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AT THE HEART OF ALL THINGS

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New arrivals down on the farm

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The Chinese year may be coming to an end. But a real year of the pig is just beginning at Bath City Farm.

Volunteers at the farm in Twerton have delivered seven piglets to Molly, the attraction's two-year-old pig.

They spent sleepless nights looking after Tamworth Molly and her new offspring.

Helen Lerwill, the farm's volunteer co-ordinator, who was also present for the birth, said: "We are so pleased that all the piglets are doing well."

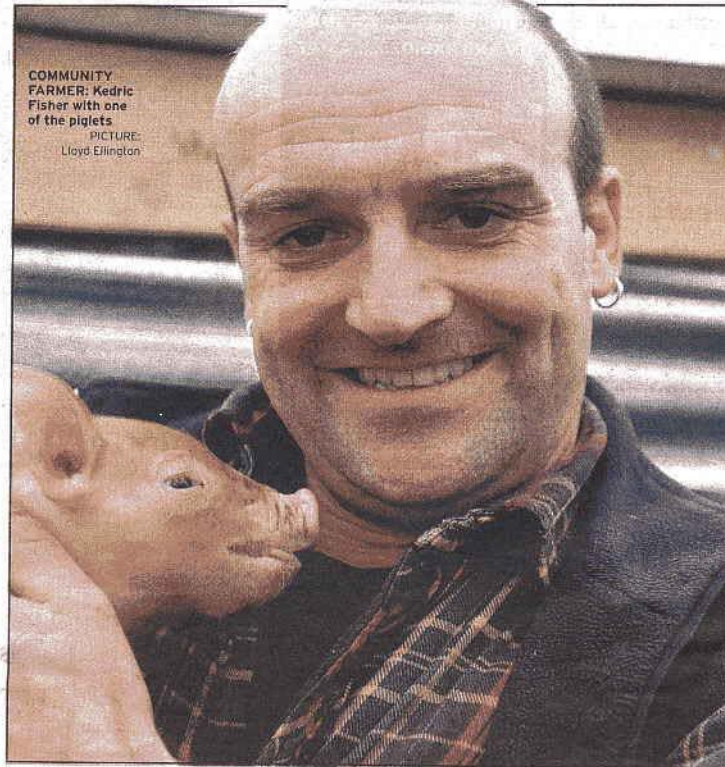
"If she had given birth during a really cold spell we would have surely lost some by now."

"We have no electric to power a heat lamp to keep the piglets warm, so we had to stock up on ceramic hot water bottles and plenty of straw to keep them warm."

"As it happens, though, the piglets completely ignore these and use their mother's big warm belly to snuggle up to."

"It is also very common for piglets to be squashed by their mother when she gets up or sits down, but so far we have been lucky."

Bath City Farm is open from 10am to 3.30pm on weekdays.



COMMUNITY FARMER: Kedric Fisher with one of the piglets
PICTURE: Lloyd Ellington

Bath's Year of the Pig



LITTLE PIGGIES: how one might look outside the Royal Crescent Hotel

Pigs could be flying into Bath to create a new talking point on the streets.

A former politician is leading a project to celebrate the fabled founder of Bath with a tourist trail of 100 model pigs.

Legend has it that King Bladud founded the city nearly 3,000 years ago after stumbling upon the healing powers of the hot spring waters while banished nearby as a leper with a herd of pigs.

Now former Freshford councillor Gitta Dawson has hatched plans to place 100 glass fibre models of the animals around the city.

Each pig will be around 5ft long and available for anyone to sponsor

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with a price tag of £1,000.

Every pig will feature a small plaque showing the name of the pig, the artist who customised it and the sponsor. The animals would stay in place for around six months.

Mrs Dawson was inspired by similar projects across Europe, including a scheme to place 260 sparrows in the German city of Ulm which hosted summer football by around 25 per cent.

Continental schemes have also seen the installation of 150 coloured storks in five small towns along the

Danube, and 150 teddy bears in the German town of Giengen.

Mrs Dawson said: "To have something nice and colourful and amusing will be very popular and do-able because it is temporary."

"The pigs would be installed in batches, not all at once, and it is expected that it will be a sport for residents to spot the new arrivals."

"They would be sturdy and have heavy bases."

After six months, the pigs would be auctioned off with a minimum price of £1,250.

Sponsors will get £750 back and every artist involved will receive 25 per cent of the sale price.

Any surplus income will be

donated to the Two Tunnels project which recently secured £1.1 million of lottery cash to open up a cycle path to the south of Bath.

Mrs Dawson said: "In Germany some have fetched amazing prices. "What often happens is that the sponsors are so fond of their pig that they want to hold on to it."

A planning application has been made to Bath and North East Somerset Council for the first 10 sites.

The first pigs would appear at Orange Grove, Ladymead Fountain, Walcot Street (two sites), Bath Abbey, Kingsmead Square, the Royal Crescent Green, St Andrew's

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What you think of the pigs



"They are not the best-looking things. As long as money hasn't been taken from us to fund them, it is fine."

Chloe Gibbings, 17, a student from Radstock



"I think they will look OK. It will be good for people to know the history behind Bath."

Jason Wakenshaw, 34, a window cleaner from Twerton



"I think it will be interesting and will attract attention. It will depend on where the pigs will be situated. They should be next to the spa."

Chloe Jervis, 27, a fashion design student, Bradford on Avon

Scheme hogs the limelight

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Green, The Circus and Ring Common Allotments in Royal Victoria Park.

Walcot Street trader Martin Tracy, who runs The Framing Workshop, has agreed to host two of the pigs and to help find artists to customise each pig with their designs.

He said: "Art on the streets brings a smile to people's faces. They will really make people stop and get people into areas of the city they wouldn't otherwise go into."

"The Framing Workshop has a reputation for doing silly things with its window anyway and this will fit nicely with what we do."

As a prince, Bladud discovered the city's hot springs when the pigs he

was looking after while in exile as a leper emerged free of skin diseases when bathing in mud. He then bathed in the waters, was cured of leprosy, and returned to the royal court.

The B&NES Council cabinet member whose responsibilities cover public areas of the city, Cllr Charles Gerrish (Con, Keynsham North), said: "I like the idea of items of interest that will form the topic of conversation for residents and visitors."

"I think the principle of having public art on display has a lot to commend it and, of course, having the King Bladud pigs in Bath reminds people that our ancestry is more than just Roman."



"It will be a waste of money. It isn't for local people - it will be for tourists."

Ron Kent, 49, a window cleaner from Kingsway