

# BATS IN CHURCHES



## St Pega, Peakirk, Cambs

### ST PEGA, PEAKIRK

The Grade 1 listed church of St Pega's shelters a maternity colony of around 250 soprano pipistrelles, which have roosted in the chancel since 2005. A few Brown Long-eared bats also roost in the church.

Pregnant female bats gather in spring to give birth and raise their pups, foraging for their insect prey at nearby Deeping Lakes. Maternity roosts are vital for maintaining healthy bat populations, but the bats were flying about in the church, and causing

mess and extra cleaning. This was a burden for the small church community.

Sadly, in 2018, most of the church lead was stolen. Although a temporary roof was quickly installed, the church was put on the Buildings at Risk Register.

Re-roofing, however, was an opportunity to build a new home for the bats, preventing them accessing the church interior. As scaffolding was already in place and workers on site, costs were far lower than for a stand-alone bat mitigation project.

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Ecologist Matt Cook undertook detailed bat surveys and, working with the church architect, produced a bat management plan.

As a result, bespoke boxes were installed in the new roof, enabling the bats to roost but preventing them accessing the church interior.

The mitigation was successful: the bats are using their new home, and numbers are higher than prior to re-roofing. The interior of the church is clean and free of bat droppings, the heritage is no longer at risk, and the church community is content.

Cambridgeshire Bat Group agreed to monitor the bats. And make sure that the bat box remains functional.

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