

VICARS' CLOSE

A MEDIEVAL STREET SINGING THROUGH THE CENTURIES

The Project

Vicars' Close: A Medieval Street Singing Through the Centuries is a once in a lifetime opportunity to save this internationally significant architectural site. It will create a legacy that will not only safeguard the future of Vicars' Close, but also deliver an exciting new, visitor experience and programme of events to uncover and celebrate our heritage.



The Heritage

Vicars' Close is the oldest intact medieval street in Europe (1348) still used for its original purpose: to house the Cathedral's adult choir. Surveys have shown the pressing need to rectify the seriously deteriorating condition of each of the twenty-seven historically significant Grade I listed houses, the Chapel, Vicars' Hall, and Treasury rooms.

Our project will repair and conserve the envelope of the Close's buildings, to halt the water ingress and damp that is causing considerable and accelerating deterioration to the buildings' fabric. Without these urgent works there is an imminent danger that Vicars' Close is added to Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk Register.'

Two of the properties will also be opened to the public as interpretation spaces where the stories of the Close's social, architectural, and musical history and heritage will be told for the first time.



Exterior damage caused by damp



Opening unseen rooms

Project Scope

The main scope of the works is expected to include:

- Roofs: all roofs are to be lifted, assessed, and reinstated or replaced as needed to stabilise, with insulation upgraded to current thermal efficiency standards.
- Rainwater drainage: all gulleys, gutters and downpipes will be removed, renovated, or replaced and reinstated.
- Structural repairs: all exposed structures will be inspected and assessed with interventions designed and implemented to areas of structural instability.
- Joinery: all woodwork will be prepared and redecorated if sound, and replicated and replaced if unsound. Secondary glazing or draft proofing will be sympathetically introduced to improve thermal efficiency.
- Masonry: all masonry to the external walls will be conserved, repaired, rebuilt, and re-pointed using traditional methods.
- Render: existing render coatings will be consolidated or replaced.
- Groundwater drainage: repairs to main underground drainage channels .
- Interpretation: New interpretation will be developed for numbers 12 and 22, the Close Chapel, Vicars' Hall, and Treasury Rooms.
- A new app or guiding system will be developed to connect the interpretation across the Close.
- The gardens of numbers 12 and 22 will be developed into interpretative medieval physic gardens.
- A programme of activities will be delivered with community groups and visitors.

Timeline

- 2022-24
Project development and fundraising
- 2024
Submission to National Lottery Heritage Fund
- 2028
Project Completion

Funding

The total project cost is £6.2million

To date we have raised £1.1m with the potential of a further £3.3m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

We need to raise the remaining match funding of £1.8m by March 2024



About Us

Wells Cathedral is classified as an exempt HMRC charitable organisations - Exemption Number X7886 - equivalent to a registered charity and recognised as such by an Act of Parliament under the Cathedral Measures Act 1999. Under the Cathedral Measures Act 2021, Wells Cathedral will become a registered Charity by April 2024.

