

## The Bishops Palace & Gardens 2025

### Volunteer Annual Briefing

Welcome and thanks from

Roger Hawes, Chair of Trustees

Merryn Kidd(Chief Executive)

### 2025 Goal

- Continue the journey to establish The Bishop's Palace & Gardens as a diverse, welcoming, sustainable, and financially sound attraction
- Focussing on: Visitor Experience, Events, Community Engagement, Environment and Financial Growth

In the 5-year Strategy we outlined that by the end of 2025, we will:

- Be an example in the South-West for inclusivity and diversity in our operations, events, interpretation and welcome.
- Have transformed the interpretation of the historic interiors and be sharing the captivating stories they hold.
- Put learning and education at the heart of all we do with programmes of structured and informal learning activities for a broad range of audiences.
- Optimise our continued status of RHS Partner garden by offering a range of horticultural courses and workshops.
- Have maximised all revenue streams and significantly increased surplus.
- Have implemented improvements to The Dragon's Lair area.
- Have proceeded with or rejected a new Visitor Reception
- Have installed an accessible loo, and completed works to the Community Garden area to create adequate facilities for user groups
- Be fully engaged with the local community, offering high quality employment, volunteering opportunities, and pathways to employment across all our work.
- Have improved our environmental performance in energy consumption, on-site production and storage.

2025 is the final year of our current five-year strategic plan, and planning for the subsequent strategic cycle will begin in March 2025 with an SMT and Trustees Away Day.

### Strategic Objectives 2025

- a. Audience Expansion: Build a diverse, inclusive visitor base.

- b. Wellbeing & Community: Enhance visitor health and community connections.
- c. Visitor Experience: Upgrade site facilities and visitor flow.
- d. Sustainability: Achieve environmental and financial sustainability goals. £80k surplus.
- e. Excellence in Horticulture: Strengthen reputation as an RHS Partner Garden.

#### 2025 Key Initiatives

- Pricing: New day tickets, revised annual pass, and premium “Friends” membership.
- Flagship Events: Garden Fair, History Fayre, Party at the Palace, and "Sparkle".
- Visitor Experience Upgrades: Convert SRY to new Reception entryway, Interpretation - digital interpretation tools, added family-friendly spaces - Dragon’s Lair, Willow Bridge.
- Community Engagement: Outreach programs, volunteer expansion, partnerships with local schools.

#### Financial and Environmental Goals

##### Financial

- Increase income to £2.2 million via new offering of ticket sales, flagship events, improved retail, and consolidated food offerings

##### Environmental

- Renewable energy investments, zero-waste goals, continue to work towards 50% carbon reduction by 2030

##### Horticultural

- Maintain gardens as exemplary visitor attractions with increased sustainable practices

#### Conclusion

I expect our 2025 plans to set the foundation for a second year of surplus, along with a foundation for future continued growth, community engagement and sustainability. I look forward to us all working together to achieve amazing things again in 2025. Thank you for all that you do.

Siobhan Goodwin(Community Engagement Manager)

Continue with:

- Wellbeing Walks
- Free tickets to local children on pupil premium
- Groups in community garden (STEP, Growing Roots, Slow & possibly others)
- Nature Connections Courses
- Oral History project
- Museum to You Outreach
- Christmas Eco Art Exhibition
- Stalls at local events

Introduce:

- Arts Project
- Expansion of community garden facilities
- Better connections with local schools (including community gardener visits)
- Young people's ideas
- Pack of Playing Cards

Volunteering

Continue:

- Family Volunteering days
- Annual training programme
- Pathways to employment
- Coffee Meet Ups & socials
- More supported volunteering
- Volunteer recruitment
- Staff 2 days pro rata
- Quality Standard (liV)

Introduce:

Investing in Volunteering scheme and implement recommendations

Rachel Harrison (Head of Catering)

#### Goals for 2025:

- With a target to reach in 2025 of £826.200 (£738.119 in 2024) our primary focus is to maximise all outlets throughout the year to create as many sales as possible.
- Increase our takeaway offering further in the Horsebox ie: Salad Bowls, Sandwiches, Ice Cream, Pastries, Savories
- Offer Cream/Afternoon Teas in the Apple Store, with the option of extending to the Juliet Balcony seating area
- Create a successful Spring/Summer Menu
- Focus on Sunday Lunches in the Undercroft – Become known for our food offering
  - Liaise with Adam to utilise the Mobile Bar and BBQ for events
  - Offer a Mother's Day Afternoon Tea in the Undercroft.
  - Focus on staff training within the kitchen and front of house.
  - Increase our offering for Christmas 2025 to coincide with the increased planned illuminations
  - Trialing evening events within the Café ie: wine & cheese tasting

Adam Saunders

(Visitor Experience Manager)

#### News for 2025

- Day tickets available in Ticket Office
- Changes to the Annual Pass – now includes the Rare Plant Fair
- Introduction of Friends of the Palace – replacing the old membership scheme
- New products in the gift shop including the bespoke wallpaper range launching in the summer

#### 2025 Theatre Programme

- Weds 3rd July - The Pantaloons - Sense and Sensibility
- Sun 20th July – The Lord Chamberlain's Men – Twelfth Night
- Sat 2nd August - Illyria – HMS Pinafore
- Weds 13th August – 3 Inch Fools - The Most Perilous Comedie of Elizabeth I
- Weds 3rd Sept – The Pantaloons – Hamlet

#### The Palace Garden Fair

A 1-day garden and country themed event across the site with highlights including:

- Dog Show
- Plant Sales area
- Music
- Have-a-go archery and axe throwing
- Speakers Tent
- Petting Zoo
- Rural Craft Displays and stands
- Flower arranging, baking and craft competitions

### The Palace History Fayre

This two-day event will see the palace grounds filled with re-enactors from different historical periods from Iron age to WW2.

- Living History Camps
- Talks and combat displays
- Have a go children's sessions
- Storytelling
- Medieval Music

The Saturday evening the Undercroft will host our Medieval Banquet with live historical entertainment.

### Sparkle – Christmas Lights

For the first time our Christmas Lights become a chargeable ticketed event as they expand out to cover the whole site including the outer gardens and arboretum

- Double the illuminated area to explore
- New and exciting light features
- Music every weekend in the Chapel
- Dynamic Pricing with bookable time slots
- Improved catering offer

Hollie Peppard (Head of Finance & People)

Finance 2025

2025 Budget

- Income 2025 £2,211k, Expenditure £2,131k budgeted surplus £80k.

#### Main Changes

- Visitors Income increase, shift in mix of ticket purchases, new pricing and reintroduction of day ticket.
- Café Income – Higher sales volume, seasonal offers full use of outlets.
- New Events Program.
- Weddings – Higher bookings confirmed for 2025
- Continue to be a Real Living Wage provider.
- Capital Investments in the projects highlighted.
- Increased expenditure in key areas.

#### Lindsay Mann (Marketing & Communications Manager)

- Marketing & Communications
- Campaign Management
- Press & PR
- Brand Management
- Print & Design
- Website Management (not tickets/Merac pages)
- Digital Comms inc:
- Social Media (Facebook, Insta, TikTok)
- Meta ads paid social
- Google pay per click
- Search Engine Optimisation
- Digital reviews/TripAdvisor
- YouTube
- Offline/print ads
- Partnership marketing (RHS/Visit Somerset/Visit Wells etc)

#### UK Media Trends

- Ofcom's Online Nation report tells us that Google remains the highest-reaching search engine, reaching 86% of UK online adults in May 2023
- YouTube is now the most popular social media service among UK adults, taking the top spot from Facebook with more than nine in ten visiting it in May 2023

- And short-form video will continue to dominate generally in 2025 with platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts and Facebook Reels leading the charge.

#### 2025 opportunities

- Digital First: we'll continue to run campaigns using a 'digital first' strategy
- Over 50% of our web traffic comes from mobile so we'll ensure our website is optimised with fast loading times and an intuitive route to purchase.
- We'll use video and social content to highlight the diverse stories of people who benefit from visiting the Palace showing how we serve a broad audience through our activities.
- We'll target visitors within a one-hour drivetime using local SEO and geo-targeted Google Ads with keywords like "family days out near me" or "local events [city name]".
- We'll prioritise building the Palace's email list sending regular updates on our year-round events and activities.
- We'll also continue to refine our leaflet distribution strategy to Tourist Information Centres, hotels, B&Bs, cafes to maximise exposure at a competitive cost.
- Weddings: We'll use visual storytelling; behind-the-scenes looks at weddings in progress; social proof testimonials; tagged photos and re-share social posts.

#### Christmas at the Palace 2024

##### Results:

- Christmas at the Palace web page views increased 67% from 2023 at 14,873
- Meta Ads reach increased: 40,593 (2023) versus 182,423 (2024)
- Meta Ads link clicks increased: 2620 (2023) versus 11,991 (2024)

Results: £32,466.00 revenue from Evening Tickets

THANKYOU !

Here's to an amazing 2025

