

**Karen Stafford, General Manager, Bodiam Castle & Bateman's
Bodiam Parish Assembly update, 18 May 2023**

I'm pleased that we're able to host you here at the Wharf tearoom this evening.

We've been hosting the village meet-up group which meets every second Thursday in the second-hand bookshop. I understand the village defibrillator training came up following a suggestion at the meeting and we were pleased to be the venue for that training.

Over the last twelve months we have continued with our care of the castle and grounds, investing in our conservation and making the experience the best it can be for all of our visitors - we were pleased to welcome just over 150,000 visitors.

We recently agreed the residents pass for Bodiam and Ewhurst residents, available from visitor reception during opening hours with your ID, it covers access to the surrounding grounds for up to 2 adults and 3 children.

We are keen to ensure everyone feels welcome when visiting National Trust properties and to be more accessible, we have invested in a passenger buggy which can transport wheelchairs up to the castle, giving more people the chance to get up close. We have also created photographic access guides for those unable to make it up the towers and this year will be creating touch tours for the visually impaired.

The facilities team maintain the site and we're pleased to have gone a full summer with the improvements to the sewage treatment plant working and seeing us through the blistering hot summer. Removing the blue containers is high on our priority list with the rebuild of the Workshops set for September.

Our resident bats are now chattering as the maternity roost swells. We will close the Gatehouse tower once pups are being born and I'm delighted that following a donation from the Eastbourne National Trust supporter group, we have produced a short information film about the bats featuring footage captured last summer here at Bodiam. It's a lovely little film going behind the scenes on these wonderful creatures and our management of their habitats.

You'll see that this year, we're continuing to invest in our annual schedule of conservation works with repairs to the Postern Tower. To safeguard the archaeology of the moat, the scaffold needed a cantilever design in the great hall, and it has taken a month to build. Repairs to the walls will start next week and with good weather on our side, the scaffold is due to be down by the summer holidays.

We're also undertaking works to the Northeast tower to bring it up to modern day health and safety standards, thereby allowing visitors to access a new view.

Over the summer, our popular medieval fair will return, and we are hosting Quantum theatre's A Midsummer Night's dream in the Castle for two nights in mid-August.

We continue to undertake a care of Bodiam Castle thanks to the volunteers who give their time and the members who invest in the care of the property I'm always keen to alert you to the Junior Membership which is £10 per child per annum and gives children of 17 years and under the chance to visit all NT properties with a welcome pack.

We will be arranging a chance for Bodiam residents to visit the castle, see the new bat film and the Northeast tower this autumn.