

With thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund

The church has received initial support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Securing the future of St Mary the Virgin Church, East Bergholt.

Made possible by National Lottery players, the project aims to undertake conservation to remove risk to the building and enable a wide range of audiences to engage with the rich heritage of the church and local area. Development funding of £199,460 were awarded by the Heritage Fund in early 2025, to help St Mary the Virgin Church, East Bergholt progress their plans to apply for a full National Lottery grant of over £1m in mid 2026.

Updated: September 2025



About our church

St Mary's
East Bergholt

St Mary the Virgin Church, East Bergholt is a grade I listed medieval church dating back to 1350 and is listed as 'vulnerable' on Historic England's 'at risk' register. Its rich heritage includes links to the landscape painter, John Constable, an unfinished tower, and the heaviest bells still rung in England, housed in a cage, and uniquely pushed by hand rather than pulled by rope.

Protecting the Future of Our Church

St Mary's
East Bergholt

Our church is generally in good condition, but the lead roofs have now reached the end of their life and urgently need replacing. Temporary repairs are no longer enough and leaving them any longer than necessary could risk more damage.

The Parochial Church Council is committed to replacing the roofs and moving forward with plans to reorder the church interior. These improvements will not just protect the building, they'll also help bring new life into the space, making it more adaptable for community use and helping generate funds for ongoing maintenance.

About the project

St Mary's
East Bergholt

Our project is all about preserving and sharing heritage. Our goal is to remove the church from the Heritage Vulnerable register by restoring and internally reordering, to improve the facilities available to the local congregation and increase engagement with the local community.

We will use our location at the heart of the village of East Bergholt, the birthplace of the artist John Constable to help shine a light on the natural world as well as local history, and to connect with people beyond our parish boundary.

The most important aspect of our project is saving the church from physical deterioration, ensuring it survives and thrives to share its rich heritage for many years to come.

About the project

St Mary's
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We envision a welcoming, inclusive space that preserves and honours the church's historic features, whilst sharing its fascinating history and that of its stunning Constable-country setting. We aim to create a warm, flexible, and inclusive space that reflects the needs of our local community. By offering a safe environment for mother and toddler groups and providing facilities that welcome people of all ages, we seek to support those often underserved. This space will be more than just a venue—it will reconnect local people with a place cherished by generations before them, nurturing a sense of belonging and shared heritage. Through these initiatives, our project will improve the church's long-term physical and financial stability and increase engagement with both local people and tourists who seek comfort and inspiration.

East Bergholt & Beyond

St Mary's
East Bergholt

East Bergholt enjoys many visitors, attracted by the legacy of artist John Constable, who was born close to the Church and became renowned for depicting the spirit of Suffolk through his archetypical paintings of local landscapes and wide-open skies.

Many of the views painted by John Constable are still recognisable around the village today. The church itself offers its own Constable memorial; an 1877 window with glass by WH Constable of Cambridge, a memorial to Constable's wife and his parents' graves. His painting also made famous the priest's room.

East Bergholt & Beyond

St Mary's
East Bergholt

These are important to local and national art historians. These features make St Mary the Virgin Church a wonderful stop-point on the Constable tourist trail. We aim to complement other village archive collections and gather historical data about the church and bell cage in one place, which will be more accessible to scholars and visitors alike. By reimagining the layout of the church, we plan to offer a space to display information on the church's valuable history and heritage. This will provide opportunities to engage local people and visitors in wonderful and enriching heritage

Donating to the Roof Fund

You may wish to donate to the project. The quickest way to do this is by scanning the QR code with your phone's camera. If however, you cannot do this then you are also able to make a cash donation.

You will find printed envelopes for this purpose in the church. Please reference ROOF FUND on the envelope.

We would encourage you to gift aid if possible. Completed gift aid envelopes with donations need to be placed in the box inside the church when you visit. Thank you!



Thank you

St Mary's
East Bergholt

The churchwardens, on behalf of St Mary's Church, would like to thank you for your interest in and support of our church.

Jackie Reeves and Fiona Trott.

