



other church as it seeks to reduce its carbon emissions.

Brendan Foster

St Paul's Church in Covent Garden is known as the Actors' Church. Both the Theatre Royal and the Royal Opera House are in its parish. Famous names of the stage and screen are memorialised here, including Charlie Chaplin, Noel Coward, Richard Beckinsale and Diana Rigg.

Even the church cat (Eliza), named after Eliza Doolittle, has a theatrical name.

The church is developing a quatercentenary project to mark 400 years since it was established. Plans include making the building more accessible, as well as reducing its carbon footprint and transforming its space for the use of the community.

Heritage project director Max Lacey is leading the project. "Because it is an Inigo Jones building, it demands that things are done to the highest standards. It has a carbon footprint of 11 tonnes of CO2, and we are looking for the most advanced ways to reduce



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The answer came from another city centre church, St Peter Mancroft in Norwich. Both churches are historic. Both lie in the heart of an urban environment. Both use their space for artistic endeavours as well as worship.

St Peter Mancroft is also one of the Church of England's first Demonstrator Churches. The £5.2m Demonstrator Churches project from the Church of England's Net Zero Programme aims to help up to 114 churches in 2025 on their journey to net zero.

There was an obvious contender for change at St Paul's: the oil-fired heating system. In 2022 it used some 8,000 litres of oil, costing the church around £9,000.

The air source heat pumps that Max saw at St Peter's may be just the thing to solve the heating problem.

Perhaps the crucial question is what will the church cat – Eliza – make of it?

"Eliza really enjoys sleeping on the cast iron grilles, carved into Thomas Hardwick's narthex flooring, with the heating pipes under them," said Max.

"The grilles will certainly be retained, so her favourite sleeping place will not be affected, if anything, enhanced!"

Cat lovers everywhere will be mightily relieved.

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