



GREAT SPA TOWNS *of Europe*

Media Release

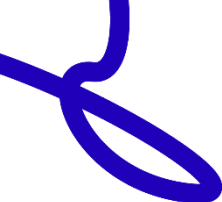
2nd March 2023

Great Spa Towns of Europe visits Bath for its General Assembly

The Great Spa Towns of Europe is holding its second General Assembly in the World Heritage City of Bath on 2nd March 2023. In attendance will be **Her Excellency Laura Davies**, the Ambassador and Permanent Delegate for the UK Delegation to UNESCO, and **James Bridge**, the Secretary General and CEO of the UK National Commission for UNESCO. The incoming chair of the new Great Spa Towns of Europe Intergovernmental Committee, who is also the Head of National Coordination World Heritage Austria, **Ruth Pröckl** will join other representatives of the seven State Parties which are the national representative of the seven countries of the GSTE, including **Alexandra Warr** the UK's representative and Head of International Strategy at Historic England.

Bath, which is one of the 'Great Spa Towns of Europe', a serial transnational World Heritage Site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2021 is hosting the General Assembly at the Guildhall. The meeting brings together all the Mayors and Site Managers from the eleven towns which make up the Great Spa Towns of Europe (GSTE), as well as Chiara Ronchini, who took up her new role as Secretary General of the GSTE just two weeks ago.

Mayor of Baden bei Wien in Austria, and Chair of the Great Spa Towns of Europe, **Mr Stefan Szirucsek** said "As one of the best known of our Great Spa Towns of Europe, the City of Bath has a very special place in our Association, and we are delighted to be spending a few days here on the occasion of our second General Assembly. I am looking forward to meeting my colleagues again, both from our member towns and from the States Parties. The city of Bath is a good place to decide the next steps in the care and preservation of our common world heritage. I am especially pleased to be welcoming Her Excellency Ambassador Laura Davies, alongside **Councillor Kevin Guy** at the Roman Baths reception on Thursday evening."

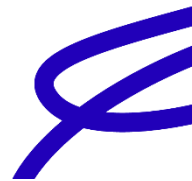


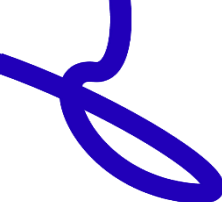
World Heritage Site Manager **Tony Crouch** said “Bath is the largest of the Great Spa Towns of Europe, and with its double World Heritage inscription is well placed to share examples of best practice and over thirty years of experience in this technical field with delegates who are gathering not only to discuss the business of the GSTE, but to celebrate and to learn during their three days in the city. This is a great opportunity for my colleagues in the Great Spa Towns of Europe to experience Bath’s unique architecture, and to learn about how we manage our World Heritage Site. Although the programme is tightly packed, we will be taking in the Royal Crescent and Circus, and will visit the City’s latest prestigious projects, including the Bath Abbey Footprint Project, the refurbishment of the historic parkland at Sydney Gardens, the newly-restored Cleveland Pools and of course our brand new World Heritage Centre.”

Not forgetting the thermal waters which are the original reason for the development of Bath, some delegates will have a chance to bathe at Thermae Bath Spa, before experiencing the magical setting of the Roman Baths at night, for a drinks reception and dinner hosted by the Leader of Bath and North East Somerset Council, Cllr Kevin Guy. The Mayors of the Great Spa Towns will also meet Mayor of Bath, **Cllr Robert Appleyard** at an intimate and quintessentially English gathering in the Mayor’s parlour for afternoon tea.

Local World Heritage and Spa expert and consultant, **Paul Simons** now becomes a Special Advisor to the Great Spa Towns of Europe, having served as its Secretary General since 2013 after three years of involvement in the early stages of the project. His involvement in the Great Spa Towns of Europe has helped this extremely complicated World Heritage Site to be nominated and then inscribed in 2021.

Speaking from his office near Bath, he said “This will be my last meeting with all the members of the Great Spa Towns of Europe, and it’s a bitter-sweet moment, as on the one hand I am pleased to be showing off this great city to colleagues, while on the other hand, I will also be handing over the reins to the new Secretary General, Chiara Ronchini. It has been an immense privilege to work with this group of spa towns, and I have to pay tribute to the many talented experts and dedicated politicians and officers who have helped me to see this project through to this stage. I am very proud of our collective achievement so far and am very happy that as a Special Adviser I will remain involved in the future.”





New Secretary General **Chiara Ronchini**, who has just returned from her first familiarisation visit to Baden-Baden in Germany said “For me, this visit to the beautiful City of Bath is going to be about meeting people, diving straight into the work of the Association with the General Assembly, and getting up to speed with all the projects that we will be working on for the next 12 months. I am immensely grateful for the support I have already received from Paul Simons and our Chair, Stefan Szirucsek, and I am looking forward to meeting and working with colleagues from the seven countries. Our transnational co-operation has already been recognised by UNESCO as an example of best practice, and it is an exciting time to be joining the Great Spa Towns of Europe.”

- ENDS -

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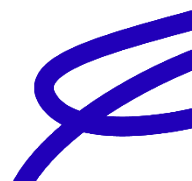
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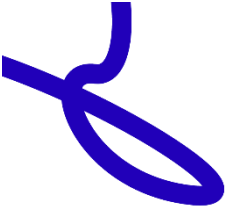
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Notes to Editors :

1. The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* is a ‘Serial Transnational’ World Heritage Site, comprising 11 famous historic thermal spa towns and cities in seven countries. The site was inscribed on the World Heritage List at the extended 44th World Heritage Committee meeting in Fuzhou, China on 24th July 2021.
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2. The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom represent a unique cultural phenomenon which reached its height in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as a particular urban type and form which deserves global recognition as a phenomenon which helped to shape Europe.
 3. Inscription on the World Heritage List is the highest international recognition for global cultural and natural heritage sites. It is managed by UNESCO (the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) on behalf of the United Nations from its headquarters in Paris.
 4. There are over 400 working spa towns across Europe and those selected are the *crème de la crème* of Europe's best. The eleven *Great Spa Towns of Europe* possess architectural ensembles, parks, gardens and landscapes which are maintained to the highest standards. They also maintain a wide range of outstanding cultural activities, welcome an international clientele and provide a continuing living tradition of leisure, health and well-being.
 5. All of the *Great Spa Towns of Europe* are easily accessible, often by rail, and offer a wide range of quality accommodation. Cultural activities and heritage attractions compliment the health and leisure treatments traditionally associated with spa towns. Local gastronomy and wine present a distinctive feature of each spa town along with more contemporary well-being programmes. Rural pursuits, walking, hiking and cycling in the surrounding therapeutic spa landscape are available for all visitors.

For more information and to discover the Great Spa Towns of Europe, please visit

www.greatspatownsofeurope.eu

