

Lily Thorne

ALIX

Alix has had a 30 year long relationship with the Hannover Bristol Project through his connections of education and sport. He visits Hannover often to keep in contact with his long-term friendships – he’s been six times in the last few years. His job for the project was to develop the relationship with Hannover “I feel privileged to have the overview of the relationship”.

The twinning of Hannover and Bristol took place in 1947, two years after World War II ended. It was “the brave pioneers” who set up the twinning, says Alix. “It was about building a stronger Europe so that we don’t bomb each other anymore”. Bristol was the first city to reach out to Germany. After the war both Bristol and Hannover were left with terrible damage to their cities. When Bristolians heard about children in Hannover without shoes they gathered footwear and clothes together to send to the city. This was the beginning of the blossoming friendship.

Hannover was badly bombed which left the centre flattened; it now has four scale models in City Hall which represent the buildings which stood before. The present day centre of Hannover is filled with a functional public transport system and lots of busy bikers. Hannover worked hard on trying to keep their traditional designs while Bristol was “busy modernising and becoming a more urban city”.

The landscaping of Hannover is much flatter than that of Bristol resulting in a much less sweaty cycle to work. The culture and traditions of Bristol and Hannover are very different, Bristol is well known for big nights out and great student living with lots of diversity from streetwear fashion to cultural experiences. Hannover is known for beautiful flat landscapes and cultural escapes through the various galleries, museums and theatres. I asked Alix what he would bring to Bristol from Hannover “the cycling infrastructure and culture is something I would bring to Bristol, as well as the public transport, we all know what the buses are like here”. Hannoverians take pride in being known as a “green city”.

Even covid couldn't keep these two cities apart. It made the Bristol Hannover project much more efficient. Via zoom bigger groups of people were able to get together and discuss events and the organisation leading up to the 75th anniversary.

Through the work Alix and many other project ambassadors have done the relationship between the two cities has remained strong and intact. Generations of children have been a part of the exchange group and have been able to swap countries and experience the different cultures of the cities, which in turn is only building up the relationship even more.