Finance Manager

Introduction

Launde Abbey is recruiting a Finance Manager to be part of the Senior Management Team. Together with the Operations Manager, the Development Manager and the Deputy Warden, they share responsibility with the Warden for fulfilling the vision, goals and purpose of Launde Abbey as a Christian Retreat House, and as a place of prayer, hospitality, community and sanctuary.

Launde Abbey is owned and run by a charitable trust. In 2025, its turnover was over £1.3m and it has around 40 staff and 20 volunteers. Between the Tudor manor house and the C17th stables, it has 39 bedrooms, a selection of meeting and conference rooms, a dining room and café open to the public, a library, prayer rooms and various seating areas for guests. Outdoors there is a walled garden under partial cultivation, wider gardens largely managed by volunteers, a 'way of the cross' walk and a grass labyrinth. At the heart of the site and its activity is a chapel – incorporating the remains of the 900 year old priory church – in which a pattern of daily prayer is observed by the permanent praying community, a small number of whom live on the site.

Over the last few years, we have successfully rebuilt Launde Abbey's finances post-pandemic and have been re-focusing its activities for our current context and to ensure financial sustainability for the future. Aware of our history both as an Augustinian priory and as a Tudor manor house, we have centred our vision around four words that characterise who we are and what we offer: 'prayer', 'hospitality', 'community' and 'sanctuary'. Through these we 'serve those who serve others', and in doing so our focus is first towards the Church and church-linked organisations and charities. However, our hospitality also encompasses a range of other organisations undertaking educational, social, recreational and wellbeing activities where they are compatible with our core purpose. Daily hospitality in the dining room and café reaches a more local community including walkers and cyclists. Many of those who come – both groups and individuals - are repeat visitors and regard Launde Abbey as a kind of 'home'.

As a business, we aim to deliver an excellent service to our guests, generating sufficient financial surplus to ensure that the facilities and presentation of the historic buildings and gardens are maintained and developed and there are adequate reserves for a business of this size. There are many current challenges in the hospitality sector – rise in the cost of food and utilities, increases in employment costs, changes to zero-hours contracts – which must be met. All this is to be done mindful of the character and ethos of Launde Abbey.

In each of the last few years we have achieved a small financial surplus, as well as made considerable reinvestment in the organisation. We have rebuilt our reserves and our cashflow is strong. We have introduced changes to staff structure, put in place more rigorous working practices and governance procedures, and installed industry-standard software. We are in a good position for a sustainable future. However, there remain a number of projects we'd like to pursue to take our finance function to the next level. These include establishing more robust cost-modelling, reviewing our VAT treatment & status, and increasing efficiency through better use of software. The re-shaped role of Finance Manager will be key in taking these projects forward alongside strengthening the financial business-as-usual activities in support of the front-line work of the organisation.

Purpose of Role

Reporting to the Warden, and a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT), the Finance Manager will lead the Abbey's financial activities across all of our hospitality and retreat activities, ensuring strong financial control, accurate reporting, effective planning, and compliance with relevant statutory and regulatory requirements. They will have a strong understanding of the financial drivers of the organisation, identify opportunities to improve efficiency and income generation, and lead the ongoing development of financial systems, processes and reporting. Working, in part, with the Development Manager, they will provide clear performance data and financial insight to support the Board of Trustees and SMT in making informed decisions, improving organisational performance and ensuring the Abbey's long-term financial sustainability, achieved in a way that supports its character, purpose and wider organisational objectives.

Responsibilities

Financial Management, Reporting, Planning and Modelling

- Lead the preparation of monthly management accounts and forecasts, including tracking of key performance indicators (KPIs), with clear commentary, to support effective decision-making at Board, SMT and operational levels.
- Lead the annual budgeting process, working collaboratively with the SMT and budget holders to develop realistic, evidence-based budgets aligned with organisational priorities.
- Develop their own and others' understanding of the financial contribution and the cost drivers of the different activities of the organisation, so that they can both model the potential impact of proposed new and changed activities, and identify opportunities to improve financial performance.

Financial Control, Compliance and Governance

- Lead the preparation of the annual statutory accounts in accordance with applicable accounting standards and the Charities SORP, working with the external auditors.
- Oversee payroll-related financial processes, including payments to pension providers.
- Maintain robust financial controls, policies and procedures, ensuring appropriate authorisation, segregation of duties, financial accountability and protection of the Abbey's assets.
- Identify, assess and manage financial risks, advising the SMT and the Board of Trustees, escalating significant issues and recommending appropriate mitigating actions.
- Undertake company secretarial duties as agreed with the Board and SMT, including maintaining statutory company records, coordinating required filings and supporting compliance with relevant company law requirements.
- Ensure the timely and accurate preparation and submission of VAT returns, including the appropriate treatment of differently rated items.
- Ensure current Gift Aid documentation is in place and that claims for Gift Aid are submitted in a timely manner.

Operational Support and Continuous Improvement

- Work closely with the SMT and frontline teams to embed good financial practice throughout the Abbey, helping budget holders and those without a financial background understand their financial responsibilities, interpret reports and manage budgets effectively.
- Maintain clear, documented financial procedures and ensure that systems and processes remain effective as the organisation develops.
- Ensure that financial information flows efficiently between operational systems (including Rezlynx and its current Excel interface) and the finance function, reducing duplication and improving the reliability of management information.
- Provide appropriate financial and administrative support to colleagues involved in recruitment, staffing and volunteer management.
- Identify, then lead or coordinate agreed finance improvement projects, managing implementation, staff engagement and the realisation of expected benefits.

Team Leadership and People

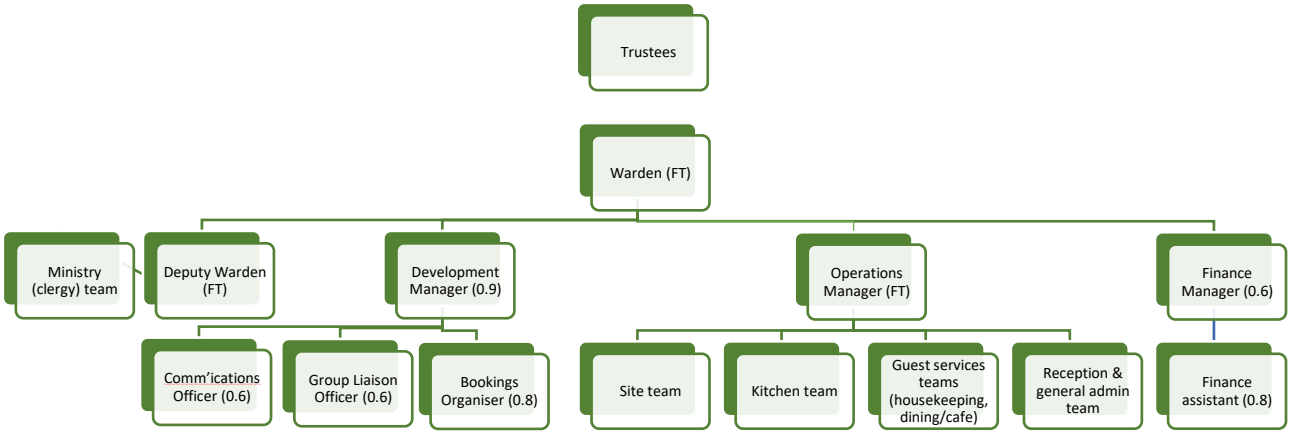
- Line manage, support and develop the Finance Assistant, organising the work of the finance function to ensure that essential activities, deadlines and reporting requirements are met reliably.
- As a member of the SMT, contribute to the development of a supportive, accountable and collaborative working culture, with sound people-management practices.

Development Priorities

The postholder will be expected to develop and implement an agreed programme of improvements, prioritised with the SMT, including:

1. **Digital finance:** Review, then agree and implement a plan to increase the efficiency of our financial processes, by making better use of technology, automation and digital records.
2. **Cost modelling:** Develop and articulate an up-to-date understanding of the relationship between income, costs (direct, indirect and overheads) and surplus/margin for the Abbey's primary 'products', to support the SMT and Board in more robust strategic decision making.
3. **VAT review:** Working with an external VAT consultant, coordinate a review of the Abbey's VAT position and treatment to ensure we maintain compliant in this field, whilst exploring the possibilities of simplifying various functions across the organisation, enhancing the service we offer, and reviewing the potential of increasing our profitability.
4. **Management information:** Working with the Development Manager, review and improve the suite of financial and other performance reports, dashboards and KPIs using AI and other available tools, to increase the value, accessibility and efficiency/timeliness of reporting.
5. **Finance and hospitality IT systems integration:** Review the effectiveness of Sage and its interaction with Rezlynx, assessing options for improved integration, reporting and potential replacement of financial software.

Organisation Structure



Team members

- Finance Assistant (4 days/week)

Reporting to

- The Warden

Peer colleagues

- Operations Manager
- Deputy Warden
- Development Manager

Person spec

Required

We are looking for someone who:

- Is equipped to share senior-level leadership of the organisation.
- Can work in sympathy with Launde Abbey's vision and ethos; is comfortable with a context in which prayer, Christian faith and ministry play a prominent part.
- Has a recognised professional accounting qualification, or equivalent relevant experience demonstrating the technical competence required for the role.
- Brings substantial experience in a finance role involving management accounts, budgeting, forecasting, cash-flow management, financial risk management, financial control and statutory reporting.
- Has experience of preparing or coordinating year-end accounts and working with external auditors.
- Has experience of payroll oversight and pension administration.
- Has experience of developing financial reports and using data to identify trends, risks, variances and opportunities for improvement.

- Brings strong IT and financial systems skills, including accounting software and spreadsheets, with the ability to improve processes and make effective use of technology.
- Demonstrates the ability to manage mixed VAT arrangements, accessing specialist advice.
- Shows the ability to explain financial information clearly to non-financial colleagues and build effective and supportive working relationships across an organisation.
- Demonstrates strong organisational skills, attention to detail and the ability to manage competing priorities and deadlines.
- Takes a proactive, practical and collaborative approach, playing their part in a greater whole, with the confidence to challenge existing processes constructively.
- Has high standards of integrity, discretion and confidentiality.

Desirable

They might also bring some of the following:

- Experience in hospitality, accommodation, catering, conference or events operations, or another organisation with multiple income streams.
- Experience of working in a charity, not-for-profit organisation or faith-based setting.
- Experience of Charities SORP reporting and charity governance requirements.
- Experience of improving or implementing finance systems and integrating financial and operational software.
- Experience of line management and developing colleagues.
- Experience of company secretarial responsibilities.
- Experience of supporting HR, workforce planning or volunteer-related administration.

Employment information

Working pattern and hours of work

- 22.5 hours/week (0.6 FTE)
- Basic working pattern negotiable over 3 full or 4-5 shorter days per week
- Friday morning Board meetings once a month and Wednesday morning SMT meetings weekly (some flexibility may be possible for the right candidate)

Place of work

- As a hospitality business with a strong sense of place, working onsite with the team at Launde Abbey is important, however, some hybrid working may be possible for the right candidate. Attendance is required onsite at Board and SMT meetings. Your own transport will be needed to reach our rural site.

Salary and remuneration

- £24 - 27k for 22.5 hours/week (£40 – 45k FTE)
- Holiday: 16.8 working days (28 days FTE), up to 5 FTE of which are taken at the discretion of Launde Abbey, typically at Christmas. In addition, 4.8 days (8 days FTE) are taken as bank holidays or days in lieu as agreed.
- Pension