

**Karen Stafford, General Manager, Bodiam Castle & Bateman's
Bodiam Parish Assembly update, 14 May 2025**

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 our visitors - we were pleased to welcome just over 155,000 people in 2024.

We continue to manage our land to benefit nature and have entered into a mid-tier stewardship scheme. This involves creating two separate areas of grassland: managed grassland where the area is actively taken care of, with activities like grazing by animals and cutting of hay and a no management area which is left alone, with no grazing or hay cutting which will allow the natural ecosystem to thrive.

We've undertaken clearance work around the south moat bank; our management of the moat banks is important to allow annual inspections, not least as changes to the Reservoir Act this year, means the moat will be classified as a reservoir once more.

Last year we undertook high level weeding of the castle with a project that saw abseilers working across the monument and this year we will continue with our program of repairs with work to the west wall of the castle.

We've had a strong start to the season with all of this sunshine and fortunately the overflow car park was dry for the whole of Easter; for the rest of the year, archery, games and reenactments will continue to entertain our visitors and we have a How to Train Your Dragon trail by Cressida Cowell running all through the summer, with Cressida coming to Bodiam for a book signing.

Last year we found much evidence of the hop fields on Fearn Meade with the archeology dig. At the end of June, we will be once more hosting talks and tours while undertaking another dig in the search for evidence of Roman settlement during the Festival of Archaeology.

We were thrilled to be successful in obtaining a National Lottery Heritage award to improve the interpretation story telling in the castle, open up the North East Tower and four more rooms; the work will be taking in place in the hundredth year of the National Trust caring for Bodiam Castle.

We're in the process of making some alterations to the shop and the gable end will house our visitor reception. We have been looking at the possibility of EV charging at Bodiam although this is proving very tricky with the car park being in a floodplain!

National Trust Junior Membership is £12 per child per annum and gives children of 17 years and under the chance to visit all NT properties, children receive a welcome pack and regular newsletters. Under 5s can access National Trust sites for free.

The residents pass for Bodiam and Ewhurst residents is available from visitor reception during opening hours with your ID, full detail details on the Bodiam parish council website.

We've also been hosting the village meet-up group which meets every second Thursday and we look forward to continuing to support this in the year ahead.

Finally, I want to recognise and thank the volunteers at Bodiam Castle who give their time and knowledge which allows us to care for this special place for generations to come.