



SHERBORNE ABBEY



FACILITIES UPGRADE PROGRAMME

Upgrading a building

Securing the future

Serving our community

Sherborne Abbey

Facilities Upgrade Programme

Improvements to the Abbey's facilities have long been needed, and one of my priorities as Rector has been to ensure that Sherborne Abbey continues to be a place that welcomes all who come here.

These proposals represent the most significant improvement to the Abbey's practical facilities since the restoration of the Lady Chapel in the 1920s. They have been developed with great care to respect the architectural and historic character of the building while responding to the needs of those who use it today.

Our aim is simple: that Sherborne Abbey should remain not only a place of beauty and worship, but also a place of welcome for the wider community.



The Revd. Martin Lee
Team Rector

“This is what true stewardship looks like - honouring the craftsmanship of yesterday while having the courage and vision to shape tomorrow. In doing so, we create a harmony between past and future, ensuring that Sherborne Abbey remains not only a monument to history, but a living place of worship and a source of inspiration for generations to come.”

– **Michael Dooley**, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Dorset

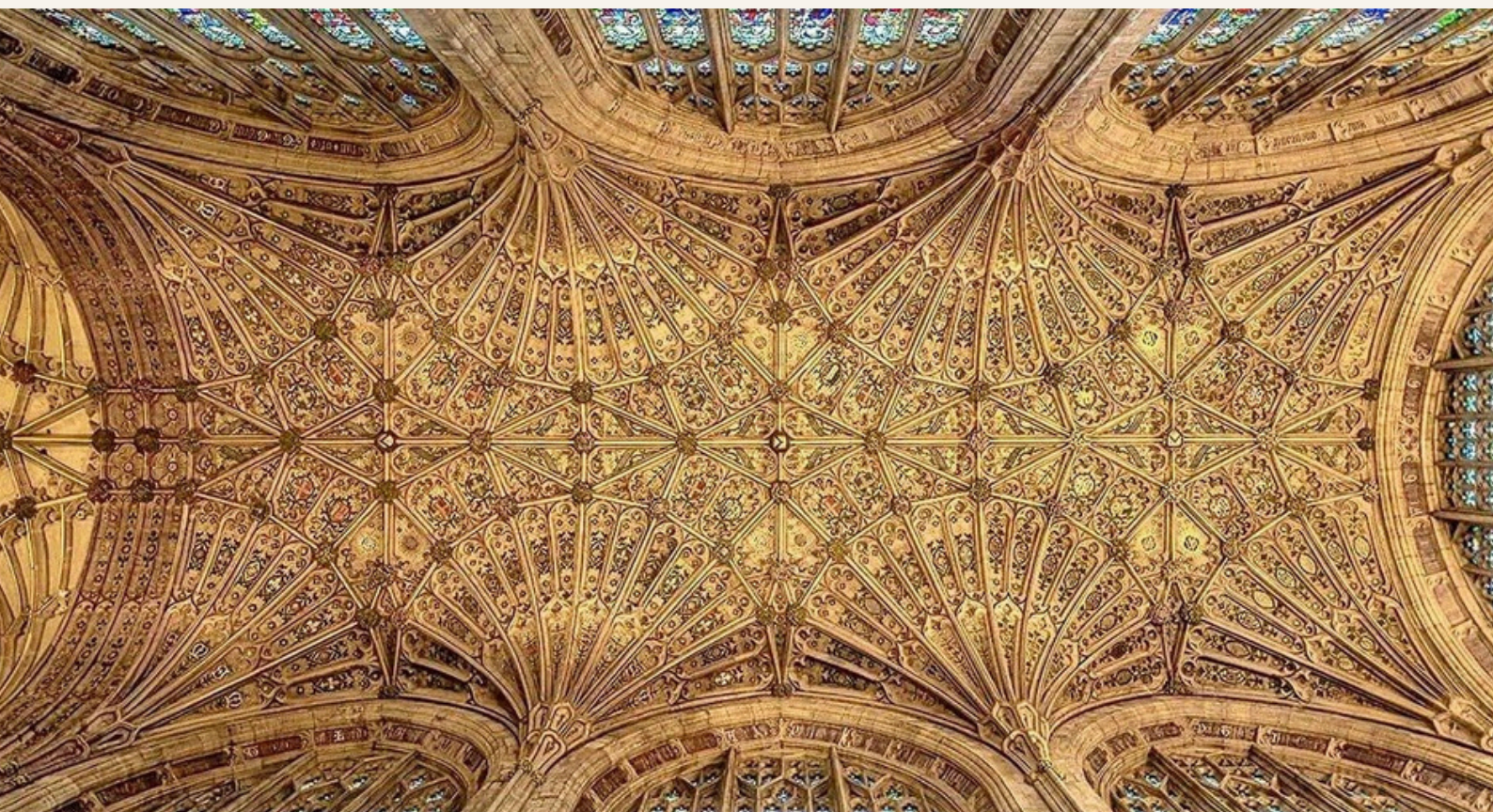


History of the Abbey

Sherborne Abbey has stood at the heart of Dorset since 705 AD, when it was founded as a Saxon cathedral by St Aldhelm and became a centre of learning and mission in the early English Church, shaping Christianity across Wessex. It later became a Benedictine monastery in 998, and although the Abbey was dissolved under Henry VIII, the townspeople famously bought it back to use as their parish church.

The building blends Saxon roots with Norman arches and soaring Perpendicular Gothic vaulting. Its medieval misericords, fan-vaulted ceiling and richly carved west front tell a layered story of faith, survival and community resilience spanning more than thirteen centuries.

Sherborne Abbey is a Grade I listed building welcoming more than 50,000 visitors annually. Often called 'The Cathedral of Dorset', it is not only the grandest building in the town centre but is the largest church in the area. It is a highly active parish church, hosting around 80 services each month, major civic events, concerts, school services and nationally significant exhibitions



The Challenges We Face

Constraints of the building

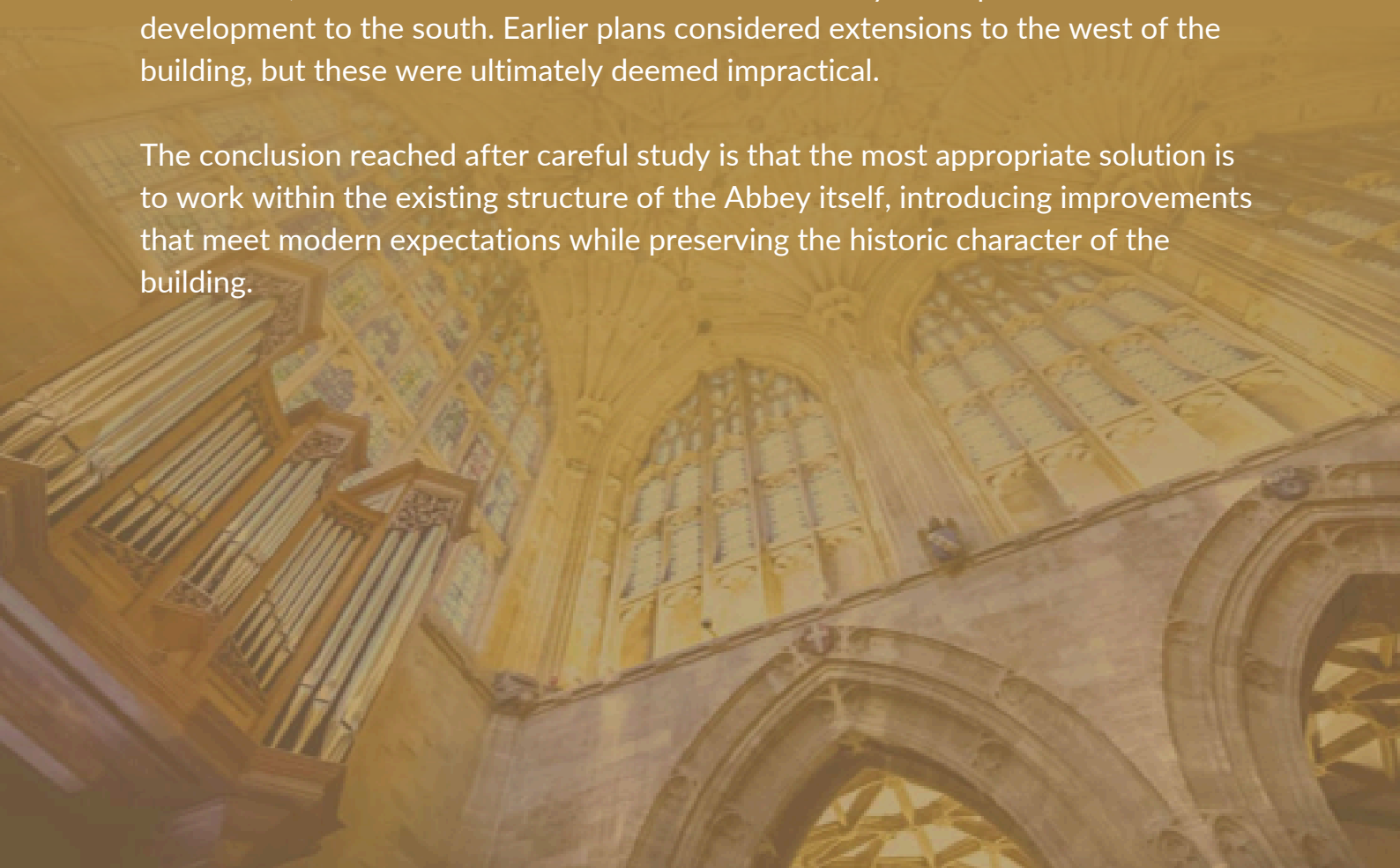
Sherborne Abbey is the result of many centuries of development. The original Saxon cathedral founded in 705 AD was expanded into a substantial church by the mid-eleventh century. A major rebuilding in the twelfth century left us the transepts and much of the tower that still stand today.

The later medieval developments of the fifteenth century created the magnificent Perpendicular Gothic building that we recognise today, with its celebrated fan vaulting and richly detailed architecture. Subsequent centuries have seen further changes, including the reordering of the chancel in the nineteenth century and the restoration of the Lady Chapel in the early twentieth century.

Like many historic buildings, Sherborne Abbey has evolved as successive generations responded to changing needs. It is therefore entirely appropriate that we now consider how the Abbey can best serve those who use it today.

However, the Abbey's historic setting presents significant constraints. Land to the north is owned by Sherborne School and forms part of a Scheduled Ancient Monument, while the celebrated view across the Abbey Close prevents development to the south. Earlier plans considered extensions to the west of the building, but these were ultimately deemed impractical.

The conclusion reached after careful study is that the most appropriate solution is to work within the existing structure of the Abbey itself, introducing improvements that meet modern expectations while preserving the historic character of the building.

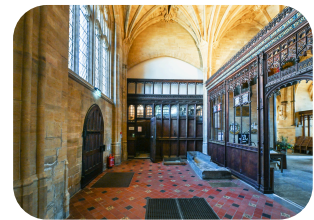


The Abbey Facilities Upgrade Programme

The Facilities Upgrade Programme brings together a series of carefully considered changes within the existing building, designed to improve accessibility, usability and day-to-day function.

1. Visitor Facilities

The existing vestry will be adapted to provide discreet lavatory facilities within the Abbey, improving access for visitors and supporting services, events and daily use.



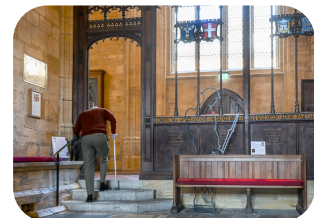
2. New Vestry

A new vestry will be created beneath the organ loft, providing a central and practical space to support clergy, volunteers and the operation of the building.

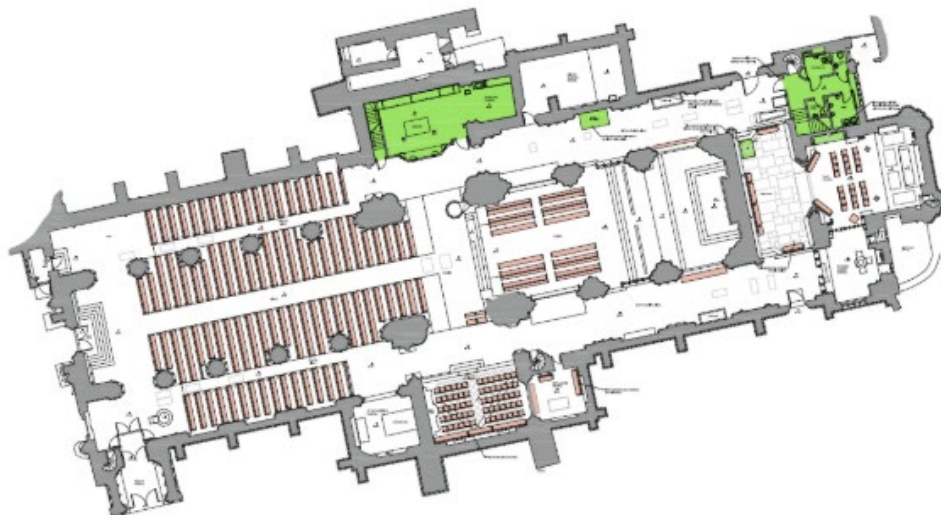


3. Access and Hospitality

The Lady Chapel and Ambulatory will be enhanced through improved accessibility, including a wheelchair lift, and a permanent hospitality area.



As part of these works, significant historic monuments within the Abbey will be carefully relocated to more appropriate positions, ensuring their continued prominence and preservation.



The Abbey Facilities Upgrade Programme

What will this achieve for the Abbey and local community?

The Facilities Upgrade Programme will ensure that Sherborne Abbey continues to serve both church and community with dignity, accessibility and excellence for generations to come.

A more welcoming Abbey

The provision of lavatory facilities within the building will allow visitors, worshippers and those attending services or events to remain comfortable within the Abbey. For many, particularly older members of the congregation or those travelling from further afield, this will make a significant difference to how they experience their time here.

Greater accessibility

The introduction of improved access, including a wheelchair lift to the Lady Chapel and Ambulatory, will enable more people to participate fully in the life of the Abbey. Spaces that are currently difficult to reach will become more readily accessible to all.

Supporting the life of the Abbey

The creation of a new vestry at the heart of the building will improve the day-to-day functioning of the Abbey, supporting clergy, volunteers and visiting choirs. It will allow the Abbey to continue its extensive programme of services, civic occasions and cultural events with greater ease.

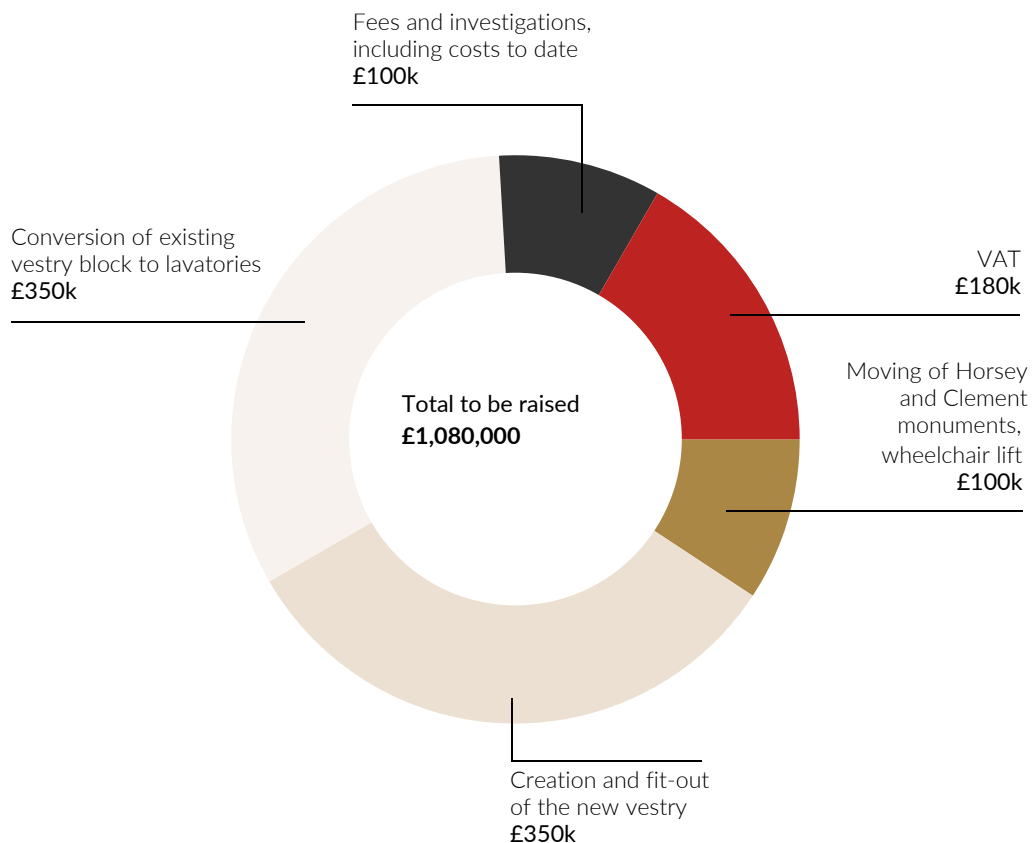
A building ready for the future

Together, these changes represent a considered investment in the Abbey's future. They ensure that this historic building remains not only a place of beauty and heritage, but one that continues to serve its community in a practical and sustainable way.



Meeting The Cost

The total cost of the Facilities Upgrade Programme is approximately £1.1 million.



Funds secured

This includes the conversion and fitting-out of the existing vestry block to create lavatory facilities, the creation of a new vestry within the north transept, improvements to accessibility including a wheelchair lift, and the professional and conservation work required for a project of this nature.

The Abbey and the Friends of Sherborne Abbey have already committed over £540,000, representing half of the total cost of the programme.

This is a significant moment in the life of the Abbey, and one in which leadership support will play a vital role.

How to get involved?

We are now seeking support from charitable trusts, grant-awarding bodies and individuals who share our desire to ensure that Sherborne Abbey remains a place of welcome, worship and community life for generations to come.



SHERBORNE ABBEY

Sherborne Abbey has stood at the centre of the town for more than thirteen centuries. Each generation has played its part in ensuring that this remarkable building continues to serve the community that surrounds it. The Facilities Upgrade Programme represents the next chapter in that continuing story.

For further information about the programme, or to discuss supporting the appeal, please contact:

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The Parish Office

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To find out more or support the Facilities Upgrade Programme:

