

700-year-old St Margaret's Church, Ipswich

Bells have been ringing at St Margaret’s Church in Ipswich for 450 years, and the tradition is set to continue thanks to National Lottery players.

The eight bells housed in the Grade I listed medieval building will be restored and the story of bellringing given a new lease of life.

A crucial HLF grant of £163,600 will enable the church to reopen its doors as a safe space for the community – having been shut in 2011 following a spate of vandalism.

[quote=Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England]“The bells at St Margaret’s have been ringing for more than 450 years and now, thanks to National Lottery players, their future as part of Ipswich’s heritage is bright.”[/quote]

History and future of bellringing at St Margaret’s

St Margaret’s Church was built in around 1300. The tower was added in 1400 and 153 years later the bells were installed. In 1630 the bells were replaced – and five of these still make up the eight-strong set today.

This project will see the bells removed for the first time in over 100 years. This will not only allow the bells and the tower to undergo vital restoration, it will also enable access to the historic tower clock which will be refurbished and have an

electronic winder and regulator installed. This will ensure that the clock keeps perfect time and will no longer need hand-winding every week.

The bells and a new ringing gallery will then be reinstalled lower down in the tower so that the ringers will be visible from inside the church. A computer bell simulator and a video screen linked to cameras around the bells will provide unprecedented insight into how the bells work.

Trained bellringers will be able to take part in a teaching programme and a new generation will be recruited from local schools and youth groups. The story of the church and its bells will be brought to life through the collection of oral histories and activities to welcome communities back through the doors of St Margaret's Church.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England, said: "The bells at St Margaret's have been ringing for more than 450 years and now, thanks to National Lottery players, their future as part of Ipswich's heritage is bright. We're delighted to support this project which will enable not only the sound of the bells to be heard for generations to come but also their story and that of their historic home, which will be open once again as a place for people and communities."