

Art project pioneers are pig sick of vandals

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Vandals in Bath are threatening to make a pig's ear of a public arts project designed to celebrate the city's founding father.

Dozens of fibreglass pigs have been introduced to Bath's streets and parks since April to commemorate King Bladud who, according to legend, was the first to discover the healing powers of the city's natural hot springs.

But over the past two months vandals have caused thousands of pounds of damage to more than 15 of the models.

On Saturday, two teenage girls were caught on a CCTV camera apparently trying to breaking the tongue off one of the latest pigs, known as Swinehound, in Camden.

Pigs have also been stolen, including a model decorated by youngsters at Radstock Youth Centre, and another named Piggery which was dragged from Royal Avenue and dumped in woods.

The King Bladud's Pigs project aims to have 100 pigs in streets and parks in the city and surrounding areas. Each model is sponsored by a business to the tune of £1,000 and personalised by an artist of their choosing.

There are now 88 in place and project organisers are calling on people to report vandalism and discourage anyone seen causing damage.



THE WHOLE HOG: project pioneer Gitta Dawson holds one of the pig trail maps with, at back from left, Paul Dabson, Sue Yates-Price, Justin Braithwaite, Megan Witty and Wendy Learoyd, sponsor of the Bath Chaps pig

PICTURE: Kevin Fern

Project event manager Justin Braithwaite said the sculptures were strong enough to take the weight of an adult but organisers did not expect "wilful damage".

He said: "It's very dispiriting that this happens in our city, when similar displays in other cities in Europe have no such problems.

"We want to get the last few pigs out on display but find ourselves distracted by rescue and repair work."

The project team is now in close touch with police who have agreed to keep a close eye on CCTV footage and spread awareness among officers and community support staff.

A police spokesman said:

"Police have been informed about a handful of incidents where damage has been caused to the pig sculptures in Bath.

"Officers have conducted house-to-house inquiries as part of their attempt to identify the offenders. It is unlikely that any of the offences are linked."

Meanwhile, the latest additions have set up home in the city's most exclusive address.

Corsham-based artist Paul Dabson has created two new pig sculptures in the Royal Crescent which bear the faces of famous men and women linked to the city. The male pig 'Bath Chaps', which is sponsored by Zest Concierge, features socialite Beau Nash, astronomer William

Herschel, entrepreneur Ralph Allen, actor Johnny Depp and MP Don Foster.

Mr Dabson has also designed 'Bath Belles' which features the faces of female athletes, actresses and authors including Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Sarah Siddons and Jennifer Biddall.

Bath Belles is currently without a sponsor but a group of Royal Crescent residents is looking to club together to back it.

Project organisers have also published an A3-sized guide with a map listing the locations of each pig. The maps are available for £1 at the tourist information centre in Kingston Parade, Bath Abbey shop and at Bath Aqua Glass in Orange Grove.