

Bats and churches set for a harmonious future

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Churches can offer sanctuaries for bat maternity roosts and hibernation Hugh Clark/Bat Conservation Trust

A new project bridging the gap between bat conservation and the protection of historic churches has received £3.8million of National Lottery support.

The five-year Bats in Churches partnership between Natural England, the Church of England, Bat Conservation Trust, Historic England and the Churches Conservation Trust is set to trial new techniques to enable bats and church congregations to live together more harmoniously.

[quote=Ros Kerslake, HLF Chief Executive]"We welcome this unprecedented co-operation between church leaders and bat conservationists."[/quote]

Ros Kerslake, HLF Chief Executive, said: "We welcome this unprecedented co-operation between church leaders and bat conservationists. It's a positive move forward and should provide a practical solution to what has become a national problem."

Supporting places of worship

The project will support places of worship across England where large bat populations sometimes have a negative impact on historic buildings and the communities who use them.

Natural England's Chairman, Andrew Sells, said: "We've been working very hard for a number of years with our partners to find ways to help bats and people coexist peacefully in these beautiful, historic buildings. This funding will allow us to really capitalise on that good work and find innovative new ways of resolving the age-old conflict."

Finding a solution

The UK has internationally important populations of bats which are at risk due to decreases in precious woodland habitats. Churches offer alternative sanctuaries for maternity roosts and hibernation. However, bats in churches can cause serious problems as bat droppings can restrict activities, damage historic artefacts and put a strain on the volunteers who look after the buildings.

Thanks to input from skilled professionals who will work with volunteers, solutions to these problems will be shared with hundreds of churches.