As the first ever celebration of Brown’s extensive works, the Capability Brown Festival brought together a huge range of events, openings and exhibitions.
Festival Partners

The Festival was managed by the Landscape Institute on behalf of a partnership comprising the Historic Houses Association, the National Trust, English Heritage, Historic England, Natural England, The Gardens Trust (with the County Gardens Trusts), Park & Gardens UK, Kolab, the Embroiderers’ Guild, NADFAS (now The Arts Society), the National Garden Scheme, the Royal Horticultural Society, VisitBritain, VisitEngland, Historic Royal Palaces, Bridgeman Images, Blenheim Palace and the Georgian Group.

The Capability Brown Festival was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.
Festival Partners and Supporters
Aim and intended outcomes

The overall aim of the Capability Brown Festival was to celebrate the contribution of Brown to the shaping of designed historic landscapes. The Festival organisers and funders hoped that it would result in:

- new and larger audiences for Brown’s work and for historic landscape design more broadly (‘audiences’ meant visitors, project participants, readers, viewers, researchers and students);
- more sites with an increased capacity to engage with the public;
- new knowledge about Brown and his work;
- more and better relationships between individuals and organisations with a shared interest in Brown and in historic landscapes.
Key Festival Achievements

Delivery of an effective and interesting national project through a very large partnership.

Activities lasting from a day to a year took place at sites designed by Brown or with a strong Brownian connection. These included properties in public, private and charitable ownership, some with employees, whilst others were run on a wholly voluntary basis. In some places the Festival was the sole supporter and in others, the activity was part of a larger tercentenary programme.

453 events were listed on the festival website, and were promoted by the Festival. These events featured the Festival logo and often used the Cosway portrait of Capability Brown, provided by Bridgeman Images. These included exhibitions, new interpretation, trails, workshops, films, performances, activities for children, readings, talks, publications and the commissioned audience development projects.

The Festival directly funded 38 organisations (mostly between £3k and £5k) through a strategic commissioning process, fulfilling the Festival’s two key aims of developing new audiences and interpreting Brown for the needs of the widest possible range of participants.

Use of the Cosway portrait of Capability Brown portrait was requested 183 times, with a minimal monetary equivalent of well over £25,000.

The Festival produced 24 leaflet maps for Brown sites in 2017, which can be downloaded from the interactive map or from the research page on the Festival website www.capabilitybrown.org. 141 Brown sites on the interactive map now have researched and illustrated entries covering both historic and biodiversity information.

The website will be kept live by the Landscape Institute and has also been collected by the British Library’s Web Archive.

More and better relationships have been developed between individuals and organisations with a shared interest in Brown and in historic landscapes, which will continue in legacy.

The Festival attracted at least 1,571 pieces of media coverage and thanks to the internet, is estimated to have reached a potential audience of 4.2 US billion.

Capability Brown, the man and his work, is now much better known and understood by the wider public, with a growing awareness of the manmade nature of historic landscapes.
- 36 commissioned Capability Brown sites

- Over 70 exhibitions

- 22 audience development projects...

...including Potter & Ponder - a prizewinning project at National Trust Croome working with and for children with wide-ranging special needs and learning disabilities to create a new sensory map, having a great impact in the area.
Potter & Ponder: Sensory Experiences At Croome

Please use this map to discover some of the wonderful sensory experiences our Capability Brown landscape has to offer.

- Interaction Space - A place to play
- Terra - Feel different surfaces and tree stumps.
- Ponder - A place to stop and think.
- Echo - Make a sound.
- Reflecting Space - Relax here for a while.
- Touch - Reach the leaves and the tree trunks.
- Seeing - Experience the view and landscape.
- Making Choices - Which cake would you choose?
- Light and Shade - Feel the rope, enjoy the light and shade.
- Shake - Lively sounds on the grass.

In the image, there are various sensory experiences indicated, such as feeling different textures, observing the landscape, and engaging in playful activities. The map is designed to enhance sensory experiences in a natural setting.
The total cost of the Capability Brown Festival was £1.93m, 53% of which was given in kind. HLF supported both the development of the Festival in 2014-15 (with a grant of £139,200) and its delivery in 2015-16 (with a final figure grant of £827,235, against a grant offer of £911,100.; the underspend consists of non-transferable VAT savings and not using the emergency contingency budget). Support in cash and in kind was provided by the other Festival Partners and by the individuals and organisations designing and delivering Festival activities around the country.

4,786 of hours of voluntary work were valued as an equivalent of over £920,000, with significant contributions from partners including County Gardens Trusts, NADFAS (now The Arts Society), the Embroiderers’ Guild and volunteers at the many sites which took part in the Festival. Volunteer hours were 47% in excess of the original target.
453 events listed on the Festival website
Press coverage to March 2017

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<td>standard PR calculator)</td>
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<td>Total online audience (inc. international)</td>
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<td>Total audience reach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total number of items</td>
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</table>
24 leaflet maps.

142 Capability Brown sites entries – on history & biodiversity
Lessons learnt

A project of this size and complexity will always end with an useful list of lessons learnt for any future projects.

Governance and Management

Arrangements for the governance and management of a time-limited event need to be kept as simple as possible, while providing the funders and partners with the assurances they need. HLF may be able to provide future partnerships with guidance on appropriate structures, processes and roles, but responsibility for these choices will always remain with the recipient of funds, not the funder.

When a project has had a long gestation period and plans have been adjusted to take account of unsuccessful applications for funding or the involvement of new partners or members of the team, it is important to confirm that all have the same understanding of the purpose and priorities of the project and the way it is going to be delivered. It is helpful if every member of a Project Management Board has a comparable level of delegated authority (from his or her organisation) to take a view and make decisions, on behalf of their organisation. This may help to reduce the number and length of delays in decision making.

A national celebration involving a large number and diverse range of partners and a programme of locally focused activity, delivered by paid professionals and volunteers, needs sufficient lead-in time to establish the necessary relationships and resources. Staff need to be in post at least a year before the first event takes place.

A distinction needs to be made between the overall direction of the staff team’s work by the Project Management Board, the leadership of the team by the Festival Director, and the role of employer, which should not involve more than the legal and operational aspects of employment, once staff have been appointed. The employer is likely to benefit from the support of a sub-group of the Project Management Board (including financial management and HR expertise). This group would meet regularly and ensure that issues were addressed and resolved, with copies of their minutes circulated to the Project Management Board to keep them up to speed.

The staff roles required to deliver the project and the relationship between those roles need to be designed by people with experience of delivering a similar event. If, at an early stage, it becomes apparent that the proposed staff structure is not fit for purpose or the appointment of someone with a particular set of skills makes it advisable to amend other roles and responsibilities, changes should be made. A senior member of the office-based team needs to be responsible for the day to day operational management of the project and needs the project management skills to achieve this. This need not be the responsibility of the director.

Contractors whose role is to develop materials for use by individuals delivering activity on the ground need to be appointed in time for them to finish their work and have it approved by the appropriate authority (e.g. a sub group of the Project Management Board or member of staff) in time for those materials to be of use. Agreement on who will have editorial control of the material delivered (whether an individual or a group) must be reached before the contractor is appointed.

A Festival that relies on a strong sense of local motivation and ownership needs a simple system for local partners to express their interest in an opportunity to be commissioned. Funding agreements need to be as simple as possible, while meeting the necessary requirements of accountability and reporting. The Festival organisers need to be familiar with the priorities and operating environment of those delivering the programme locally. Wherever their office base, the organisers need to be seen and heard around the country. Consideration should be given to where volunteers will be managed from within a national Festival. Volunteers may well be more interested in connecting with a local site or organisation that is part of a national project, than the central project itself, and volunteer management capacity should be allocated accordingly.

Future large partnership projects may benefit from developing a partnership agreement prior to the formal notice of their grant funding.
Lessons learnt continued

**Audience Development**

22 audience development projects were delivered by organisations with a very wide range of experience - from opening to the public for the first time to leaders in their field.

The disparate levels of experience and understanding of the term ‘audience development’ was a challenge for some and reflected in the level of innovative programming suggested in some responses to the call for Expressions of Interest.

A longer run in time would allow for development time in working with individual sites and organisations to identify their specific support needs.

**Communications**

**Internal**

Effective communication and the resources to achieve it are vital to the effective operation of the Festival organisation: communication that is appropriate in content and tone between partners and staff, partners and their colleagues or members, and between the Festival team and the individuals and groups delivering and supporting the Festival programme.

**External**

A social media and web strategy and plan and the skills to deliver it are now essential. The speed of developments (technology and practice) in communication makes it likely that a Festival with a lead-in time of more than a year will have tools available to it that were not available when applications for funding were being made.

The press team (whether internal or external) needs to be in place at least six months before the start of the Festival year so that it can familiarise itself with the subject matter and secure coverage in publications and programmes with long lead-in times. A larger budget may be difficult to justify in advance, but the experience of the Capability Brown Festival is that the investment paid off. For a national festival, with numerous local stories, better coverage may be achieved by a team with regional as well as national contacts.

It was essential for the success of the Festival media and press response that the Director was available at short notice for interviews across the country. Capacity to ensure such availability is recommended for future projects.

The catalyst effect of a growing public profile cannot be underestimated and capacity to deal with increasing interest to get involved should be built into future plans.
Volunteers gave 4,786 days support to the Capability Brown Festival worth over £920k
Legacy thoughts from partners on the Project Management Board.

Natural England
Working around a theme across different teams in a partnership or organisation brings different views and angles which helps to engage more people and is an approach that Natural England are keen to continued.

National Trust
Learning and rising to the challenge of interpreting 18th Century gardens and parklands was a key outcome of the Festival for National Trust who are now looking to stretch these ambitions and developing support for National Trust sites in advance of the 2018 anniversary of Humphry Repton’s death.

Historic England
We can build on the success and reach of the Festival to engage and involve people in historic and new landscape design whether visitors, students, researchers, designers and managers, owners, or volunteers. The Festival should be seen as a beginning.

Landscape Institute
Landscape now has a higher profile. Networks have been built between partners and it is important to keep those connections and build upon them.

The Gardens Trust/County Gardens Trusts
After Capability Brown came Humphry Repton, and that is still the case in the 21st century. Many of us are raring to keep up the momentum and so the Gardens Trust is taking a lead on producing a collaborative celebration to mark the bicentenary of Repton’s death in 2018.

Historic Houses Association
The HHA went into the Festival keen to encourage smaller independent historic house landscapes to open to the public either for the first time or to develop their offer, alongside raising the profile of the more experienced historic house landscapes and encouraging more innovative audience development projects through partnership working. We were encouraged by the energetic partnerships that developed at local level, which uncovered exciting stories and helped historic landscapes to engage with their local communities and tourists alike in new and different ways. The impressive media coverage of the Festival helped to raise the profile of historic landscapes in general — Brown or otherwise — which was hugely valuable for the sector as a whole. Our main takeaway in terms of legacy is confidence and capacity-building for our Members, many of whom will now feel more emboldened to engage in multi-partner projects in the future. We’ve also learned important lessons along the way about communication channels and managing members’ expectations from the outset!

Ceryl Evans, Director, Capability Brown Festival
The Capability Brown Festival has opened many new eyes to historic landscapes and helped to highlight their importance. 2016 was just the beginning.

Gilly Drummond, Festival Chair
Partnerships, especially at a local level, can achieve great things.
2016 was just the beginning...