

Bodiam parish assembly 12 May 2022

Karen Stafford, National Trust update

Thank you for joining us at Bodiam Castle this evening, we're delighted to host this first parish assembly meeting since 2019.

Over the last two years, we have kept the grounds open at Bodiam and opened the castle and our indoor spaces whenever possible. We were able to provide people with much needed outdoor space in the most challenging of circumstances.

Last year, we welcomed over 128,000 visitors and as the desire for outdoors grew, we had one of our busiest summers.

We were glad to be able to restart our projects after the hiatus of 2020; We updated the sewage treatment plant and installed a FOG trap at Castle Inn.

The Wharf area buildings were decorated and we started to use our overflow car park which has improved visitor flow and traffic management around the entrance.

You'll have seen that we've invested in our planting with the Bateman's gardeners supporting, bringing daffodils to the entrance and planting around the wharf area.

Our vital conservation work also continued with much needed repairs to the murder holes and the East wall of the castle.

In 2022 we are rebuilding our maintenance workshops which were flattened by an oak in a February storm of 2020. The planning application is live at the moment and do please speak to Will or I later if you have any questions.

We will be embarking on a large project with internal and external repairs to the Postern tower, and in 2023 we will have large scale scaffold on the exterior of the postern tower.

We will continue to provide a great welcome for visitors with our events programme,

Over the May half-term and jubilee weekend we will have Wolfshead bowmen encampment, a unicorn trail and royal craft activities.

The summer will see the return of the medieval fayre and archery and for Christmas the welcome return of Father Christmas and sleigh.

As well as visitors and members supporting us and allowing our conservation of Bodiam Castle to continue, we couldn't operate without our fantastic volunteer teams who have returned in good numbers.

Our second hand bookshop continues to help raise funds to support our conservation work and you're welcome to visit to look for a great read (or a jigsaw puzzle!) as well as drop off any books you'd like to donate.

If you are interested in volunteering at Bodiam Castle, then do get in touch.

Thank you for your support.

Lucy Stevens, Ranger at Bodiam Castle gave a short update on the bats and outdoor work supporting nature conservation. A recent Dark Skies event had seen over 60 people attending and the donated bat detectors from Tenterden NT Association were put to use for the first time.

We will be running further dark skies events in future as this one proved very popular. The bat maternity roost is very busy with plenty of chatter which can be heard now and over the coming weeks there will be pups. During this time we reduced access to the gatehouse tower to ensure the bats aren't disturbed.

The management of our estate is vital in supporting the bat ecology and the waterscape of the river and moat at Bodiam are what makes the Castle such a great environment for the bats.

We continue to manage the grounds to support nature and wildlife and we will be mowing a path through Doakes field to allow visitors to enjoy this very special place.