

Vicars' Close Project

Callout for Community Choirs



Are you a community choir based in Somerset?

Would you like to try something different?

Are you interested in a free workshop with a local, professional composer?

We are beginning a major new community-led project around the opening of Vicars' Close at Wells Cathedral, and we're looking to build relationships with regional community choirs.



Vicars' Close is an amazing medieval street that feels like travelling back in time. For over 650 years it has been home to the Cathedral's choir. As well as repairing the buildings, we are engaging people in a whole range of activities – from singing and oral histories to wildlife gardening. Eventually, once we've finished repairs and made it more accessible, we will open parts of the street as an innovative new visitor attraction with all kinds of things to explore.

Given its continued use as a residential street for many people, our theme for the Vicars' Close Project is 'home'. We're excited to explore what this means to people from across the county, through some exciting singing sessions with celebrated voice artist Verity Standen

The Vicars' Close project is made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, we have been able to offer these bespoke workshops to local choirs.

Singing Workshops

To launch this project, we are offering *free* creative singing workshops to local community choirs. These workshops will be joyful and accessible to all.

Verity Standen has worked with singers across the UK and internationally. We've chosen to work with her because she has a particular skill getting people to try new ways of using their voice – whether they are experienced choristers or don't usually sing outside their own shower.

- Composer (and Somerset resident) Verity Standen will host the workshops for your choir along with Nik Kitchridge (Creative Facilitator) or Amanda Boyd (Engagement Co-Ordinator) from the Wells Cathedral team.
- We'll introduce the project and share some stories about the hundreds of amazing people who've lived and worked in Vicars' Close over the centuries.
- Verity will share some playful songs and vocal exercises – these won't be anything like the music you'd normally hear in the Cathedral; Verity's music is contemporary and lively, drawing on influences from Eastern European polyphony to pop and folk.
- Verity teaches everything 'by ear' – no written score. And there's nothing to prepare. Singers can be of any level of experience and confidence. Verity will adapt as she goes to suit your group, and we'll support your group with anything that helps make the experience fun and accessible.
- We will include some gentle creative exercises to gather your ideas about 'home' and living in Somerset – these ideas could inspire new music created with your group or feature as part of the visitor experience on Vicars' Close.
- We can also provide a short overview about the amazing history of Vicars' Close – still home to Cathedral Choir today - sharing stories about the wonderful characters that have lived and worked there over the centuries.
- Wells Cathedral will then keep in touch with you about our future creative activity, which will include more opportunities for choirs and singers. This project is a great way for us to kickstart our relationships with groups across the region as we begin to expand our identity as a creative and cultural hub.

About Verity:

"I'm really excited to be working in Wells. The spaces of the Cathedral are completely magical to sing in, charged by hundreds of years of voices... I love chatting to people and hearing their stories. I'll be travelling around the region, discovering how people respond to the idea of 'home'. And I'll be getting as many people singing as possible along the way. I feel very lucky!"

Verity is an artist, composer and choir leader (she runs her own open-to-all choir in Frome). Her work focuses on the human voice - gathering people together to sing and exploring different ways that people can experience vocal music. Her projects take a range of forms – concerts, theatre pieces, films, installations, community events – but they always start with the voice.

She has filled castles, cafes and hospital wards with song, as well as theatres and concert halls across the UK and Internationally, from village halls in the Outer Hebrides to the National Theatre, Prague to Shanghai. You can explore her work at www.veritystanden.com



Photos: Paul Blakemore

Details:

- Sessions are entirely free.
- They will take place between January - April 2026.
- We can travel to your setting to deliver the workshop or host you here at Wells Cathedral, depending on what your group would prefer.
- We will fit into your existing meeting schedule and/or work with you to find a time that fits.
- Each group will be offered 2 sessions, bespoke to your group. Ideally these would be entire choir rehearsals (e.g. 90 minutes) so we can try out some song ideas, but we can also offer shorter 'drop-in' moments if that would fit better with you.

We may ask groups for their permission to document some of these sessions through photography, video, and audio recording for the purposes of project documentation, evaluation and marketing. No-one will be recorded if they do not wish to be, and all participants have a right to anonymity.

How to Express Your Interest

Please get in touch with the Vicars' Close Project Team: VCProject@wellscathedral.org.uk

Or scan the QR code:



And we will get back to you to arrange an informal conversation.

If you would rather contact us by phone, you can call or leave a message: **07747214861**

Further Information:

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact the Vicars' Close Project Team: VCProject@wellscathedral.org.uk