

Statement from Chapter about the Cathedral's staff and organisation

The combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and two years of very disappointing numbers of visitors to the Cathedral has forced us to make some difficult decisions in order to sustain the Cathedral and enable its future activity.

We receive no state funding for our running and maintenance costs. Our income comes from donations, what we earn from the café, shop and events, rents from Close properties and dividends from our investments. In addition, we receive the stipends of the Dean and two Residentiary Canons from the Church Commissioners along with contributions from the Commissioners to the salaries of our Executive and Finance Directors.

The COVID-19 crisis caused us to close the Cathedral for three months. The regulations about social distancing and maintaining a safe, COVID-secure, environment mean that practically and economically the café and shop must remain closed for the foreseeable future and very few events, apart from worship, can take place in the Cathedral.

As lockdown restrictions have eased visitor numbers have started to increase, but only slowly and hesitantly. (We are seeing 20% of the proportion who came at the same time last year). There is no disguising the seriousness of the situation. Our income from trading has disappeared. We have been able to secure support for our recovery plan from the Church Commissioners' Cathedrals Sustainability Fund which will help fund posts in education, volunteer recruitment and co-ordination of event and development management. All these must become self-funding within three years. We have made bids from all agencies offering support to heritage and arts organisations and we are confident of some success.

Nevertheless, we have had to take urgent and radical action. After a proper period of consultation about a staff re-structure, we have now finalised the shape of the staff team. This has been a painful process for everyone involved. We have benefitted from loyal and dedicated service from many of our staff over many years. However, the result is we will lose administrative support staff and, because we see no way of the café and shop trading profitably and safely, we will close those enterprises and make their staff and the Visitor Services team redundant. We are very grateful for all that the staff team has contributed and the constructive and understanding way they have taken part in discussions.

These are very difficult times for all of us; as lockdown eases we will be aware that rebuilding careers and patterns of work will be a long process in the context of a crisis that breeds a great deal of uncertainty. We invite everyone to pray for the future of the Cathedral that we may be quick to discern new opportunities of ministry and service that enable us to contribute to the health and well-being of the wider community. Please pray for all our staff who cannot now be employed by the Cathedral but whose contribution has been really valued.