

BATS IN CHURCHES

HELP AND ADVICE FOR CHURCHES WITH BATS



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Bat Conservation Trust



ABOUT BATS IN CHURCHES

Many of our local parish churches are home to bats. In most cases bats and people live alongside each other very happily. In some churches, however, bat droppings and urine can cause serious damage to the historic interiors and create a massive cleaning burden for the church.

The Bats In Churches Project has been working to find a range of practical advice and solutions for churches and bats to help them live together without conflict.



CLEANING & CONSERVATION ADVICE

A full set of guidelines and advice for cleaning churches with bats is available to download on the Bats In Churches website, along with online videos demonstrating various cleaning techniques on different materials. Printed copies of the guidelines are available from the project as well.

For delicate items like wall paintings, painted wood or highly carved monuments and memorials, we would always recommend getting specialist conservation advice before you start cleaning to prevent any damage.

MORE ADVICE & TRAINING

We have a wide range of training and advice available through our online eLearning page. The training includes planning and running events, writing interpretation, working with churches and carrying out simple bat surveys.

For more information batsinchurches.org.uk

NATIONAL BAT HELPLINE

The National Bat Helpline is run by the Bat Conservation Trust on behalf of Natural England and can usually give free advice on works in churches with bats, although some major works may not be covered by the service.

They may be able to advise you directly or send a Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor to your church. Please have as much information as possible about your church, your bats and any planned works to hand before you contact the helpline.



COLLECTING INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR BATS

The more you know about your bats, the better you will be able to plan any mitigation or works at the church. Having this information will help you get the best advice, and could reduce the number and cost of any surveys you may need before works take place.

Throughout the year, record the amount and location of droppings in the church. This could simply involve marking them on a basic plan of the church once a month or before you clean. Take photographs to show the amount of droppings that accumulate between each clean. You could also watch the church at dawn or dusk and note where bats are entering or exiting the church.

Your local bat group may be able to help you get started with surveying or lend you equipment such as bat detectors. You may know an ecologist or wildlife expert in your local community who would be willing to help.

There is more detailed advice on recording your church bats on our website.



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PRACTICAL HELP WITH BATS

If bats are causing damage to the inside of your church there are lots of practical steps you can take, from protecting individual items to more complex mitigation work. Each church and bat roost is unique and you will need to work with an ecologist, architect or conservation specialist to design mitigation that is right for you.

Any work that affects the bats' roost location or access points will need to be supervised by a licensed ecologist and may require a licence from Natural England.

You can find more information and a range of mitigation examples on our website.



False chancel ceiling with bat void
St Lawrence, Radstone



Bespoke internal bat box
St Mary, Gayton Thorpe

MAJOR MITIGATION WORKS

In some cases you may be able to exclude the bats from the church interior. Examples include installing a new false ceiling with bat void above, or building enclosed boxes around the bats' natural access points.

Major mitigation is complex, expensive, requires specialist input from an ecologist and the church architect, may not always be successful and can take several years to get right. It may also have a substantial visual impact on the church. However it can be worth considering in serious cases.

For more information batsinchurches.org.uk

MINOR MITIGATION WORKS

You can carry out minor mitigation works to protect specific areas of the church from bat mess. This could include installing trays or 'sails' under the main bat roost to catch droppings or adding a ceiling, sail or canopy over your vestry, kitchen or altar.

This approach can be much more affordable, may not require a bat licence, and can give you a clean space instantly. It's an ideal option if you can generally cope with cleaning but want to keep one specific area free of bat mess.



**Removable sails under roost
St Mary Magdalene, Brampton**

**Bespoke case for cadaver tomb
St John the Baptist, Keyston**



HERITAGE PROTECTION

In some cases you may simply wish to protect one individual monument or heritage item. A bespoke case can be a useful option for delicate monuments, or you can use breathable covers over floor brasses. Fabric or plastic sheets can be used to protect pews and larger areas.

This is a very effective, low cost option if you're specifically concerned about damage to particular important or historic items and can generally cope with cleaning the rest of the church.



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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

While bats can cause problems for some churches and congregations, they can also be a highly effective way of engaging the local community, including those who may not otherwise come to church.

Local communities have helped to fundraise by sponsoring bat boxes. Bat walks and events can be a great source of fundraising and a great way of attracting a new audience. You may be able to find local wildlife-friendly volunteers or groups who will help clean your church as well.



BAT WALKS & EVENTS

Evening bat walks can be an incredibly popular local event. The best way to start is by contacting your local bat group via the Bat Conservation Trust website. Many bat groups are more than happy to lead walks or events and they will usually be able to bring bat detectors and technology to help view the bats.

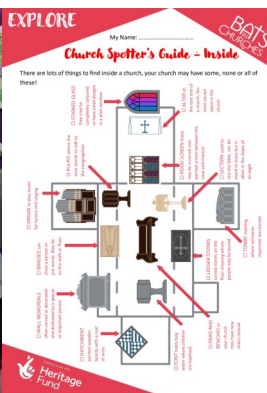
Bat walks are best held around August/September when bat numbers are still high and dusk is not too late in the day. You could combine your bat walk with a barbecue, or join with a local pub for a 'Beer and Bats Night'.

In the winter you might think of organising a community clean up to help maintain the church. Local bat groups, wildlife volunteer groups or other community groups may be willing to help with this.

SCHOOLS, FAMILIES & UNIFORMED GROUPS

We have created a range of resources around bats and churches for you to use with schools or groups including educational worksheets, games, crafts and art, and ways for groups to get involved with their local church. The activities are designed to be used on a visit to the church, or in classrooms, and are a great way to encourage groups to get involved with their local church.

We also have a Bats In Churches Challenge Badge, perfect for uniformed and other groups. Cloth badges for groups completing the challenge are available online.



POSTERS & INFORMATION

The project has a range of posters, signs and interpretation available including information on bat species and what to do if you find a sick, injured or grounded bat in the church. There are also easy online guides to creating bespoke interpretation for your church.

THE LITTLE CHURCH BAT

The Little Church Bat is a beautifully illustrated picture book for children that tells the story of one bat, one church and how they learn to live alongside each other.

It is a simple introduction to the issues of bats in churches, for adults as well as children. The book is available to buy online or we can provide copies at cost price for you to sell to raise funds for your church.



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The Bats In Churches Project is a ground breaking, multi-organisation partnership supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Between 2019 and 2023 the Bats In Churches Project worked with over 100 churches across England to trial new, practical, tailored solutions to reduce the impact of bats on churches, heritage and communities, while still preserving and protecting bat roosts.

The project created a wide range of advice, guidelines, activities and other resources to help and support all churches living with bats.

You can find more details at

batsinchurches.org.uk

The National Bat Helpline

bats.org.uk/our-work/national-bat-helpline

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