

BATS IN CHURCHES



BROUGHT TOGETHER BY BATS

ST PETER'S, WINTRINGHAM, NORTH YORKSHIRE

When St Peter's church, which is cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust, joined the Bats in Churches project in 2019 it had just two volunteers, one in her 80s. With large colonies of Natterer's Bats, Pipistrelles and Brown Long-eared Bats roosting in the church throughout the year, keeping it clean and open was a significant challenge for such a small team.

As part of their involvement with the BiC project, in June 2022 the church did a roost count for the National Bat Monitoring

Programme. This acted as a catalyst for the establishment of the Friends of St Peter's Church. The church now has a dedicated group of more than 30 volunteers, an established volunteer rota and holds events and celebrations throughout the year.

In October 2022 the church hosted a Bats in Churches cleaning workshop and children in a local school took part in the BiC school workshop.

One of the volunteers says, **"It was the bats that brought us back together ... and re-established a community feel."**

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The church celebrated its resident bats and rejuvenated community by hosting the Bats in Churches touring multi-media art installation *On A Wing And A Prayer* in February 2023, and holding a bat-themed community day with refreshments, a children's bat mask competition, arts and crafts, talks and tours. At the end of its tour of project churches around England, in September 2023, *On A Wing And A Prayer* took up permanent residence in St Peter's.

Being on the Wolds Way, the church gets a lot of visiting walkers. It hopes the installation will attract many more visitors and help spread the message that, rather

than being a nuisance, bats can actually be an asset.

With close ties to the East and North Yorkshire Bat Groups, St Peter's plans to continue roost counts for the National Bat Monitoring Programme, as well as running more events to celebrate the church's cultural and natural heritage.

Wintringham church has shown how, by embracing its resident bats, it has been able to attract and retain volunteers from the local community, ensuring that this wonderful building has a sustainable future for both bats and people.

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