



CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019 GOLD WINNER

Category: Regional Campaign of the Year

Company: Highlight PR

Entry title: Minerva's Owls of Bath

Brief and objectives:

Overview:

Minerva's Owls of Bath was a charity public art sculpture trail which took place between June and September 2018. The three-month event united Bath's flourishing community of businesses, creatives and schools for a fun-filled summer, ultimately raising £139,000 for four regional charities.

Brief and objectives:

- Launch and promote the sculpture trail to Bath businesses, schools, residents and tourists
- Secure regular positive local, regional and national media coverage and social media buzz
- Encourage people to visit Bath, download the official app, buy a map and follow the trail
- Drive public attendance at a 'Hoot Farewell' event featuring all the owls in one location
- Help raise thousands of pounds for charity at the final auction event.

The idea, research and planning:

Ten years previously, Bath had staged one of the UK's first public art sculpture trails – King Bladud's Pigs. To celebrate this anniversary and raise fresh funds for local charities, the organisers reunited to launch Minerva's Owls of Bath. Owls were chosen because the city's Roman Baths are dedicated to the goddess Minerva, whose animal symbol was an owl.

Research was conducted into other city sculpture trails and their impact on local economies, providing valuable background media information. Fun owl-themed messaging was developed, and a detailed calendar of media hooks planned to build interest up to and throughout the trail.

Mindful that this was a charity initiative, activity had to be particularly efficient and cost-effective, ensuring as much money as possible would go to worthwhile causes.

Strategy, tactics, creativity and innovation:

Our strategy was built around a proactive and focused media relations campaign, and tight media targeting. Alongside national media, particular emphasis was placed on key regional print, online and broadcast outlets, including The Bath Chronicle, SomersetLive, BBC Points West and ITV WestCountry.

A mix of official press releases, photos, video and individual human interest stories were drip fed to media and influencers, sometimes exclusively, covering angles such as:

- Calls for artists and sponsors + profiles of notable artists/businesses signed up
- Business stories - economic impact of sculpture trails on tourism, city pride
- Making of the sculptures (by local sculptor and Bristol film prop company)
- Profiles of key organisers behind the trail
- Launch of special owlets for local schools to decorate
- Creation of sponsor PR guides, template releases and bespoke stories with sponsors
- Launch of trail maps and range of owl merchandise
- Beacon technologies and mobile app adding interactive element to sculpture trail
- Schools and children involved, including a 6 year old collector of owls we nicknamed 'Owl Boy'
- Pre-recorded and live TV features on the launch, Hoot Farewell and Charity Auction.

Delivery:

Our PR and social media campaign activity centred around six areas:

- Initial announcement

Our initial call out to sponsors and artists took place at The Romans Baths, with reigning Miss Bath dressed as the Roman Goddess Minerva, providing the visual hook for why Owls had been chosen as the focus for Bath's newest sculpture trail. Extensive regional TV and radio coverage was secured as well as blanket local exposure.

- National launch

With many sculpture trails competing for national attention, we knew great visuals would be key to standing out. Accordingly, we unveiled the first 30 painted Owl sculptures in front of Bath's world-famous Royal Crescent with artists, sponsors and our Goddess Minerva for eye catching photos and TV backdrops. The Times, Telegraph.co.uk and Guardian all covered.

- Trail listings

Strong events listings and 'things to do' coverage was pivotal to the success of the trail. UK national lifestyle magazines including Grazia, Woman's Weekly and Woman's Own all featured the event, as well as regular listings features in regional lifestyle media. On the eve of the trail, we also negotiated a special 4-page pullout with The Bath Chronicle free of charge, featuring a visual guide to all the owls, a trail map and latest news.

- Hoot Farewell Weekend

At the end of the event, all 82 owls were reunited for a ticketed Hoot Farewell Weekend at Bath Rec, with craft activities, food and drink, music and merchandise – creating another hook for pre-event coverage, ticket competitions and live broadcast/online reporting.

- Charity Auction

The trail culminated in a Charity Auction at The Apex Hotel, attracting almost 200 guests. Both ITV Westcountry and BBC Points West reported live from the event throughout the day and following morning, as the Owls raised a final total of £139,200.

- Day-to-day press office

A proactive daily approach to PR throughout the campaign period allowed momentum to be maintained in between bigger events. Main press office stories included: National travel features on sculpture trails (Telegraph Online, Sunday Mirror Notebook); celebrity ambassadors including Bath Olympian Amy Williams; 'Owl Boy' super fan Jack Hills; owls merchandise; and artist profiles and interviews.

Measurement and evaluation:

- 332 pieces of coverage secured throughout the Minerva's Owls of Bath campaign
- 6.8m estimated reach across print, online, broadcast and social media outlets
- 15 dedicated TV features on local BBC and ITV news channels (average 2 mins each) which generated significant engagement:
 - ITV West Country video on Facebook had 97k+ views, 1.6k reactions, 1138 comments and 896 shares
 - BBC Points West video on Facebook had 56k views, 992 reactions, 319 comments and 651 shares.
- 50+ radio mentions, including BBC Radio Bristol, Somerset and Wiltshire and Heart FM
- Over 15,000 app downloads and 5,000 trail maps sold
- 7,500 visitors to final Hoot Farewell Weekend
- £139,200 raised at final auction

- 5,000+ social media community built from scratch
- Facebook total daily reach (source: Facebook Analytics) = 398,206 unique users
- 56,081 Owls of Bath website visitors, viewing 238,226 pages
- Official footfall data saw an extra 60,000 visitors to the city in the first 2 weeks of the trial.

Budget and campaign impact:

This campaign truly captured the imagination of Bath's residents, businesses, schools, creatives and tourists. It generated vast amounts of PR and social media coverage, boosted visitor numbers to Bath over the summer and raised almost £140k for charity.