



**Celebrating the Cascade**  
**Summary Interpretation Plan**



Chatsworth House Trust is a Registered Charity No. 511149

## 1. Background

The Cascade is an iconic and much-loved Grade I water feature within the Grade I heritage gardens and landscape of Chatsworth. As the central water feature in Chatsworth's garden, the Cascade has amazed, delighted and awed visitors since its inception in 1696. It is now one of the UK's most important surviving 18th century water features, and one of the few remaining early aspects of Chatsworth's formal gardens – while the rest of its surroundings have changed in line with changing aspirations, uses and tastes, the Cascade would be just as familiar to a visitor of 1724 as one of 2024.

The Cascade itself is an accumulation of many of the finest designers, craftsmen and engineers of the 18th and 19th centuries. Whilst it's the crowning jewel of water features at Chatsworth, it sits atop a hidden myriad of complex systems responsible for moving and distributing water around the estate. An early 18th century system that was much ahead of its time and remains a great example of sustainability today.

The water artery and associated features and elements, present a unique and highly significant example of early 18th century natural and man-made engineering. Together as a sequence, it presents a multitude of opportunities to study architecture, horticulture, natural environment, social history, art and design, engineering and much more.

## 2. Interpretative Approach

### Aims and Aspirations

The aims and aspirations for the interpretation element of the Celebrating the Cascade project have been developed in partnership with communities, staff and wider Chatsworth stakeholders.

- Better tell the stories of the Cascade and the wider water artery - with a particular focus on information that is currently not showcased or understood.
- Create an inclusive interpretive offer that makes space for a breadth of engagements - from playful and active to reflective and subdued.

- Create a scheme that attracts and engages a more diverse range of audiences.
- To deliver a suite of interventions that cater for various audience needs/interests.
- Create a scheme that helps facilitate and support a broad range of diverse activities that enrich lives and champion communities.
- Create a scheme that helps promote wellbeing with input from Derbyshire Mind.
- Create interpretation that embeds community input and contribution and creates further space for ongoing collaboration.
- Be ambitious and unexpected, yet sensitive to the historic environment.
- Offer a new level of equitable access to Chatsworth and its story - crossing pay barriers and ensuring paying and non-paying visitors have a meaningful experience.
- To deepen engagement and relevance for Chatsworth's audiences.
- Improve and increase the presence of the natural and built assets at Chatsworth.
- Celebrate heritage assets - allowing them to shine more brightly and within relevant context.

Celebrating the Cascade interpretation should:

- Be community driven.
- Be accessible in both content and design.
- Be influenced by the Devonshire Group Brand Guidelines in both tone of voice and style.
- Be driven by CHT's interpretation strategy.
- Speak to The National Lottery Heritage Fund investment principles: saving heritage, protecting the environment, and inclusion, access and participation.

Visitors should leave their visit having learnt about:

- The significance of the Cascade and its story.
- How advanced and innovative the water artery and water features are.
- What the entire water artery looks like, how it works and what it does.
- How the water artery and water features are cared for - behind the scenes
- The importance and role of water at Chatsworth.
- Who were the significant characters in the story of the water artery.
- What are the key events in the story of the water artery.
- How the Cascade links to other water features in significant houses/sites across Europe as part of our historic story.
- The importance of water as a precious resource globally and what we are doing at CHT to combat climate change/increase biodiversity in the context of the Cascade and other water features in the garden.

Visitors should have **the opportunity to feel:**

- Proud of Chatsworth and its landscape.
- Connected to the stories of people, place and progress.
- Connected to nature.
- A sense of mindfulness.
- A sense of playfulness.
- Inspired by the craftsmanship, innovation and creativity embedded in the water artery and associated features.
- Welcome and included.
- The stories and content is relevant to them and their lives.

Visitors should have experienced:

- An accessible experience.

- Opportunities to get tactile.
- Opportunities to be playful.
- Opportunities to be creative - onsite and post-visit.
- Reflection and mindfulness.
- Beautiful views of nature and the landscape.
- Revealed views of historic structures or aspects that cannot be viewed without augmentation (digital and physical).
- Routes and areas that currently have lower footfall.

## Interpretative Framework

A framework for interpretation was developed in consultation with community groups, schools and staff. These themes and stories have also been tested against our audience segmentation research.

### Key message

Chatsworth as an architect of water: water runs through Chatsworth like blood in veins, the two are intrinsically intertwined. For over 400 years, Chatsworth has cultivated controlled the lifeblood – for function, joy, decoration and much more.

### Core Narratives

Chatsworth as an ecological haven:

- Habitats – newts and crayfish who have made the water artery home.
- Plants and nature.
- The trout stream.
- The River Derwent.

#### Chatsworth as a place of community:

- Gardener's and landscape teams of the past.
- Visitor's and their stories and memories.
- Gardener's and landscape team working at Chatsworth today.
- Joseph Paxton.
- James Payne.
- Monsieur Grillet.
- Queen Victoria's visit.
- Henry Cavendish.

#### Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity and ideas:

- Water turbines.
- Creation of the Emperor Fountain.
- Man-made lakes.
- Gravity-fed system.
- Art and design of the built forms.
- Installation of the Wellington Rock.
- Cavendish's water experiments.

#### Modes of interpretation

An aspiration for the interpretive scheme was to create engaging interpretation that did not detract from the beautiful landscape at Chatsworth. Consultation partners stated that they wanted to feel the interventions had 'always been there' and they didn't want to be cognitively overwhelmed. However, consultation also told us that our audiences want information.

To overcome this challenge interpretation should take a layered content approach. This will largely be supported by a built hierarchical system but also by using trails and digital interventions.

### Trails

To relieve the pressure on the built infrastructure we will co-produce a series of trails that can be accessed in physical, paper-based form from key locations onsite, or downloaded on the website. Some trails will offer subject specific information and routes that best highlight this – for instance, an engineering trail. Other trails will provide suggestions for routes around site that offer themed experiences, for instance playful, calming, or adventurous days. These experiential trails **will be co-produced with Minerva Learning Trust.**

### Wellbeing booklet

To work in combination with the experience trails we will create a booklet that centred around mental health and wellbeing. This booklet's content and design will be co-produced by staff and users of Derbyshire MIND.

**Details on our plans for co-production can be found in our engagement plan.**

### Digital Interpretation

To continue to layer interpretation and offer addition information to visitors, digital will be a key asset in bringing the story of the Cascade and water artery to life. Digital will be used to uncover hidden elements of the water artery such as how the pipes feed the gravity fed features. It will bring characters to life. Digital will be used sparingly, with an eyes up approach. Celebrating the Cascade includes an oral history strand and the recordings collected should form an element of digital interpretation.

Connectivity and mobile reception can be challenging on site so consideration of how to create accessible digital interpretation solutions within that context should be made.

## Physical Interpretation

To help address the challenge of differing locations, visitor needs and landscape requirements/sensitivities differing forms of on-site interpretation will be offered.

Physical interpretation should include:

- Light touch wayfinding will be added to existing wayfinding to help visitors navigate the water artery.
- Wayfinding plus designs will provide stories of the Cascade and site whilst helping visitors recognise key features of Chatsworth and orientate themselves.
- High level interpretation hubs will sit at key points on the water artery to share the Cascade narrative. Depending on the area of site, these might provide interactive opportunities.
- Interpretive benches carrying short pieces of interpretation and providing moments of rest will be installed. Where benches are already situated, interpretative panels or additions should be considered to make sustainable use of our resources.

We will work with the Level Centre to inform our designs, creating accessible, entertaining interpretative moments across site.

## The National Lottery Heritage Fund Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement of our funders, including but not limited to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, should be creatively considered and included in interpretative designs

## Interpretative and Wayfinding Locations



Modes of interpretation have been plotted onto a map of site to ensure the narrative flows evenly. 56% of interpretation sits outside of the paywall offering an accessible visit to Chatsworth. To ensure we have addressed all core narratives, a content development plan setting out modes of physical interpretation and the narrative content has been included in this plan.



Location	Purpose	Theme	Content	Digital Strand	
				Y/N	Content
Sensory Garden (Cascade Hub)	<p>Primary content delivery device for the Cascade.</p> <p>What is the Cascade? Why is it important? What's its place in the water artery?</p> <p>Key dwell point</p>	<p>Chatsworth as a place of community.</p> <p>Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity and ideas.</p>	<p>How the Cascade was built/evolved, summary of the water artery, Monsieur Grillet</p> <p>Those that built the Cascade. Story of the restoration both during and after the project. Invitation to visit the Cascade</p> <p>Smaller interactive elements would work here. Access Audit has suggested a tactile model of the Cascade and House - this could be explored at the Hubs</p> <p>The significance of the Cascade and its story' – could we include reference links to other water features in significant houses/sites across Europe and the designers as part of our historic story.</p>	Y	<p>Reveal content: AR of pipes/digital copy of water artery diagram</p> <p>Access Audit suggested a 3D VR tour of the Cascade House- could look at using Matterport as we have done in the house.</p>
Paines Mill (hub)	<p>Main content delivery device. Information about the Mill, its connection to the water artery and why its significant.</p> <p>Dwell point.</p>	<p>Chatsworth as a place of community.</p> <p>Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity.</p>	<p>Summary of the water artery - Severn Trent Water main (laid with a Steam train but still the main water main in the area) - running through the park - could provide photos of when this was opened up. How the landscape team look after the park, invitation to pause. James Paine.</p>		
Emperor Lake (Hub)	<p>Main content delivery device for Emperor Lake, what is it, why is it important, what is its role in the water artery?</p> <p>Critical dwell point.</p> <p>Outside pay barrier.</p>	<p>Chatsworth as an ecological haven.</p> <p>Chatsworth as a place of community.</p>	<p>Plants and nature Lakes - constructed, not natural, but now a thriving home to nature Habitats - newts and crayfish</p> <p>How the landscape team work to protect these habitats. 'The importance and role of water at Chatsworth' could include the importance of water as a precious resource more generally in an environmental context and what we are doing at CHT to combat climate change/increase biodiversity in the context of the Cascade and other water features in the garden, hydropower, crayfish, reducing leakage, relaxed planting schemes</p>		
Stand wood Hub (in woods)	<p>Main hub content for Stand wood area.</p>	<p>Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity and ideas.</p>	<p>Summary of the water artery. Gravity fed system - this is best place for interactives and water play. Point out the view of the Cascade Pond and Cascade. View up the hill of water artery.</p>		

	Why is this area so important for Chatsworth and the water artery?  Key dwell point				
Stand wood Hub (adaptation of existing structure)	Main hub content, why is this area so important for Chatsworth and the water artery? Key dwell point.	Chatsworth as an ecological haven. Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity and ideas.	Introduction to the water artery (explaining the walk) New waterways walk.  Continued use of the spotters guide but with inclusion of water habitat.		
Kitchen Garden (furniture)	Moment to pause and take in the surroundings.  Deliver emotive quote/quick information (eg. Date of creation, poetic statement, names of key people involved).	Chatsworth as a place of community.	Tying to practical use of the water artery covered in the wayfinding plus in this area. Poetry commission?	Y	Audio of the Cascade or poetry
Emperor Fountain/canal pond (furniture)	Moment to pause and take in the surroundings.  Deliver emotive quote/quick information (eg. Date of creation, poetic statement, names of key people involved).	Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity.	Turbine Gravity fed system Creation of Emperor Fountain	Y	AR of pipes/ video of turbine/ diagram of turbine/diagram of the water artery.
Derwent River (furniture)	Moment to pause and take in the surroundings.  Deliver emotive quote/quick information (eg. Date of creation, poetic statement, names of key people involved).	Chatsworth as an ecological haven.	River Derwent, poetry commission?		

Route to Sowter Stone (furniture)	<p>Moment to pause and take in the surroundings.</p> <p>Deliver emotive quote/quick information (eg. Date of creation, poetic statement, names of key people involved).</p>	Chatsworth as a place of community.	Invitation to pause, visitor and staff memories, poetry commission?		
Swiss Lake (furniture)	<p>Moment to pause and take in the surroundings.</p> <p>Deliver emotive quote/quick information (eg. Date of creation, poetic statement, names of key people involved).</p>	Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity and ideas.	Constructed lakes - name and date of construction.		
Ice Pond (furniture)	<p>Moment to pause and take in the surroundings</p> <p>Deliver emotive quote/quick information (eg. Date of creation, poetic statement, names of key people involved).</p>	Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity and ideas.	Constructed lakes - name and date of construction.		
Brick Pond (furniture)	<p>Moment to pause and take in the surroundings.</p> <p>Deliver emotive quote/quick information (eg. Date of creation, poetic statement, names of key people involved).</p>	Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity and ideas.	Constructed lakes - name and date of construction.		
River Derwent (wayfinding plus)	<p>Wayfinding and orientation information.</p> <p>Additional interpretation, such as context or key facts.</p>	Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity and ideas.	Tie water artery story together here. Instruction to look up and down the water artery.		

Willow Tree Fountain (wayfinding plus)	Wayfinding and orientation information.  Additional interpretation, such as context or key facts.	Chatsworth as a place of community.	Queen Victoria visiting and her description of the Willow Tree		
Ring Pond (wayfinding plus)	Wayfinding and orientation information.  Additional interpretation, such as context or key facts.	Chatsworth as a place of community.	Pipes and gravity fed system.		
Kitchen Garden (wayfinding plus)	Wayfinding and orientation information.  Additional interpretation, such as context or key facts.	Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity.  Chatsworth as a place of community.	Practical use of the gravity fed system now (gardeners and landscape team today).		
Trout Stream/cascade pond (wayfinding plus)	Wayfinding and orientation information.  Additional interpretation, such as context or key facts.	Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity and ideas.	Pipes, gravity fed system.		
Grotto pond (wayfinding plus)	Wayfinding and orientation information.  Additional interpretation, such as context or key facts.	Chatsworth as an ecological haven.	Habitats.  Garden and landscape team today.		
Calton Lees (wayfinding plus)	Wayfinding and orientation information.  Additional interpretation, such as context or key facts.	Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity.  Chatsworth as a place of community.	Welcome Charity message.  Invitation to walk.  Water highlights in the park.		

Queen Mary's Bower (wayfinding plus)	Wayfinding and orientation information.  Additional interpretation, such as context or key facts.	Chatsworth as a place of community.	Explain the building  Look at the view of water features in the garden and park, history of former water garden in that space, discussion of whether these water features were for food/display? The ponds here were called stew ponds - were the fish for eating or display? Explain that the moat can still be filled, Ecological stories around the habitats formed.		
Kissing Gate (wayfinding plus)	Wayfinding and orientation information.  Additional interpretation, such as context or key facts.	Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity.  Chatsworth as a place of community.	Welcome to Chatsworth Charity message.  River Derwent walk.  Highlights in the park.		
Route to Sowter Stone (wayfinding plus)	Wayfinding and orientation information.  Additional interpretation, such as context or key facts.	Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity and ideas.	What can you see from this - view finder/ path of the water artery.  Invitation to pause.		
Rock Garden (wayfinding plus)	Wayfinding and orientation information.  Additional interpretation, such as context or key facts.	Chatsworth as a place of ingenuity and ideas.	Installation of Rock garden and the gardeners that achieved this - could add to existing history maker's stone.  Could add a wayfinding plus sign at Wellington Rock to the Strid.	Y	Audio Story