

## Current Position

1. The Abbey area already has a number of service providers and other groups who depend on and encourage volunteer contributions. Through these, there is already a substantial existing volunteer input, including:
  - a. St Edmundsbury Cathedral volunteers who are welcome stewards, tour guides, tower tour guides, shop volunteers and chaplains (250);
  - b. The Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership (29 organisations and individuals who give their time freely for the benefit of the Abbey);
  - c. Friends of Abbey Gardens (32 of whom work in the Gardens alongside West Suffolk Council);
  - d. Bury Water Meadows Group (230 of which 70 are very active);
  - e. Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides who offered 428 tours which attracted 1655 people in 2022.

There is however no cohesive strategy to develop in full the benefits of volunteering across the Abbey area nor to increase levels of activity within the existing volunteer groups.

2. Individual organisations maintain records in different ways so there is no central recording or monitoring of volunteer information. We do not therefore have a complete profile of volunteering in the Abbey area by, for example, age, gender, ethnicity or place of residence. This profiling will be extremely helpful in understanding the relationship between volunteering and the local community and in future volunteer planning and will form part of the Evaluation Plan. It is generally understood that the volunteer profile is white, financially comfortable, over 55 years of age, and predominantly comprises individuals who were female at birth.

## Objectives

3. The objectives of the (outline) Volunteer Plan are to:
  - a. Develop a co-ordinated approach to volunteering;
  - b. Support the further development of existing volunteer groups;
  - c. Maximise opportunities for volunteering in the Abbey area;
  - d. Recruit a further 125 volunteers which represents a 50% increase on the existing volunteer base at the Cathedral;
  - e. Diversify the volunteer base by prioritising recruitment of (and delivering learning and development pathways to):
    - young people (through the Cathedral's Ecoyard project and its links with other youth groups including innov8 workshops, Youthwatch in Healthwatch Suffolk and Youth Hub through West Suffolk Youth & Employment Services);
    - people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (especially through the multicultural women's group in Bury St Edmunds);
    - individuals and families living on the Howard Estate, which has several indicators of deprivation;

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- f. involve volunteers in delivering the project throughout the development and delivery phase.

**Outline Plan – Development Phase**

4. During the development phase we will develop a more detailed volunteer plan which will:
  - a. introduce a formal structure for extended volunteering activity and how it will interact with existing volunteers, including
    - policies and procedures;
    - induction and refresher programmes;
    - learning pathways;
    - thanks and recognition events;
  - b. ensure that volunteering will be effectively monitored throughout the project through data collection and evaluation, which will be fed into the wider evaluation plan;
  - c. establish a volunteer forum across all the volunteer groups which meets quarterly to agree a shared code of practice, discuss and resolve issues, develop opportunities on a quarterly basis, encourage involvement in activity plan trialling and various focus groups (learning, interpretation, design), and identify training needs;
  - d. develop a recruitment plan which will help us to expand and diversify our volunteer base.
  
5. The project cost recovery programme allocates time from the Cathedral p/t volunteer manager and Cathedral marketing manager for this task, supported by some input from the West Suffolk Council Manager for Green Spaces and Heritage.
  
6. Volunteers will also make a contribution during the development period towards the project.

<b>Description of task</b>	<b>Number of volunteers</b>	<b>Number of volunteer hours</b>	<b>Value of volunteer contribution</b>
Project Board members @ 4 hours a month x 20 meetings	2	160	£3,200
Chair of Project Board support to Project Manager @ 4 hours a week x 80 weeks	1	320	£6,400
Project Board member liaise with Heritage Partnership @ 3 hours month x 20 months	1	60	£1,200

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Major Donor Panel 4 members @ 4 hours a month x 20 meetings	4	320	£6,400
Each Major Donor Panel member has 4 hours a month x 20 months	4	320	£6,400
Youth Forum 5 young people @ 2 hours x fortnightly x 8 months	5	160	£3,200
Teachers Advisory Panel – KS2 @ 2 hours x 4 months	4	32	£640
Teachers Advisory Panel – KS3 @ 2 hours x 4 months	4	32	£640
Heritage Partnership - input from 4 members of their interpretation panel into interpretation focus groups @ 2 sessions of 4 hours	4	32	£640
Heritage Partnership - input into archaeology consultancy @ 3 people x 30 hours	3	90	£1,800
Volunteer participation in piloting some training activities with existing volunteers including working with young people and people with dementia, supporting the formal learning programme, working with social media and digital technology	30	300	£6,000
Volunteer participation in interpretation co-creation focus groups	20	100	£2,000
Volunteer participation in a	20	50	£1,000

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series of design focus groups			
Volunteer participation in focus groups to test the paths network and the visitor centre design for barriers to access and engagement	20	50	£1,000
Volunteer participation in one to one chats with people suffering from dementia to identify potential for oral history programme, including write up	12	60	£1,200
Volunteer participation in consulting with heritage partners (including Moyse's Hall Museum, the Guildhall and West Stow Village) and potential heritage partners (Sutton Hoo) to test our proposed pathways through the town landscape and further afield	8	40	£800
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>2,126</b>	<b>£42,520</b>

Outline Plan – Delivery Phase

7. During the delivery phase we will:
  - a. appoint a f/t Volunteer Co-ordinator who will finalise the Volunteer Plan;
  - b. activate the recruitment programme
    - to recruit at least 125 more volunteers to the Cathedral-led programme, focusing on diversity, which will expand to include the wider Abbey site and embrace the activity plan;
    - via blog posts and social media, links on the partners' websites, advertising in local cafes and on the Abbey Gardens notice boards, stalls at festivals and events, articles in newsletters and local media;
  - c. continue to strengthen collaboration between volunteer groups to ensure there is an Abbey-wide approach to recruitment, training, emphasis on diversity;
  - d. provide a training programme for existing and new volunteers in, for example:

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- running successful public events;
  - working with young volunteers;
  - working with people with dementia;
  - child protection, health and safety, first aid;
  - specific skills training such as use of digital technology (for welcomers, tour guides and supporters of learning workshops), driving minibus (for free transport), gathering data for public surveys and assessments;
- e. provide volunteering opportunities. It is anticipated these will generate the following additional volunteers:

<b>Volunteer Type</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Target numbers</b>
Youth Forum		10
Teachers Advisory Groups	Two groups - for primary and secondary schools – to advise on the content and delivery of the learning programmes	10
Biodiversity planting and maintenance	Via West Suffolk Council	20
Heritage conservation	Via English Heritage	20
Support assistants to learning programmes	Assist in delivery of school and community workshops	15
Welcomers and Befrienders	Helping to welcome participants in the activity programmes and support/befriend individuals	20
Events and Activity Management	Helping to organise and run the events in the activity programme	20
Surveys and Monitoring	Helping to test user satisfaction levels	10
Bite-size volunteers, for example, students	Assisting with one-off initiatives such the events	50

8. Appoint a Volunteer Co-ordinator who will support the work of the Learning and Engagement Manager by:
- a. recruiting and training volunteers in the delivery of key elements of the activity plan;
  - b. assuming responsibility for the Cathedral volunteer programme;
  - c. liaising with the wider Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership and helping coordinate their aspirations for the Abbey Site;
  - d. liaising with the English Heritage Free to Enter Sites Volunteer Manager (South) and helping to integrate English Heritage’s directly managed volunteers into the work of the project;

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- e. liaising with the Abbey Gardens Friends and helping run and extend the number of horticultural sessions they do in coordination with the Abbey Gardens Manager;
- f. liaising with The Bury Water Meadows group and River Lark Catchment Partnership and providing support to them in coordinating projects along the Rivers Lark and Linnet, where WSC have riparian responsibilities for the water course including the enhancement of the neighbouring meadows biodiversity;
- g. liaising with the Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides and providing support to them in promoting their activities;
- h. driving more diverse volunteers into the Abbey Precinct through working with other agencies such as the Probation service, and the Green Light Trust who are seeking to develop a base at nearby West Stow Country Park;
- i. monitoring the activities and providing reports on the type, number of volunteer activities, and numbers of people involved.

**Projected impacts**

- 9. Strengthen volunteering throughout Bury St Edmunds as a local community resource.
- 10. Reinforce the unity of the Abbey area – Abbey ruins, rivers, Cathedral, Great Churchyard – on a human as well as a landscape level.
- 11. Provide personal wellbeing and growth opportunities, learning pathways and routes to employment.
- 12. Deepen collaboration with charitable organisations throughout Bury St Edmunds who will benefit from engagement with the Abbey site.
- 13. Increase organisational resilience for the project partners and for the charitable organisations with whom they collaborate.

**Projected level of volunteer involvement at delivery stage**

<b>Description of task</b>	<b>Number of volunteers</b>	<b>Number of volunteer hours</b>	<b>Value of volunteer contribution</b>
Project Board members @ 4 hours a month x 30 meetings	2	240	£4,800
Chair of Project Board support to Project Manager @ 4 hours a week x 100 weeks	1	400	£8,000
Project Board member liaise with Heritage Partnership @ 3 hours month x 30 months	1	90	£1,800
Volunteer led guided tours	20	400	£8,000

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Volunteer led bite-sized taster tours	10	200	£4,000
Volunteer-led heritage walking tours of town	10	200	£4,000
Volunteer-led family trails	10	300	£6,000
Volunteer-led sensory garden tours	10	300	£6,000
Volunteer support in staging quarterly history talks	10	300	£6,000
Volunteer participation in oral history project – recording people’s memories and digital uploading	10	200	£4,000
Volunteer support in history learning sessions KS2 and KS3	20	200	£4,000
Volunteer support in cross-curricular school workshops 10 themes	20	200	£4,000
Volunteer support in researching West Stow Village and Sutton Hoo themed links for cultural trails	6	60	£1,200
Volunteer support in staging musical events in Cathedral and crypt	30	210	£4,200
Volunteer participation in costumed interpretation days	50	250	£5,000
Volunteer support in outdoor activities for young people	20	160	£3,200
Volunteer storytellers	10	40	£800
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>3,750</b>	<b>£75,000</b>