



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST FELIX- NM-22-00665

Evaluation Report

Pippa Smith

August 2024

Contents

1	Executive Summary	1
2	Introduction	2
3	Evaluation Methods and Framework	2
4	Approved Purposes	3
5	Baseline.....	5
6	Capital work.....	5
7	Activities	7
7.1	Hard Hat Tours.....	7
7.2	Archaeological Excavations	8
7.3	School Pack	9
7.4	St Felix Fair (2023) and Medieval Fair (2024)	10
7.5	Heritage skills workshops	16
7.6	Churchyard volunteers	18
8	Project outcomes	19
8.1	A wider range of people will be involved in heritage	19
8.2	Heritage will be in better condition	20
8.3	Heritage will be identified and better explained	20
8.4	People will have developed skills.....	21
8.5	The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit	22
8.6	The local economy will be boosted.....	23
9	Challenges and successes	23

Appendices

Appendix 1- examples of publicity and marketing

Appendix 2 Baseline report

Appendix 3 Soham Village College summary of feedback

Appendix 4 Geographic distribution of people engaging with the project

Appendix 5 public feedback from the fairs

Appendix 6 post project survey

Plates

Plate 1	Failing lead was removed	6
Plate 2	Apex stones were replaced	6
Plate 3	Before work on the gutter.....	6
Plate 4	The same view after work	6
Plate 5	Before rebuilding.....	7
Plate 6	After rebuilding	7

Plate 7 Students excavating a garden test pit	8
Plate 8 Medieval craft demonstration: Mark Fairhurst photography.....	10
Plate 9 Medieval cookery demonstration: Mark Fairhurst photography.....	10
Plate 10 Fighting Knights: Mark Fairhurst photography	11
Plate 11 Peat the jester: Mark Fairhurst photography.....	11
Plate 12 One of the community stalls: Mark Fairhurst photography	11
Plate 13 One of the knitted monks.....	12
Plate 14 Demonstrating flint knapping.....	16
Plate 15 Students having a go at pointing brickwork	16
Plate 16 Churchyard volunteers	18
Plate 17 A bug box installed on the church	18
Plate 18 New wildlife friendly planting	18

Figures

Figure 1 Age range of visitors.....	13
Figure 2 Formal engagement with the church	14
Figure 3 Previous visits to the church-inside	14
Figure 4 Previous visits to the church-outside.....	15
Figure 5 Responses to the fairs	15

1 Executive Summary

In the Footsteps of St Felix ran from January 2023 to August 2024 and enabled crucial repairs to the fabric of the church. Alongside these repairs an engagement programme provided opportunities for the church to work more widely within its community.

Pupils from the Soham Village College 'Hub' who face a range of challenges took part in two archaeological projects facilitated by Wessex Archaeology. They also joined a heritage skills workshop and tried out a range of heritage crafts. The impact that this had on some of these students was huge with some finding new career aspirations and one participant who is now pursuing a career in construction with the offer of future apprenticeship with a heritage crafts contractor. The experience of these young people was described as transformational by staff at the college.

Hard hat tours opened a different perspective on the church for members of the public and pupils at St Andrew's Primary School. The Primary school pupils also helped to pilot a new key stage 2 archaeological resource for teachers devised as part of the project by Wessex Archaeology. This resource is now freely available via the Times Educational Supplement resources website and will be sent to all the Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust Schools.

Two successful medieval themed fairs were run, and despite a severe weather warning limiting the offer at the fair in 2023 over 1000 people visited and enjoyed these two events. For many this was their first engagement with the church.

A team of volunteers have created a wildlife area in the churchyard, planted a communal herb garden and installed bird and bug boxes. Residents who have noted and appreciate the improvement made to the church and churchyard, commenting that it shows that people care and improves the image of the whole town.

The best word to sum up the project is **transformational**. It has transformed the fabric of the church, moving it further along the enormous task of restoring the church building. It has transformed the churchyard into a place where people choose to sit and enjoy nature. It has transformed the life of students taking part. Finally, it has transformed the church by making a step change in its importance as a cultural hub within the wider Soham Community

2 Introduction

St Andrew's Church in Soham is a Grade I listed building in the centre of the town. The earliest part dates to the 12th century with many subsequent additions and alterations. Much of the original 12th century building is still extant including the crossing arches and 4 bays of the nave, described as 'particularly fine' by Historic England in their listing description. Additions in the 14th and 15th centuries include the south aisle, south porch, transept, an additional nave bay, the tower and clerestory. The church has many notable features from this period including a triple sedilia, piscine, three wall paintings (one reputed to depict St Felix), pews with carved poppyheads, misericords and a tie beam nave roof decorated with carved angels now, sadly, lacking their wings.

The church building has been on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register since 2018. The inspector noted St Andrew's was historically and architecturally a church "of the highest order or significance" but the condition of the building was "poor" and at "immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric."

The church is well used by the wider community, from Foodbanks and school projects to talks and regular fairs. In 2018 -2019 the PCC successfully delivered a small project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund which included a range of heritage themed activities. The church is very much at the centre of this community and as the Covid restrictions eased, many people commented on how important it was to have the building open again, with activities and support on offer.

The project 'In the Footsteps of St Felix' included the first phase of major fabric repair alongside a programme of events designed to raise aspiration and build pride of place, particularly among teenagers. The programme included hard hat tours of the repair work, an archaeological project with the local secondary school, medieval themed community fairs, heritage skills workshops and a volunteer team formed to improve the churchyard for wildlife.

3 Evaluation Methods and Framework

The framework for the evaluation of this project is based on a logic model which looks at each of the planned project activities and considers which of the Project Approved purposes and which of the NLHF outcomes it is linked to

The evaluation is then designed to

- Capture the input needed to deliver the activity- this relates to financial input, resources, and people's time
- Understand the output- these tend to be quantitative and will look at the number of attendees at an event for example
- Short term outcomes- these are a mix of quantitative and qualitative and will reflect the outcomes at the end of each activity. They may be, for example, that 60% of people said they learnt something about the heritage of Soham or that 30% of attendees said it was the first time they had visited the church
- Medium term outcomes- these will be largely qualitative and will reflect whether, for example, young people taking part in an activity had changed their future plans as a result of taking part or whether residents of Soham consider that the town is a nice place to live work or visit as a result of the project.
- The evaluation will also consider whether there is a clear link between the activities and the intended outcomes and what changes may have happened anyway. For example,

how much of an improved view of the town is because of improvement elsewhere such as the rail station

4 Approved Purposes

Approved Purpose	How was this met?
High visibility acknowledgement of the National Lottery Heritage Fund on site, online and in all activities as well as using your project to acknowledge and thank National Lottery Players	<p>All publicity and evaluation material has carried the National Lottery Heritage Fund logo, both printed and digital.</p> <p>The Lottery funding is acknowledged on all digital assets.</p> <p>Examples can be found in Appendix 1</p>
Take proactive measures to be inclusive, remove barriers to access and reach new and diverse audiences through the delivery of this project	<p>A key focus of all marketing activity was to ensure a wide reach. There was a mix of print and digital marketing to appeal to a wide age group and ensure that those not comfortable with social media were also engaged. Posters and banners were posted around the town and 300 leaflets distributed. Community outlets were used such as Jigsaw Magazine which goes to all households in Soham.</p> <p>Digital posters for project events were posted on key local Facebook community pages Soham (8800 followers), and Soham Community Page (4.6K followers)</p> <p>Effective partnership work with Soham Village College ensured that students facing a range of challenges were enabled to take part in the excavation with their involvement widely celebrated within the college and the community. Similarly, students were enabled to take part in the skills workshops which had led directly to at least one young person actively seeking an apprenticeship. Both activities raised aspirations for this group.</p> <p>Community partnership work also underpinned delivery of two fairs with Soham Village College Community Ambassadors delivering an activity alongside other community groups. Similarly, community groups were invited to take part in the skills workshop event with some successfully recruiting volunteers for their work</p>
Recruit a suitably qualified freelance Heritage Project Co-Ordinator	Dale Copley was recruited after a competitive tendering process.
Undertake capital works on the church building; (i) reroofing of the North and South Transepts, (ii)	The North and South Transepts have been reroofed and associated masonry repairs to parapets and abutments made along with the repair and redecoration of cast

masonry repairs to North and South Transept roofs, (iii) holding repairs to the Nave roof	iron rainwater goods and lead holding repairs to the Nave roof.
Commission a suitable archaeological services provider to deliver two 3-day archaeological excavations of test pits in local residents' gardens (involving up to 48 secondary aged school pupils) and to develop an archaeology schools pack	<p>Following a competitive tendering process Wessex Archaeology were successfully recruited and delivered two three-day excavations with pupils from the Hub at Soham Village College. In total 44 students were supported to take part.</p> <p>An archaeology pack was developed and piloted with year 6 pupils at St Andrew's Primary school.</p>
Deliver two days of heritage skills workshops in the churchyard, involving up to 24 secondary age students and 24 adults	On October 6th Soham Village College brought 24 year 10 and 11 students who are supported by The Hub in two groups for taster sessions with skilled practitioners. This was followed by a public event on Saturday October 7 th attended by an estimated 100 residents
Recruit volunteers to improve the churchyard for wildlife and the community; to include installing boxes for wildlife, wildflower seeding, hedge planting, and creating a free community herb garden	<p>A free community herb garden has been created in the churchyard. Bulbs and native species have been planted naturalistically throughout the churchyard along with trees and shrubs.</p> <p>Bird, bug, and hedgehog boxes have been made and purchased and installed.</p> <p>A dedicated volunteer role was created and volunteers recruited from the community. An ongoing partnership with Soham Village college Community Ambassadors Team will support maintenance of the area.</p>
Deliver hard hat tours of the in-progress repairs for school students, interested members of the public and lottery players	St Andrew's Primary School brought 57 year 6 pupils and 33 adults booked and attended tours
Hold a community fair, to include exhibition of the archaeological findings and a focus on monastic crafts	Two fairs were held with an emphasis placed on medieval crafts and activities for 2024 after a necessary reduction of activity due to adverse weather in 2023
Create digital outputs for the church website; including (i) videos and blogs by secondary aged pupils recording experiences, and (ii) films of hard hat tours and heritage skills sessions	<p>Three videos were made and are linked to from the church website</p> <p>Hard hat tours https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0HE82Hp2Ck</p> <p>Excavation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1P3hIQCP39M</p> <p>Heritage skills event and workshop https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skSuAkplw5w</p>

5 Baseline

A 'snapshot' of Soham was taken using data from the 2021 census, information from 'A Market Town Plan for Soham' 2021 commissioned by East Cambridgeshire District Council and data from UK Social housing. Additional baseline information was collected by way of an online survey.

A detailed baseline report is included in Appendix 2. Key points to note are

- Soham is the fastest growing town in East Cambridgeshire
- Although a 2021 report from East Cambridgeshire suggested that there were some issues with education in the town recent OFSTED inspections suggest that the schools are performing well with two of the three Primary schools rated Good and Soham Village College rated Outstanding
- There are some significant skills gaps at later stages with a lower proportion of adults having a level 4 qualification when compared to Cambridgeshire as a whole
- Levels of health and disability is in line with East Cambridgeshire as a whole
- Ethnic diversity is low and Soham has a predominantly white population
- There are small groups of residents from Eastern Europe with 90% of residents reporting that they were from the UK
- Levels of deprivation are relatively low
- Social housing is concentrated in the North ward of Soham
- Residents value the community they live in and are proud of where they live
- There are some concerns around anti-social behaviour, empty shops and over development without accompanying infrastructure

6 Capital work

(Update provide by Architect Stephanie Norris Architects Ltd)

The capital works recently completed at St Andrew's Soham included the reroofing of the North and South Transepts in sand cast lead, associated masonry repairs to parapets and abutments, repair and redecoration of cast iron rainwater goods and lead holding repairs to the Nave roof to extend its life until further funds can be raised.

The failing lead was removed from both North and South slopes and all sarking boards checked and refixed. Whilst the condition of the boards was better than anticipated, the masonry to the parapets and copings on both sides was worse, and the inner limestone rubble parapet face had to be rebuilt to be able to provide weatherproof flashings to the new roofs. Apex and kneeler stones were replaced on the north side where they were found to only be 50mm deep in the parapet wall.

The detail of the back gutter at the junction with the east end of the Nave clerestory was improved on both sides of the church. This was to prevent water ingress issues and remove the nesting ledge for pigeons, both of which had been a significant problem previously.



Plate 1 Failing lead was removed



Plate 2 Apex stones were replaced

Following the stripping back of the leadwork on the North Transept at the abutment with the Nave, and the associated lead weathering to the northeast buttress top, it was discovered that the condition of the northeast corner of the Nave clerestory wall was unstable and this was rebuilt.



Plate 3 Before work on the gutter



Plate 4 The same view after work



Plate 5 Before rebuilding



Plate 6 After rebuilding

The North and South Transept roofs and their parapets and abutments are now in a good state of repair and should be weathertight with no further major interventions needed for 50-100 years.

7 Activities

7.1 Hard Hat Tours

Hard hat tours were offered to the public to enable them to see the restoration work in progress. One morning was allocated to Year 6 of St Andrew's Primary School. The tours were advertised on the church's Facebook Page, via the Parish magazine and by posters designed and placed around the town by the Project Co-ordinator. Bookings were managed using Eventbrite. The tours were led by the team working on the restoration.

St Andrew's primary School brought 57 year 6 pupils and 33 adults booked and attended tours on the following day. Due to severe weather warnings the tours on Saturday 15 July were adapted and undertaken inside the church.

Most of the adults taking a tour were older than 65 (seven of those who volunteered this information with three in the age range 35-44 with one 45-54). Most people had found out about the tour by word of mouth (seven), posters and social media posts (three for each) and two were sent information directly.

All were asked to rate their enjoyment of the tour by ticking along a scale or choosing an appropriate emoticon sticker.

Children overwhelmingly chose to say that they had enjoyed the tour 'Lots' with only one choosing 'It was OK' and none saying, 'Not at all.' Similarly, all adults ticked the end of the scale showing that they had enjoyed the tour lots.

Adults were also asked about their prior engagement with the church. Five people indicated that they regularly attend the church for services with another seven saying that they had visited for special occasions. Ten had previously looked around the church building inside ‘often’ with one stating ‘a few times.’ Similarly, most respondents had looked around the church building outside often (six) or a few times (two). Only two people had never visited the church before. This suggests that the tours were popular with people already familiar with the church building who wanted to find out more.

7.2 Archaeological Excavations



Plate 7 Students excavating a garden test pit

Following a competitive tendering process Wessex Archaeology was commissioned to deliver this part of the project. The decision was made to work with a mix of Years 9 and 10 who attend the Hub at Soham Village College. The college website describes the Hub as

‘our centre where additional needs of all students are coordinated and managed by a highly experienced and successful team. This includes making lessons accessible academically all the way to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of any student who needs it.’

Students are supported in the Hub for varied reasons, some are autistic, other have learning difficulties and some have high levels of anxiety or mental health challenges.

In total 44 students completed the activity over two seasons. In 2023 a preparatory day was held at the college. This was designed to familiarise the students with the Wessex Archaeology team and give them an introduction to what would happen over the subsequent three days. This was important for some of the students who have high anxiety levels and can find change difficult. The students all successfully completed a carousel of activities. This was particularly challenging for some as a member of staff pointed out that some of the groups don’t cope well with change or unfamiliar activities. Some of the Y9 pupils weren’t aware that they were taking part until the last minute. Following feedback from the college this preparatory session was built into the first day of fieldwork in 2024 allowing a quick application of skills learnt in context.

Students then took part in three days of excavations in gardens across Soham. They were encouraged to try different activities and in addition to excavating they took photographs and videos of the process, made 3d virtual models using photogrammetry software, washed finds, sieved spoil for environmental evidence and interviewed colleagues and staff.

Finds, which included medicine bottles, bones, flint, and a horseshoe, were displayed to the public at both fairs.

Evidence from the young people taking part was collected in several ways. Students involved in the archaeological project face a variety of challenges and formal feedback mechanisms would not be appropriate in this context. The project evaluator met and worked alongside the students throughout the project and had informal chats with them as they worked, encouraged them to interview each other and spoke with college staff to get feedback each afternoon after the excavations had finished. Wessex Archaeology also fed some evaluation questions into the filming work they were carrying out.

The students all enjoyed the excavations and learnt a range of new skills. Some of these were obvious in terms of using equipment, taking photographs and archaeological skills but other less tangible skills were also developed with students suggesting that they had learnt independence and teamwork when asked if they had learnt anything that will help them in the future. Staff agreed with this.

Students were encouraged to interview each other without staff present and were lent a video camera and voice recorder. This was done to avoid asking students to write responses as it would have excluded some, and to triangulate feedback given to school and project staff as it was felt that their responses to each other may be more open. Some students were happy to respond in writing using post it notes. A summary of responses can be found in Appendix 3 and these agreed with the feedback given to adults saying that they had enjoyed the dig, taking part had made them feel happy, excited, and integrated and that they found a range of the activities interesting and fun.

During the 2024 season students were able to teach staff members how to use software to render 3D models of finds and excavations and this element of students teaching staff was a new experience for them. One of the key benefits identified by the college staff was the time spent with students working as equals

the staff involved have all commented that it has been an enriching experience for them, as well as our students. They have had time to really get to know some of our students outside of the classroom and this has strengthened relationships, which I have no doubt will enrich the students' learning next year.

A video of their experience can be found here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1P3hIQCP39M>

7.3 School Pack

Wessex Archaeology prepared a resource for schools 'How to create an archaeological mini dig in the classroom' (<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/create-an-archaeological-dig-in-class-13096452>) This was piloted by two year 6 classes in St Andrew's Primary School led by two staff from Wessex Archaeology and feedback collected from the teachers.

The children thoroughly enjoyed the activity and understood many of the key concepts. They were all engaged and worked well in their teams. The teachers agreed that the day as they experienced it was valuable but had concerns about the viability of this type of activity for many schools. These concerns were twofold; firstly, around the skills needed to deliver the activity but, more importantly to them, the cost and time needed to assemble the necessary equipment.

Following feedback, changes were made to the pack and it has been uploaded as a free resource to the TES resources section and will be distributed to all schools in the Diocese of Ely MAT

7.4 St Felix Fair (2023) and Medieval Fair (2024)



Plate 8 Medieval craft demonstration: Mark Fairhurst photography



Plate 9 Medieval cookery demonstration: Mark Fairhurst photography

A community fair was planned for July 15th, 2023, with stalls inside and outside the church showcasing contemporary and traditional crafts alongside historic costumes, medieval games, and historic music. However, in response to a Met office severe weather warning for high winds the lead building contractor advised that people should not be gathering in the churchyard considering the temporary scaffolding, and trees with low hanging branches. The decision was made to move the St Felix Fair inside the church. Activities which could not be delivered inside the church had to be cancelled. This included living history/ reenactment (10 tents, fighting knights, cookery demos etc), a storyteller (telling Anglo-Saxon and medieval stories), wandering musicians playing early music, and community activities where these could only be done outside.

Due to the necessary restrictions on the fair in 2023 the project team decided to hold a second fair in 2024 rather than a planned, smaller scale celebration event. This fair successfully encompassed a range of medieval activities and crafts which had been excluded by the challenges faced in 2023. Although the weather was unseasonably cold and wet it improved enough to allow the outdoor activities to take place.



Plate 10 Fighting Knights: Mark Fairhurst photography



Plate 11 Peat the jester: Mark Fairhurst photography



Plate 12 One of the community stalls: Mark Fairhurst photography

In 2023 of the 28 stalls and activities originally planned 9 were cancelled or declined to take part because of the need to move everything inside. In 2024 although there were 11 cancellations at the last minute due to the wet weather 36 businesses, community groups. Reenactors and performers took part in the event.

The Project co-ordinator liaised with local community groups and organisations to allocate space and coordinate the events. Both fairs were publicised online, by posters and banners, the Parish magazine and in 2023, by the distribution around Soham of knitted monks which people could bring to the fair to claim a sweet. Forty volunteers spent 150 hours knitting 500 monks. These were used for some targeted distribution for the event alongside a ‘what’s on’ leaflet featuring it and were distributed in areas of Soham where the church doesn’t usually manage to engage.



Plate 13 One of the knitted monks

For both fairs attendees were counted using a clicker on the main entrance. In 2023 this was the church door and the number is felt to be secure as there was only one entrance. In 2024 those coming into the main gate were counted but it wasn’t possible to count those entering the site via two smaller entrances. A head count of those on site was taken every hour to help estimate final numbers.

	2023	2024	Total
Counted	404	605	1009
Additional attendees estimated	0	100	100
Total	404	704	1109

Attendees at both fairs were asked to indicate where they lived by adding a dot to a map of Soham (Appendix 4). This helped to understand whether all areas of the town were reached. Postcards were used to ask for some basic demographic information, discover how people had found out about the event, to understand previous engagement with the church, and see what

people had enjoyed and discovered. Ninety-one postcards were returned representing 162 individuals.

There was a range of ages represented suggesting that the event appealed to family groups as well as older residents.

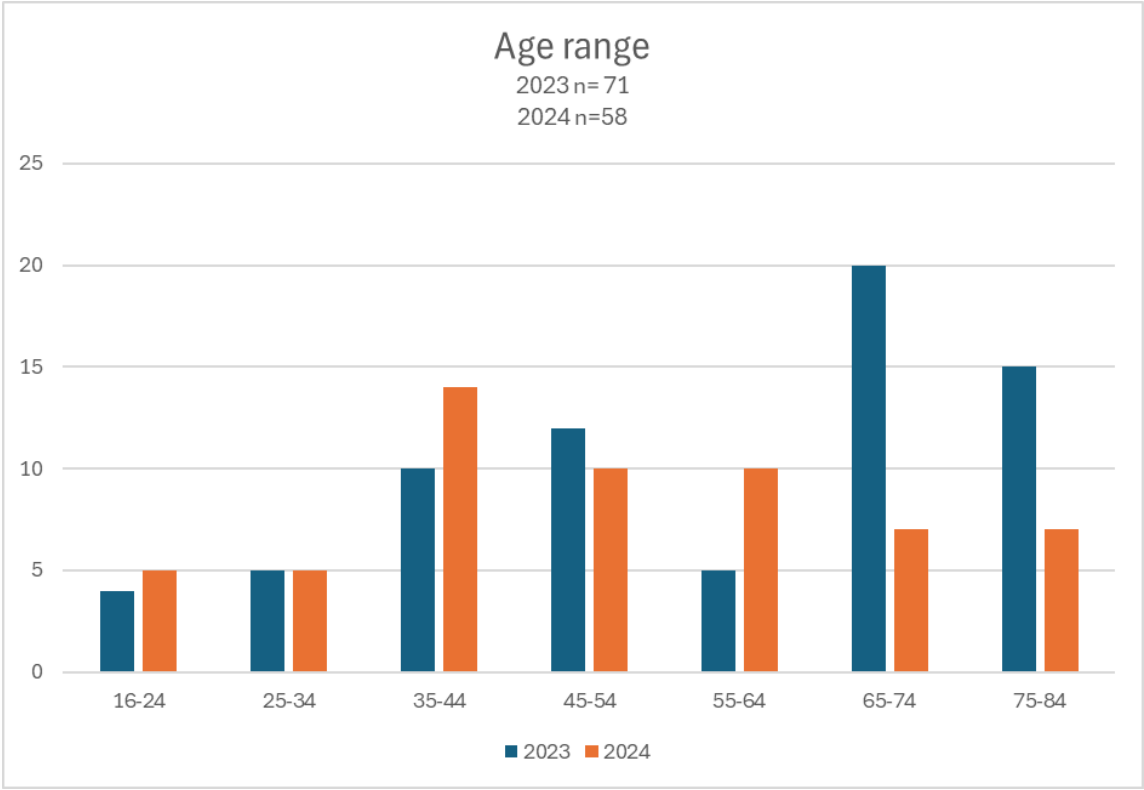


Figure 1 Age range of visitors

Age range of visitors younger than 16

	2023	2024
Younger than 1	2	2
2	2	1
3		1
4	3	2
5		1
6	2	
7	2	2
8		1
9	2	1
10	2	
11		2
13	2	1
15		1
15	1	

People were asked whether they regularly attended church and the majority reported that they had visited on special occasions.

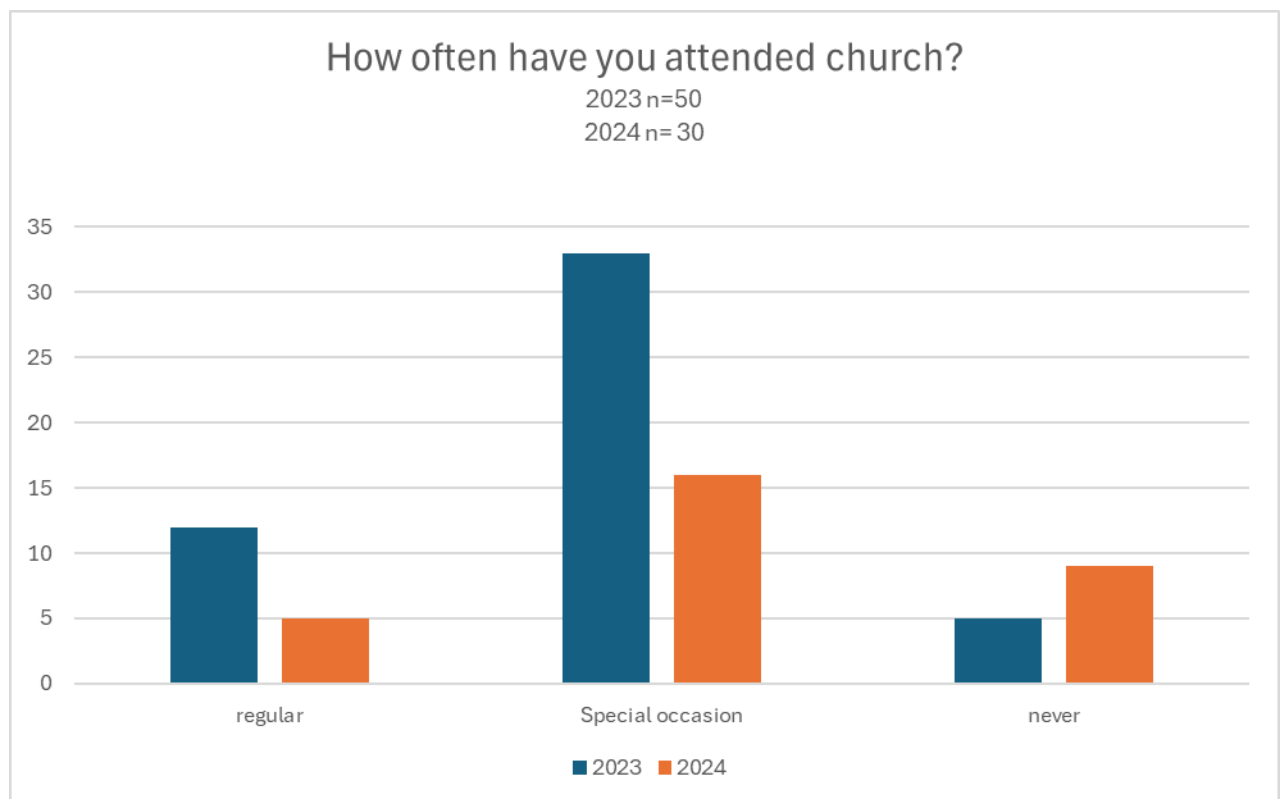


Figure 2 Formal engagement with the church

The Revd Eleanor Whalley greeted visitors as they came into the event and anecdotally reported that she knew around 20% of the visitors by sight suggesting that 80% were not church goers

On being asked whether they had looked around the church before most people had visited a few times.

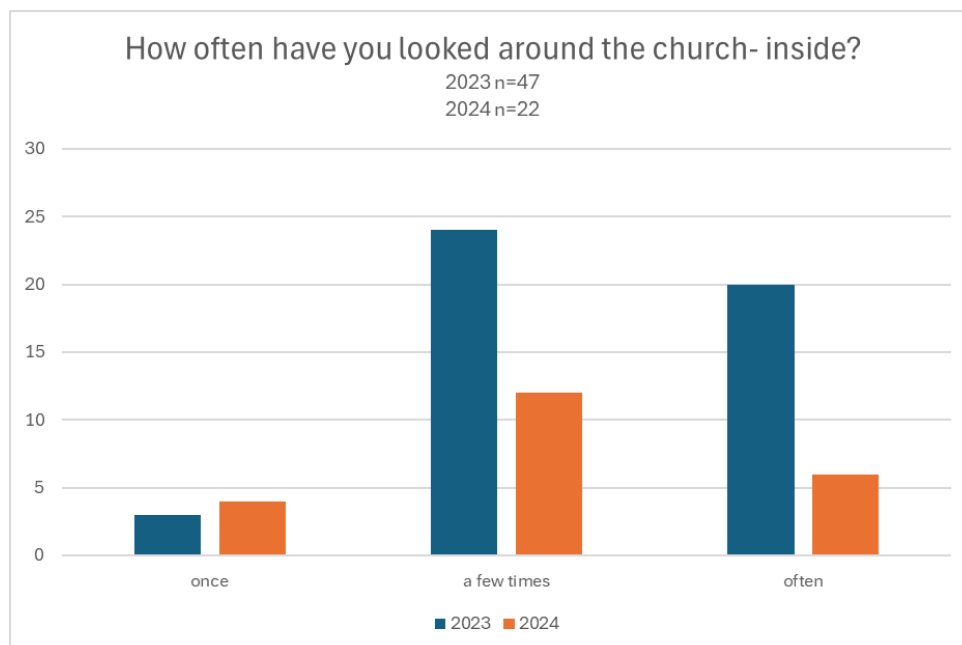


Figure 3 Previous visits to the church-inside

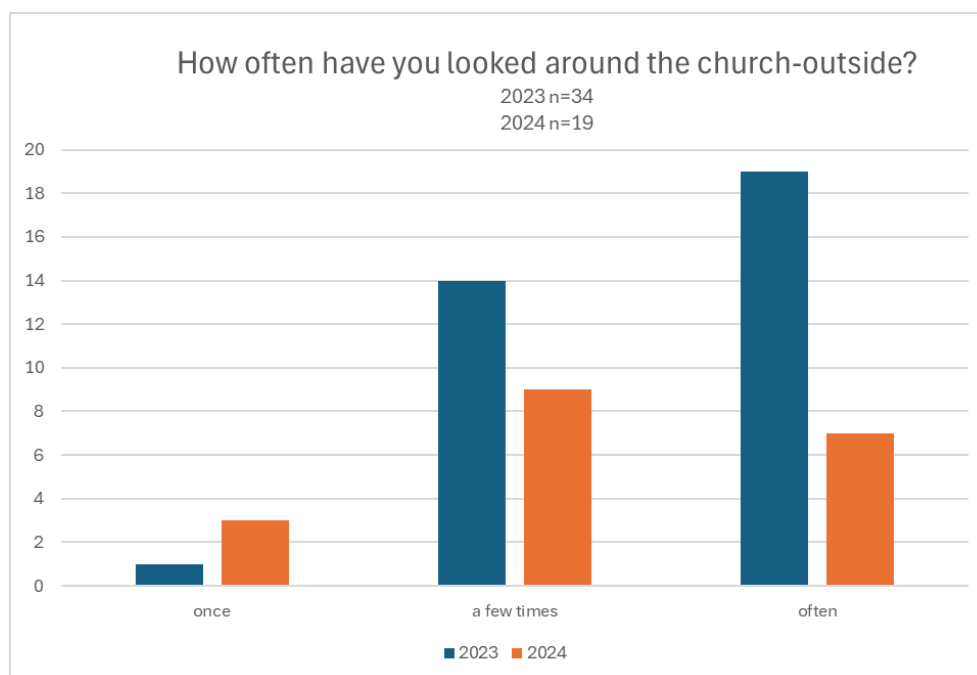


Figure 4 Previous visits to the church-outside

In 2023 most visitors had found out about the fair by word of mouth whereas in 2024 social media was most often mentioned. Visitors were again asked to mark on a map where they had travelled from or list their rough location if they were from further afield (Appendix 4). The geographic spread for 2024 is wider than 2023 and this may reflect the severe weather warning in 2023 dissuading people from travelling or could be a result of the use of targeted social media posts.

In response to what they had enjoyed or what had surprised them about the events people wrote about the archaeological displays, the community feel, the various displays and cake. The word cloud below shows the most frequently used word. The full list can be found in appendix 5.

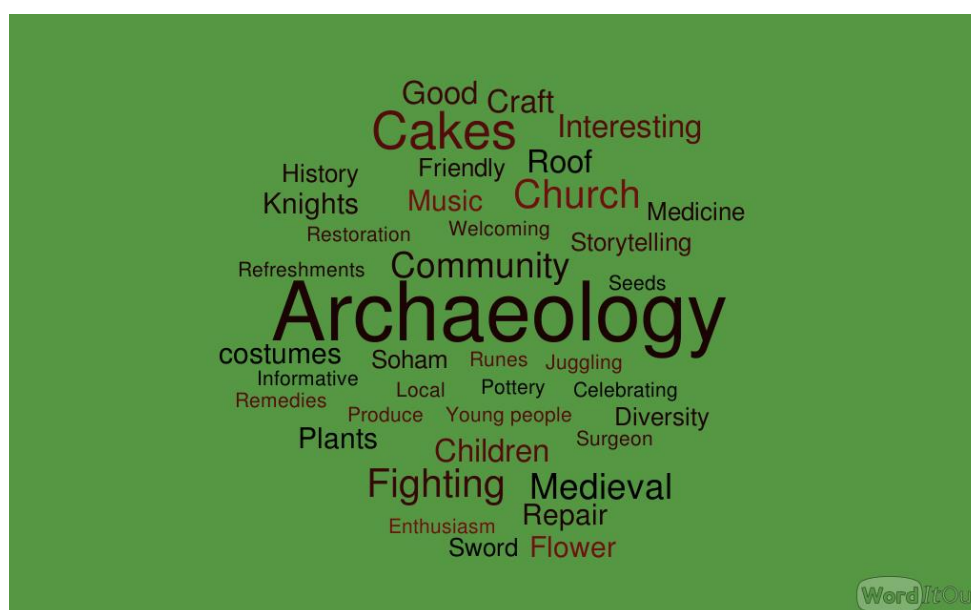


Figure 5 Responses to the fairs

7.5 Heritage skills workshops

On October 6th 2023 Soham Village College brought 24 year 10 and 11 students who are supported by The Hub in two groups for taster sessions with skilled practitioners. This was followed by a public event on Saturday October 7th.



Plate 14 Demonstrating flint knapping

The school workshops were coordinated by Place Services and supported by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. The Heritage Project Co-ordinator liaised with Soham Village college and visited the students there to chat to them about plans for the day. Teams from Anglia Lime, Mathias Restoration Ltd, Orsi-Contini and Traditional Oak Carpentry were contracted to deliver taster sessions and demonstrations



Plate 15 Students having a go at pointing brickwork

The public event was co-produced with Place Service. The Heritage Project Co-ordinator recruited additional stallholders and activities and marketed the event. Posters, leaflets, and banners were produced and social media posts made. Direct contact by email and mail out was made with named career leads from 35 schools and sixth form colleges within a 30-mile radius of the church, highlighting the event and asking them to promote to their students and via their social media channels. Two young people at the event reported hearing about it via this route.

An exact count of attendees at the public event was not possible as there were several stalls outside and three entrances and exits. A headcount was taken each half hour.

Time	Number counted
10:30	45
11:00	40
11:30	47
12:00	44
12:30	50

Dwell time was estimated to an average of one hour so an estimate of 100 attendees across the morning is reasonable.

Students who attended the workshops were asked to indicate whether they had enjoyed the experience, whether the workshop had made them think differently about jobs they would like to do and if they would like to find out more about any areas they had tried.

All indicated that they had enjoyed the session and most replied yes or maybe to the question about jobs. Several were keen to find out more about specific areas.

Fifteen feedback cards were completed on the public day. Although not a large sample the comments made are interesting and show that new information about heritage and heritage crafts was gained. One comment again referred to raising awareness of career opportunities

Loved the knowledge that the craftspeople shared. Fascinating to be able to bring my 16 YO to show her alternative career options!

Others enjoyed seeing bookbinding, lead working and blacksmithing

One of the key successes of the activity was the two-way learning which took place.

Representatives from SPAB were delighted with the response of the students and want to explore delivering 'bite size' sessions in schools following this model. The craftspeople were also encouraged by the enthusiasm and skills shown by the young people and enjoyed their work with them.

Stallholders at the public event enjoyed interacting with the visitors but also valued the chance to meet and talk to other heritage workers

A massive thank you for hosting the event yesterday, we had a fantastic time and so enjoyed chatting to the public, but also other heritage workers. I particularly loved hearing about traditional roofing, something I knew very little about beforehand! It was such a great event.

7.6 Churchyard volunteers



Plate 16 Churchyard volunteers

This work was started by a small volunteer team made up of members of the church congregation. A dedicated volunteer role was created to allow wider advertisement of the volunteering opportunity. This was advertised on the church website and newsletter and via a local community meetup and six additional volunteers recruited. In addition, a partnership was created with students from the Soham Village College Community Ambassadors team who attended a one-off event. The volunteers spent the equivalent of 47 days working on this element of the project.



Plate 17 A bug box installed on the church



Plate 18 New wildlife friendly planting

The creation of the wildlife friendly planting in the NW corner of the churchyard and the placing of the bird and bug boxes required statutory permissions and the Project Co-ordinator developed and submitted plans to Soham PCC and Soham Town Council. Following this a faculty was submitted and plans were all approved.

Bird and bug boxes were installed in Autumn 2023 and 13 students from Soham Village College supported a bulb planting session. Early on in 2024 a community herb garden was created and bulbs and native species planted naturalistically throughout the churchyard. Finally trees and shrubs were planted to create a hedgerow.

8 Project outcomes

8.1 A wider range of people will be involved in heritage

This outcome was met in a variety of ways across the project.

Liaison with Soham Village College enabled the staff there to encourage students who would not usually have this type of opportunity to take part. None of the students had any previous exposure to archaeology and few mentioned any previous interest in history or heritage. When asked about what they enjoyed doing they talked about a range of activities including fishing, sport, singing and drama. None could remember visiting a museum although when prompted by staff a couple talked about a school trip to Cambridge when at primary school. Only one student mentioned an interest in history when being interviewed by a friend.

The sessions in 2023 gave students an insight into the range of skills needed for work in archaeology and heritage and this intrigued many of them. Several enjoyed photography and one young man was excited to discover that there were jobs where he could use his interest in photography as he was unaware of this potential career. Another pupil who excelled at the illustration exercise was interested to hear about jobs using her artistic flair and again hadn't realised that these existed. Pupils found the 3D scanning interesting and were impressed that they were using the same technology that was used in creating TV and game effects. Again, they hadn't linked history, archaeology, and computing skills so this showed them more opportunities.

The 2024 cohort similarly found the range of options open to them surprising. Photography was again a popular option. Two of the students suggested that they might look at archaeology as a career choice as they had enjoyed the experience. One participant after noticing the carvings in the church commented that he would be interested in focussing his ambition to be a carpenter toward working on historic buildings.

For the two fairs, marketing was aimed at widening engagement beyond those already involved with the church. The knitted monks were spread around the town and specifically targeted in areas of social housing along with printed leaflets. Facebook paid advertising was used to target a wide demographic and information was posted to several community groups on social media. Posters and banners were sited in all areas of the town. Examples of marketing and publicity can be found in appendix 1. Visitors were asked to place a dot on a map of Soham showing where they live (Appendix 4) and this shows a wide geographic spread.

Additional work with the Soham Village College Community Ambassadors Team helped to strengthen links within the community. Non heritage themed community groups were encouraged to bring stalls to the fair to help attract visitors who do not usually engage with heritage. For example, Soham Community Association brought an information stand and provided children's games, Soham Men's Shed and Soham Gardening club were also present.

The marketing strategy for the Heritage Skills Workshop was aimed at encouraging people from across the town to attend and, as for the two fairs, focus was given to areas of social housing and online community groups. All local colleges offering tertiary education were contacted. Soham Village College identified students who would benefit from the opportunity, many of these students have additional needs. The Head of Foundation Learning sent feedback after the event

Thank you so much for the experience that the students had last week, they have been buzzing ever since. It's such an important thing for these students, who have such varied needs and challenges to be able to access this world.

8.2 Heritage will be in better condition

The fabric of the church is in a better condition because of the capital work. Failing lead has been replaced and masonry repairs undertaken. The North and South Transept roofs and their parapets and abutments are now in a good state of repair and should be weathertight with no further major interventions needed for 50-100 years.

The setting of the church has been improved by the creation of a community herb garden and new planting around the churchyard.

8.3 Heritage will be identified and better explained

The hard hat tours gave visitors a unique perspective of the church building and a deeper understanding of the historic built environment. Visitors to the tours included as part of the fair commented in general on this indicating that the thing that they most enjoyed was

the talk on the roof repairs

An excellent lecture come demonstration describing replacement and re-leading of the transepts

and that they were surprised to learn that

That St Andrew's had a spire removed in the 15thC

History of the church and stonework

The archaeological project with Soham Village College students helped them to understand the history and heritage of Soham in some detail. In addition to the physical artefacts that they recovered they learnt about the reasons for the locations of the trenches and could link finds to these locations. For example, in 2023 one trench uncovered glass bottles and students realised a link between these and a former chemist shop on the site. The display of their discoveries at the fairs helped visitors understand more about the history of Soham with comments such as

The children were entranced at how old Soham is

I was surprised by ...

- *How much history there is*
- *That it had so much history*
- *That there was so much archaeology in this area*
- *That it had so much history*

The two fairs enabled visitors to learn about the medieval period in general through engagement with reenactors. They enjoyed watching the entertainment provided by knights and jesters but also reported learning about food and cooking as well as plants used in medieval remedies

- *The medieval theme was very informative and the people were welcoming. The jousting was great*
- *enjoyed watching medieval crafting*
- *Engaging with the period demonstrators and craft people.*
- *The cooking display, leather displays*

In addition to the comments made above in response to the archaeological findings, visitors also learnt about the heritage of the town expressing surprise at discovering

- *The extent of the friary at St Felix's time*
- *Gustavus Vassa and his wedding to Susanna*
- *Here in the Ice Age*

Other visitors reflected on aspects of the church building

- *Wonderful wood carvings on the roof*
- *Seeing how old some of the memorials were in the church*
- *The dog man gargoyle*
- *Carvings in the church*

8.4 People will have developed skills

This outcome is particularly pertinent to the projects involving students from Soham Village College. The group learnt 'soft skills' such as teamwork which was commented on by staff members from the college. A member of the staff team was asked if anyone had surprised them with how they had responded and she felt all of them had given the challenges these young people face. They all stayed focussed which can be hard for some and worked very well together in their teams. Not all the pupils knew each other before the session as they were from different year groups and different key stages (3 and 4) so the team work was particularly impressive.

Students themselves reflected that they had had learnt independence and teamwork. One young lady thought that working on the project had been a good preparation for work. She was asked what working with the team for Wessex Archaeology had been like and she reflected

They treat us like adults and I think that's a good experience as well because when you go to the work place you are treated like an adult so I think doing this experience you sort of click and you think 'Oh Ok you have to grow up now'

Others appreciated that they had been spoken to like professionals but that there had also been humour and relaxed moments.

In terms of specific skills, several students showed a particular aptitude. One participant excelled in interviewing participants creating thoughtful and tailored questions and was reflecting that journalism might be an interest. Several enjoyed and showed an aptitude for photography and one young man reflected that he might like to try sport photography as a career.

One success of the Heritage Skills workshop was the experience of a Soham Village College Student. The student has faced a range of challenges and was supported by attendance at the

Hub. He thoroughly enjoyed the experience of flint knapping and proved to be adept at this. He was offered work experience with the demonstrator and spent two days working one to one alongside professionals restoring two courses of flintwork at the base of the church tower. The professional has kept in touch and encouraged this student's interest, discussing an apprenticeship with him which will happen as soon as practical. In the meantime, the student has decided to attend college to learn wider construction skills before specialising. His parents and staff at the college have described the experience of this student as transformational.

The Deputy head of the college commented that

The training and experience that our students have had from being involved in the project has been transformational for those involved. Not only has it improved their knowledge, but it has also developed them as people. I have watched the students grow in confidence and empathy. Furthermore, it has helped several of our students to choose training and career paths that they had not realised were open to them.

8.5 The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit

A post project survey was shared on Soham community social media groups and with attendees to the church. The response rate was low (27) but comments made in response to the question *What do you think it adds to the area?* give a useful insight into how locals perceive the changes made to the church and churchyard. A full list can be found in Appendix 6 but some examples are

Heritage, makes it look like people care about where they live

Improves the look. Glad to see church is involved in helping wildlife.

Much more welcoming and also gives children something to talk about.

Charm, History, attracts visitors, makes the church the focal point to the town

The wider understanding of the heritage and history of the town among students and inhabitants helps to improve the quality of life in Soham by increasing respect for the historic built environment thus reducing the likelihood of vandalism. Giving young people a sense of ownership also empowers them to influence others and dissuade anti-social behaviour among their peers.

The attendance of community groups and charities at the two fairs enabled them to extend their reach with at least one group who hadn't attended events in Soham before (P3) planning further links with the church to support the community

Great to meet you again on Saturday. Both Christine and I were delighted with the engagement and numbers liaising with P3. Do let me know re mornings/afternoons where I can informally come along and fly the flag for P3. I have book marked November as previously discussed.

The improvements made to the fabric of the church have freed up the vicar to carry out her ministry rather than needing to constantly firefight issues with the building. Much of her work is rooted in supporting the local community, whether churchgoers or not, and enabling her to focus on this key aspect of her work can only have a positive impact on the town's inhabitants.

The project with Soham Village College students has had an immediate impact on those taking part but has also had a positive impact on the college's relationship with the wider community of Soham. The staff member liaising with the project team was interviewed about the project and one of the key points he made was that this had improved the relationship between the

college and the wider community. The achievements of pupils not usually celebrated had been widely shared and the support of the garden owners had been appreciated by the students. He felt that this was the start of a more open relationship with the Soham community beyond parents.

The vicar also reported that she felt the relationship between the church and the college had changed and that the project had built and fostered trust between the community and college students.

These positive community links and increased understanding of, and pride in, the heritage of Soham can only have a positive impact on the town.

8.6 The local economy will be boosted

The architectural firm appointed are based and regularly work in the East of England region and employed local trades where possible.

The two community fairs gave local craftspeople the opportunity to showcase their work in Soham, and for three this was their first fair and an opportunity to launch their small business.

It was my first time trading, and it was really successful. I really enjoyed it.

Other traders appreciated the support given which enabled them to trade

The team running the event are friendly, approachable, professional and answer any questions very quickly. We were made to feel very welcome. I bring my elderly disabled mum as I am her 24/7 carer and Dale made sure that we were inside and close to amenities. This is my 2nd year and would recommend this event. we also enjoyed seeing the other stalls and the entertainment. This is a great event that brings the community together, it deserves funding.

Another organisation to benefit from the project was social enterprise Burwell Print which provides training and support to adults with additional needs. A deliberate choice was made to use this supplier.

Going forward, the improvements made to the church and churchyard now make it a more attractive option for those looking to the church for their wedding. Before the project, the uncertainty around when there would be scaffolding around the church meant that couples were often reluctant to use the church for their ceremony. Additional weddings held at the church will increase footfall to local businesses catering for weddings.

9 Challenges and successes

One challenge flagged up by the project team was that of the differences of scale between the church and PCC and a large commercial archaeological organisation. On the ground the partnership worked well and the archaeological excavations were one of the highlights of the project. Behind the scenes this disparity of scale led to frustration. One example given was the issuing of a contract with the Project Team struggling to deal with a legal department more used to negotiating with national construction companies. This wasted a great deal of the Project Team's time and resources on what should have been straightforward for the client. These challenges were exacerbated by the ill health of one of the key contacts at Wessex Archaeology with the project team unsure of who to escalate any issue to.

An area of misunderstanding early on was the nature of the archaeological sub-contracting for this part of the project. It was initially presented to the Project Co-ordinator as an 'off the peg'

resource when this was actually a research and development partnership which needed much more input from her to make it a success than had been originally assumed. This was particularly around communication and planning with Soham Village College and residents. Early discussion between all partners would have helped clarify aims from the start. Additionally, a staggered approach to recruitment appointing the Project Co-Ordinator before the other sub-contractors would have allowed her to take part in the selection process and put her in a position to build the team from the start.

The project successfully used existing community contacts and relationships with, for example, schools and used these to build and foster trust further. From this it was possible to put in place opportunities that the schools and pupils wouldn't usually have access to.

Young people facing a range of challenges were supported to develop their soft skills, resilience and confidence and try out a range of practical skills. For some the experience has had a transformational impact on them raising aspirations, showing a career path they hadn't previously considered and providing practical support to help them reach these aspirations.

The success of the two fairs, despite challenging circumstances, have enabled the church to see how an ambitious and professional approach to community events have helped place them as a major cultural player in Soham and shown the local appetite for them to adopt this role.

The project has seen a step change in the relationship between the church and the wider community. People who had never engaged with the church now view it as a resource for the wider community and appreciate its pivotal place in the town.