A survey of stakeholders N=18⁶
6. Independent key informant telephone interviews⁷
7. Project Learning Review⁸
8. Recommendation and validation session.⁹



⁵ Triangulation is a technique which facilitates the validation of data with the use of multiple sources

⁶ Circulated to 47 stakeholders

⁷ N:5; see Appendix 1 for full list of interviewees.

⁸ 4 October 2022, attended by: Harriet Carty, Georgina Sharp, Liam Taylor and Andrea Gilpin. A PLR is a form of group reflective practice. Reflective practice is a way of studying our own experiences to improve the way in which we work and how the project performs. It can help us to deal with real, complex and difficult situations as

This evidence has been analysed, synthesized together and cross-referenced with the project's anticipated outputs and outcomes to create the findings set out in this report.

Limitations

There are always factors which limit an evaluation. Evaluators work to minimise the impact of limitations and bias on the evaluation process and findings. A few specific examples of limitations on the evaluation of the BBG project are outlined below:

Scale of evaluation – The evaluation has a modest budget, and it has therefore been important to focus evaluation efforts in a pragmatic way. For example, the sample size for telephone interviews had to be small compared to the reach of the project, and the time available to analyse and interpret results and to write this report were again limiting.

Understanding project long-term impacts – Some impacts cannot be fully investigated during this summative evaluation. This is because there is not yet enough information available to fully assess what difference the project may have, for example, on the health of habitats, and decisions being informed by the new data that is now available.

well as helping the team to recognise and capture successes. Using Rolfe's (2011) model of reflective practice the project team were asked to focus on what had gone particularly well or been particularly challenging ('What?'). Together the team then explored why this mattered ('So what?') and if anything is needed to, or could be done to, address/capitalise on this issue ('Now what?').

⁹ 22 November 2022, attended by: Harriet Carty, Georgina Sharp, Liam Taylor and Andrea Gilpin

3. What the project delivered

3.1 Project management and resourcing

BBG delivery phase began in 2018 and finished at the end of 2022. This project was managed by a team within Caring for God's Acre, in close collaboration with partners (see [Section 3.2](#)). Dedicated staffing and capacity in the wider staff team has been absolutely essential for delivery of the project. The small team have been high-performing and achieved a lot compared to their size (see [Section 5.2](#) for further discussion).

Overall **project management has been excellent**, with robust and timely management of risk and adaptive management employed when required to flex the project in a rapidly changing operating environment.

The governance structure included a number of Working Groups. Working Groups were formed to deal with the nitty-gritty of the project, engaging with the relevant individuals (internal and external) to move the project forward in accordance with the Project Management Plan (overseen by the Project Manager). The Data Management Working Group somewhat 'lost its way' during delivery phase and a governance review ensued to ensure effective working processes.

The programme had a final cash income of £714,282¹⁰ – the breakdown of this is shown in the chart opposite. In addition to this total, volunteers and in-kind contributions given to the project are valued at an estimated cash equivalent of £857,155. This is over 180% above the target for volunteer time set in the development phase, showing that CfGA has been able to leverage

¹⁰ As of November 2022, however, the final grant amount from NLHF is estimated because the final has not been submitted.

significant support for the project. The addition of volunteer time and in-kind contribution brings the **total project value to over £1.57 million**.

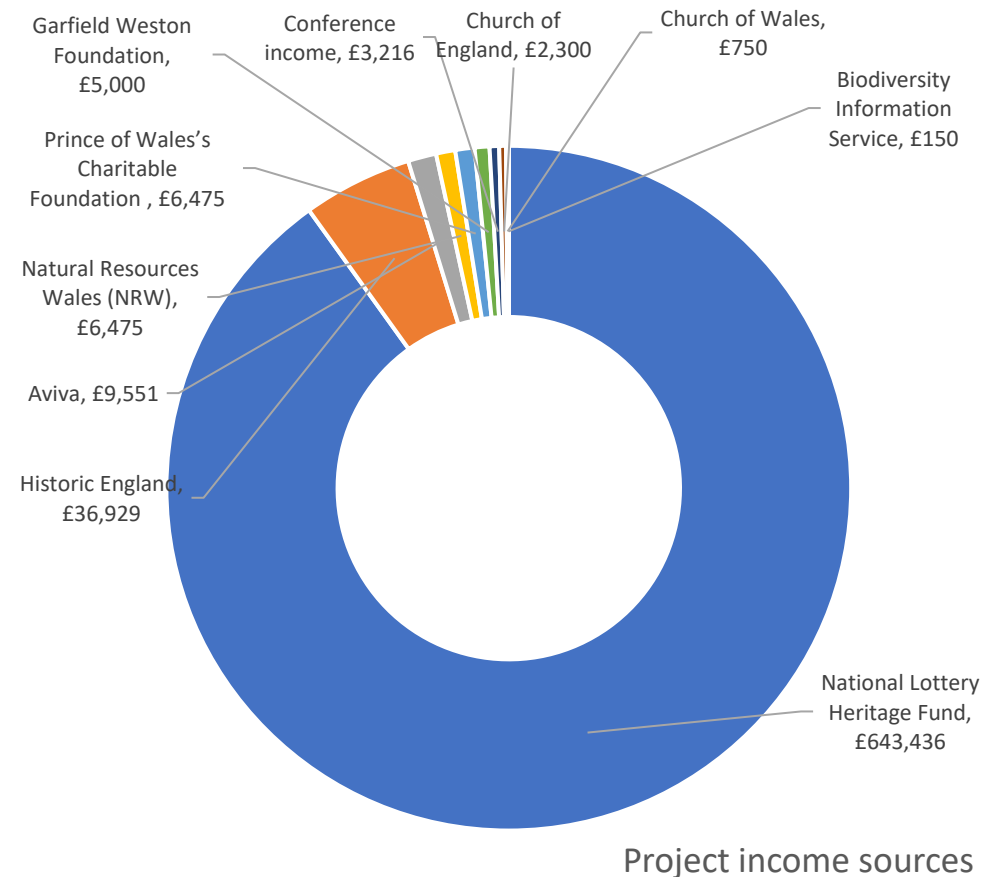


Figure 3 Donut chart to show a breakdown of income into the programme.

3.2 Partnership-working

Partnership-working has been central to successful delivery of the Beautiful Burial Grounds project and the team have worked with nearly 60 partner organisations, a process which in itself takes resources, time and commitment to develop fruitful relationships. Partners have been wide-ranging, from local environmental record centres such as Thames Valley and Cumbria Biodata Centre to Moors Meadows Gardens. Key partnerships have been with the Church of England, Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru (the Church in Wales) and NBN.

Relationship development has taken considerable amounts of the project team's time, and relationship management has been an essential skill for the CfGA team. The project team reflected that partnerships largely rely on good relationships between individuals. Turnover in the staffing at partner organisations¹¹ disrupted this and caused some delivery to go slower than anticipated.

Finding the 'sweet spot', where BBG aims overlapped those of a partner organisation or project, takes time but is one of the keys to achieving the massive task of understanding the heritage of our burial grounds across two nations.

'We have slightly different aims and therefore we have to be careful about making sure our aims are met as well as theirs, and actually that wasn't a problem; our collaboration has only grown from the project.'

External stakeholder

Partnership-working has generally been very successful; however, there were some frustrations about communications between all partners, which were somewhat stop-start at times. Regular scheduled 'stand-up' meetings as part of the original partnership agreement may have been beneficial, as would more face-to-face meeting opportunities and getting key partner contacts out on site to see the work of the project on the ground for themselves more often.

Working with partners has been a useful strategy for a number of areas of the project, including delivery of training and events, and for helping to reach target audiences, such as those with disabilities and those with mental health issues.



Figure 4 Burial ground event for people with sight impairments at the Church of St. Mary and St. David at Kilpeck, Herefordshire.

¹¹ For example, the CEO of NBN and the key contact at the Church Heritage Record.

However, partner capacity and low priority of project activities has, at times, been a limiting factor to project delivery.

The project has also found alignment with new partners and concurrent NLHF-funded projects. For example, the aims and content of the BBG project made a logical collaboration with the Rough Around the Edges project,¹² which is part of the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership Scheme in the central Chilterns, simple.

Another example is the capacity afforded by the external funding enabled the Bats in Churches project¹³ to take up opportunities provided by the BBG team, for example, an article for the Lych-gate newsletter to CfGA members.

The project also had a good relationship with the Jewellery Quarter Townscape Heritage project in Birmingham focussing on a burial ground within their project area. However, in contrast, BBG project's relationship with Birmingham City Council was not fruitful.

All good partnerships deliver mutual benefits for all partners. Partners cite a number of ways in which they have benefited from the project, including:

- Built capacity, for example, UK-CEH used CfGA citizen science experience to design a churchyard carbon study
- Improved understanding, e.g. of the challenges of managing burial grounds
- Leading to ideas and actions, e.g. new webinars, new archive resources, more inclusive walks

- Informed future project and programme design, for example, Atlantic Geomatics have used CfGA experience to tweak their burial-ground recording system, in particular their Monument Condition Assessment, which the BBG team worked with them on, and then agreed it with Historic England
- Opened-up opportunities for future collaboration
- Helped to leverage funding, e.g. Birmingham via the Celebrating Communities Fund.

'We've collaborated with our existing partners on a new level; we knew each other previously but working together jointly in this way has deepened those relationships.'

'You've opened up doors when others have closed.'

External stakeholder

Figure 5 Participants at a dawn chorus event in St. Mary's Churchyard in Handsworth, Birmingham, joint with the English Heritage-funded Celebrating Birmingham's Burial Grounds project.



¹² Run by BBOWT on behalf of the Chilterns Conservation Board: www.chilternsaonb.org/chalkcherrieschairs/our-work/wildlife/rough-around-edges/

¹³ <https://batsinchurches.org.uk/>

3.3 Project delivery

The project was designed to support people and communities to investigate, protect, enhance and enjoy the heritage within the unique spaces of burial grounds. The project comprised a range of activities – see diagram opposite.¹⁴

Key outputs

As part of the end-of-project evaluation, the scale of delivery has been assessed. Delivery against project output targets has been assessed to produce an 'on-target rating system'. Each output target has been rated with either a red, amber or green rating (RAG) code to indicate to what extent the target was met or even exceeded. The table on the following page summarises the ratings for each of the project categories to provide an overview of delivery.

Key to project achievement RAG rating:

Green: Achieved or exceeded; **Amber:** Good delivery but did not achieve target; **Red:** Low delivery and did not achieve target.

Overall delivery against targets has been excellent, with many targets exceeded, despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Figure 6 Diagram showing the main areas of activity for the BBG project, as set out in the Activity Plan.

¹⁴ Numbering refers to location in original Activity Plan.

Output target	Project delivery	% against target ¹⁵	RAG rating	Notes
Burial Ground database on National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas and links with Church Heritage Record (CHR), CHC etc. and links with other heritage databases	Delivered	100%		The team worked hard to develop and snag the digital outputs and portal for the project, resulting in the NBN Burial Ground portal home page with full functionality completed and live.
96 training sessions will be delivered for budding/existing recorders	212 face-to-face training sessions and 808 distance sessions	220%		
960 participants will be engaged through activities	1,940 participants have been engaged through face to face project activities (and a minimum 16,440 more in sessions supported from a distance)	202%		
Year of the Burial Ground 2019/2020	Delivered	100%		This element was successfully delivered but was slightly more low-key than first anticipated. This was due to a delay in getting systems snagged and ready (e.g. NBN data-entry portal and link to CHR/CHC) - the project team wanted the systems to be a little more user-friendly before launch. However, the project team delivered a range of activities for this focal year, including expert blog posts, monthly group sign-ups for 'snippets' on burial ground conservation, a photographic celebration and e-news updates continue. Furthermore, many activities continued to future years of the project.

¹⁵ Rounded up to the nearest whole number.

Output target	Project delivery	% against target ¹⁵	RAG rating	Notes
Recruit and engage 6,000 volunteers¹⁶	18,380 people recording wildlife and giving £857,115 worth of time	306%		
83 activities for under-represented groups	53 activities successfully delivered to 890 people from a range of under-represented groups	64% against target of formal sessions		The pandemic hampered delivery of this area of work for a number of reasons, including workload and conflicting priorities of partners, national lockdowns and health concerns amongst host burial sites and participants. In response, the project worked on encouraging use of resources by the widest possible group – see Section 4.1 for further details. This target has therefore been given a green RAG rating.
480 participants from under-represented groups	890 participants from under-represented groups engaged in the project	185%		
80 example sites with range of heritage data and four best practice sites	66 Flowery Burial Grounds to Inspire currently on website, more being added on a weekly basis	82%		The process to get this right has been lengthy for the project team; however, now the criteria have been agreed upon, it is anticipated that it should run a little faster. This is dependent on the many sites that have been contacted supplying the team with the necessary photos and information required. In addition, the team have a compiled a previously unavailable comprehensive list of the 206 burial grounds which are also local wildlife sites. News items are being added weekly and therefore this has been given a green RAG rating as will likely reach the target by the formal end of the project.

¹⁶ The project believes the target of 6,000 is incorrect. The original Activity Plan has targets for 2,500 volunteers submitting records and 2,000 volunteers using the system to learn about burial grounds. The higher target appears to have come from the Heritage Fund Approved Purposes. The project will liaise with their grants officer to raise this query.


4. What difference did the project make?

4.1 Delivering intended outcomes



The table below provides examples of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has delivered against its intended National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) outcomes.

NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
Outcomes for heritage		
Heritage will be better managed	<p>Central to the project has been encouraging and supporting better, integrated management of burial ground heritage. As a result, 63.5% of stakeholders say that learning about the wildlife within their churchyard changed how they think about and/or manage the churchyard.¹⁷</p> <p>For example, the project team ran two training sessions for members of the local community at Holy Trinity Church Buckfastleigh, Devon. This churchyard was usually cut by contractors several times during the growing season and had not been allowed to grow long before. To ensure there was a suitable area in which to base the training, the Verger agreed to arrange it that the grass would be allowed to grow long from mid-May until the sessions took place in June. Allowing the site to grow had resulted in many wildflowers coming into bloom. Not only was yellow-necked mouse recorded but towards the end of the session a roe deer strolled through the site. As a result of the species list created and the churchyard managers have decided to allow an area of the churchyard to grow long each summer to provide much needed habitat for insect populations.</p> <p>In its final year, the project has been working to bring biological data into the church planning system via their built heritage database, the Church Heritage Records of England and Wales. There are two new data fields live on CHR and CHC; these are: 'Ancient & Veteran Trees', which drew on the Ancient Tree Register via partnership with the Woodland Trust, and 'Designations' including Local Wildlife Site. Two more fields are currently being built: 'Seek Advice' species, a list of protected species likely to be found in burial grounds plus some other species which, if present, need consideration when planning management or change; and 'Summary of Ecological Importance', giving better information about the biodiversity value of churchyard or cemetery.</p> <p>In summary, there is evidence that many burial grounds actively engaged in support and advice from the project have altered their management of their site as a result. Diocesan Advisory Councils, site managers and owners now all have better information available to inform management and decision-making.</p>	<p><i>'[The greatest success is] to alert the site managers and the species-recording community to the importance of burial grounds. To help organisations and groups access these sites [and] to understand the diversity at these sites, which will have a positive effect of the ongoing management at the sites also.'</i></p> <p><i>'[As a result of the BBG conference I now have] more of an idea of how to manage a cemetery for its wildlife value.'</i></p> <p><i>'We manage to combine biodiversity, bereavement care and heritage management in an effective way which balances the needs of all.'</i></p>

¹⁷ Data source: Churches Count on Nature 2022 survey.

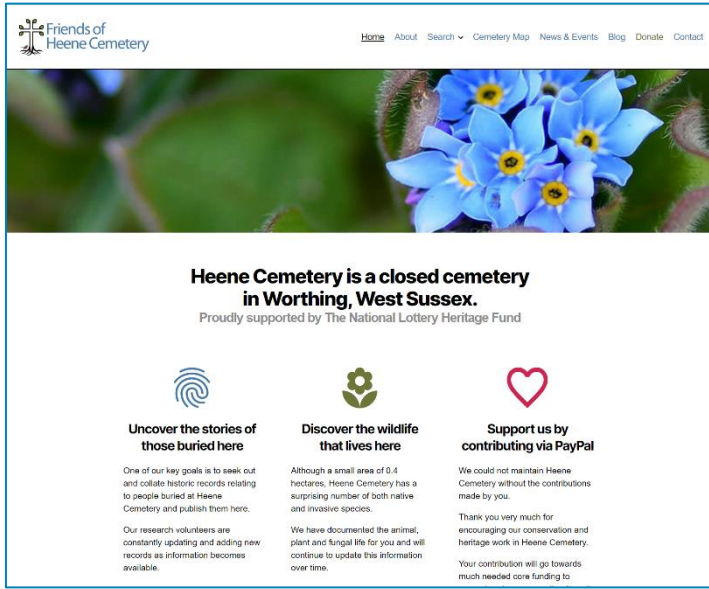
NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
		<p><i>'We have been able to get lots of churches involved to identify biodiversity and nature and record it effectively, which means we can then make better decisions about how we manage our churchyards.'</i></p>
<p>Heritage will be in better condition</p>	<p>The combined total area of burial grounds is equivalent to that of Exmoor National Park, and therefore any improvements in condition of heritage could have a significant impact. Burial grounds also contain other vital resources for wildlife and can increase connectivity of habitat. For example, burial grounds contain three quarters of the UK's ancient yews and are generally small in size in terms of habitat. They are crucial stepping stones or refuges for wildlife due to their widespread distribution.</p> <p>The project team has worked to deliver training and advice and to support resources on land management to help habitats rebuild and flourish. Stakeholders in burial grounds (including site managers and owners) have responded by altering management regimes and undertaking conservation works which have led to an improvement in the condition of heritage. In addition, positive activity, increased footfall and presence in burial grounds is likely to contribute towards deterring anti-social behaviour in these spaces.</p> <p>Condition improvements have been to habitats and also to built heritage. For example, St. John the Baptist churchyard in Bishop's Castle, Shropshire is the focus for one of four new case studies developed by the BBG team.¹⁸ The churchyard has 12 listed</p>	 <p><i>Figure 7 A flower-rich meadow at St. John's Sharow, Yorkshire. With kind permission: St. John's Sharow.</i></p>

¹⁸ www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/case_study/the-georgians-in-stone-monument-conservation-with-carolling-minifilms-and-more

NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
	<p>Georgian monuments – an unusually large amount. In partnership with Bishop’s Castle Heritage Resource Centre, the Parochial Church Council (PCC) set out to research the social, built and natural history of the churchyard,¹⁹ and in particular to find out more about this fascinating collection of monuments and those that they memorialised. This included research and a subsequent display concerning one of the graves which is to an unknown ‘Native of Africa’ who died in 1801.</p> <p>BBG supported this project with advice and guidance. The project went from strength to strength, with many local people involved in research, citizen science data collection, tours and events. The PCC then went on to commission conservation of the monuments via stone conservators. This has significantly improved the condition of the heritage in the churchyard, and is leaving it better documented and accessible via</p> <div>  </div> <p><i>Figure 8 Urn being lifted into place (above) and a stonemason at work conserving one of the memorials (right) in St. John the Baptist churchyard in Bishop’s Castle, Shropshire.</i></p> <div>  </div> <p>interpretation and events.</p>	
Heritage will be better interpreted and explained	<p>Whilst this project has not directly delivered major interpretation, it has provided the heritage information needed to give a holistic understanding of the full heritage value of a burial ground. See the <i>‘People will have learnt about heritage’</i> outcome.</p> <p>However, the project has provided information on which places of worship and burial ground managers can base their own interpretation and has provided guidance and encouragement to them to share the heritage of their burial ground. Stakeholders in burial grounds are acting upon this, with 82.5%²⁰ reporting that they have created some interpretation, permanent or temporary notices being the most popular.</p>	<p><i>‘There has been loads of positive feedback regarding the signs, both from churchgoers and passers-by, with people really enjoying the chance to learn a little more, to make time to reflect on the wonder of God’s creation and brush up their plant ID skills.’</i></p>

¹⁹ The PCC received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Georgian Group and Bishop’s Castle Town Council to conserve these monuments and to tell the story of the town, as seen through the churchyard, to local people and visitors.

²⁰ Data source: Churches Count on Nature 2022 survey.

NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
	<p>Heene Cemetery in Worthing, Sussex is an example of a burial ground with significantly better interpreted and explained heritage. The Friends of Heene Cemetery have developed an impressive website which hosts a range of blog posts. Topics include sharing the significance of the cemetery's special flora and fauna, the social history of the burials and biographies of notable burials. The group are also actively engaging the local community in the heritage and in their work through articles in the local press and in church and community magazines, by giving talks to community groups and holding open days which offer a range of activities from tours to quizzes and trails.</p> <p>In recognition of their work to care for and share the cemetery, the Friends of Heene were awarded the Green Flag Community Award²¹ for the second year running.</p>  <p>Figure 9 Screenshot from the Heene Cemetery burial ground website.</p>	
Heritage will be better identified and recorded	<p>The project plans stated that <i>'despite brimming with built, natural and social heritage, burial grounds are surprisingly under-recorded. In particular, there is scant biodiversity data; individual naturalists or groups rarely record here and when they do, records go into national systems which are not site specific but based on Ordnance Survey grid squares.'</i>²²</p> <p>Collecting, recording, organising and making accessible data concerning burial ground heritage was therefore at the forefront of the project. Furthermore, during project development it became clear that individual naturalists and groups rarely recorded in burial grounds, which resulted in minimal biodiversity data being collected or made available for these sites. The project has begun to turn this tide by raising the profile of burial grounds' hidden heritage and importance for biodiversity and providing a focus for documenting burial ground heritage.</p>	<p><i>'I have seen and recorded two rare species as a result of the project in burial grounds: violet coral and olive earth-tongue.'</i></p> <p><i>'All of the data that you see in there [National Biodiversity Network], the volunteers have</i></p>

²¹ This internationally renowned award is a testament to the contributions the Friends have made to this hidden haven.

²² 2015 NLHF application and 2017 Beautiful Burial Ground Activity Plan.

**NLHF
outcome**
Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome

The project partnered with the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) to create a Burial Grounds portal on the NBN Atlas. The online tool provides a platform to help inform people about the natural world within burial grounds and engage them in the recording process. The Burial Grounds portal is an extension of the NBN Atlas, which is entirely dedicated to burial ground records. The project worked with the NBN to continue to adjust the system and upload burial ground information from the Church of England and Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru (Churches in Wales). The project team have also worked to integrate the Built Heritage Recording System (DEBS) into the BBG project in partnership with Professor Harold Mytum and York University staff.

Development took longer than planned, as has mapping of burial sites. For example, the planned trial of the DEBS system scheduled for March 2020 was postponed due to the coronavirus situation but is now complete. Both are now fully operational. The portal works on the simple basis of 'search, submit and analyse'. The data it houses is now useful for:

- Communities learning about their area
- Biological recorders, conservation volunteers and conservation charities
- Built/social heritage enthusiasts
- Local authorities managing municipal cemeteries and closed churchyards
- Parish councils
- The Church of England and the Church in Wales
- Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councils.

As a result, users can view burial grounds on a map, as well as view records, search for specific burial grounds near to them and submit records. This is one of its main project outputs. The scale of this achievement should not be underestimated, as although developing systems and protocols might not be the most alluring of tasks, they are essential to allow engagement activities to happen and to create and store meaningful and integrated social, built and natural heritage data. It is a huge step forward for burial ground heritage and paves the way for future recording and use of the data.

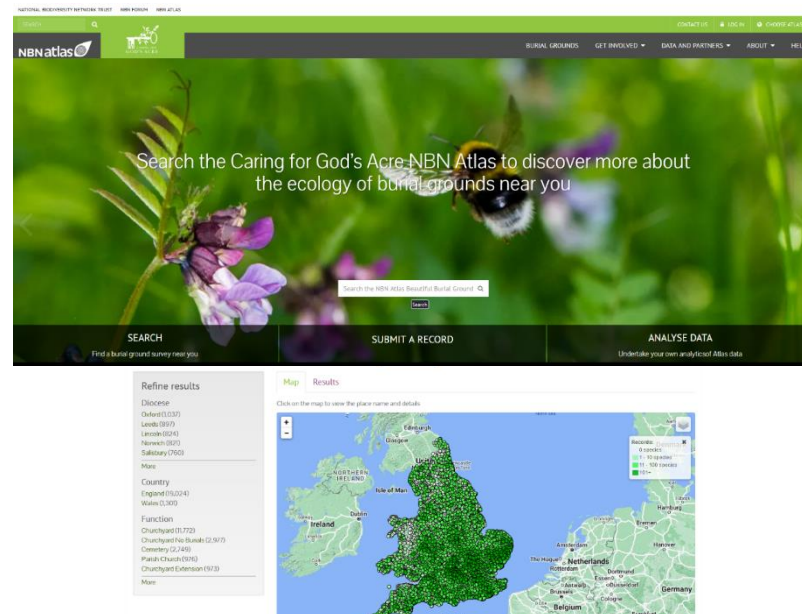

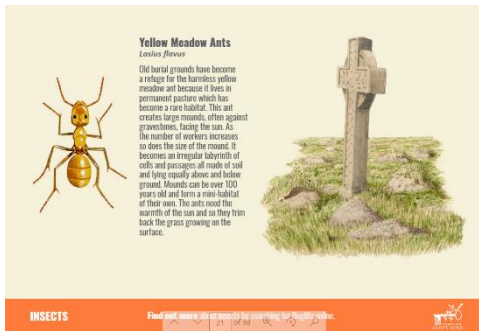


Figure 10 Screenshots of the NBN portal homepage and NBN Atlas showing location of records.

Supporting evidential quotes

collected and is available for decision-makers, academics, conservationists, the public to use in perpetuity.'

'We have got better access to the data from our burial grounds which previously was fragmented.'

NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
	<p>The project has collated 595,420 existing biological records and migrated them to the new BBG/NBN recording portal. In addition to this, over 87,000 were submitted due to BBG and CfGA activity across 6,273 sites.</p> <p>The project provided training (see the ‘People will have developed skills’ outcome) and created a range of support resources to help people feel confident about recording burial ground heritage. The centrepiece of this was a ‘<i>Starter Guide</i>’ (pictured right) available online and in print. This is a user-friendly guide to exploring the heritage of burial grounds and has received excellent feedback. In total, 7,050 English and 50 Welsh copies were printed, with many already distributed.</p> <p>As a result of the project, wildlife is now better recorded at 6,273 burial grounds across England and Wales, which is another huge achievement, and 697 people have been regularly recording. Records generate interest, which generates more recording; this positive circle will have a life of its own.</p> <p>Burial sites are now much better recorded for natural, built and social heritage. These records will be brought together into an accessible form that can be viewed either on a site-by-site basis or, in the case of biological records, as a national database covering England and Wales. As this dataset continues to grow, further research and recording can follow on as even more people become enthused.</p> <p>The data collected is now helping demonstrate the importance of burial grounds for biodiversity and be used to inform the future management of these sites.</p>	  <p><i>Figure 11 Example pages from the BBG Starter Guide.</i></p>
Outcomes for people		
People will have	<p>The project has delivered training and supported skills development to help people participate meaningfully in the project. In this way, developing skills has been a ‘facilitating’ outcome to aide delivery of other outcomes such as ‘Heritage is better recorded’, ‘Heritage is better managed’ and ‘People volunteer their time’.</p>	<p><i>‘...all the volunteers that have been trained to increase that level of knowledge about how</i></p>


NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
developed skills	<p>In total, an impressive 18,477 people have been polishing their skills to record, care for and share burial ground heritage. Skills have been developed through a range of avenues, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person training events – delivered 212 training sessions with 23 partner organisations to 1,020 participants. These have been designed to increase burial ground engagement, give people research skills, such as using archives effectively, and help improve confidence and skills for people to continue to record the hidden heritage and nature that flourishes within these underexplored sites • Talks and webinars – the project has delivered 77 talks or webinars, each to an average audience of 54 people • Web-based resources – for example, the project created webpages called Biological Recording,²³ Recording Memorials²⁴ covering creating records and photography as well as help sheets to guide people through uploading data within the National Burial Ground Survey²⁵ and mini-films on how to use iNaturalist.²⁶ <p>In total, 16,440 people have learnt about burial grounds independently, for example, via webinars.</p>	<p><i>to manage our churchyards to better nature and wildlife.'</i></p> <p><i>'We have more trained volunteers, more appreciation of the preciousness of our churchyards and we have the data that we now hold.'</i></p>

²³ www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/about-recording

²⁴ www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/resources/recording-memorials/

²⁵ The CofE name for the Atlantic Geomatics mapping system.

²⁶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCUWHW338gU and www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjNdhNG8cdU

NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
People will have learnt about heritage	<p>The project has primarily delivered this outcome through interpretation, events and training. There has not been a major strand of activity directly targeted at formal education institutions; however, the project has worked with educational groups, including a home educators' group.</p> <p>The project has also signposted resources and have been created resources that can be used by schools, for example. One of the six videos created by the project is on the topic of using burial grounds as outdoor classrooms.²⁷ CfGA also has a very popular Education Pack covering five topics, each containing several activities and ideas, including photographs, worksheets and templates. Activities are tied in with the National Curriculum and available free to download in both English and Welsh.</p>  <p><i>Figure 12 BBG home education session in progress.</i></p>	<p><i>'As well as bringing learning to life, it's very interactive. And being outside, they [home-educated children] concentrate a lot better. There's something much more relaxing about being out in the fresh air.'</i></p> <p><i>'I enjoyed looking at the bugs and seeing if they're insects or not.'</i></p> <p><i>'I am most proud of watching people discover something new and be amazed by it.'</i></p>
People will have changed attitudes and behaviour	<p>Development-stage consultation highlighted a number of areas in which the project could improve awareness of burial ground heritage, leading to changes in attitudes and actions, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing heritage recorders were largely unaware of how interesting burial grounds are for heritage, and the communication and training within this project will highlight their value Many managers and owners of burial sites were undertaking resource or 'tidiness'-focussed management of burial sites Local communities and even congregations of places of worship had a low level of awareness of the richness of heritage in the burial grounds in their communities and the opportunities these afford. <p>There is strong evidence that BBG has had a significant impact, on those engaged with the project, on their awareness of burial ground heritage (and in particular, the natural heritage, which was particularly under-appreciated pre-project). When the team first started the project, one of the main tasks was to persuade burial ground stakeholders and gate-keepers of the benefit of wildlife and other heritage in burial grounds. By the end of the project, this was no longer a major task as appreciation of this heritage was much improved.</p>	<p><i>'Far more people having an appreciation that church grounds share really precious ecosystems.'</i></p> <p><i>'There are a lot of people who didn't feel that the churchyard was a welcome space for them so I think doing things like the project, which encourages churches to open their gates to the general public, is a really positive thing.'</i></p>

²⁷ www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/resources/films/

NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
	<p>In turn, this has led to burial grounds being seen as more of a place where everyone is welcome and a community heritage resource, rather than just a place for funerals. Burial grounds are beginning to be used more for events, reflection and relaxation, and for learning. This is particularly evident in the take-up of the national campaigns by BBG by so many places of worship – see the <i>‘More and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage’</i> outcome. Higher profile has also led to existing recording communities looking to record within burial grounds.</p> <p>Developing understanding amongst burial ground managers and owners has led to more mindful management regimes that are heritage-led, for example, moving away from the need to be ‘neat and tidy’ in all areas of the burial ground, thus allowing more space in which wildlife can flourish. Some of the early adopters of advice are now sharing that with peers to encourage improved management in other burial grounds, for example St. John’s Sharow, Yorkshire.²⁸</p> <p>Furthermore, the BBG team have added example sites to the website to inspire more burial ground stakeholders to find out more and take action for their heritage. 59 ‘Flowery Burial Grounds to Inspire’ are currently on the website, with more being added on a weekly basis. This section of the website consistently receives 500+ visits per quarter so is well-used. Six mini-films²⁹ have also been created, covering topics ranging from why wildlife should be recorded in burial grounds to using burial grounds for well-being.</p> <p>Overall, the project has made major steps in ensuring that the value of heritage of burial grounds is realised and appreciated, and in engendering heritage-positive behaviours as a result of this. In recognition of this work, in the final year of the project BBG won the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Best Practice Knowledge Sharing award.</p>	<p><i>‘We think of ourselves as caring for God’s creation and building an ark for vulnerable species, and we support and mentor other churches attempting similar projects.’</i></p> <p><i>‘I delivered a series of national webinars about land and nature. We did 12 the first year, and then 10 the next year. We had 96% of people tell us that they felt better informed after the webinars, and 90% more confident to take action.’</i></p>



Figure 13 Volunteers undertaking burial ground management at St. John’s Sharow, recipients of management advice early in the BBG project.

²⁸ <https://stjohnssharrow.org.uk/conservation/#1508413914169-a8983a2a-48f4>

²⁹ www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/resources/films/

NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
<p>People will have had an enjoyable experience</p>	<p>The project has worked closely with burial grounds and target audiences to ensure that everyone has the chance to learn about and enjoy their local burial site. Events, campaigns and engagement opportunities have created enjoyable opportunities for people to get involved with their local burial ground, explore and find out more.</p> <p>For example, feedback from the Churches Count on Nature week was overwhelmingly positive, with over 95% of people rating their enjoyment of churches as 4 or 5.³⁰ A sample³¹ of training participants were asked if they'd had an enjoyable experience and 100% said they enjoyed the training given.</p> <p>A number of resources have been created in order to help people enjoy their local burial ground, for example, a poster highlighting things to look out for in each season (pictured right) and a webpage of 'Things to do in Burial Grounds'³² including a new Discovery Pack, family activity sheets, Butterfly Spotter's Guide and Summer Flower Spotters Guide.</p>  <p><i>Figure 14 Participants enjoying a fungi event at St. John the Evangelist Church, Colemere with Lyneal, Shropshire, and a poster created for display at burial grounds to help people explore and enjoy the wildlife in the space.</i></p>  <p>People will have</p> <p>Mobilising volunteers across England and Wales has been central to the BBG delivery model. The project has managed to gain support from a huge number of people across the two nations.</p>	<p><i>'Children particularly enjoy hunting for these small treasures, and we hope we are encouraging a love and respect for nature in the work that we undertake here.'</i></p> <p><i>'It has engaged at church congregation level including a lot of young people.'</i></p>

³⁰ On a scale of 1-5 where 1 = Not at all and 5 = Loved it.

³¹ 286 people completing feedback forms from 2018 to 2019 over various courses asking about participants enjoyment.

³² www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/things-to-do-in-burial-grounds/

NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
volunteered time	<p>For example, all of the new heritage records entered onto the database have been generated by volunteers ranging from experts, members of heritage societies and enthusiasts to those completely new to recording. An astonishing 18,380 people have volunteered time recording wildlife. Combined with in-kind contributions, this added up to an astonishing £857,115 worth of additional contributions to burial ground heritage.</p> <p>More people are now taking an active role in recording and maintaining local burial grounds and subsequently making them more accessible. A third of burial grounds felt that, as a result of being involved,³³ more local people have become interested in and involved with the churchyard. This included helping with the management, enjoying and exploring the green space, and recording heritage (built, social and natural).</p>	<i>'We have got a good network of volunteers and active groups for these sites.'</i>
Outcomes for communities		
More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage	<p>BBG aimed to extend the range of people engaged and involved with burial grounds. The project successfully engaged large numbers of people, for example, Love Your Burial Ground week took part in 808 places of worship nationwide. The project continues to engage large numbers quarter-on-quarter, for example, subscribers to the project newsletter have grown to 901 people, project website content receives a steady flow of traffic, with 445 visitors in the last quarter, and the burial grounds inspire content receiving 1,295 visits per quarter, which is high for relatively niche content.³⁴</p> <p>Beyond this more general communication content, the project also set out to engage with three specific target audiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities and reduced mobility – to help them discover what a wealth of accessible heritage there is within burial grounds • People suffering from mental health issues – to help them discover a tranquil place within their communities, offering great interest as well as new contacts and associations • Families – to connect them with fun things to do for free on their doorsteps. 	<p><i>'The project won an award for Best Engagement Project which was a testament to what the project has achieved and the fact that it has done something different.'</i></p> <p><i>'It has put burial grounds on a much higher footing with people from a range of backgrounds. No longer are they simply places of funerals or church add-ons. They are a focus of attention for more people and that was a great outcome of the project.'</i></p>

³³ Involved in Churches Count on Nature as part of BBG. Data source: Churches Count on Nature 2022 survey.

³⁴ All figures from Quarter 3 2022.

NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
	<p>In total, 53 sessions were delivered to 890 participants from the above audiences. These included sign-language-interpreted sessions, 'gentle' sessions as an introduction to burial grounds, and family fun sessions. The training was also targeted to help build confidence and improve mental well-being through the project teams' outreach sessions with under-represented groups.</p> <p>The project has been successful at working with Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Vision Links Hereford, Shropshire Disability Network and a Shropshire-based 'Growing Confidence' group for under-25s as well as many more. 100% of people who attended training sessions said they enjoyed them. Working with partners has been a useful strategy for helping to reach target audiences, such as those with disabilities and those with mental health issues. However, partner capacity and priority of project activities has, at times, been a limiting factor to project delivery.</p> <p>The pandemic hampered delivery of this area of work for a number of reasons, including workload and conflicting priorities of partners, national lockdowns and health concerns amongst host burial sites and participants. In response, the project worked on encouraging use of resources by the widest possible group, for example by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The addition of Accessibility Tools to the CfGA website • Simplifying the Action Pack sheet on risk assessment³⁵ in order to help people do their own risk assessments and visits, particularly for Churches Count on Nature but for general use too • Creating a new Action Pack sheet on Burial Grounds for All, to encourage burial ground managers to maximise the accessibility of their sites³⁶ in response to a workshop with Lichfield Diocese, including several members of the Shropshire Disability Network • Recording a monthly Nature Notes article for inclusion within a talking newsletter 	<p><i>'It was very interesting, I learnt new things, and it was enjoyable.'</i></p> <p><i>'I gained confidence working with vulnerable groups... it's been really positive and felt natural to me. That's down to George.'</i></p> <p><i>'[As a result of the BBG conference I have] ideas for introducing more people to the cemetery, also for managing it.'</i></p> <p><i>'...while I have always been interested in nature and wildlife, it shows how through your events that I have been to have revived my interest. Looking back, as a child of eight and nine and my parents taking us on long walks on Sunday afternoon looking at plants and wildlife. My junior school also good re nature tables, competitions weekly. I</i></p>



Figure 15 Participant at a BBG family event admires a Bufftip moth

³⁵ www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/resources/action-pack/action-pack-section-d-involving-people/

³⁶ www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/D7-Burial-Grounds-For-All.pdf


NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating family resources, including a Discovery Pack, Butterfly and Wildflower Spotters' Guides and Recording Memorials guide • The blog and webinar series, which cover a range of topics, including many featuring discovering heritage and recording it • Providing a range of ways in which people can input their data, including via post if they were not digitally connected. <p>Furthermore, the conference was moved online in 2022 to allow people to access it at home.³⁷ This was attended by 265 people and received excellent feedback, with many attendees coming with specific learning intentions and going away feeling more confident in how to record and manage their burial ground.</p> <p>Finally, the project has increased accessibility for participants in Wales by creating resources translated into Welsh. These are now all in one place on the CfGA website under Resources.</p>	<p><i>had thoughts of a career in nature but in my secondary school it was not encouraged but now I'm thinking if I could turn the clock back I would probably have gone down that route.'</i></p>
A better place to live, work or visit	<p>Burial grounds are often physically at the heart of communities and represent an exceptional opportunity to engage people in their local heritage right across England and Wales. BBG is leaving many local communities in which it has worked a better place to live, work or visit for a range of reasons, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding value to vital green spaces – often in the centre of communities through improved condition of burial grounds as places for enjoyment, learning and havens for wildlife, and people feeling more welcome in the space • New volunteering roles and expanded volunteer teams providing opportunities for local people to get involved with caring for and sharing their local burial ground heritage • Adding to sense of place – through new interpretation revealing the significance of local burial grounds. Providing social and community value through burial grounds which give a tangible connection to history, bringing people literally in touch with the past. For example, in 2020, St. Andrew's Churchyard in Norton, Powys, Wales became redundant due to declining attendance and lack of funds for maintenance. A year later, Norton Community Trust submitted both Change of Use and Listed Building consent and planning applications to turn the church into a 'Community Hub'. The management group for St. Andrew's churchyard felt that a permanent interpretation panel would be beneficial. The resulting board has helped with keeping the community involved in how the churchyard is being managed (including the grassland management regime) and is key to maintaining and galvanising support. • Enriching community life – through opportunities to come together and enjoy their local heritage through interpretation and events, many of which will carry on beyond the life of the funded project 	<p><i>'We consider our churchyard to be a community resource, a place of tranquillity and peace for all to enjoy.'</i></p> <p><i>'The project was a brilliant thing to connect people interested in burial grounds in everything from conservation to heritage.'</i></p> <p><i>'[The secret is] Enthusiasm. It engages people very well. Bringing people in to these spaces and showing them what is possible to do in them. Showing them natural history,</i></p>

³⁷ The first Beautiful Burial Ground Conference was held in Cardiff in March 2020. 80 people were booked on but there was only 50% attendance due to Covid-19.

The second conference was held online on 15th March 2022, online, with 265 attending on the day while additional participants will have watched afterwards via recordings.

NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the sense of community – by creating new connections between members of the community, interest and community groups, burial site owners and site managers, which has increased connectivity and added to a sense of community. 	<i>the heritage, and using the space more creatively.'</i>
The organisation will be more resilient	<p>BBG has helped CfGA to strengthen a number of the indicators of organisation resilience:³⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective partnerships – it has developed its profile as an effective charity, and developed relationships and leveraged support from the sector and with key partner organisations. Further possibilities and models for these partnerships continuing and growing are now being investigated by CfGA, for example, a potential commissioning opportunity with Church of England to provide biodiversity and recording expertise, and discussions with NBN on how to employ CfGA's expertise in developing new audiences to grow the iNaturalist audience. These are all in initial discussion stages at present but look promising • Proactive posture – it has been able to further develop its capacity for delivering effective action for burial grounds and engaging a wider range of people in this, in particular, beginning to level-up the profile and active management of natural heritage in burial grounds with that of built heritage. The project has also provided interest and a way for existing CfGA supporters to get involved. It is likely to have added to membership retention and the attraction of new members. Membership has grown steadily during the life of the project, with the number of new members per annum increasing by 181% in 2022 compared to 2021. The project has also helped to swell the CfGA mailing list and social following, for example, CfGA now has 3,500 followers on Twitter – a 74% increase over the life of the project • Stress-testing plans – following on from the above, BBG provided CfGA with an opportunity for trialling or extending new and creative ways of engaging people in their local burial ground • Situation analysis – BBG has focussed on improving the data available concerning burial ground heritage – both from existing data sets and creating new data through volunteer-led recording. In addition to informing site-based management, this data can help to shape future CfGA project design and to inform decision-making • Leveraging knowledge – CfGA and partners can now use the heritage data generated through the project to continue to identify trends and facts that will bring the importance of burial sites into the public consciousness. Furthermore, the evaluation data and this report provide a valuable evidence base to inform future investment plans and funding bids 	<i>'We've collaborated with our existing partners on a new level, we knew each other previously but working together jointly in this way has deepened those relationships.'</i>

³⁸ Through in-depth case studies of organisations of different sizes, sectors and ownership structures, Resilient Organisations have discovered that organisational resilience consists of three interdependent attributes and 13 indicators of resilience. These build business as usual (BAU) effectiveness as well as robust and agile response and recovery from crises. www.resorgs.org.nz/about-resorgs/what-is-organisational-resilience/

NLHF outcome	Selected example of how Beautiful Burial Grounds has achieved against this outcome	Supporting evidential quotes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal resources – the project has helped retain existing staff members (especially during the difficult times of the pandemic) and expand the CfGA team with specialist skills in engaging new audiences and data management. <p>Through delivery of the project, the team has gained further experience and built confidence in delivering this highly successful project.</p> <p>In addition, it has increased skills and knowledge, for example, the project Data Manager received training and can analyse the data in-house rather than requesting NBN to do so as originally planned. As a result, he has produced 21 analytical reports on a range of topics to date, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites with swifts • Sites within geographical areas, e.g. Brecon Beacons National Park • Top Ten species recorded in Churches Count on Nature • Most common trees in burial grounds • Burial grounds in Wales within 1km of SSSIs (pictured right) • Shropshire burial grounds and extent of recording • Shropshire Hills AONB and extent of recording • Top 20 burial grounds by species total • Churches Count on Nature (2021 and 2022) – six reports each year –top 10 species, top five lists of trees, plants, mammals, birds and invertebrates recorded. 	 <p><i>Figure 16 An example of how the data can now be used. This map shows burial grounds in Wales within a SSSI with a 1km buffer added. There are 1,051 in total.</i></p>

5. Successes, challenges and lessons learnt

Every project is a learning journey.

The evaluation process provides a tool with which to identify those things that have helped a project along ('facilitators'), plus successes and opportunities it has created, and the things that have hampered progress ('blockers') and the challenges it has faced. It is important to crystallise lessons learnt from these so that they can inform future working practices, project design and delivery.

This section provides examples of facilitators, successes, challenges and lessons learnt for the project. In addition, there are successes and challenges regarding partnership-working in [Section 3.1](#).

5.1 Facilitators and successes

Environmental benefit

'Negative environmental impacts will be reduced' was not an intended outcome for the BBG project. However, the project has contributed towards this outcome in a number of ways, for example, through reduction of pesticides and herbicides use in routine burial ground maintenance.

Churches have steep targets around reaching 'carbon zero' status and supporting biodiversity. The project has been able to support churches to identify ways in which to start their journey to reach this target.

As part of burial grounds' first step on the journey towards carbon reduction, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) undertook a rapid assessment of carbon stock and habitats which provides a new baseline for developing a natural capital assessment of soils within churchyards. The report highlights some opportunities to develop this approach and firm-up the measurement estimates,³⁹ while providing management guidance. This was viewed as a first step by the group involved (CfGA, CofE, CinW CEH), the next step is currently underway which involves volunteers taking samples to enable actual measurements from churchyards.



Figure 17 Grassed areas left to grow so that wildflowers can flourish, adding to the biodiversity value of the burial ground, Shrewsbury.

³⁹ The soil data is based on UKCEH Land Cover Map land classifications with a relatively coarse resolution (25m raster), combining with the UKCEH Countryside Survey soil carbon national averages for representative habitats found in churchyards

to 15cm soil depth. It is not based on actual measurements in churchyards and is likely to be a low estimate of actual carbon.

This focus has also opened up 'green financing'⁴⁰ options for CfGA which could expand its funding opportunities in the future. CfGA have received a grant from the Green Finance Institute⁴¹ to explore this avenue further and is currently appraising options.

Leaving a robust legacy

The BBG project is a limited-time project and it is therefore important to consider what it is leaving behind, i.e. its legacy.

The Activity Plan mapped out broad areas of intended legacy, and as part of the mid-term evaluation, external evaluators Heritage Insider facilitated an Evaluation and Legacy Lab.⁴² This provided focussed time in which the project team considered what implicit legacy⁴³ had already been established through project delivery and where the project team could create more opportunities for enhanced legacy⁴⁴ for the remainder of the project. At this point there was already good planning for ongoing benefits of the project and further actions were identified to maximise the legacy.

The project legacy is aided by the fact that its design had in-built sustainability of benefits, for example, working with existing groups to improve their skills so that they can care for burial grounds in a more effective way.

⁴⁰ Green finance is a loan or investment that supports environmentally-friendly activity, such as carbon sequestration through tree planting or arable reversion, biodiversity gains through habitat restoration, purchasing environmentally-friendly goods and services or building environmentally-friendly infrastructure. It has a critical role to play in working towards net-zero, in the fight against climate change and other environmental issues such as the biodiversity crisis and is likely to grow in prominence in the not-for-profit sector as an alternative funding source.

⁴¹ www.greenfinanceinstitute.co.uk

'I think there is a material or even joint legacy that we have a better cared-for churchyard now as a result of the project. We are learning to care for it now... There is a knowledge legacy too as they have encouraged us to be more curious about what we have got... There are lots more opportunities to expand that knowledge.'

External stakeholder

The project legacy comprises ongoing benefits in the following broad themes:

- **Visibility and awareness of burial grounds as a community resource** – site managers, interest groups, schools and other organisations have discovered what good places burial grounds are for events and activities. Caring for God's Acre will continue to support this through information and advice

'We have more trained volunteers, more appreciation of the preciousness of our churchyards and we have the data that we now hold.'

External stakeholder

- **Increased capacity** – amongst UK biodiversity, church and community volunteers to record, care for and share burial ground heritage. Learning resources continue to be available to support managers and volunteers past the end of the project.

⁴² Held with the project team on 12th February 2020

⁴³ Implicit legacy = things that will bring benefit after the life of the project, whatever happens, for example, skills people have learnt, habitats restored, etc.

⁴⁴ Enhanced legacy = things that will actively continue after the end of the project and need to be managed, maintained and monitored, for example, community work, refreshing training for volunteers, buildings maintenance

'The legacy of people who would have learnt skills and changed the way they manage their burial grounds that will enhance the wildlife... That's really positive.' **External stakeholder**

- **A portal for input of data** – the Beautiful Burial Grounds page within the NBN Atlas will continue as it will be maintained with the NBN Atlas as a whole. The CHR/CHC will continue, maintained by the Church of England and the Church in Wales. The new fields within this will be populated and maintained and the links between CHR/CHC
- **Improved records** – more species, historic records and regional data sets and mapping are available. This means that better heritage information will continue to be available to site owners, managers and decision-makers, facilitating good practice
- **Enhanced relationships** – between delivery organisations
- **Improved resilience of CfGA** – see [Section 4](#) for further discussion. CfGA can now use the excellent delivery and networks built-up during Beautiful Burial Grounds and its previous NLHF project Caring for God's Acre as a foundation for future projects and programmes.

'...we have an essential, beautiful space that is worth preserving, treasuring and promoting for future generations. Therefore, what we have done is just a beginning.' **External stakeholder**

Heritage Insider facilitated a legacy-planning session with CfGA in January 2023 to further plan how to maximise the lasting impact of the investment in BBG.

Profile for burial grounds

Stakeholders were asked 'What's the secret to raising the profile of burial grounds' built heritage, the cultural importance and the biodiversity?'. Responses included:

- Relationship-building
- Giving people 'lived experience' and access to 'experts'
- *'taking people to these places and pointing out its potential and guiding people to be active in recording, managing and conserving the diversity of all kinds'*
- *'...facilitating people meeting experts that can convey their enthusiasm'*
- *'Engaging the local media'*
- *'Building relations within a community, either a virtual community or offline'*

5.2 Blockers and challenges

This section comprises examples of challenges encountered by the Beautiful Burial Ground project and any associated lessons learnt.

National reach: local action

This project faces the challenge of any project with a national reach which needs to deliver place-based outcomes within very localised areas, i.e. every community's burial ground. Planning such projects is a juggling act between national-profile-raising and centralised support and resources versus being on the ground in a local community, providing face-to-face opportunities and hands-on support.

'More face-to-face opportunities. BBG project personalised sessions were a touchstone of inspiration to many.' **External stakeholder**

The former can reach more people but can result in a broad and shallow impact, whereas the latter, localised delivery is very resource intensive (human and budget) but can have a deep (but narrow) impact.

'If the project had more resources, I would have advocated for staff developing relationships on a county/diocesan basis to further build on engagement work.'

'It might have been interesting to know what was going on at the Birmingham sites before the event so I could have contributed more but I understand how that might not have been easy in the circumstances i.e. Covid.'

External stakeholders

The pandemic prompted the team to adapt their approach due to national restrictions, health concerns and places of worship being temporarily closed. National Campaigns such as Year of the Burial Ground and Churches Count on Nature came into their own to enthuse local communities, and webinars became a useful tool for maintaining momentum and reaching more people.

Lesson learnt: The balance between national and local delivery should be explored thoroughly in project-design stage and then revisited on a regular basis during delivery to ensure maximum benefit from any future projects and programmes.

Options to use CfGA's solid foundation of burial ground resources and data to undertake less-direct delivery, and strongly focus on facilitating others to deliver, can also be appraised at this point. In particular, there is potential to

provide support to other, more locally-based schemes to incorporate BBG-type activities into their own programme.

This model has already been trialled with area-based schemes as part of BBG, with some lessons learnt in terms of choosing partners with legacy, continuity and evaluation in mind, as well as where a greater input to sessions and resources (including FAQs supplied by CfGA) is possible. This could be a strategy to unleash the potential of their locally-based and locally-supported volunteers and existing connections in local communities. This model could also provide the support for local burial grounds to apply for funding for improvements, such as Section 106 allocations.

Capacity a limiting factor

Time and capacity will always be limiting factors with a small project team. Whilst the project team have delivered a very varied and impressive range of outcomes, the project has highlighted that there is a want and need from burial ground stakeholders for more. Linked to the above point, this is even more poignant when the project has a reach across two nations, rather than a smaller discrete project area.

As with every good project, as BBG developed, the project team created new connections and opportunities – some of which were unforeseen in the development stage. In particular, local level delivery and relationship-building and collaboration are very time-consuming but reap rewards in terms of positive outcomes for people, communities and burial ground heritage.

'It would have been nice to have collaborated more.'

External stakeholder

Lesson learnt: The two NLHF major projects undertaken by CfGA have clearly demonstrated that the organisation is effective and efficient at delivering major-scale programmes with significant outcomes, and that there is a need from communities and heritage (including heritage at risk) for projects such as BBG.

'...I was amazed at how the charity has grown and progressed.'

External stakeholder

In this way, CfGA has laid the foundations for scaling-up to a more ambitious, larger-scale collaborative burial ground project that can deliver deep impact, in more places.

Sharing data

Gaining access to existing data has been time-consuming or impossible for some data sets, for example, some recording schemes and Local Environmental Record Centres⁴⁵ found it difficult to share data with NBN because of the requirement for all data to be fully open access. Data sharing is a systemic sector-wide issue, particularly affecting biological data, not just one specific to BBG. On the flip side, some data sharing was smooth, for example, the Woodland Trust shared all the data from their ancient tree register, which is now available seamlessly on Church Heritage Records.

Maximising useability

Getting the data collection and storage systems spec-ed, built and snagged was a major undertaking. Ensuring good useability of the data entry and

access portals is another important aspect of making recording data accessible to a wider range of people.

BBG provided a range of ways that volunteer recorders could submit data. After persistent usability and stability issues with the iRecord system, the team took the decision to move to iNaturalist for data entry instead. This has significantly improved the user experience and user feedback has been good. The team have created support resources to help people through the process of adding data, including YouTube tutorials. Maintaining and improving useability will remain a challenge post-project and for future projects.

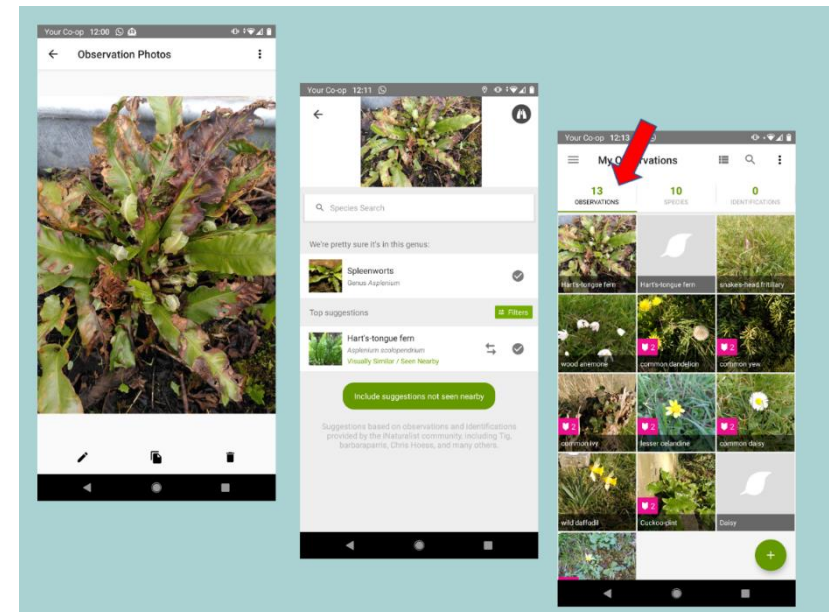


Figure 18 Screenshots from iNaturalist to help volunteers record wildlife sightings in burial grounds.

⁴⁵ However, NBN are in discussions with Local Environmental Record Centres about the potential for future data sharing, with firewalls in place for sensitive or

confidential data. This may release further data in the future about nature in burial grounds.

'The recording system at the NBN was not as flexible and as powerful as I would have liked it to have been. It was a bit clunky to use.'

'Maybe more resources for NBN to develop improved tools within those systems. I'm not sure.'

'We needed guidance on uploading our finds to the two recommended wildlife ID databases – it was in the plan to allow people to try this out [...]. No-one's fault.'

'It's a shame that Atlantic Geomatic have been slow in implementing the fixes to condition checking on the map as I think this is a great resource for burial ground managers.'

External stakeholders

Once data has been input then it provides the opportunity to interpret and communicate the results in a range of ways.

'I would have liked to have seen more interpretation of the records that came in, mainly to keep people coming back to burial grounds and recording species and using them as a resource. It's about continuing communication and engagement.' External stakeholders

Lesson learnt: Future projects and programmes need sufficient resource to continue to support users to submit data and also to take that data, interpret it and communicate it in an accessible way. This will then add to further motivate existing and new participants to record, care for and share the heritage of burial grounds.

Lessons learnt for stakeholders

Finally, lessons learnt for stakeholders were:

- Lots of smaller interactions are better than one or two big events, and being there is important
- BBG provided evidence for how important burial grounds are for people
- There are people out there that want to help
- Re-thinking maintenance regimes can be very positive
- Strengths and challenges of collaborating between partners
- Burial grounds are precious and need caring for – and there are some important ones nearby.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 List of key informant telephone interviewees and interview frameworks

Appendix 2 Website statistics report for BBG

Appendix 3 Churches Count on Nature evaluation summary 2022

Appendix 4 Celebrating Birmingham's Burial Grounds Evaluation Report – large file available on request or via <https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Celebrating-Birminghams-Burial-Grounds1-1.pdf>

Thank you to everyone who has generously given their time and thoughts to help conduct this evaluation.