



**Swindon Travel Choices**

**Swindon Summer Trails Challenge 2024**

**End of Project Report**



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## 1. Introduction

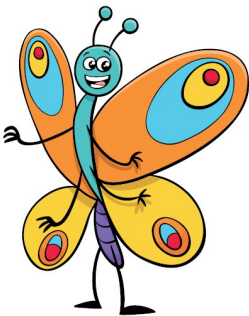


### Overview of project

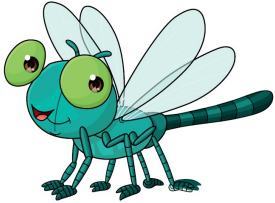
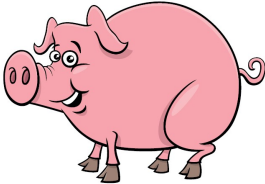

Inspired by [Torbay Council's "Healthy Selfie" Trails](#) in 2023, we designed 6 walking trails around Swindon for families to explore over the 2024 school summer holidays.

For each trail completed, children could visit a designated partner location and collect a limited-edition badge and enter a prize draw. The badges were an incentive for children to want to do all the trails and collect the set, whilst the prize draw enabled the monitoring of how many people had completed the trail.

The trails had distances between one and three miles long, and were designed to take in local arts, heritage and historical sites, as well as playparks and places of natural beauty. Each had an animal theme, which was reflected in the badge and the branding of the route.

The six trails were:

	<p><b>Trail One</b> (The Butterfly Trail) along Old Town Railway Path from Mannington to Old Town.</p> <p>A linear route of 2.2 miles from a retail park close to the new development of Wichelstowe to Swindon's Old Town. The Old Town Library was the partner location.</p>
	<p><b>Trail Two</b> (The Fish Trail) A loop of Coate Water</p> <p>A circular route of 2 miles around the lake at Coate Water.</p> <p>The café by the toilets and playpark was the partner location.</p>
	<p><b>Trail Three</b> (The Bear Trail) around Swindon's Railway Village to STEAM</p> <p>A loop of 1.1 miles around Swindon's Railway Village to end at the partner location, STEAM Museum.</p> <p>The Bear refers to "Brewer Bear" who is a mascot of the STEAM Museum.</p>

	<p>Trail Four (The Dragonfly Trail) along the canal from Wichelstowe to Swindon Town Centre. Starting from the pub in the heart of the new development of Wichelstowe, the 2-mile trail was a linear route into Swindon Town Centre, demonstrating the flat, traffic-free route that is available to residents.</p> <p>The Dragonfly is a nod to the Wilts and Berks canal boat called “Dragonfly”, which operates trips along the canal.</p> <p>The partner location was Swindon’s Central Library.</p>
	<p><b>Trail Five</b> (The Pig Trail) along the Eastern Flyer from Greenbridge to Swindon Town Centre.</p> <p>A linear route of 1.9 miles highlighting the traffic-free Eastern Flyer, which connects new housing close by at Oakfield to the town centre.</p> <p>The partner location was Swindon’s Central Library.</p>
	<p><b>Trail Six</b> (The Squirrel Trail) around Lydiard Park This circular route of 2.5 miles around the paths of Lydiard Park.</p> <p>The café by the toilets and playpark was the partner location.</p>

The trails all launched together on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2024, and the badges and prize draw were available until Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

The routes were designed to be accessible, with alternative suggestions provided where this wasn’t the case. Details for getting to the start of each of the walks by public transport was provided.

## 2. Project Aims and Objectives

The project aimed to

- Provide a free and accessible activity for families over the duration of the school holidays
- Promote local walks, green spaces, public realm and heritage
- Encourage residents to explore their local area and discover new routes
- Gather feedback on what residents enjoyed most about our green spaces and routes
- Promote bus use (especially in people that wouldn't normally travel by bus)

Aim	How was this to be achieved	How was this to be measured
Provide a free and accessible activity for families over the duration of the school holidays	Trails launched on the day that the schools broke up with social media and comms on the weeks running up to the launch. Reminder comms via social media continued throughout the challenge period.	Numbers taking part could be monitored by prize draw entries and number of badges being redeemed.  Comments on social media were monitored.
Promote local walks, green spaces, public realm and heritage	Trails focused on Swindon's flagship parks, the flyer routes to town, established canal and old railway paths, and the historic railway village.  Points of interest were highlighted in the trail leaflets.	On the prize draw entry forms, questions were included that gathered feedback on what residents had seen or learnt on the route.
Encourage residents to explore their local area and discover new routes	The summer trails challenge was particularly targeted at residents in new housing developments with the overview leaflet posted through doors on new estates where the trails ran in close proximity.  Trails were chosen to start or go near new housing developments.	Postcodes given on the prize draw entry could be analysed to see where the participants came from.
Gather feedback on what residents enjoyed most about our green spaces and routes	On the prize draw entry forms, questions were included that gathered feedback on what residents	Comments appear as an appendix to this report and will be shared with partners.



	enjoyed about the route.	
Promote bus use (especially in people that wouldn't normally travel by bus)	Half of the trails were linear routes and the trail leaflets gave information about how to travel back to the start by bus.	The prize draw entry forms reveal how many people participated on the linear routes. We can only presume the bus was taken back to the start, but we have no way of measuring this.

### 3 Project initiatives and outputs

A large amount of the work undertaken was focussed on setting up the infrastructure of the trails, the relationship with partners and the publicity schedule. This chapter discusses these steps.

#### Swindon Travel Choices branding

The Swindon Summer Trails Challenge was branded as a Swindon Travel Choices initiative. Swindon Travel Choices has been in existence for over 12 years and the summer trails challenge needed to be a visual brand which was not explicitly linked to the branding of the Council itself.

A page was set up on the Swindon Travel Choices website, linked from a banner on the homepage, and all social media comms linked through to this central page.



The skyline graphic (above) featured on the website and leaflets, promoting the inclusivity of the trails, and appealing to families.

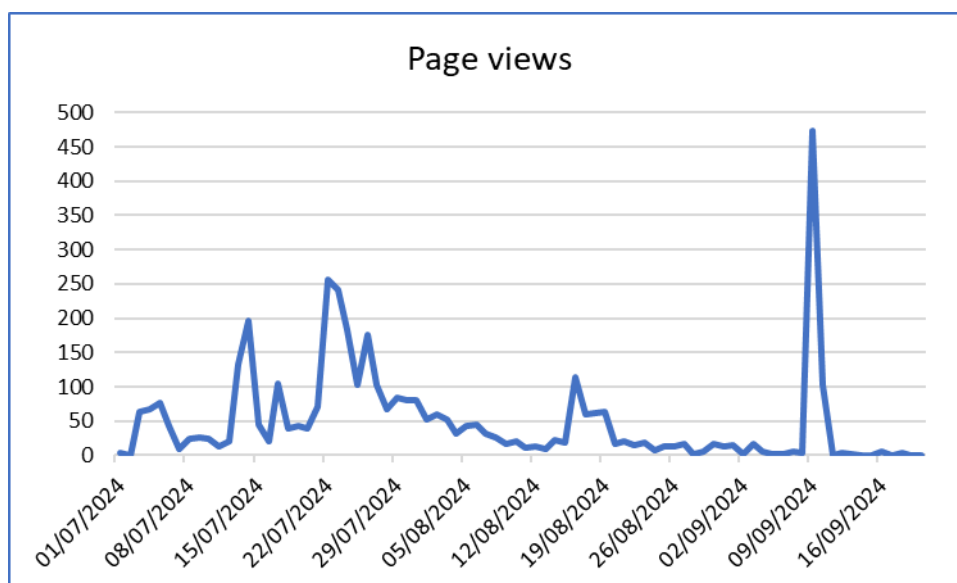
#### Project webpage

The project webpage [www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/activeswindonchallenge](http://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/activeswindonchallenge) was available early in the planning. It contained:

- An overview of the initiative.
- Details of the prizes to be won.
- A list of the trails and the partner locations.
- The trails leaflets to download as PDFs (available on launch day).
- The online prize draw entry form (available on launch day).

Once the challenge finished in September, the page was updated to past tense and a list of the prize draw winners appeared for transparency. The PDF links to the trail leaflets were left on the page for people that may want to continue to walk the trails as an ongoing activity.

The following graph shows hits to the webpage over the period from July 2024, though the challenge to the end of September 2024.



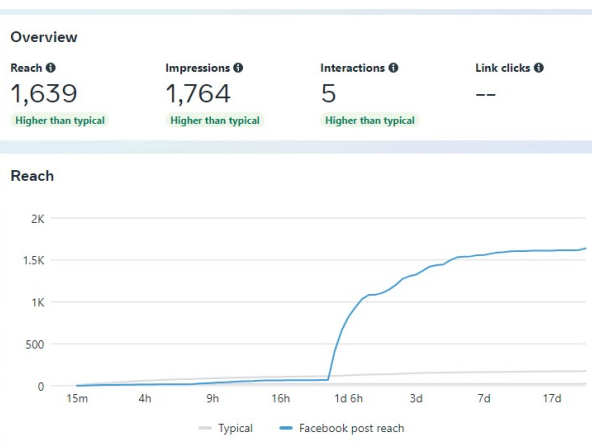
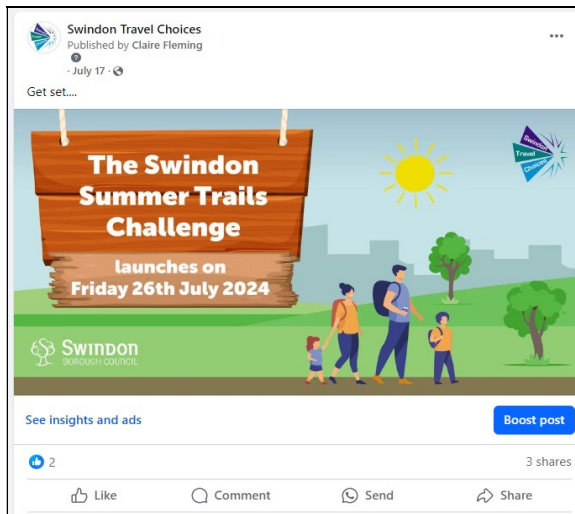
There were 3992 visits to the webpage over the 3 months. We can see that there are spikes of hits throughout July as various forms of publicity took place. The page visits wane gradually through the summer, with a small spike in the middle of August thanks to some refresher communications. The large spike at the end of the challenge was a result of prize draw entries being entered on the website (from the paper forms) and publicity concerning prize winners.

### Social media and communications

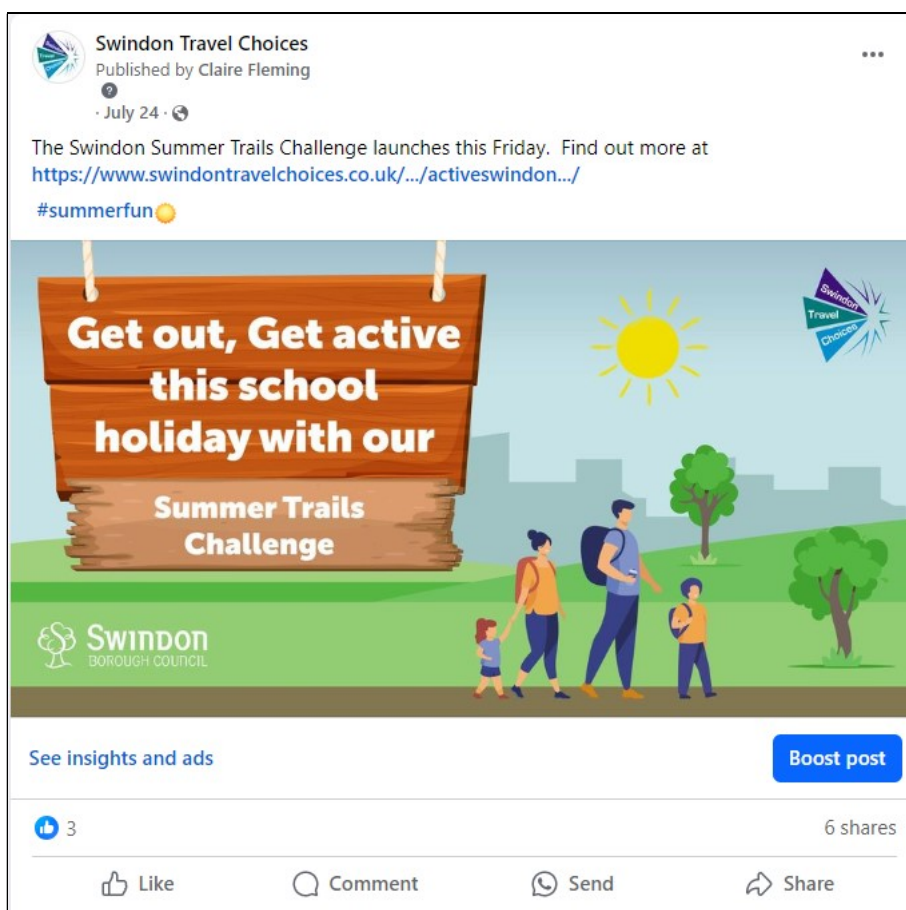
An important part of helping to ensure widespread recognition of the challenge has been to maintain a social media and communications campaign. A number of ongoing activities contributed towards this. In particular the team has:

- Utilised Swindon Travel Choices Facebook and X (Twitter) feed, along with Swindon Borough Council's Facebook, Instagram and X (Twitter) feed.
- Encouraged partners to share the social media posts.
- Informed Councillors and encouraged them to share details on the social media accounts for their localities.
- Utilised newsletters, such as the Swindon News, Highways News and the newsletter to headteachers at the 92 schools across Swindon.
- Used local print media outlets, such as the Swindon Advertiser and the Link magazine who share the story online and in print.

A selection of our social media posts is demonstrated below.



This teaser post went out just over a week before launch. It was reposted by Swindon Borough Council's social media team, resulting in a reach of 1639 people.

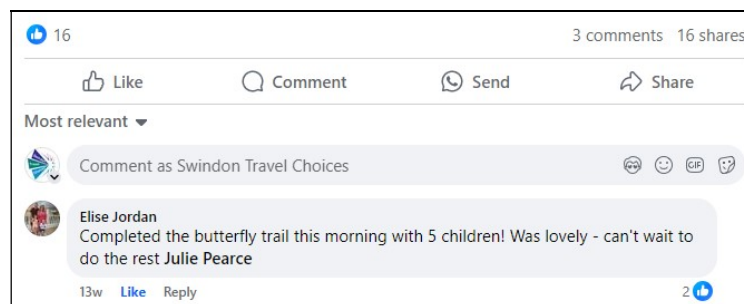


This Facebook post went out a couple of days before launch.

The Swindon Borough Council Corporate Comms team were engaged and scheduled a range of posts on the run up to launch and throughout the challenge period. Here is a selection:



There were positive comments on Facebook:



**Swindon Borough Council**  
July 26 · 🌐



Explore nature and Swindon's history with new family summer trails! 🌿

This summer holidays, families can discover more of Swindon with six new walking trails across the Borough.

The trails, which are all between one and three miles long, will take families to some great local arts, heritage and historical sites:

- 🦋 Butterfly Trail, along Old Town Railway Path from Mannington to Old Town
- 🐟 Fish Trail, a loop of Coate Water
- 🐻 Bear Trail, around Swindon's Railway Village to [Steam - Museum of the Great Western Railway](#)
- 🐉 Dragonfly Trail, along the canal from Wichelstowe to Swindon Town Centre
- 🐷 Pig Trail, along the Eastern Flyer from Greenbridge to Swindon Town Centre
- 🐿 Squirrel Trail, around [Lydiard Park](#)

You can download trail leaflets from the Swindon Travel Choices website or pick them up from your local core Library.



**Swindon Borough Council**  
July 27 · 🌐

This [#LoveParksWeek](#) why not explore nature and Swindon's history with new family summer trails? 🌿

The trails, which are all between one and three miles long, will take families to some great local arts, heritage and historical sites:

- 🦋 Butterfly Trail, along Old Town Railway Path from Mannington to Old Town
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- 🐷 Pig Trail, along the Eastern Flyer from Greenbridge to Swindon Town Centre
- 🐿 Squirrel Trail, around [Lydiard Park](#)

You can download trail leaflets from the Swindon Travel Choices website.

3 🗨️ 2 shares

👍 Like    💬 Comment    📧 Send    ➦ Share

## Trail leaflets

Six trail leaflets were designed – one for each trail. The A5 leaflet gave a starting point with “What three words” for people to identify the correct location. There were step by step instructions for following the trail and details of the partner location at the end to collect the badge and post the prize draw entry. The middle of the leaflet had a tear strip, with the inside right page reserved for the prize draw entry.

The prize draw entry asked for a name and contact email address, which was only to be used for contacting prize winners. For monitoring purposes, we asked for a home postcode, and number of adults and children who followed the trail.

There was also the overview leaflet that replicated much of the online information, and was available in the libraries ahead of the challenge starting.

The leaflets remain online at

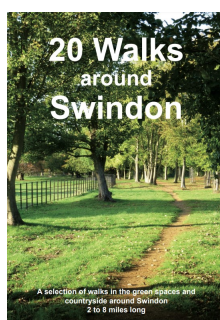
<https://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/home/activeswindonchallenge/>

## Prizes

Across all the trails, there was a grand prize draw for one winner to win £100 supermarket voucher. This was chosen for its universal appeal, and the winner could choose the supermarket of choice.

Each trail then had 5 runner-up prizes. These were chosen to support local small business or charity, and / or further promote sustainable transport.

- Food hamper (from local deli, Bloomfields).
- A Swindon walking book (produced by the local Ramblers group).



- “Active Swindon Challenge” T-shirts for all the family.
- Family pass to the STEAM museum.
- £20 credit voucher to redeem on Great Western Railway.

The winners were drawn using a random generator once the challenge had closed on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Winners were notified by email and names published on the project webpage.

## Badges

Using the animal characters for each trail, small badges (made from recycled plastic) were designed up. Due to the minimal numbers required by printing firms, we printed up 250 badges for each trail, but in the T+C's explained that badges were available to the first 200 people only.

At the end of the challenge, the partners returned unclaimed badges, and there were over half left for each trail. The image below shows the badges collected by one child, attached to a ribbon.



## Partners

We chose partners at the end of each trail that were neutral locations (ie not pubs / churches), accessible, and open every day, including at weekends.

The partners were;

- Old Town Library
- Central Library
- Coate Water café
- Forest café, Lydiard Park
- STEAM

Each partner had copies of each trail leaflet and a large A4 postbox that was branded as the place to post the prize draw entry form.



## Evaluation and learning

### Cost

Aside from staff time, the cost of running the Swindon Summer Trails Challenge was as follows;

Item	Cost	Notes
Leaflets (Design)	£600	<i>This in-house design work included the overview leaflet, 6 trail leaflets, the 6 badges and social media graphics.</i>
Leaflets (print) Overview Trail 1 Trail 2 Trail 3 Trail 4 Trail 5 Trail 6	£846 £642 £642 £642 £642 £642 £642	<i>We printed 1500 copies of each trail leaflet, but had to recycle around half of these at the end of the project.</i>
Postboxes	£338.50	<i>Can be reused for future challenges</i>
Badges	£900	<i>Enough leftover to use for future challenges</i>
Prizes Supermarket voucher Food hampers Books STEAM tickets T-shirts GWR vouchers	£100 £160 £18 £150 £0 £120	<i>T-shirts were leftover from previous challenge</i>
Advertising	Nil	<i>We utilised social media and word of mouth</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£7084</b>	

### Trail popularity

We noticed that the trails with the most prize draw entries were the circular routes in places that residents are most familiar with; Lydiard and Coate Water.

However, this did not tally with the number of times the trail leaflets were downloaded from the website. Trail One (Old Town Railway Path) was the first download in the list of leaflets and was downloaded far more than the other 5 leaflets.

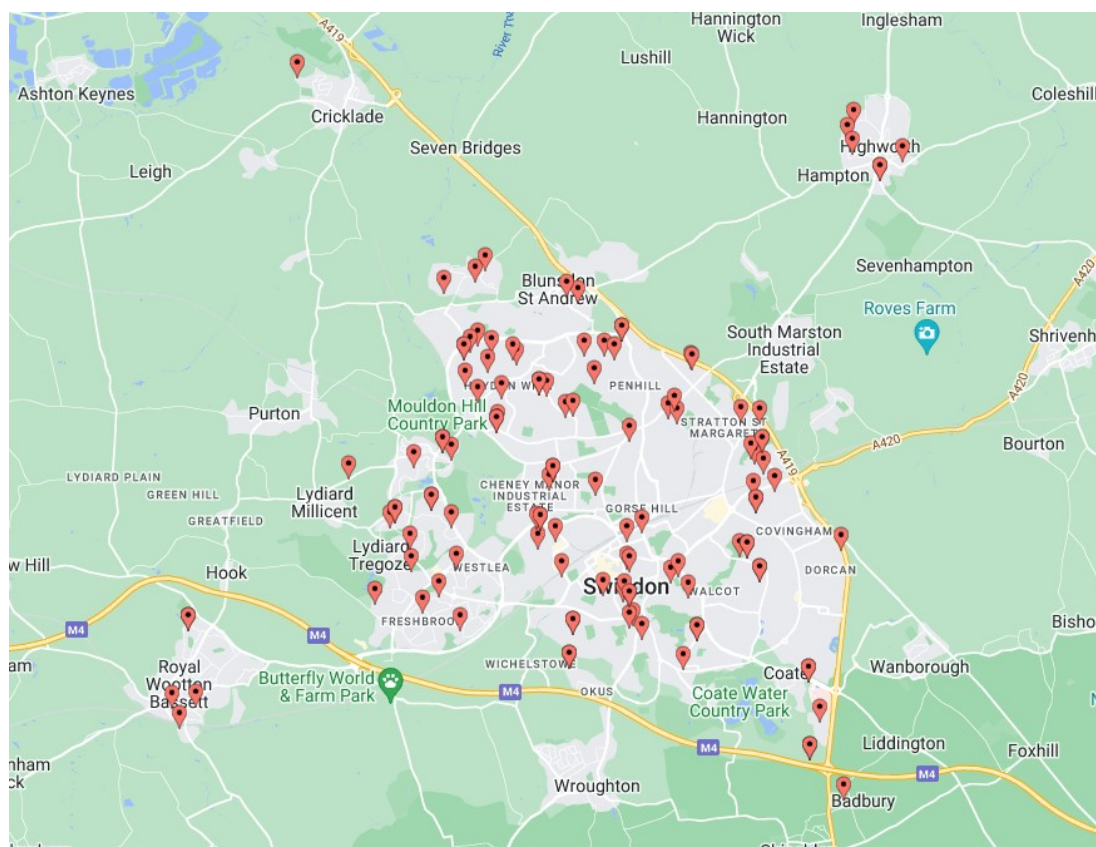
	Entries	Number of Trail leaflets downloaded from website
Trail 1 (Old Town Railway path)	33	425
Trail 2 (Coate)	70	295
Trail 3 (Railway Village)	51	221
Trail 4 (Wichelstowe canal)	38	248
Trail 5 (Eastern Flyer)	31	212
Trail 6 (Lydiard)	74	286

### Participation

From the prize draw entries, we could calculate the number of adults and children that participated in each trail. The entries revealed that the trails were walked 1036 times – by 460 adults and 576 children under 16.

### Home addresses

We asked participants for their home postcodes to try and discover whether we had attracted people from new developments. The map below shows unique postcodes of participants from the Swindon area (there were postcodes from Oxford, Dorset and Sheffield, but have not shown these) with duplicates removed.





We achieved a good spread of residents from across Swindon. In terms of new developments, there were postcodes from Marlowe Avenue (Oakfield), Coate (Western Gate) and Wichelstowe, but the numbers don't reflect the effort put in advertising the challenge to the new residents.

## Winners

Prize draw winners were notified by email and their names published at <https://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/home/activeswindonchallenge/>

Of the 31 winners, 3 email addresses bounced and 2 winners never responded to the email asking them to confirm their home address.

## Learning

### 1) Printing

It was unclear how many printed leaflets we would need. It transpired that we printed too many leaflets and had to recycle the leftovers as they were not suitable for ongoing use.

If the trails challenge is repeated in future years it will be easier to judge the number of leaflets required. It is also recommended that we investigate the cost of combining all trails routes into 1 brochure to keep printing costs down.

### 2) Offline prize draw entry

When inputting the paper prize draw entries it was easy to misread the hand writing and enter the wrong email address. This led to a small amount of prize winners emails bouncing back. For future forms, instructions such as "use block capitals" or "please write clearly" could be added.

### 3) Offering a variety of navigation options

In the trail leaflets we gave step-by-step written navigational instructions. These are not necessarily easier for people to follow and maps should be utilized in future (as well as the step by step instructions). To keep printing costs down, the maps could be in the form of a link to the digital format, including GPX tracks that participants could download.

There was feedback that the instructions for finding the starting points were unclear (which way to face) so small insert maps will be useful.

### 4) What 3 words

The leaflets utilized "What three words" for the starting point of each trail but not for the end points. This should be incorporated in future.



## 5. Ripple Effects

The evaluation of running the trail challenge has been discussed above, but other benefits can be identified, which are less quantifiable. We have identified some positives below:

### Co-working with partners

The trails challenge brought together partners from across the council and wider community, bringing benefits beyond the challenge itself.

Public health colleagues helped to define the challenge in terms of increasing the activity for families. Our partners at the Central and Old Town Library would have seen additional footfall as families collect leaflets, claim their badges and enter the prize draw. For some, this may have been the first time in a library, or a reconnection to the library.

The cafes at Lydiard and Coate would have also seen additional custom as families collect leaflets, claim their badges and enter the prize draw.

At the STEAM Museum, new customers may have entered for the first time, had their interest in Swindon's railway history piqued by the trail, and visited for the first time. They may have recommended the museum to family and friends. Extra purchases may have taken place in the gift shop.

### Family time

One thing that came about from the prize draw entries was the additional family time that the trails offered.

When asked what people enjoyed most about the Lydiard trail, the comments involved the joys of being with family or friends;

"Spending time with my family"

"We enjoyed the scenery and spending time together"

"Being outside together"

"Catching up with friends along the way."

Or mentioning the other benefits of nature that are good for improving mental health:

"Taking in nature on a beautiful day"

"Peace + quiet"

"Going into the forest and seeing trees and bugs"

"Exploring and seeing all the nature and swans on the lake."

### Girl Guide Badge

A parent got in touch to tell us that her 13-year-old daughter, TJ, had decided to complete the 6 trails challenge as part of her girl guiding Gold Award. TJ used the trail leaflets to plan her journey to each trail by bus or by cycle, then completed each trail and collected the badges. She then made up a Powerpoint presentation to deliver as part of the award. This contained photographs of the route and feedback and recommendations to the council. TJ gained her award as a result of her hard work.



## **Go Jauntly**

Each trail has been recreated on the free “Go Jauntly” app. The app curates walks with photographs, step by step instructions, as well as showing the route on a map. This means that the trails will be available for people to complete outside the dates of the trails challenge, and the app can be promoted for people to discover not only the trails, but other walks in the Swindon and surrounding area.



## Appendix 1

Prize draw entries

### Trail 3 – What is the most interesting thing you have learnt today about the Railway Village?

That the water tower holds 50,000 gallons of water & was made of wood  
How many people lived in one house  
I learnt that the GWR opened in 1873 with 140 workers, quickly expanding to 1800 employees by 1847  
The community centre used to be an armoury (know it was the hospital)  
The NHS founded in Swindon (Health Hydro)  
That 10-12 people lived in each railway cottage!  
The best preserved railway village in the UK  
That trains were built in swindon!  
Lots of different trains  
That 10-12 people lived in the 2 roomed cottages  
GWR opened on the first day of the year  
The Park  
Health and hydro has been there since 1890s  
I enjoyed looking at all the trains in steam museum  
How many people lived in the railway houses at one time  
Living conditions in the first years of the railway village were basic, homes had no running water & overcrowded & disease  
How many people fit in the tiny houses  
How small the houses were and what buildings used to be  
Where they lived and how GWR park was built for the families  
The railway village was established in the 1840s  
The way the cottages were beautifully built  
It's where the railway workers used to live  
That health hydro was docs and dentists has just swimming pool in its original use  
BSI Census records 14 people living in a two-bedroomed house in reading street  
About how there were no health & safety or first aid until st johns was introduced  
How old it is  
ISambard Brunel made the village  
Learning about the different buildings  
1 made by man & women, train made of iron  
That the central community centre was a hospital  
The houses slept 10-12 people!  
Working in a train it's very hard job  
That 10-12 people lived in the cottages  
Children got cake once a year in GWR Park at the children s park  
The size of the houses and how small they are  
That 10-12 people lived in one house  
From the 5yo: what the railway village was for!  
Medical Centre



I have learnt about the olden steam engine how they was before and saw a model of the trains passing they was before and saw a model of the trains passing through the tunnel

How tiny but how huge on impact on townsfolk

How many people lived in each of the small houses

The railway tracks by the STEAM museum

It is the best preserved railway village in the UK with 300 cottages listed.

GWR park was originally a cricket pitch

Renovation details for iconic buildings

Surprising 10-12 people often lived in a railway village house

Geese

"How super old the tiny houses are!"

#### **Trail 4 (Wichel canal)- What wildlife have you seen on the trail today?**

Butterflies and sparrows

Morhen, ducks, canal, robbin and parks

Moorhens, ducks, butterflies

Many butterflies, dragonflies and many mini bees also bugs

Butterflies, and many mini bearts and bugs

Ducks and Squirels

Heron, mallard ducks

Bees, Dragonfly, Flies, Moorhens, Heron, Ducks, Squirrel, Cat, Dogs,

Birds

Bird Butterfly and duck

Fish, Bird and ducks and butterfly

Ducks, Heron, Squirrels

Butterfly, Dragonfly, Squirrel, Birds, Spiders

Pigoen, butterfly

Peahens, ducks and a swan

Ducks, a swan and dragon flys

Birds, Ducks, Dogs, Insects

Ducks, Morehens, Dragonflies

Birds

Heron, Ducks

We saw robins, squirrels, dragon flys, butterflys, movehen, and ducks

Ducks, Squirrel, Robin

dragon fly

Heron, Ducks, Moarhens, Dogs, Birds

Heron

Ducks & birds

Squirrel

Heron

Butterfly, pigeon, squirrel, magpie, crow

Butterfly, bees, bird, grasshopper

Pigeon, Squirrel

Bird



Ducks, Moorhens, a heron and lots of insects  
Squirrel  
Ducks + Dogs  
Dragonfly, spiders and squirrels  
Morehens, ducks, squirrel, butterflies  
Birds, including a heron  
Swan , ducks

### **Trail 5 (Eastern Flyer) – What have you seen on any of the murals today?**

Bright flowers  
Bridge, cyclists  
Flowers, a woman reading, a bridge over a canal  
I have seen large painting on the walls. And also the marsh farm old bridge  
Runners, cyclists & golden bridge  
A girl reading a book  
Canal scene, Fox & bird, flowers  
Egyptians and rainbow girls  
Steam train, Brunel, family @ the beach  
Green bridge  
Eastern Flyer  
People, animals, bright colours, shapes  
Bright calaus  
Swindon and History  
cyclists, runners  
Fox & Bird  
Golden Lion Bridge  
Fox bluetit girl telephone bridge  
Painting on the side of the house of a canal  
Flowers  
Railway Wokers  
Jokes  
Roman, Dragon, Pig, Horse  
Bridge over water with people going over the bridge  
Fox and bird  
Bikes & Runners  
Fox looking at a bird  
Flowers, people running/cycling, geometric shapes  
Fantastic murals all about Swindon - steam trains, Brunel, family holiday scene, Egyptians near council buildings.  
Flowers, people on bikes, a person reading a book, a waterway and a bridge over it.



## Trail 6 (Lydiard) - What did you enjoy most about walking the trail today?

Running, the ice house, nice weather

I have enjoyed walking round the old pond and read about the history. (I scanned the QR code online)

I enjoyed watching the old pond and reading the history about it

Seeing the ducks, swans and dragonsflies round the lake

Finding new places to walk in the parks

Spending time with my family

Seeing 2 squirrels

I liked seeing the horses

I liked climbing

Going into the forest and seeing trees and bugs

Riding our scooters

Seeing the horses, playing in the park, walking

Taking in nature on a beautiful day

Nearly catching a squirrel

it was good family time

Hiding in the trees

Lookins @ all the nature

The nature

The weather was nice - sunny, cloudy a bit windy

Seeing the swans on their nest

Being out and seeing the park

Hanging out with friends

Nature

I loved to explore and spot different animals

Peace + quiet

seeing butterflies, bumble bees & horses

Play park & cygnets

getting and breathing fresh air

walking & park

park

Have ice cream

The mud hill

finding where to go

Playing seamonsters

Admiring nature

Seeing the squirrels

Listening to the water at the bridge

Walking Park

riding out bikes

wildlife

The lake

Walking, lakeside and place

spending time with the family at the place we got married



Trees

The ducks and geese on the lake

Great route through the outer park. Lots of dogs to say hello too

We enjoyed the scenery and spending time together

See all the lovely people & the nature outside

Seeing butterflies

Being able to walk there & back from home!

The shade! (HOT)

The old pond + bridge

The Park

The forest, swans and eating blackberries

The lake

Being outside together

Catching up with friends along the way. As well as seeing all the wildlife on Lydiard's lake.

The beautiful scenery including the lake with ducks and geese everywhere

Playing with my friends along the way

The play park at the end

The Lake

Church Building

The wildlife and beautiful scenery. We especially enjoyed walking through the woods and seeing the lake with all the wildlife.

I like to see the old pond and enjoy reading about the fish (Tench). I like walking on the bridge.

I enjoyed walking around the old pond and reading about the fish(Tench ,carp..) Queen Elizabeth visited the Lydiard Park in 1592. Muscovy ducks were sent as a gift to King Charles 2 for his new canal in St. James Park.

Climbing by the big tree

Seeing the ducks

Exploring and seeing all the nature and swans on the lake.

The fresh air

The sunshine and being with my family.

The chance for the boys to run free. They enjoyed the play park most.

We enjoyed being outside together on a nice nature walk