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The Bath Café of Europe comes to our Utopia

Is Bath a Utopia? Is it an “ideal” place to live? Are spa towns the ideal places to live? What makes Bath special compared to towns that were developed in the past for military, trade or political reasons? Why is our city, devoted to leisure, wellbeing and health over the centuries, so different from other places? Is the European spa town model one that should be applied to other towns in the future? These are some of the questions that will be pondered by the Bath “**Café of Europe**”, a prestigious debate taking place in the city as part of the Independent Bath Literature Festival, in development with Bath & North East Somerset Council.

The Café will take place at **Komedia** on **Thursday March 5th**, from 1.30 – 5.45 pm, in the presence of mayors and representatives from the major spa towns of Europe, and more than 100 delegates who have already registered for their free place via Bath Festivals. The **Mayor of Bath**, Councillor Cherry Beath will open the Café, and the President of EHTTA, Mr Guiseppi Bellandi will welcome everyone, before the debate proper starts with several distinguished authors and a panel of local experts, who effectively manage Bath’s “Utopia” every day.

In the morning of the Café, from 10-11, children from a special project called the “**Chancery of Lost and Found**”, led by Alice Maddicott as part of the Independent Bath Literature Festival, will present their ideas of the “ideal city” in a specially-commissioned performance. They will be joined by children from Widcombe Primary School, and an audience of European delegates for a discussion of their ideas.

Other aspects of the Café include a specially-written “**interactive novel**”, with characters that can be followed on Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter. They will “meet” some of Bath’s famous characters depicted by the **Natural Theatre Company** at a Civic reception at the Roman Baths after the café. “Beau Nash” also depicted by the Naturals will be at the main Café Event, bringing order to the proceedings!

The café will be recorded as a “travel diary” by **Andrew Lansley**, of Walk and Draw Bath, and will be filmed for the Source Project website by local company **Sunflower Films**.

Prestigious European meetings

Bath is also hosting two major meetings of European spa towns around the time of the Café. The first is the **Mayors Steering Group** for “The Great Spas of Europe”, a group leading a bid for “serial nomination” for World Heritage Status from France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Czech Republic. This nomination recognises the “intangible” values of our spa towns, and the important role they have played in the development of modern Europe’s history, politics, arts and even today’s tourism industry.

After the Café, **EHTTA** will also hold its **General Assembly** in Bath, welcoming delegates from its membership of 30 spa towns and regional associations from Bursa in the East, to Ourense in the West of Europe. Delegates from the Institute of Cultural Routes in Luxembourg will be there too, as EHTTA also runs the Route of Thermal Spa Towns, one of the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes. The EHTTA meeting will review the preceding Café of Europe events which have examined digital technology, spirituality and pilgrimage, travel writing, music, tourism, film and historical literature in the context of the spa towns, in order to shape a blueprint for the future work of the Association.

Cllr Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development said "The City is a leading centre of spa and well-being activity, and as such we operate in a global market. Events such as this enable us to learn and share best practice, and our partnership with Bath Festivals for the Café of Europe is bringing a special creative dimension to the week".

Cllr Cherry Beath, Mayor of Bath said "Bath was a forerunner in the historic European spa movement and the influence of what happened here spread across the continent. It is a pleasure to welcome a European audience to explore the legacy of our collective spa culture and to examine what this can mean for our future."

-ENDS-

Further Information

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Photocalls: 13.20 at Komedia, Bath for the Bath Café of Europe Debate
19.15 at the Roman Baths for the Interactive Novel

Members of the press and media are welcome to attend any aspect of the Café of Europe below – please RSVP to Catherine Lloyd, above.

10.00 - 11.00 The Chancery of Lost and Found, at Komedia
13.30 - 17.45 Bath Café of Europe at Komedia. Doors open at 13.00 for a prompt start at 13.30
19.00 – 21.30 The Interactive Novel and the Civic Reception at the Roman Baths (meet at ticket hall at 19.00) – Please note that the Civic Reception is by invitation only

PTO for notes to Editors

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1. The Bath Café of Europe is a free event. Tickets from www.bathfestivals.org.uk Tel: 01227 463362
2. The Bath Café of Europe is part of the “Source” Project, developed by the European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA), and part funded by the EU Culture Fund. Bath was a founding member of EHTTA in 2010 and continues to be a leading member of the Association.
3. The Mayors Steering Group of the Great Spas of Europe World Heritage serial nomination includes Mayors and representatives from Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany and Italy.
4. Pupils from Widcombe Junior School will be joining the “Chancery of Lost and Found” event between 10 and 11am on Thursday 5th March.
5. Speakers at the Bath Café of Europe are:
 - **John Carey**, writer and editor of “The Faber Book of Utopias”
 - **Ian Bradley**, lecturer with a lifelong fascination with spas and music and author of “Water Music – music making in the spas of Europe and North America”.
 - **Amy Frost**, architectural historian, curator and writer on the works of architect John Wood the Elder whose mystical inspiration created much of Georgian Bath.
 - **Christopher Woodward**, art historian, Museum Director and writer
 - **Susan Sloman**, an independent scholar and author of “Gainsborough in Bath”
 - **Gillian Clarke**, town planner, writer, and garden specialist with a particular interest in Prior Park garden, Bath.
 - **Christopher Pound**, architect, town planner, writer and World Heritage expert, author of “A Verve excellent treasure – values of the Bath spa resort”.
6. The Panel of Local experts are:
 - **Stephen Bird**, Head of Heritage Services, B&NES
 - **Tom Boden**, General Manager, Bath Portfolio, National Trust
 - **Tony Crouch**, World Heritage Manager B&NES
 - **David James**, Chief Executive, Bath Tourism Plus
 - **Belinda Kidd**, Director of Bath Festivals
 - **Peter Rollins**, Director of Marketing, Thermae Bath Spa
 - **Rhodri Samuel**, Director, Craneworks CIC
7. The Café of Europe will be chaired by **Paul Simons**, Spa Consultant and World Heritage Expert

Local artists and companies are involved in the Bath Café of Europe, and we are delighted to have their talents adding an extra creative dimension to the Café. Local artists and companies are involved in the Bath Café of Europe, and we are delighted to have their talents adding an extra creative dimension to the Café.

- **Andrew Lansley** of Walk and Draw Bath is the official “Diarist” of the Café and will be producing a series of sketches to document the events around the Café. Other travel diaries can be found at www.sources-of-culture.com and will be on display during the Café of Europe.
- **Sunflower Flims** will be filming the event, and the resulting footage will be put online at www.sources-of-culture.com and stored with the new International Resource Centre on Thermal Heritage, created as a result of the Source Project at the Valéry-Larbaud Museum and Library in Vichy.
- **The Natural Theatre Company** will be providing a Master of Ceremonies at the Café in the form of “Beau Nash”, and will inject an element of living history to the debate. The Naturals are also breathing life into four historical characters who will meet those in the “Interactive Novel” at the Roman Baths Reception in the evening.