



prayer • hospitality • community • sanctuary

Launde Abbey's

2025 SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT

Registered Company Number: 07469311

Registered Charity Number: 1140918

CONTRIBUTORS

Chair of Trustees

Jennie Page CBE

Warden

Revd Alison Myers





CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

Jennie Page CBE

'There is an abbey, Launde, in the heart of England. The air is always sweet there and it's quiet. A little heaven here on earth.' With these words, attributed to the arch-destroyer of such places, Thomas Cromwell, Hilary Mantel in her novel *The Mirror and the Light* summarised an emotional response to Launde Abbey which matches that of many who visit today (some, indeed, prompted by the televised version of the novel). In the 21st century, the place is still numinous and 'thin' in spiritual terms, benefitting from the continuing prayer of generations and the beauty and peace of its setting. Such a place is rare and precious, particularly when as now the external world is found to be uncertain, disappointing and damaging to wellbeing.

Trustees are pleased to report continued success in 2025 in the difficult task of combining the protection and enhancement of such a special place with maintaining financial and practical performance. As the Warden sets out in her following report, recovery from the Covid years continues in terms of visitor numbers, and prior years' investment in updated systems and new procedures allowed space and resources in 2025 to begin some innovative thinking about the longer-term future. Inevitably in a very uncertain world, major shocks occurring to financial markets and supply chains had an impact on the abbey's direct costs and potential visitors' discretionary income. Notwithstanding these difficult circumstances, performance in 2025 remained at a similar level of surplus to 2024 (just over £80k).

The business mix continued the post-Covid trend of change, demonstrating the ongoing impact of the wider world situation on some of our traditional market segments. While our group bookings overall held to the previous year's numbers, use by the two partner dioceses of Leicester and Peterborough continued a downward trend, reflecting their

financial restrictions: use by other dioceses went some way to make up for that loss, alongside a broadening range of independent Church of England groups, other denominations and non-aligned groups coming to Launde Abbey. This probably reflected increasing awareness of Launde Abbey as a place where people can meet to address desires for spiritual support and refreshment in hard times.

Individual visitor numbers increased, possibly showing a growing call for what Launde Abbey provides, rather than just the in-year introduction of on-line booking, which undoubtedly helped to spread awareness to many potential visitors who would have found Launde Abbey no other way. This increase is also a compliment to the quality and availability of the Launde Programme which attracts many return visitors. We can expect this trend of broadening recognition and awareness to continue; deeper analysis of the market will be needed in future to enhance the ability to respond to new groups and individuals.



Meanwhile, adverse geopolitical circumstances have, since year-end, increased, suggesting that for the foreseeable future the abbey faces continuing risks to long-term sustainability. These existential risks are common to all, but trustees are confident that the investments of recent years have moved forward management's ability to respond creatively and to develop new opportunities. One of these opportunities could well be a more considered approach to the wider estate, where biodiversity could be increased and the contribution to the business enhanced.

The Warden's report highlights the importance of the abbey's people to successes to date, and the impact that individuals make on the enjoyment of visitors and the growth of each other within the abbey community. Launde Abbey is fortunate in its staff and volunteers, many of whom have been at the abbey for many years, although each year brings new people to join the team, as others understandably move on. All the team wishes those who have left Godspeed, especially Chris Webb, our former deputy warden, who carried responsibility for the operation of the abbey in the six months before the Warden arrived in November 2021.

At trustee level, 2025 saw the departure of Revd Stephen Griffiths on his relocation from the diocese of Peterborough to a role in the diocese of Oxford, and the arrival of Revd Virginia Moggridge (diocese of Ely) and Revd Shakeel Nurmahi (diocese of Peterborough). We continue to seek potential new trustees, lay and clergy, to enrich further the valuable skills and wisdom of existing trustees. The trustee board, the Finance and Personnel Committee and the Estates Committee met regularly, the last mentioned served by two co-opted members as well as trustees. Trustees worked behind the scenes to improve the governance and management systems to enhance the ability of the team of clergy and lay workers to do their best for the abbey. For example, we started the task of regularising a minor but intractable ecclesiastical law anomaly, we introduced fuller use of modern finance processes, we obtained consent to remove a permanent endowment restriction to create an accessible capital reserve and debated the larger task of developing a full understanding of the historic land and its future potential. All will take time to complete, but all should enhance the resilience of Launde Abbey and its ability to continue to serve the church and its mission.



Jennie

J A Page CBE

Chair of trustees

2025 In Numbers



1000
services
in the chapel



51
retreats
day and residential



1
new
website



70%
bookings
made online
for Launde Programme



23
volunteers



42
members
of staff



£1.37m
income
from ordinary
activities



£83k
'surplus'*
after costs
*for future developments
and reserves



7959
visitor
nights



3374
bed
changes



225
groups
visiting



96
C of E
groups
diocesan + national
church





WARDEN'S REPORT FOR LAUNDE ABBHEY IN 2025

Revd Alison Myers



The firm foundation set in 2024 enabled us to tackle some bigger projects and some more creative ones in 2025. We have also risen to some challenges - staff absence, cancellation of bookings and the weather - but ended the year well both in financial terms and in reinforcing our raison d'être as a place of prayer, hospitality, community and sanctuary.

The Abbey Community and its Ministry

The ministry that we offer from the Abbey and the daily rhythm of prayer in the chapel, sustained by the Abbey's small praying community, are significant draws for those who make the choice to come here.

With the permanent team of clergy and now the wider College of Chaplains, we are able to always have a chaplain on duty during the day. During 2025, the clergy and chaplains between them led around 1,000 services in the Abbey Chapel. More individual retreatants requested pastoral or spiritual direction conversations whilst here, and, with a chaplain on duty, we were able to meet most requests. Individual retreatants who came for a self-guided retreat contributed 13% of our operating income in 2025.

Our own retreat programme of residential retreats and Quiet Days continued to attract many and, in business terms, contributed 19% of our operating income. Retreats are sometimes run by members of the in-house Ministry Team but more often led by an invited retreat leader. This year, our 36 residential retreats ranged in size from six whole-site bookings, most notably for Canon Paula Gooder and the silent retreats of the School of Contemplative Life, to intentionally smaller retreats like Living with Loss, run twice with

just 12 participants each time. Launde Programme retreats achieved 83% occupancy across the board. Our Quiet Days, now with more additional Saturdays, a total of 15 in 2025, were also well attended, largely by local people.



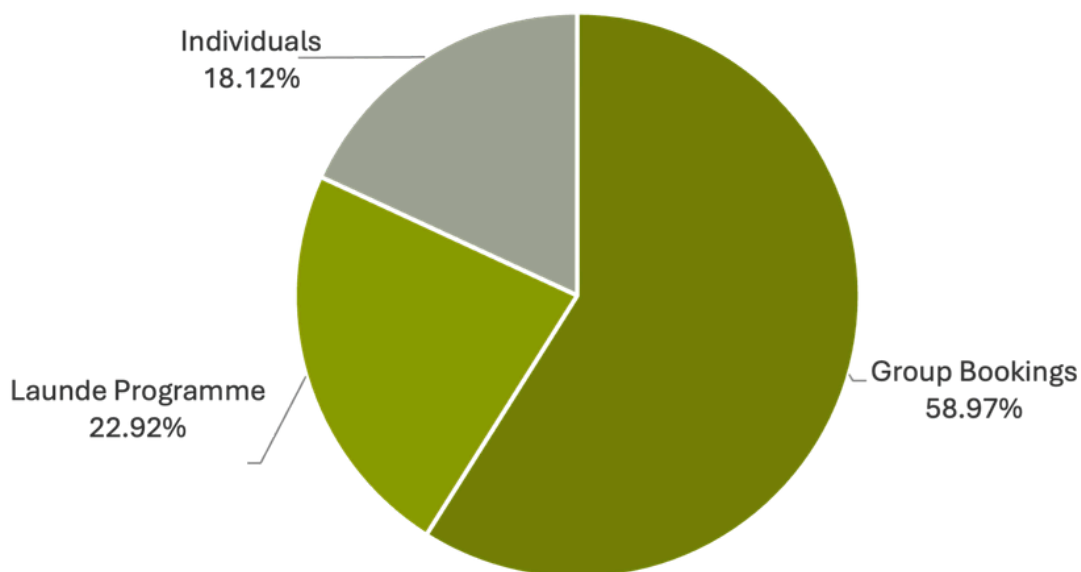
As well as offering retreats and chaplaincy, this year the Abbey's Ministry Team contributed significantly in a number of further ways to the life of the regional and national Church. The Quiet Day programme was intentionally used as a way of developing the ministry of newer retreat leaders. The Holy Listening Course, training new spiritual directors for the region, took on a second, denominationally mixed, cohort at the start of the year; and the first cohort graduated in December after two years with us. In the summer, members of the Ministry Team led ordination retreats in three other dioceses (in addition to the three ordination retreats taking place at the Abbey). For three years from summer 2025, a curate from Peterborough Diocese will serve part of her curacy here. In May and November respectively, the Ministry Team took on commissions to run a 'study day' for Leicester clergy and a weekend for Peterborough's lay ministers in training. Both were focused on nurturing a life of prayer and on developing spiritual practices. These, and events like them, may be developed further where there is demand and funding for what our experienced team can offer.

We are deeply grateful to members of the permanent Ministry Team and the members of the College of Chaplains for their time and gifts which strengthen the ministry offered at, and from, the Abbey.

Groups and café

Our groups business held steady this year, contributing £679k to our operating income, a small increase on 2024 (£656k), and just under half of the total. This is achieved with a fair amount of work behind the scenes. The proportion of our income from our partner dioceses – Leicester and Peterborough – continues to decline, but an emphasis on the proactive tasks of publicity and relationship building has helped to mitigate this by bringing in new groups, including those from a wider range of Anglican dioceses and from the national Church. In 2025, the variety of groups enjoying time here included Methodist Women In Britain, Church of England Discernment panels, Sambando (and other musical groups), and Devine Creative (and other wellbeing-focused groups). We are consistently praised by group leaders for the warmth and quality of our hospitality, the support we give as they organise their event, and the ambience of the Abbey as its setting.

2025 Visitor Type Split

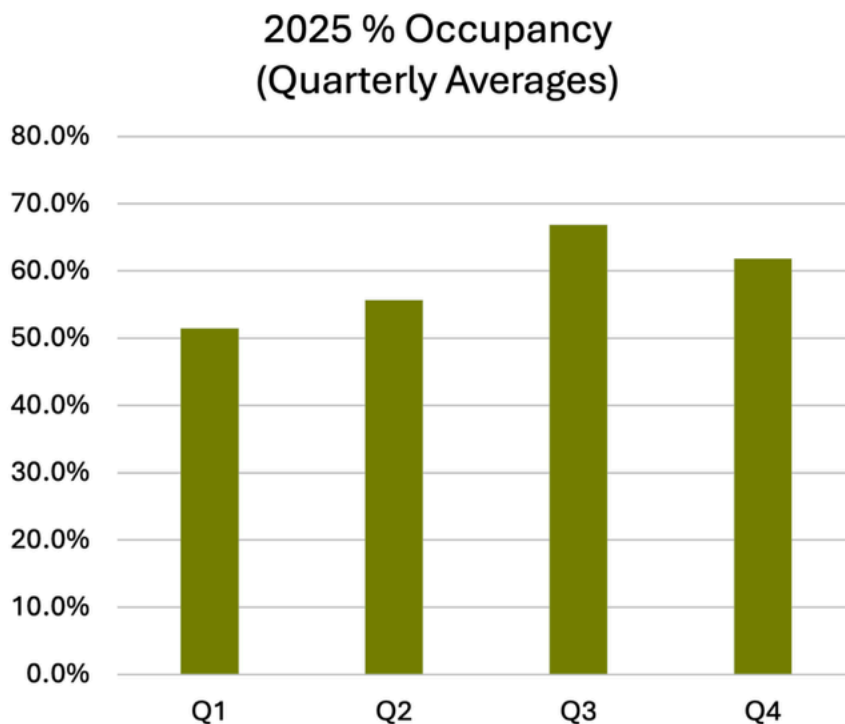


The above chart shows 'visitor nights' – a single person may stay, say, three nights – and the proportion of visitor nights attributed to each of our three main categories of guests in 2025.

The work of the strengthened Bookings Team through 2025 (and earlier) will bring ordinands from Derby Diocese to the Abbey for their ordination retreat in 2026, joining those from Leicester, Peterborough and Southwell & Nottingham Dioceses for the first time in recent history. Ordination retreats are a flagship event in the Church of England. Other groups coming in 2026 will continue to demonstrate the breadth of our hospitality: ranging from Church of England Bishop's Advisor training, bishop's leadership team residentials, and curates' residentials for a variety of dioceses; through the chapter

meetings of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins and the Third Order Franciscans; to a gathering discussing new monastic spiritual formation and a whole site booking for a single parish enjoying a weekend away.

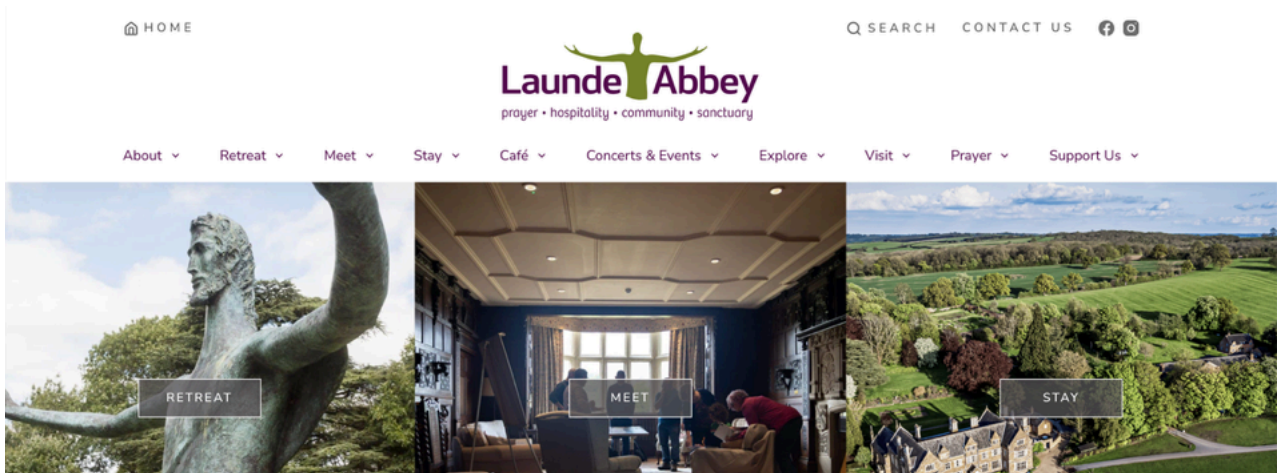
During 2025, the Bookings Team took £576k of bookings for 2026 and another £378k for the following four years. In fact, by the end of 2025, and including bookings taken in previous years, the order book for 2026 already contained £926k of bookings. (These figures are made up of both groups and places reserved for Launde Programme retreats).



Beyond retreats, the café income has surged this year, helped by the warm spring, of which we were able to make the most. There was no increase in menu prices from 2024 to 2025, nevertheless café income increased from £81k to £105k, constituting a not insignificant 7.5% of our income. Café visitors often walk in the gardens, and an increasing minority join us in the Chapel for Middy Prayer.

Infrastructure

After a complete rewrite to fit the Abbey's character and identity today, our new website was successfully launched early in the year with online booking available for some of our own retreats. We gradually increased this online capability as the year went on and, over the year, 70% of bookings for the Launde Programme were made online (as well as over 50% of other individual bookings). This is changing the demographic of those who come and, internally, is streamlining some administrative processes.



Fabric projects included expensive, though necessary, upgrades to internal doors to meet current fire standards. A grant from Harborough District Council funded a new audio visual system to make hybrid meetings easier in the Drawing Room. The same grant paid for a cybersecurity audit and the upgrade of office equipment anticipating the withdrawal of Microsoft 10. In early 2025, a first phase of refreshment to the Stables has included selected carpeting and paintwork in corridor areas, and upgrading the programmer and zoning for the Stables heating, reducing our utilities bill and improving our environmental credentials. At the end of 2025, work began on replacing and extending paving at the front of the Stables to create visual and access improvements, and a phase of further internal painting of doors was begun.



Communications

Publicity via the Church Times and Premier Christianity and our own mailing list is now supplemented by an active presence on social media. This, and the quality of the new website, increased our web presence for those searching for a place like Launde Abbey. A number of appearances of the Abbey on Songs of Praise during the year have also helped visibility, in a different way.

The membership of our Launde Abbey Companions supporters and volunteers scheme, though still relatively new, increased by a third this year. The bi-monthly 'Life at Launde Abbey' newsletter, produced in-house and sent to all Companions keeps them in contact.

Gardens and grounds

We recognise how important the gardens are both to retreatants and to café visitors as part of the Abbey's sense of sanctuary and are another reason that people come here. In the spring, the new, wider borders along the east wall of the manor house were planted with over 1,200 plants, almost all propagated onsite. Other garden projects have included more summer bulbs and scented shrubs in the Quiet Garden, roses eventually to ramble through selected trees, and more meadow areas encouraging wildflowers and grasses.

An emerging plan for the walled garden has seen new and interesting planting in the sheltered bed at the entrance, a small winter border beyond the now fully roofed glasshouses and the beginnings of an avenue of old roses and fruit trees where the poly tunnels were removed in the summer. Also in the summer, we introduced two bee hives to an area on the south side of the walled garden so that the bees could enjoy the blossom on the heritage apple trees there.



Earthworks around the north end of the car park have made it more useable after rain and the system of French drains installed in the early winter months diverts flood water more securely away from the sewer system.

Grant funding from the Friends of Launde and Harborough District Council enabled us to invest in a new mower and a set of battery power tools, and the Friends funded a pump so that we could use rainwater from an old Victorian underground reservoir on the new borders.

The garden team is almost entirely made up of volunteers to whom we are very grateful, and we continue to benefit from pro bono professional conservation and design advice.

Staff and volunteers

At the end of the year, we had 42 staff and 29 volunteers on the books. The strength of the staff and volunteer team has enabled us to deal well with challenges thrown at us this year. The team is cohesive and supportive at all levels of the organisation, and the reputation of our ethos and character aids recruitment and unusually high levels of retention for a hospitality business. Volunteers – whether chaplains, gardeners, trustees or receptionists - give their time because they love being here, enjoy their colleagues' company, and believe in what we do. They enable us to remain resilient and adaptive, and we are the stronger for it.



In the early part of the year, we reviewed and made some small changes to the finance function to make it better able to support the whole organisation, and we recruited a new finance assistant in May. In the autumn, a third chef joined our permanent kitchen team to fill a vacancy of several months earlier in the year. Long-term sickness throughout the year impacted the organisation in Reception and in our overnight on-call team, but we were able to reshuffle duties and our existing staff and volunteer team have ably filled the gaps.

In August, the part-time Resident Chaplain who had been with us just a year left due to ill health, and this difficult-to-fill post was still vacant at the end of the year. We were also sad to lose our Deputy Warden in September, a member of both the Ministry and Senior Management Teams, as he left for pastures new after 11 years here. We are grateful for his legacy. By the time he left, however, we knew that we would be welcoming a new and experienced Deputy Warden at the start of 2026.

Safeguarding

In 2025, as the College of Chaplains has found its feet and developed its ministry, we reviewed working practices for one-to-one chaplaincy work, including working with those made vulnerable by life's circumstances. Updates to the Trust's Safeguarding Handbook were agreed by the board in March 2026 to reflect this. A report was made on safeguarding activity in the last period at every board meeting. Five concerns were raised during the year: all were documented and appropriate action was taken. There were no serious incidents.

Trustee Stephen Adshead remains the lead safeguarding trustee. Safeguarding Coordinators were Graeme Ostah (Operations Manager) and Chaplain Revd Fran Grasham (to August 2025), supported by Warden Revd Alison Myers; Graeme Ostah remains Safeguarding Officer in 2026, joined by Revd Anna Walker from February 2026.

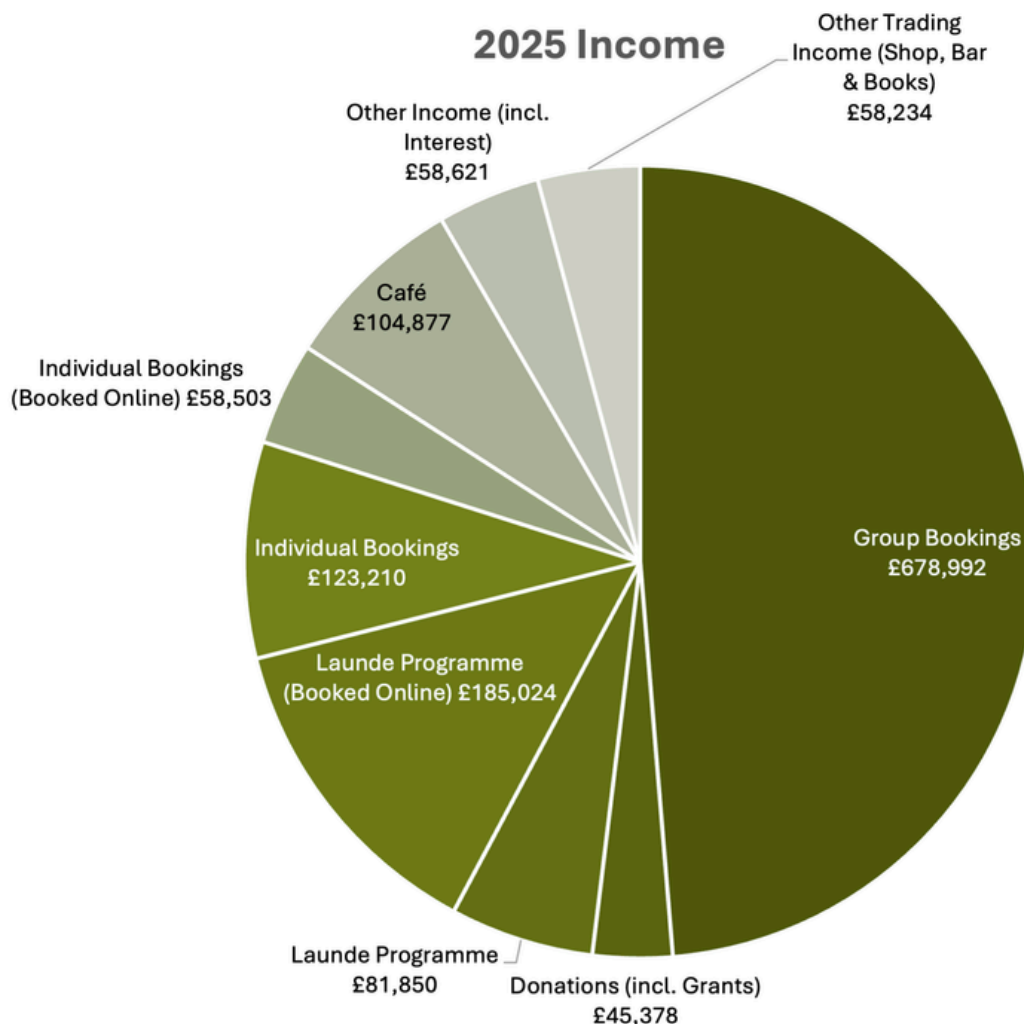
All staff and volunteers are required to undertake at least Basic and Foundation safeguarding training from the C of E's training suite. All clergy and licenced ministers complete the training required for their licence and trustees undertake the additional training required for their role. There were no new staff in 2025 who required a DBS check and, where necessary, DBS checks for current staff were renewed. Posters alerting guests how to raise a concern are in place. This information is available from the front page of our website, along with a link to our Safeguarding Handbook.



Finance

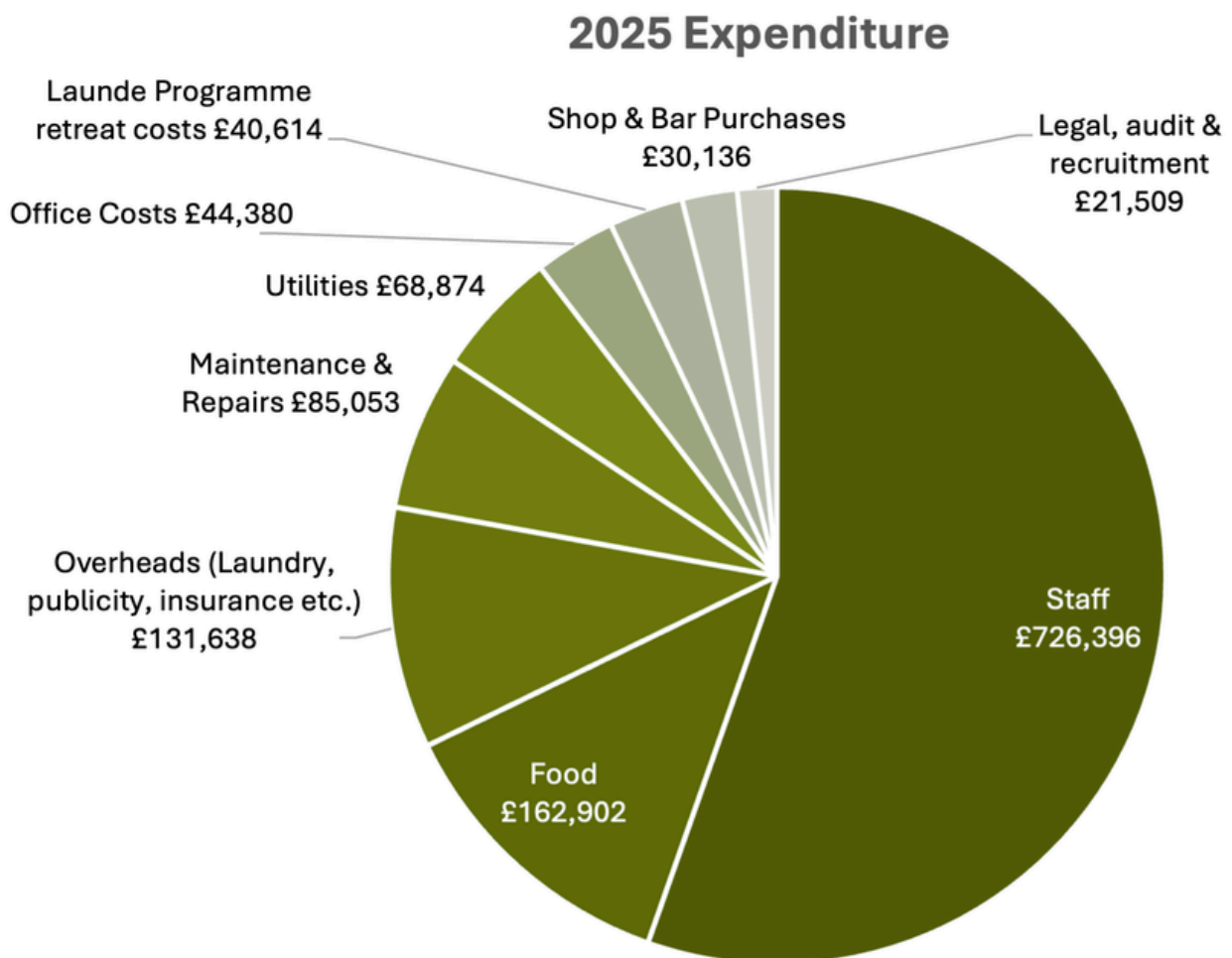
Our income from ordinary activities in 2025 was £1.37m. We ended the year with an operating surplus of £56k, slightly higher than 2024 (£49k) and a jump up from 2023 (£19k). Adding exceptional items, but excluding the monies previously held in an endowment fund, the surplus for 2025 rises to £83k, very slightly higher than last year, but double that of 2023. This reflects the level of stability and confidence now achieved and enables us to build up reserves and to support selected development projects.

Our different sources of income are shown in the income chart. As always, the largest proportion of our income comes from our group bookings activities. You can also see in the chart below how much income is taken via the new facility for online bookings.



We are very grateful to everyone who makes a contribution towards the work, the grounds or the buildings of Launde Abbey whether this is through one off donations, regular giving, a legacy, through membership of the Companions or via The Friends of Launde.

Staff and food costs fluctuate according to the number of guests. However, staff costs increased in 2025 in absolute terms, as predicted and as in every other hospitality business, due to the jump in the Real Living Wage and employers' National Insurance. Repair costs were also higher as steps were taken to refresh tired areas of the property, including replacing carpets and redecorating and although energy costs have fallen, they are still considerably higher than before the energy crisis. The split of general operating costs is shown in the pie chart below.



To account for these cost increases and after a benchmarking exercise against similar retreat houses, we increased our tariffs by 4% for 2025 bookings, though the effective implementation of any increase in our tariffs is staggered in line with the lead times for different types of bookings.

Into 2026

With a good team in place, we are up for the hard work of maintaining, even improving, our levels of occupancy and of sustaining the flow of guests and retreatants. Building on the good work in increasing visibility and communications, we will be looking at staff recruitment and re-deployment to further bolster the Bookings and Operations Teams. The new Deputy Warden, who started work in February, has oversight of the 2026 retreat programme and will put together the 2027 programme. We are gradually increasing the focus of the Ministry Team on 1-to-1 chaplaincy work and resourcing spiritual practices. We continue to make software and process improvements to encourage online bookings, support group leaders and encourage a sense of community amongst guests when on site. Fabric projects include a review and potential refurbishment of the attic flat and the introduction of acoustic panels and artwork into the Dining Room. We plan to replace our ageing telephony system and the quinquennial inspection (survey of the fabric) will take place in the summer and will inform further projects.

We start 2026 on a firm foundation, though not complacent about the challenges of continuing staff absence, of rising costs in the hospitality sector and the cost-of-living impact in the wider context. It is perhaps that wider context that makes places of prayer and sanctuary, like Launde Abbey, in which people can stay for a while for rest, refreshment, friendship or inspiration, ever more needed.

Alison

Revd Alison Myers
Warden

P.S. If you would like to support the life and ministry of Launde Abbey, we warmly invite you to consider joining the Launde Abbey Companions – a community of prayerful supporters and volunteers committed to walking alongside the Abbey in its work. Alternatively, you may wish to make a one-off or regular donation. For more information about the Companions or to give online, please visit our website at www.laundeabbey.org.uk/companions, follow us on social media or contact us directly at info@launde.org.uk.



The full annual report and consolidated accounts is available from the Charity Commission website.