

The new National Lottery grant will help bats, churches and congregations.

Bats are often synonymous with churches, but the relationship isn't always a harmonious one.

The UK's bat population has suffered significant historical declines and they are protected by UK law, which means they can't be moved. But in some cases bats are causing irreparable damage to historically significant church monuments and memorials as well as impacting upon the people who use the buildings.

Now, a ground-breaking project led by Natural England will bring together wildlife, heritage, conservation and church organisations to save bats and protect churches for future generations.

Practical solutions

The Bats in Churches project, which has been given £3.8million National Lottery funding, will find practical solutions to enable 102 of the most severely impacted church communities to reduce the impact of colonies on the church, without harming the bats.

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It will train professional ecologists and historic building specialists and create a network of volunteers who can undertake bat surveys and support congregations who have bat roosts at their church. Some practical solutions being trialled include using ultrasound to encourage bats to take a different, and less damaging, route in and out of the church buildings where they live.

Natural England is working in partnership with the Church of England, Historic England, Bat Conservation Trust and Churches Conservation Trust to deliver this ambitious and innovative project.

Ros Kerslake, HLF Chief Executive, said: “Places of worship and nature are both priorities for us, but they don’t always coexist harmoniously. Finding ways to solve this problem is beneficial to bats, churches and their congregations and is a really good use of National Lottery players’ money.”

Rt. Hon. Sir Tony Baldry, Chair of the Church Buildings Council said: “We are absolutely delighted with the news that HLF will continue to fund the Bats in Churches project. Protecting our natural and historical heritage will create a lasting legacy that will benefit present and future generations.”