

Arnos Vale Community Cemetery



Making a Victorian garden cemetery fit for the future



Sector:	Environment
Location:	Bristol
Grant awarded:	£50,258
Award date:	February 2019
Ownership:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation



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Grant purpose

The grant helped fund new accessibility ramps and an awning to double the covers in their community café, and blackout blinds in their visitor centre to make it useable for screenings and corporate presentations.

Locally rooted

Over 1000 people stepped in and campaigned to save this Victorian cemetery from development, preserving it as a place of remembrance for generations to come.

Improving health and wellbeing

Arnos Vale Cemetery is working closely with local GPs to recommend over 50s for their green gym scheme, as well as their volunteering programme.

Trading for the benefit of local people

Income generated from weddings and letting out space for meetings and exercise classes is reinvested into preserving the 45 acres of green space and running community events.

Established in 1837, the stunning Victorian Arnos Vale cemetery offers 45 acres of green space in a densely populated part of Bristol. Since saving it from development in 2002, the community have turned the site's two Victorian chapels into a community café – the Anglican Chapel – and a heritage, wellbeing and education centre – the Spielman Centre. The site attracts a broad range of people, from dog walkers to families, sports enthusiasts to schools, universities and corporates. Some of their 60 committed volunteers contribute 200 hours a week, in the café, giving regular tours of the now Grade II* listed cemetery, bringing Bristol and local people's history to life, and helping people research their family tree.



Power to Change awarded Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust a £50,258 grant through our Community Business Fund to help them develop their income streams and become fit for the future. Some of the funding will be used to make the community café more accessible and inclusive by installing ramps and better visitor signage. Awnings will also be installed to create a sheltered outdoor seating area, which will double the café's covers from 35 to 70 with the aim of increasing their income by 30%. And they will also install a connecting door between the café and the kitchen which will avoid disrupting meeting spaces they have let out.



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Part of the grant will be used to purchase a new projector and blackout blinds for the huge Victorian windows in the 100-seater Spielman meeting space to make the room fit for corporate meetings and show screenings. The other building, the Anglican Chapel, has excellent acoustics and is often hired out for concerts and classes. Part of the grant will purchase a new storage unit for tables, which will double as a bar for evening events – a clever solution for a Grade II* listed space that can't be modified easily.

How did they do it?

Arnos Vale Cemetery was saved by the people of three neighbouring Bristol wards – Knowle, Totterdown and Brislington – when it was threatened by demolition in the early 2000s. A volunteer action group called the Friends of Arnos Vale (FOAVC) was formed to help save and protect it. They produced petitions signed by thousands, marched with a 1000 people to City Hall, managed and improved the grounds and finally forced a compulsory purchase of the site. They formed the Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust in 2002 to ensure the protection and sustainability of the site.

With help from various funders, and £7300 raised by local people, the site has been developed for community use. The local community are constantly involved in the site through the Friends of Arnos Vale; volunteers hold quarterly meetings with the staff and the Board hold the executive

team to account.



Making a difference to real people

Arnos Vale are working closely with local GPs to recommend over 50s for their green gym scheme, as well as their volunteering programme. This helps tackle social isolation. For families, the improved spaces will lead to more diverse events taking place and an improved education and engagement function. The green spaces and access can also be developed enhancing local safe, traffic free routes between two busy main roads.