

# Annual Review 2021



Helping Communities  
Across Greater Bristol to Thrive

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# Welcome

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 2021 Annual Review of the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV).

With a new leader elected annually, we each have just 12 months to drive forward a long list of ambitious plans, all with the shared objective to make Bristol a better place for everyone who lives and works here.

This year began once again in lockdown, with the schools and care homes that we support, all under tremendous pressure to plan and prepare to emerge from lockdown safely. As I write this review of the past year, it seems that no one is exempt from feeling the effects of Covid and the challenges will continue for some time to come.

Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, SMV made good progress in several areas of our work. For example, in education we have focused particularly on improving social mobility and inclusion. I am proud that SMV is funding a new role within *Venturers Trust* to help bridge the gap between school and employment, working with careers advisers, students and their families to help young people develop and pursue rewarding career pathways.

We have also collated a directory of opportunities, including careers advice, interview techniques, work placements and apprenticeships, offered to students by SMV's members through their own businesses and networks.

In this review, you will read about the *Bristol Future Talent Partnership*, one of several initiatives being supported by SMV in line with the *One City Plan*, in particular its vision for young people and skills.

Our charitable activities have continued apace and I hope you will enjoy reading about some of the inspiring local charities that we have been privileged to support this year. Some of these organisations are working with the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups and communities in the region, where their support is often life changing.

Like so many others, over the past year we've been using virtual platforms to hold meetings in place of face-to-face gatherings. New connections have been made with a range of community and charitable organisations during the pandemic, including *City to Sea*, the *Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group* and the *Women's Work Lab*. The latter does crucial work supporting unemployed mothers to become work-ready.



Gillian Camm DL, pictured with Montpelier High School students

The Downs has continued to play an incredibly important role within the city, never more so than during lockdown, providing fresh air and open green space for the people of Bristol to relax and enjoy. The Downs Committee has recently hosted a 'listening event' to gather the views of various stakeholder groups to help inform the creation of the first five-year strategy for the Downs.

For SMV, listening and learning has been another key theme of the past 12 months.

We've opened the Society up to more scrutiny and discussion about who we are and how we seek to work with communities and organisations across Greater Bristol. In addition, an independent research project is well underway to explore SMV's history, helping us to identify where the Society's money came from and how it has been spent over the years. The findings will help us to better understand our past and plan for the future.

I would like to close by thanking each of our members, the team based at Merchants' Hall, all the staff working in our schools, care homes and on the Downs, the many individuals who give generously of their time and expertise as school governors, the care home visiting group and the many organisations that collaborate with us to deliver our charitable objectives, including the *University of Bristol* and *Bristol City Council*. Your hard work and commitment make the positive impact of our activities considerably more far reaching and long lasting.

Gillian Camm



# International Women's Day 2021

Undeterred by the pandemic, women from all over the world found new ways to join together to recognise and celebrate International Women's Day in March 2021.

More than 80 Bristol-based women from a wide range of sectors, industries and different points in their careers joined SMV's Zoom event, chaired by this year's leader Gillian Camm DL. The keynote speaker was Kathryn Bishop CBE, renowned author and thought leader on women's development. Kathryn is an Associate Fellow at the Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford and Development Director for the university's leadership programme 'Women Transforming Leadership'.



Kathryn Bishop CBE



In exactly the same way that organisations look at their current position, future plans and the route to get there, Kathryn suggested that each of us can take the same approach in our own working lives. She encouraged delegates to think about where they are now and how they got here; where they want to be; and what needs to happen in order to get there.

Kathryn also suggested that delegates could use their emergence from the pandemic as an opportunity to reset, perhaps to choose a different path or forge a new path, sparking ideas that delegates explored together in a series of virtual breakout groups. The many inspiring suggestions, valuable lessons learned and new connections made, certainly left a positive and lasting impression on all attendees.

*Delegates could use their emergence from the pandemic as an opportunity to reset, perhaps to choose a different path or forge a new path.*



## A Royal visitor



Valuable take-aways from the event included:

- Give yourself time to reflect and think about your career and how you want to move forward.
- Build a sense of self-acceptance, looking at what you've achieved and how you've overcome obstacles.
- Consider your strengths and how you can make best use of them.
- Only do what you can do – at work or at home, delegate tasks that someone else could do.
- Learn to say no or at least create breathing space by saying: "let me get back to you".
- Identify your sense of purpose and build your life around that.
- Create a 'to NOT do list' of things you don't want to carry forward into the new normal.

**H**RH The Princess Royal and her husband, Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence, were warmly welcomed to a special event held at Merchants' Hall in October. Guests came from all over the UK, including many from the Greater Bristol region. Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE, Chair of the National Audit Office, gave an inspiring speech, challenging guests to always look for the good in everyone and everything. The following day, guests from outside Bristol took part in a guided tour of the city which included the Downs, the SS Great Britain and the Bristol Old Vic.



Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, with Ross Ancell (L) and Peter Hillier, Master of the Royal Company of Merchants of the City of Edinburgh (R)



Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence with David Freed and Gillian Camm DL

The Princess Royal signing the visitors book





# Bristol Future Talent Partnership

Over the past 12 months, progress has been made towards Bristol's vision of making this the fairest and most racially equal place to study and work in the UK.

The creation of Bristol Future Talent Partnership (BFTP) has joined together like-minded organisations who've made a commitment to work with young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds to raise aspirations, remove barriers and provide talent with opportunity. SMV was one of the first organisations to pledge its support and provide financial backing.

On behalf of Wessex Water, I'm incredibly proud to be leading this initiative.

If you're from a black African background you're five times more likely to be unemployed in Bristol than a white person. In fact, Bristol is in the bottom quartile in England and Wales for employment inequality for black and ethnic minorities. This is a city-wide problem to which BFTP is focused on developing real solutions.



Mohammed Saddiq

Our work with young people is designed to expand their horizons by showing them diverse career opportunities they might never have thought of, giving them high quality work experience and providing them with mentoring and role models they can relate to.

We don't claim to be experts and we don't have all the answers, but we do know that when talent is given opportunity, young people discover possibilities, develop their skills and become equipped to fulfil their potential. Identifying high quality work experience opportunities is fundamental to success.



Careers Insight Week, part of the BFTP programme held at Wessex Water in June and July 2021



## Identifying high quality work experience opportunities is fundamental to success.

Partner organisations are supported to host events focused on career opportunities and showing young people how to access them, such as through an apprenticeship or graduate entry scheme. We also help partners to develop valuable work experience programmes that provide young people with important career skills such as CV writing, interview techniques, team working, networking and presenting.

We're actively looking to increase the number of organisations that want to become part of BFTP.

If you're reading this and your organisation is serious about changing the communities you operate in; and you're willing to step outside your comfort zone and take action, then please visit the BFTP website for more information ([www.bristolfuturetalent.co.uk](http://www.bristolfuturetalent.co.uk)) and follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter. As well as changing your organisation for the better, you'll see the difference you can make in the lives of young people in Bristol and the positive impact this has on your staff and stakeholders.

**Mohammed Saddiq, Chair of Bristol Future Talent Partnership and Executive Director of Wessex Water.**

Students learning how food waste is sustainably treated at the Bristol Recycling and Renewable Energy Park



Students successfully complete the programme





# Our journey of discovery continues

This is a journey that we're sharing with many institutions and organisations within Bristol, a city-wide conversation that has the Transatlantic slave trade and its legacy at its core. As a membership organisation that is over 400 years old, we want to understand in more depth where we came from, what's truth and what's myth.

We want to appreciate how SMV's past forms who we are today, the role our organisation plays within this magnificent city, including our historic links with education and skills, care for older people, guardianship of the Downs and charitable activities.

*Every group of people has a history and we wouldn't be who we are today without our history. To understand today, we have to understand our past.*

"Only by taking this journey now can we really understand who we are and our role within Bristol in the 21st century," explains this year's leader, Gillian Camm. "It's an exciting and exceptionally worthwhile piece of work that's being delivered independently to ensure that it's impartial."

Dr Richard Stone, lecturer in history at the University of Bristol, is leading on this project. Dr Stone is a specialist in uncovering the role of the Atlantic economy and overseas trade in Bristol. His ongoing research is already playing a major part in a city-wide conversation, not least for the 'We are Bristol History Commission' set up by Bristol City Council.

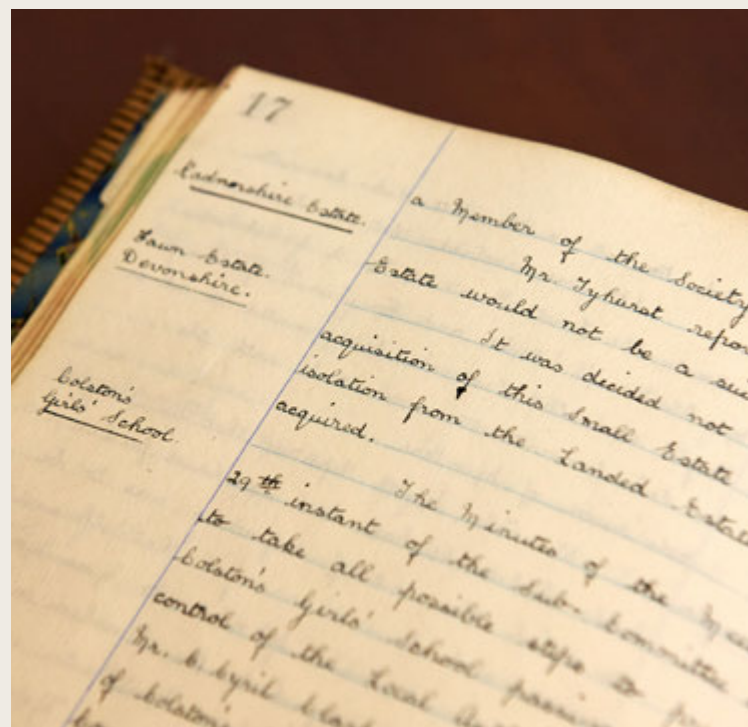
"History gets us to where we are today," explains Dr Stone. "Every group of people has a history and we wouldn't be who we are today without our history. To understand today, we have to understand our past."

Getting to grips with Bristol's past and discovering new evidence with the help of today's technology is an important journey that SMV is keen to be a part of.

By carrying out his own primary research, Dr Stone says, "Technology reveals new things about the past that we didn't know 30 years ago. Detailed research might even contradict what we thought we knew."

Dr Stone is using a wide range of documents, including SMV's wharfage and port records to analyse trade, specifically what went in and out of the city's docks and how money was earned and spent. Already we know that by 1654, 60% of Bristol's overseas trade was being transacted with the Americas. It is a fact that Bristol's growth at that time was largely being driven by the trade in enslaved Africans.

The Society of Merchant Venturers was then a trade guild – a collection of individuals who worked to maintain industry standards. Trade guilds were often formed to protect mutual interests. Whilst the organisation wasn't a business trading in its own right, it did have responsibilities for managing the city's docks.



Dr Stone is examining SMV's records dating back hundreds of years





Dr Richard Stone with Gillian Camm DL

One element of the research will be investigating how SMV spent its money during this time, from planks and stone needed dockside, to wages and almshouses for docks workers and seamen.

Gillian says, "It's really important that we're looking into our past so thoroughly with the help of Dr Stone's research.

"We're shaped by our past and understanding it will help us look to our future. We should be both curious and bold as we undertake this deeper look into our history."

Dr Stone adds, "The evidence and surviving records that we now have from across the city, including from the Society of Merchant Venturers, will allow us to paint a far more detailed picture of Bristol's role in the Transatlantic slave trade than ever before.

"We'll be able to discover more about individuals living and working in the city at the time. We know that many Bristolians were long standing supporters of the abolition movement, some of whom were members of SMV.

We also know that other members of SMV worked hard to lobby Parliament against the abolition of the slave trade. Much like today, SMV was a complex body of people each of whom had their own individual views that were sometimes in opposition to each other, as we are already discovering from our detailed research."

*We're shaped by our past and understanding it will help us look to our future.*

# Education



Chris Curling DL

A year ago, it seemed inconceivable that Covid would continue to dominate the world of education in the way it has done throughout the 2020/21 academic year and beyond. The teachers and support staff in all SMV-sponsored schools have worked tirelessly throughout this time to provide the maximum educational, wellbeing and mental health support possible to all students.

Even when the schools reopened in March there was much disruption due to forced isolations of class groups, teachers and other staff. The summer term was a particular challenge in this respect for students and for a workforce already exhausted by the stressful demands of the previous 15 months of the pandemic.

The priority given to the wellbeing and education of students in these exceptionally difficult circumstances has created particular challenges in maintaining the advances being made in the continuous improvement of the *Venturers Trust* schools. But this summer there have been some outstanding individual outcomes at GCSE and A-level. Since September, and throughout all *Venturers Trust* schools, there is a particularly strong focus on teaching and learning to address the curriculum gaps which the pandemic has inevitably caused.

The independent schools sector has faced a slightly different set of challenges related to Covid. In this highly competitive sector, *Colston's School* has continued to provide its students with an exceptional education experience and has emerged strongly from the pandemic.

The efforts of all our leaders, staff and governors remain unrelenting in their commitment to their students. We thank them all, as we always do, but especially for what they have achieved this past year.

**Chris Curling DL**  
**Chair of SMV Education Committee**

## The snowball effect

During the snowy winter months, as a child, my sister and I loved making a small snowball and rolling it in the snow to make it bigger and bigger until we could stand back and admire the huge snowball! We were always amazed by our creation and proud that we had achieved something so impressive by working together. This snowball effect has always fascinated me.

*Merchants' Academy Primary* has experienced the same effect over the past few years: growing from the little snowball of having just under 200 pupils on roll in September 2018, to over 400 at the end of the summer 2021 – and we're still growing. Teamwork is at the heart of our success because our whole community is focused on creating and being part of a brilliant place to work and learn.

Stuart Woodburn with a Y6 class







Y4 pupils reading with Y1 pupils, a regular occurrence at Merchants' Academy Primary

We have dedicated, energetic staff; pupils who love to learn; parents and carers who are ambitious for their children; we're part of a dynamic multi-academy trust - *Venturers Trust*; and our sponsors, the *Society of Merchant Venturers* and the *University of Bristol*, are hands-on and add real value. In fact, all of our stakeholders play an active part in our growth and development, we really are a team with momentum.

Moving into our brand-new building in April 2021 was a key factor in our latest expansion, providing staff and pupils with real opportunities to take teaching and learning to the next level. We now have ample space and state-of-the-art facilities. From Monday to Friday, the building is buzzing with excitement and enthusiasm with children who are eager to learn and have fun while doing so.

Our snowball is far from finished however! Our entire school community will continue working hard together to make Merchants' Academy Primary a school ranked amongst the top educators in the city. Watch this snowball grow...



**Stuart Woodburn**  
Principal of Merchants' Academy Primary

**The Society of Merchant Venturers**  
is helping to educate over 4,700  
pupils within the following family of  
Bristol-based schools:

**Bannerman Road  
Community Academy  
Easton**

**Principal:** Lynsey Prewett  
383 pupils, age 3-11



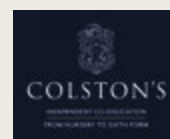
**Barton Hill Academy  
Barton Hill**

**Principal:** Emma Tovey  
353 pupils, age 3-11



**Colston's School  
Stapleton**

**Headmaster:** Jeremy McCullough  
797 pupils, age 3-18



**The Dolphin School  
Montpelier**

**Principal:** Shelley Flanagan  
275 pupils, age 4-11



**Fairlawn Primary School  
Montpelier**

**Principal:** Julie Molesworth  
257 pupils, age 4-11



**The Kingfisher School  
St Anne's Park**

**Principal:** Kirsteen Craig  
152 pupils, age 3-11



**Merchants' Academy  
Withywood**

**Principal (Primary):** Stuart Woodburn  
381 pupils, age 3-11  
**Principal (Secondary):** Vicki Starkie  
958 students, age 11-18



**Montpelier High School  
Cheltenham Road**

**Principal:** Kerry McCullagh  
929 students, age 11-18



**Venturers' Academy  
Withywood and St Anne's Park**

**Principal:** Steve Hobden  
217 pupils, age 4-19



## A new emblem for The Dolphin School



Pupils with their new school emblem, with Vice Principal Kate Jenkins

Following a public consultation launched in September 2020 and a series of workshops with pupils exploring the questions: ‘what’s in a name?’ and ‘what’s in an emblem?’, students and staff of The Dolphin School voted to change their emblem.

The next part of the journey was to design a new emblem. Pupils worked alongside accomplished local artist Michele Curtis, founder of Iconic Black Britons, a community interest company, and the artist behind the Seven Saints of St Paul’s art project.

Pupils wanted the emblem to show more than one dolphin because in the wild, dolphins live in pods to support each other, just as members of The Dolphin School community support each other.

A total of 46 different languages are spoken in school and pupils felt strongly that the emblem should represent the diversity they feel so proud of, articulated through the circular shape and the movement of the waves.



## The Bradbury Centre: spotlight on autism

In just five years, Venturers’ Academy has become recognised as a centre of excellence for supporting children with autism and their families.

Its provision is much needed: the number of children with a primary diagnosis of autism, often alongside other developmental challenges, is increasing and local authorities are working hard to create enough places to meet the needs of these young people.

Venturers’ Academy has played its part by expanding from 54 students in 2016 to a capacity in 2021 of 220 places for children aged four to 19 across three sites. The number of staff has grown to more than 160.

The Bradbury Centre is a state-of-the-art, purpose-built facility that will enable Venturers Trust to share its expertise with staff at some of the 700 schools it supports as part of the Five Counties Teaching School Hubs Alliance.

The Centre, substantially funded by a Hong Kong-based charity called the Bradbury Foundation, is at the heart of the new Venturers’ Academy site in Gatehouse Avenue, which is co-located with Merchants’ Academy Primary.



The Bradbury Centre is located within the state-of-the-art school campus in Witherwood

It includes soundproofed galleries with high-quality audio-visual equipment to allow visiting professionals to focus on techniques being used successfully in a classroom, therapy room and in an outdoor space, but without disturbing the pupils.

The Bradbury Centre will help to upskill teachers and therapeutic workers in effective practice with complex learners. It’s another step forward for Venturers Trust in achieving its ambitious vision: all children, from all backgrounds, all succeeding.



# Gatsby Benchmarks

In 2014, Lord Sainsbury's Gatsby Charitable Foundation published a report by Professor Sir John Holman, its Adviser in Education, titled 'Good Career Guidance'.

The report identified eight 'Gatsby Benchmarks' for schools to achieve in order to help students plan and prepare for successful careers by providing specific support in eight categories:

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each student
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

Collaborating with others is at the heart of SMV's longstanding work in the education sector and, through the broad range of industries and disciplines represented by the members of SMV, we're actively working with schools to help them achieve the 'Gatsby Benchmarks'.

To maximise the impact of this initiative, a directory has been put together to help match the career aspirations of individual students with the skills, connections, resources and opportunities that SMV members can offer.



Workplace visits provide valuable experiences

Spanning careers advice, internships, apprenticeships and traineeships, as well as support in CV writing, interview techniques, presentations and workplace visits, the directory currently offers students a range of opportunities across the following sectors, with more being added all the time:

- Animal husbandry
- Art / art history
- Construction
- Charity
- Creative industries
- Entrepreneurship
- Healthcare
- Hospitality
- Human resources /consultancy
- Industry
- Law
- Property
- Retail
- Science and technology

Evidence shows that students who participate in high-quality work experience opportunities are more likely to succeed when they leave school. These opportunities not only help students to make informed career choices, they also provide students with vital knowledge, skills, confidence and practical experience. In an increasingly competitive workplace, students need more than just academic qualifications to thrive after leaving school.

If you'd like to know more about the Gatsby Benchmarks, visit [www.gatsby.org.uk](http://www.gatsby.org.uk).

If you feel that you could support a school in achieving the Gatsby Benchmarks, please contact SMV's Education Committee by emailing: [enquiries@merchantventurers.com](mailto:enquiries@merchantventurers.com).



Meeting prospective employers to explore career opportunities



David Watson OBE

**O**ur ambitious goal is **all children, from all backgrounds, all succeeding;** underpinned by our motto: **Work hard, be kind.** To achieve our goal we have to work in partnership with others. For example, listening carefully to the needs of each school community helps to ensure that we are effective partners in educating our children.

We're also working hard to attract, retain and develop the best leaders, teachers and support staff; purposefully building a diverse workforce. The VT Institute of Education is currently being developed specifically to provide staff with the right level of challenge and support, alongside continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities to ensure that every member of staff can be the best that they can be.

Alongside this initiative, earlier this year Venturers Trust was given the responsibility of leading a collaborative Teaching School Hub (TSH), essentially a centre of excellence for the training and development of teachers. This is a wonderful tribute to Montpelier High School, one of the highest performing academies in the region, who spearheaded our application to the Department for Education to become a TSH.

The Bradbury Centre at Venturers' Academy in Withywood is another example of our enthusiasm and determination to set high standards in education through effective collaboration. The Centre provides unique research and training opportunities for teachers and others working with vulnerable and disadvantaged students. It's not surprising that Venturers' Academy was recently shortlisted for a highly regarded national award as 'special school of the year'.

During the previous academic year, two Venturers Trust schools designed and delivered their own thorough and balanced consultations which resulted in change. The Dolphin School chose to change its emblem and Colston's Girls' School rebranded to become Montpelier High School. I had the privilege of attending their launch event in September where students powerfully articulated their name change journey and how their new name was chosen.

In education, standing still simply isn't an option. I continue to be inspired by the dedicated staff and engaged stakeholders across Venturers Trust who work tirelessly to ensure that every child has access to an excellent education.

**David Watson OBE**  
**CEO of Venturers Trust**



David Watson OBE and Councillor Asher Craig, Deputy Mayor, with Montpelier High School students





# MONTPELIER HIGH SCHOOL

1891

## Montpelier High School – a new name for an historic school

**A**lmost 130 years after its foundation in 1891, students and staff from Colston's Girls' School voted to change their school's name to **Montpelier High School**. Students developed and led a transparent consultation, engaging with staff, governors, trustees and sponsors, as well as members of the public.

Due to Covid restrictions, a small launch event was held in September. Guests included Asher Craig, Deputy Mayor; David Watson OBE, CEO of Venturers Trust; Gillian Camm DL, former Chair of Governors for the school and leader of SMV; and Alex Thompson, Widening Participation and Student Recruitment Officer for the University of Bristol.

Principal Kerry McCullagh explained how the name change was the outcome of a well thought-through and inclusive process, where students had learnt the importance of hearing and respecting other people's views, even when they differ from their own.



Sophia Bailey, Y12, addresses the audience at the launch event



Students reveal the new mural

A group of Montpelier High School students then proudly unveiled a striking mural that has transformed the school's entrance hall into a visual narrative of the name-change journey.

More than half the 929 students at Montpelier High School come from a minority ethnic group, between them speaking more than 30 languages. Students benefit enormously from the wide range of perspectives in every class and the school's new identity reflects its inclusive and diverse community.

Sophia Bailey, a Year 12 student who played a key role in the consultation process, told her peers: "We are more than Montpelier High School. We are individuals who are part of this amazing journey. We are shaped by the past and we are ready for the future."

# Colston's School



Jeremy McCullough

I am certain there will be many 2020–2021 reflections that focus on the difficulties and disruption of a year that really was like no other. However, at Colston's we would always prefer to focus on the positives and, despite all of the genuine challenges faced by so many, we found that the school community rallied round and we were able to keep doing what we do; namely providing opportunities, fostering a spirit of service and preparing our students for their next steps.

Opportunities for learning came thick and fast for all of us; for those staff teaching hybrid lessons with some students in their classrooms and some at home; for clubs and societies moving online in order to continue to keep our students active; and for the Headmaster having to produce regular virtual assemblies in order to keep everyone connected.

The sense of service amongst our pupils was evident in the charity and voluntary outreach work that continued despite the obvious difficulties.

Colston's Forest School



Y12 students volunteering in the local community

The newly established 'Prefect News' sought to entertain and inform the school community each week; and we discovered a number of potential media stars of the future!

Of course, the important preparation for next steps continued to be an absolute priority. Unfortunately end of year events were impacted but the Lower School still managed a Year 6 play, performed to much smaller and mask-wearing audiences; the Upper Sixth Form enjoyed a Prize Day and a Leavers' Service; and we even saw the return of the annual post-exams trips to Thorpe Park.

However, the real work was all going into the award of Teacher Assessed Grades for our GCSE, A-level and BTEC students. This required the teaching staff to mark papers, moderate, annotate and assess papers, in order to award grades to their hard-working students.





Service of Remembrance attended by all Upper School students

In other areas, colleagues have continued to assess, review and, where necessary, amend course content to better reflect the needs of our diverse pupil body. We have long taught about the evils of the Transatlantic slave trade, for example, but across the curriculum we now pay greater attention to the successes of black historical figures in a wide range of other periods and narratives. The same can be said for women in history and other under-represented groups. A student-led inclusion group is now well-established and will be working with the school council to ensure that we continue to support all of our pupils in the best way possible.

So, in short, while it was far from business as usual, it really was just our usual business. Whatever this next year will bring, we begin the year with a larger school roll and a bigger Sixth Form than ever before and we will continue to do what we do; whatever it takes!

**Jeremy McCullough**  
Headmaster of Colston's School



Pantastic, performed by Lower School pupils

## The SMV scholarship programme

**M**embers of SMV make charitable donations each year to help fund three students from Merchants' Academy to study at Colston's School Sixth Form, an opportunity referred to as the SMV Scholarship Programme.



Maisie and Rhiannon

**Two of last year's scholars, Maisie and Rhiannon (pictured left), have now completed their studies at Colston's School.**

Maisie secured a place at the University of Gloucester, where she is now studying primary education. Maisie is the first member of her family to attend university.

Rhiannon secured offers from various universities to study physics, accepting a place at Leeds. She has deferred her place until 2022 while she gains some commercial experience working in Temple Quarter. In her final year at Colston's not only was Rhiannon a prefect, she also volunteered her time to support several programmes to coach and mentor younger students.

The third scholar of 2019-21 is Emily (pictured far right), who has chosen to continue studying at Colston's for an additional year to complete her A-levels. She is a founding member of the school's new Diversity and Inclusion Group; and has chosen to research sustainable housing issues in Withywood for her geography studies, which is a cause close to her heart. Emily has her sights firmly set on university where she hopes to study politics.

*We wish each of the SMV scholars every success with their studies and future plans.*





Maria, Evie and Klaudia

**The three scholars now in Colston's Upper Sixth are Klaudia, Alfie and Emmi.**

Klaudia (pictured above) is studying art, physics and psychology. She has made many new friends and is thriving in her academic studies, demonstrating considerable talent in art. Klaudia aspires to be an architect and hopes one day to run her own business.

Alfie (pictured right) is studying geography, English and business studies. Long term, he is keen to join the Police Force and is part of the apprenticeship group in Future Leaders to help achieve this goal. As part of his geography coursework, Alfie chose to investigate social issues and the need for regeneration within the Hartcliffe area, securing an interview with his local MP to discuss this topic.

Emmi (pictured right) is studying BTEC sport and exercise science. She attended school every day throughout lockdown and is determined to be the first in her family to go to university. Her work ethic is outstanding and she is certainly on track to pursue her goal of studying for a degree in sports management or coaching.

**Merchants' Academy students who began Year 12 at Colston's this year are Evie, Milana and Maria.**

Evie's love for maths has driven her A-level choices and she is studying maths, economics and religious studies, supporting her ambition to work within the financial sector. Already Evie (pictured left) is part of the Colston's Year 12 Future Leaders programme.

Milana is studying for A-level chemistry, physics and psychology, aiming to study medicine at university. She has also joined the volunteering programme and has already applied to be a Russian Language Ambassador, as Russian is her first language.

Maria (pictured left) is studying A-level maths, chemistry and biology. She is equally engaged in extra-curricular activities, playing competitive basketball and achieving great things in chess.



Alfie, Emmi and Emily on a non-uniform day in support of World Mental Health Day

## Building career pathways



Karl Tucker, Governor at Merchants' Academy

Partnerships and collaborations between businesses and educational establishments are becoming increasingly more effective. The corporate sector has a key role to play in engaging with young people before they enter the world of work, helping them to access advice, opportunities and experiences that inform their career choices.

Karl Tucker, a member of the Yeo Valley leadership team, is working hard to pull these strands together to help provide opportunities for young people.

Karl is also Chair of Heart of the SW Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Chair of South Bristol Youth, a charity that works with young people to increase their awareness and understanding of the opportunities available to them. "Businesses can play a key role in improving social mobility by giving every young person the opportunity to fulfil their potential," says Karl. "This goes hand-in-hand with encouraging students to realise the importance of attending school full time and working hard to achieve good results."

"As a governor of Merchants' Academy in Withywood, I can see for myself how much energy and ambition the students have, but often young people need advice, support and first-hand experiences to identify the right career path that will allow them to flourish."

"This past summer, I was privileged to work with the careers advisory team at Merchants' Academy, led by Assistant Vice Principal Gareth Bryan, developing an engaging work experience programme for students. This year's programme was a hybrid of physical and virtual work placements due to Covid restrictions."

Gareth explains, "Every year, we ask students to complete a survey designed to draw out their career aspirations and then we match them with specific opportunities. This year, the demand for work placements included law, accountancy, consultancy, sustainability, food technology, construction, engineering, health, ethics, care and teaching, amongst many others!"

"As a governor, Karl was aware of the size and scope of this programme and he immediately stepped up and asked how he could help. He could see that the number of businesses already engaged wouldn't match the broad variety of career aspirations identified by our students. It sounds like a cliché but we literally sat down with his list of contacts and started reaching out to business leaders."



Gareth Bryan, Assistant Vice Principal and Lead for Widening Participation, Careers and Community Engagement, Merchants' Academy, with Y11 students

After serving in the British Army, Karl worked in the quarrying industry before beginning what has turned into a long-standing career with Yeo Valley, a dairy company based in Somerset. Karl has seen the impact of a large organisation investing time and resource in local community projects and engaging with young people to raise awareness of food and farming.

*Over 150 students completed a quality work placement.*



*Their self-belief and confidence received such a boost.*



An attractive menu and food that tasted as good as it looked!

"Karl helped us to see what was possible and by the end of the summer term, over 150 students had completed a quality work placement. Deloitte, Midas, Burges Salmon, Lloyds Bank and the University of Bristol are just some of the organisations that supported us. Venturers Trust stepped in too and over 30 students spent time in primary schools across the Trust learning about different careers in primary education. The school principals all provided a very warm welcome and a brilliant placement.

"Some students shadowed the Merchants' Academy Admin Team and the Premises Team, others created a three-day pop-up restaurant and a three-day hair and beauty salon in school. They all provided a top level, professional service and attracted many happy, paying customers!

"For the students who spent time with businesses, this culminated in a presentation to senior managers. I knew how nervous they all were, but every student smashed it! Their self-belief and confidence received such a boost and every member of the careers team glowed with pride. Our students were fantastic ambassadors for Merchants' Academy and several left their placements with full-time apprenticeship offers, which were proudly accepted.

"By building career pathways for young people and creating opportunities for them to experience different types of work, we really can transform lives.

"Several of this year's students had really struggled in lessons because they didn't see the point of getting a good education. They returned from their placements with a taste of what they could achieve if they work hard and there's been a complete turnaround in their ability to focus and their appetite to learn."

*There's been a complete turnaround in their ability to focus and their appetite to learn.*



Staff enjoyed supporting the students' pop-up-restaurant

# A jewel in Bristol's crown



The Clifton and Durdham Downs

**T**he Clifton and Durdham Downs sets Bristol apart from other towns and cities in the UK and is undoubtedly one of the reasons that Bristol is repeatedly cited as one of the best places to live. Its vast expanse of green space is one of Bristol's most iconic features.

The Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project actively engages with young people



These 441 acres provided a safe breath of fresh air during the three lockdowns and as the economy opens back up, we're seeing the welcome return of many outdoor events and festivals.

Whilst there is no exact figure to record visitor numbers to the Downs, it is estimated that during the pandemic visits have been up by some 75%, particularly at weekends. This is a wonderful space for people to exercise and spend quality time, enjoyed by individuals, families, runners, athletes, dog walkers and ramblers, to name just a few examples.

Greater use brings additional challenges, particularly for Ben Skuse, who is Bristol City Council's Area Supervisor for the Downs, Blaise and Kingsweston Estate.



The Downs Football League

Ben and his team deal with the consequences of high visitor numbers, from excess rubbish to ground erosion around the pathways, particularly during the wetter months. Ben and his colleagues have been working flat out to keep this beautiful space in good condition for everyone to enjoy.

"The Downs have been so beneficial for people wanting to swap more time indoors for wide-reaching views and fresh air," says Ben. "We've received so many messages and emails from people saying thank you to the Downs, which is really gratifying."

Ben's team has a wide variety of duties when it comes to daily routine - looking after the grassland, woodland, scrub and amenity grassland, as well as the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), not to mention





FODAG hard at work

the wildflower meadows. They open and close the toilet blocks every day, maintain 180 benches and look after the children's play area near the Suspension Bridge.

They also take care of the 32 football pitches used by the Downs League, which has been a feature on the Downs for over 100 years, and they work with numerous event organisers such as Breaking Bread, Bristol Comedy Garden and Adventure Cinema.

Many community groups call the Downs their home. One of the most active is FODAG – Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge, a community group that encourages people from all over the city to visit and take part in the conservation activities it organises.



Cycle Sunday



A mask making activity with the Avon Gorge &amp; Downs Wildlife Project

From butterfly surveys to deep litter picking, from monitoring the 'Goats in the Gully' to taking part in their Conservation Sundays, FODAG also has close ties with other groups. For example, the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project which has been carrying out habitat management works to protect and enhance the heritage and landscape of the site since 1999, as well as running an engaging education programme.

The Avon Gorge and Downs are internationally, nationally and locally recognised for the wildlife they support, in particular the important grassland and rare plant communities that can be found on its slopes and rocky ledges, and on the large meadow areas. Many different groups work together to look after the best interests of the Downs and thankfully, so many important duties and responsibilities are in safe hands.

"Green space is so important to everyone's wellbeing. It's something that we should never take for granted," says Jonathon Baker, member of SMV and also the Downs Committee. "The Downs have a special place in our hearts and minds."

The Downs Act of 1861 brought the two landowners of Clifton and Durdham Downs together, Bristol City Council and the Society of Merchant Venturers, into what we know today as the Downs Committee. Responsible for protecting the Downs, the Committee oversees the management and safeguarding of this green open space, ensuring that it remains freely available for the people of Bristol to enjoy.

"Our vision is to protect and enhance the Downs in a sustainable way, as a place of recreation for everyone to enjoy," continues Jonathon. "This is a significant heritage for the people of Bristol and it's important to ensure that the Downs are handed to future generations in a healthy and sustainable condition. Many groups and individuals work really hard to preserve, protect and maintain the Downs and we owe them a huge debt of gratitude."

Ben Skuse (centre), with colleagues  
Richard Thompson (L) and Lee Clarke (R)



# Social enterprise



Andrew Garrad CBE

**T**he Social Enterprise Committee (SEC) has been part of SMV for several years and in fact we helped to set up Bristol and Bath Regional Capital (BBRC). Unlike SMV's Charity Committee, the SEC doesn't make donations, instead it makes investments or loans to support commercial social enterprises.



Photo credit: McFadyens Transport Ltd.

The challenge of delivering a wind turbine wing

We continue to work closely with BBRC, actively exploring areas where we may work together to develop funding schemes at the larger end of the local funding spectrum. At the same time, we're working together on an exciting renewable energy project in Lawrence Weston. Ambition Community Energy (ACE) is owned by the Lawrence Weston community and is in the final stages of developing a community wind turbine located next to the Seabank power station.

Lawrence Weston is no stranger to wind energy. There are many turbines nearby but all are owned by corporations of some kind. This project will belong to the community itself and, with a diameter of 115m, will be the biggest onshore turbine in England, generating enough electricity to match the current electrical consumption of Lawrence Weston.

The ACE wind turbine is no small challenge either physically or financially. The cost of the project is some £4.5 million and physically it's a very big machine. Funding loans have been made by BBRC and individual members of SMV.

Supporting zero carbon projects with long-term potential is a particular focus of the SEC, so the ACE investment is ideal. Our members are delighted to be working alongside BBRC to help deliver this project and, through a community-owned initiative, helping Bristol to reach its ambitious zero carbon goal.

**Andrew Garrad CBE**  
Chair of SMV Social Enterprise Committee



## BRISTOL & BATH REGIONAL CAPITAL

As a social enterprise itself, BBRC is firmly committed to two sometimes conflicting beliefs: that society should seek to be as equitable and caring as possible, and that free markets are good. This often puts us in an awkward position; indeed, the social enterprise sector has taken heat in recent months both for being too commercial and not being commercial enough.

Yet we continue to invest in businesses with big ambitions to create lasting social and environmental value for our region. Our experience is that it's more important to judge a business based on its impact, not its legal structure or potential return.

Through City Funds we've invested in charities like The Park, building a fit-for-purpose community centre in Knowle West, and also in tech ventures like XeroE, building a zero-carbon

delivery platform. Our combined experience in impact investing means we can find the right financial solution for these very different types of organisations and bringing them under one roof puts the emphasis on the impact achieved, rather than delivery or profit metrics. To date, we've committed a total of £4.7 million to organisations that are impact-first.

We believe that business can, and should, create the solutions we need for the future we want. Our local systems approach means we're investing for the long-term at every stage of the impact value chain.

**Ed Rowberry, Chief Executive of Bristol & Bath Regional Capital**





John Laycock DL

## Care for older people

It is with great pleasure that I've been able to chair the Care for Older People Committee for the past three years. The committee develops and delivers the strategy for two charities of which SMV is the trustee, namely the **Cote Charity** and the **Almshouse Charity**. SMV is also responsible for maintaining the long-term financial stability of the **St Monica Trust** in our role as endowment trustee.

I have witnessed the tremendous dedication and effort that staff give to every task, guided by inspirational team leaders. **Katherine House** and **Griffiths House**, both part of the Cote Charity, are safe, happy places to live and work because every member of staff helps to create a stimulating and joyful atmosphere.

Care homes have been a cause of great concern throughout the pandemic, with older people particularly vulnerable to Covid. The impact on the care sector has been extremely challenging, with many additional protocols and practices still in place to ensure that residents and staff are protected from the virus.

Every member of the Cote Charity team continues to go above and beyond to keep residents safe. During lockdown staff members stayed onsite at Katherine House and Griffiths House in order to protect residents by being part of their bubble, whilst ensuring continuity of care to the highest standards.

When residents were not able to welcome visitors into the homes, it was imperative that staff kept morale high to avoid a decline in mental health and wellbeing. You need only follow the Cote Charity on **Twitter** to see for yourself the range of interesting and fun activities that take place on a daily basis.

The **Society of Merchant Venturers** has been involved in caring for older people, and those at disadvantage, for more than 400 years. Our committee members apply their expertise to ensure that the charities remain financially stable and thus able to continue providing support in the Greater Bristol region for a great many more years to come.

**John Laycock DL**  
Chair of SMV Care for Older People Committee



A member of staff with a resident, enjoying the outdoor terrace at Katherine House



Leanne Thorne

Leanne Thorne is the Care Manager for Katherine House, Griffiths House and the Almshouse on St Michael's Hill. Having taken up her post in July 2021, Leanne is helping to steer SMV's 'care for older people' provision through one of its most challenging eras in the wake of the pandemic. Here she shares an insight into life as a care manager under the ever-present threat of Covid.

Whilst Covid rules and restrictions have relaxed in so many areas, older people, and especially those who are particularly frail, remain vulnerable to the virus and so care homes must remain vigilant. Visiting is far from back to normal, all staff wear face masks at all times and residents as well as staff take regular lateral flow tests. Being double vaccinated is essential for residents, staff and visitors and any resident returning from a stay in hospital must isolate in their bedroom for 14 days.

This might seem excessive against the backdrop of restrictions easing elsewhere, but if two or more staff or residents test positive for the virus, both Katherine House and Griffiths House would immediately go into lockdown for 28 days. We're all doing everything we can to avoid that scenario.

At the Almshouse our residents live independently, but we've taken additional steps throughout the pandemic to ensure that they don't become or feel isolated, keeping in regular contact by telephone, email and letter. We also make sure that each flat remains in good condition, addressing any maintenance issues promptly so that residents don't feel worried or anxious.

The resident chef baked a special surprise for the Mad Hatter's Tea Party



Ice creams for everyone!

The care sector has been hit hard by the pandemic, especially in terms of the mental health and wellbeing of staff, which in turn has a negative impact on recruitment. Having an open-door policy means that staff can speak with me at any time if they're feeling overwhelmed or worried about anything. Keeping lines of communication open for every member of the team is important. We've increased staff training related to mental health and will be training several staff as 'mental health champions' which is a really positive initiative.

We're also working hard to keep morale high amongst our residents and staff. We have such a wonderful community here, fun activities occur throughout each day, with music and laughter always on the agenda.

The warm weather allowed families to spend time with residents outside in the beautiful grounds. Determined to maintain the joy of family visits through the winter months, we've undertaken robust risk assessments and have invested in an indoor see-through 'visitor pod', where visitors can book slots to spend time with their loved one.

For older people lifestyle changes can be particularly unsettling, but our residents have taken everything in their stride. Our dedicated staff and amazing wellbeing team work hard to





A Katherine House resident meets a visiting therapy dog

maintain a truly positive and happy atmosphere here. Their energy and enthusiasm is boundless and it's clear to see that they love working with older people. Our activities programme is always brimming with events: music, dancing, quizzes, shared reading, gardening, knit and natter, the social club, parties for any and every occasion; it really is non-stop!

Residents were disappointed that our annual beach visit couldn't take place this year, but the wellbeing team had other ideas... Weston-super-Mare came to Westbury-on-Trym, with sand, sunhats, a summertime menu, 'Summer Holiday' by Cliff Richard playing on the Alexa, an ice cream van providing 99's for everyone; and even a visit from Charlie the donkey, much to the delight and surprise of our residents.

Challenging times may be ahead, but as a close-knit community, the staff and residents of Katherine House and Griffiths House will continue to move forward together, taking one day at a time while planning our next adventure!



The allotment, tended to by residents



A socially distanced D-Day performance was enjoyed by residents

## Charitable giving



Robert Bourns DL

Supporting communities across Bristol has, for a long time, been one of SMV's core objectives. Our charitable funds are generated from investments that provide an annual return, alongside donations made by individual members.

Charitable giving as a whole is shifting to become more about 'a hand up', rather than 'a handout', which means purposefully helping charities and community groups to become self-sustaining. To achieve this, as well as making a donation or grant, we're working with a wider number of support-based organisations to signpost practical help and advice.

This type of fit-for-purpose support can be the difference between a charity or group operating hand-to-mouth itself, versus developing a more robust operational model that enables it to thrive. In turn, this ensures that the charity or group doesn't go under at a time when the people it exists to support, need its help the most.

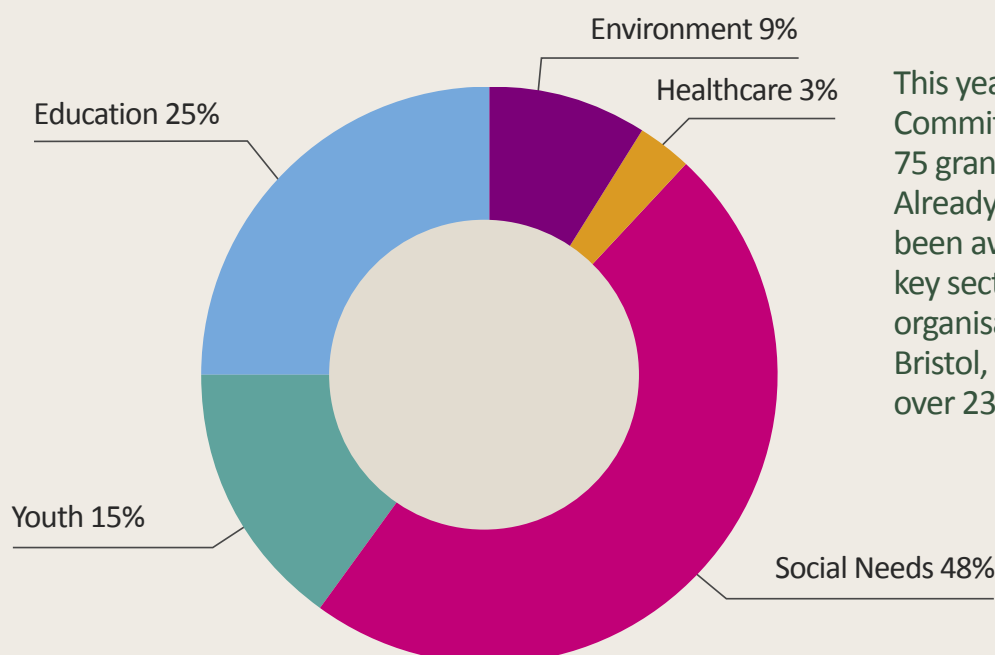
The pandemic has negatively impacted many such groups, often severely reducing their income, while at the same time increasing the needs of those they serve.

Thankfully, we have been able to continue making grants over the past year, looking to the expertise and on-the-ground knowledge of [Quartet Community Foundation](#) to help us direct donations where they are needed most.

While our emphasis is generally on current need in deprived communities across Greater Bristol, we also respond to some capital appeals, especially when a project involves improved outreach to schools across Bristol.

The SMV Charity Committee meets quarterly to review all applications, agreeing a series of grants to be awarded straight away. If you would like to know more about our charitable giving, or if you'd like to apply for a grant, you can find all the information you need in the [charity](#) section of our website.

**Robert Bourns DL, Chair of SMV Charity Committee**



This year, the SMV Charity Committee received over 75 grant applications. Already over £230,000 has been awarded over five key sectors to charities and organisations in Greater Bristol, directly supporting over 23,800 people.



## Black & Green Ambassadors

Black & Green Ambassadors is a collaboration between Bristol Green Capital Partnership and Ujima Radio. A new programme supports nine Black & Green Ambassadors over a three-year period who, through a wide range of activities, work to deliver a series of core aims: to reduce inequalities and enable bold and inclusive action across the city towards a more sustainable Bristol, which is more representative of Bristol's diverse communities.

SMV provided funding towards the recruitment of the first three ambassadors of the programme, Asia, Olivia and Roy, all chosen from an open recruitment process for their leadership potential and proven interest in helping to address issues of exclusion and achieve environmental equality.

As the first year-long post comes to a close, the achievements and reach of the three ambassadors has caused the ripple effect that the programme wanted. Through workshops, interviews, community-based research, projects, radio shows, media



Ambassadors in the studio

Photo credit: Clara Fung

interaction and local government lobbying, the ambassadors have made a significant impact and contributed towards lasting societal change.



St Paul's Adventure Playground

## The Art, Play & Environment Project

Based in St Paul's, the Art, Play & Environment Project (APE) was set up in 2007 to deliver outreach play activities for schools, community groups and at events. In 2017, the APE Project took on the management and running of St. Paul's Adventure Playground for under 12s, an iconic cultural feature of the area. The playground is a family-focused space where people come together and make new friends.

APE requested funding towards the purchase of a disabled-friendly enclosed slide. The slide is in the final stages of being installed and once open will provide a fabulous play facility for the popular Saturday morning play sessions run specifically for disabled children, where they can learn to improve their balance, spatial awareness, coordination and motor skills.

## Osprey Outdoors

Based in North Somerset, Osprey Outdoors is a Community Interest Company that provides safe environments for vulnerable adults to access outdoor activities. The charity supports people to overcome mental health challenges, helps build their confidence, restores self-esteem and reduces fear of groups. The lockdowns of the pandemic curtailed Osprey's normal support routes, causing a greater sense of isolation for their clients.

Osprey requested a grant to reignite their avenues of support in line with social distancing guidelines.

As a result, tutors from Osprey were able to encourage individuals and households to take part in a range of outdoor activities such as local walks, cycling, allotment work and bushcraft projects.

The impact of this activity was significant, with 92% of participants saying they had an increased sense of wellbeing; and 85% experienced lower anxiety levels. The local community also benefited from the activity, noticing improvements to local green spaces as a result of the work carried out by the Osprey groups.



An allotment project with Osprey Outdoors



A healthy food parcel provided by Ignite Life

## Ignite Life

Ignite Life provides valuable support for vulnerable young people in South Gloucestershire who fall outside standard funding services. The charity offers support and mentoring to help individuals deal with the impact of traumas such as adverse childhood experiences and school exclusions. Referrals are made from schools and local councils.

Ignite Life approached SMV to request funding to employ a part time fundraising manager, cover volunteer expenses and purchase food. The grant, combined with other funding sources, meant that a dedicated fundraising manager could be recruited, leading to an additional £40,000 of funds being raised. In turn, Ignite Life's essential service provision for young people and their families has increased - for example over 80,000 meals and £2,000 of food vouchers have been provided since April 2020. The people who receive support from Ignite Life frequently describe their experience of the charity as "help when we needed it the most".

## The Genesis Trust

The Genesis Trust in Bath and NE Somerset supports homeless and vulnerable individuals and families in crisis. Many experience mental health issues, physical and learning disabilities, addiction, low income or lack of a support network.

The charity requested funds towards the running costs of its 'Gateway Centre' programme which offers refuge for those in crisis, including people who are homeless. As a result of the funding, the programme has evolved into the 'Life Projects' programme offering a wide range of support including one-to-one appointments, phone support, walk and talk sessions, access to food, showers, clothing and essential advice. All with the aim to reduce self-neglect and offer pathways from crisis to independence. In the past year alone, Genesis has had over 3000 interactions with 320 individuals.



The Genesis Trust helping a client in need

One client wrote to the charity, saying: "I wouldn't have been able to bounce back without your support".

## Friends of Grove Park

Friends of Grove Park was founded in 2016 by a group of Weston-super-Mare residents concerned about anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the area. The group is run by 25 volunteers and one paid staff member. Working alongside the local council, Friends of Grove Park aims to promote the social and emotional health and wellbeing of local residents, working together to facilitate community cohesion and improve the park for the local community.

SMV was asked to match-fund a grant from the Department of Transport Sustainable Travel Access Fund for the purchase of an Ecargo Bike to help increase the effectiveness of the charity's volunteers.



Loading up the Ecargo bike



## Place-based social action

When a group of organisations works in partnership with local people to create a shared vision for their community, the pace of change accelerates, a collaboration often referred to as ‘place-based social action’.

South Bristol is one of the most deprived parts of the city, where inequality is not only financial, but also spans education, health and housing. It's particularly difficult for people to reach their potential, which negatively impacts on their ability to provide for themselves and their families.

The work of Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership (HWCP) as a community anchor is a great example of effective place-based social action. HWCP is a charity that empowers local people in South Bristol to make decisions about local issues, delivering projects and promoting partnerships between the community, businesses, Bristol City Council and voluntary groups.

Residents fundraising for a community meal



A 'Learning to Lead' visit to Wild Place

In 2019, HWCP secured a three-year funding stream through a national initiative, which was increased further by a grant of £120,000 over two years from Quartet Community Foundation, as well as £25,000 donated by SMV. To date, the funding has supported scores of social action initiatives in South Bristol, including several high-impact projects being delivered by South Bristol Youth (SBY), such as the Learning to Lead programme.

SBY is a well-established local charity that helps young people to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to access apprenticeships, higher education and high-quality employment when they leave school. It's well known that engaging with young people in school, driving up their aspirations and providing better opportunities, benefits the entire community over the long-term.

While funding for HWCP comes from a variety of sources, HWCP drives the agenda because they understand the issues at a local level. Plus, they're already working effectively with different parts of the community to deliver a range of successful initiatives.

The place-based social action approach brings together organisations that share a common purpose, creating the financial and practical capacity to tackle multiple issues at the same time, driven and delivered by the communities themselves to make lasting improvements to the place they call home.

# Impact report 2021

A great many individuals and organisations across the Greater Bristol region work with SMV to help achieve our charitable objectives. In addition, SMV's members apply their individual skills and expertise, giving over 10,500 combined voluntary hours in an average year.

What kind of impact is achieved by this collective effort and shared determination to help communities across the region to thrive?

Across two core areas of activity, we've crunched the numbers to find out...

## THE DOWNS

**441** ACRES

**100,000**  
PEOPLE

Since 2001 over 100,000 people have taken part in events and activities relating to wildlife, geology and the landscape of the Gorge and the Downs

VISITOR  
NUMBERS  
INCREASED BY

**75%**

DURING THE PANDEMIC

**2,294**  
TREES

growing on the Downs plateau

**180** BENCHES

**32** FOOTBALL  
PITCHES

**1,000** PEOPLE PLAY ON  
THEM EACH WEEK



# SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Initiated and managed by BBRC, the **Dunmail housing project in Southmead** is a first of its kind, bringing together a social investment company, a private investor, a local authority and a housing association to deliver 161 new homes, 60% of which will be at sub-market levels. With six different tenures of home on offer, the community will be mixed and inclusive, with the first tenants due to move in during 2022.



# Thrive programme



Dr Jacqueline Cornish OBE

I've been a member of SMV for 14 years and throughout that time, I have been closely involved with our work in education, particularly with Montpelier High School and as a member of the Venturers Trust Board. I am also a member of the SMV Care for Older People Committee and I was president of the Grateful Society last year.

How often has it been said that these are unprecedented times, a pandemic emergency which has had far reaching effects and touched every part of our lives? This is particularly true for children of all ages and also the less fortunate older people of our society, many of whom are frail and live alone.

My career has given me an insight into national policy development and healthcare management, working across Government, Royal Colleges and the voluntary sector. For 40 years I worked as an NHS paediatrician, treating children with cancer and leukaemia and for seven years I was NHS England's National Clinical Director for Children and Young People, responsible for all children, all conditions, physical and mental health.

Bringing together my work with SMV and my professional experience, six years ago I set out to translate national guidance into local practice by bringing mental health and wellbeing recognition and training into all SMV-sponsored schools; an initiative that was funded by SMV. I introduced the Thrive Programme, a national gold standard that was developed by the Anna Freud Centre in London. Working with staff from each of the schools, we broadened the conversation about child mental health and the importance of training staff to recognise the signs of children who might be struggling.

The Thrive Programme makes it easier to talk about child mental health in everyday language. Instead of labelling children with defined mental health disorders, this revolutionary approach places children, young people and families alongside professionals, so that decision making is shared and based on the three pillars of 'thriving; getting advice; and getting help'.

This has evolved into the more practical Thrive Approach, which is now embedded in all SMV-sponsored schools. Teachers and support staff are helped to understand how to promote positive mental health, emotional and social development in children and young people; and how to respond to concerning

behaviours. Instead of providing an intervention for just a few children, this is a whole school approach that benefits everyone.

Every Venturers Trust academy now has a Thrive Learning Practitioner who ensures that the Thrive Approach is embedded in everyday provision, using online tools to help identify where to focus support and track progress within individual classes. This results in the right level of support being given at the right time without interrupting a child's learning or social development, whether at class group or individual child level.

Screening results from the academic year 2020-2021 clearly show the positive impact of Thrive on the social and emotional development of pupils. The next phase aims to deliver sessions to support parents to use the Thrive Approach at home; and crucially, to work with schools to prepare for the possibility of some pupils struggling as a result of Covid experiences.

*This is a whole school approach that benefits everyone.*

Nationally we know that the impact of Covid on children's and young people's wellbeing has been due to disrupted education, lack of predictability, sometimes loss of relationships and occasionally bereavement, and of course health inequalities. Children living in poverty have suffered more, as well as the more vulnerable groups and there has been a significant surge in cases of eating disorders.

Staff across our schools recognise that pupils are able to succeed when they are mentally and physically secure, and socially and emotionally robust; and I am so proud that our schools fully understand the steps of prevention, identification, early support and when to access specialist support. The Thrive Approach is undoubtedly helping many young people in school communities, giving them the best start in life with strong mental health to prepare for their future.

Dr Jacqueline Cornish OBE

Let's help every child  
**thrive**



# In memoriam and emeritus

## In memoriam

### Tony Kenny 1961-2021



Tony Kenny became a member of SMV in 2006 and he was Master in 2018-19. An accountant by profession, he followed a successful career with PWC by setting up a specialist corporate finance business in Bristol; and he was also a non-executive director for a number of local companies.

Education was always front and centre of Tony's work with SMV. He was involved

in the planning for Merchants' Academy and he served as a governor and chair of the Finance Committee from the time of its opening in 2008. He also served as a governor of Colston's School from 2005 until 2019, chairing the board for three of those years.

Tony was passionate about making a good education accessible to as many young people as possible and he worked hard to successfully increase the number of bursary supported places at Colston's School.

Improving the life experiences of other people, in particular young people, was important to Tony and during his year as Master he closely followed the progress of the Wettest Classroom project. This ambitious initiative saw 27 pupils from Venturers Trust take part in a sailing expedition around the coast of the UK, paid for by charitable contributions from SMV members. Tony was on hand at the edge of the dock to share words of encouragement with anxious pupils as they prepared to set sail; and he was thrilled to hear about their tales of adventure when they returned safely to shore. He later described the project as one of his favourite highlights from his year as Master.

Tony was a devoted family man and a well-respected businessman who gave an enormous amount of time to charitable activities on behalf of SMV. He undoubtedly made a positive difference, especially to the lives of many young people in Bristol.

## Emeritus

Emeritus membership allows long-serving members to retain their connection with SMV, but with a reduced level of commitment on their part. Emeritus status is extended to members who have made a significant contribution to SMV's work over a sustained period of time.

### Canon Stephen Parsons MBE DL

Stephen has been a member of SMV since 2009, applying his professional and charitable sector expertise to serve on the Standing Committee (board of directors) for two terms, a total of six years. He was also the founding vice-chair of the Collections and Heritage Committee and the vice-chair of the Care for Older People Committee.

After leaving school, Stephen headed to Leeds University to study Law, subsequently working for 20 years in the UK rocket motor sector and a further 20 years in the nuclear submarine reactor instrumental control sector.

Born in Bristol, Stephen's love of the city has played out in many guises over the years, none more so than his links with Bristol Cathedral where he was once a pupil and head chorister.

Stephen is now a Caputular Canon and Member of the Chapter of Bristol Cathedral. He also chairs the Cathedral Schools Trust, a multi-academy trust with nine schools in Bristol and North Somerset, educating some 6,000 pupils, alongside chairing the Cathedral Trust and Fitzhardinge Society.

Beyond Cathedral life, Stephen continues to devote a huge amount of time to various Bristol-focused roles, for example as a Deputy Lieutenant of the County and City of Bristol; chairing the Affiliation Board of the City of Bristol and HMS Prince of Wales; and he is a past president of the Dolphin Society and past chair of Quartet Community Foundation. In 2015, Stephen was awarded an MBE for services to education and the community.

## New members

### Kathryn Bishop CBE



Kathryn is an Associate Fellow of Saïd Business School in Oxford, where she directs and teaches on leadership programmes for professional service firms and other multi-national corporations. For over 35 years, she has worked in a wide variety of roles in both the public and private sectors, where she has helped organisations and

leaders to navigate major change successfully. Kathryn has also served in a number of non-executive director roles in government. Over the last decade, much of her work has focused on women's leadership. She is the Programme Director for the University of Oxford's development programmes for women.

Kathryn is particularly interested in education at every level and combines her work at Oxford with voluntary roles as Chair of the [Dean Close Foundation](#), which runs schools and nurseries in Gloucestershire and in Wales, as well as chairmanship of a village charitable trust in support of primary level education.

She was appointed the first Chair of the Welsh Revenue Authority in April 2017 and in June 2021, she was awarded a CBE for services to diversity and public administration.

Kathryn looks forward to playing an active role in SMV, including on the Roger Newport Committee, supporting bursary places at Colston's School.

### Heather Frankham



A teacher by training, Heather founded and built the Lifetime Training Group in Bristol into the largest provider of apprenticeships in the UK, a journey that took her through every lifecycle stage of a business from start-up, to scaleup, to selling and exiting in 2016.

Committed to supporting the delivery of apprenticeships, Heather is the

Non-Executive Chair of Paragon Skills, a specialist provider of training to the Care and Education sector; and founder of Bud Systems, an education tech platform focused on the digitisation of apprenticeships.

Heather also created Origin Start-up, providing mentoring, coaching and business development support for entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Heather's charitable work includes Coach Core, an organisation that supports sports coaching in disadvantaged communities; and [OnSide](#), which supports and amplifies the delivery of aspirational youth provision in cities. She has also set up the Frankham Family Charitable Trust, supporting a number of charities and initiatives working to improve the life chances of children and young people.

Since joining SMV, Heather has become a member of the Venturers Trust Education Standards Committee.

### Tracey Killen



Tracey has an inspiring and impressive career history with the John Lewis Partnership - starting as an A-level trainee in 1982 at their Bristol store, rising through the ranks to staff manager and then general manager before moving on to a raft of senior posts. Her final role in the company was a board appointment in 2007 when she became

Director of Personnel for the Partnership, a position she held for some 13 years.

Tracey is now a non-executive director at the Morgan Sindall Group, a leading construction and regeneration company, a trustee of the [Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance](#) and a fellow for [Be the Business](#), an independent not-for-profit organisation that provides targeted support and guidance for SMEs (small to medium sized enterprises).

She is a governor at [Merchants' Academy](#) and a member of the Human Resources Committee at [Venturers Trust](#). In these roles Tracey is able to apply her professional expertise to supporting young people to fulfil their potential when transitioning from education into the workplace.



## Sam Roberts



Sam is the CEO and Co-owner of Boston Tea Party (BTP). Founded in Bristol in 1995, BTP has 24 cafés across the South and Midlands, including five in Bristol. He holds the business to a 'scale versus soul' approach, refusing to accept that core values and beliefs would have to be compromised in order to expand and grow.

This ethical approach to doing business includes minimising the use of single-use plastics. BTP was the first UK business to remove single-use coffee cups in every café.

Sam has developed a blueprint for all BTP cafes to provide work-based opportunities for young people from local deprived areas, an initiative based on his work with *South Bristol Youth* and *Empire Fighting Chance*, both Bristol-based charities. More recently, Sam has been actively involved as a mentor and supporter of *Mentoring Plus*, a charity based in Bath & NE Somerset, supporting disadvantaged young people through mentoring schemes, youth clubs and projects.

Sam is looking forward to joining SMV's Communications Committee.

## Professor Mahesh Sooriyabandara



Mahesh is Managing Director of Toshiba Bristol Research Lab and an honorary visiting professor at the School of Engineering at Cardiff University.

He is also a world-leading expert in wireless communications and a pioneer in industrial wireless networks.

As a chartered engineer, researcher and academic-turned-manager, Mahesh is passionate about using technology and innovation to address societal challenges.

Over the years, Mahesh has actively collaborated with local authorities and community organisations to use state-of-the-art technology and innovative methodologies to address some of the unmet needs such as energy poverty, mental wellbeing and IT literacy in communities.

Mahesh works closely with academic organisations and local authorities to create training opportunities and to build the region's capacity to meet the most in-demand skills across high-tech industry sectors.

Mahesh is looking forward to getting involved with SMV's Social Enterprise Committee.



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## Looking ahead

Appointing a new leader of SMV each year is a tradition that means looking back to November in 1552, when the Society of Merchant Venturers received its first charter from Edward VI. The leader for the year ahead is David Freed, a member of SMV since 2008, and David is firmly focused on looking forward.

Born in Wales, David was educated in Bristol, later studying Law at the University of Nottingham. He worked as a solicitor, mainly specialising in commercial property, before moving into the property development sector himself.

David now applies his expertise to support many of SMV's activities, not least a number of social enterprise initiatives, such as the ambitious development of The Park, a community space in Knowle currently undergoing a significant redevelopment.

SMV has a complex history in the city and it's important that we fully understand the organisation's past so that we can continue to make a positive difference to the schools, care homes, organisations and charities that we support.

However, this has to be in addition to our charitable activity and not instead of it. We have to keep looking forward so that we can anticipate change and provide exactly the right level of support to communities across Greater Bristol, where it's needed, when it's needed.

The impact of the pandemic on the economy has left many people in dire need as jobs have been lost and businesses have collapsed. Every young person has experienced an interrupted education. The vulnerable and frail have become more isolated and alone. We continue to be warned about the climate emergency.

No single organisation can address these massive issues alone but when people and organisations work together, I do believe that we can make a difference.

For example, schools are teaming up with businesses more effectively than ever before to secure work placements, mentoring and apprenticeships to help prepare students to succeed in an increasingly challenging environment. SMV's members are well placed to help create opportunities for young people and I'm determined to expand this initiative.



Young people currently in education are our future leaders and we must all help to prepare them for the huge responsibilities that will rest on their shoulders in the years to come.

In summary, the year ahead is about looking forward and keeping an unrelenting focus on the work we do to help communities across the region to thrive, with the invaluable support of so many others.

**David Freed**



Over the past year, we're privileged to have worked with many inspiring organisations, including...





[merchantventurers.com](http://merchantventurers.com)

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