



Dear Volunteers

I can hardly believe that there are only a few weeks left of 2025, so I wanted to write to you all before the year ends.

2025 has been an excellent year for The Palace Trust, despite a few challenges along the way.

Working together, we have achieved a huge amount, and as I just flicked back through my diary, I was reminded of the many projects, initiatives and events that we have delivered.

We began the year by launching our much-anticipated multi-media devices, and Welcome Video. These have been very well received and have added both to the enjoyment of our visitors, and their dwell time and understanding in the Palace. I am so grateful to those Volunteers who joined us, and who crossed over from other roles, at rather short notice, to take on the role of Palace Welcomer and manage the device use.

It was excellent to add to this new digital interpretation in August, with the launch of the Bloomberg Connects garden tour which contains a huge amount of fascinating information, much of it delivered by staff and volunteers from the Garden team.

I spent a significant amount of time in 2025 leading the process to develop a new 5-10 year strategic plan for the organisation, and despite it being a daunting task, I very much enjoyed a range of workshops and sessions with volunteers, staff and trustees to identify what we all saw as our unique strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats. The result was a 30-page plan, accepted by the Board in August 2025, which gives us a very exciting blueprint to take our organisation forward into a sustainable future, whilst fulfilling our purpose, and looking after our people and our environment.

We have received some incredible validation from the outside world this year in the form of being awarded Museum Accreditation Status, gaining our Investing in Volunteers Accreditation, scoring 94% in our Visit England Assessment, and winning a national accolade for the Cafe.

In addition, we have managed to deliver some wonderful new events, which appealed to a variety of audiences, including the Country and Garden Fair, a new Living History weekend, and the very impressive Party at the Palace, with 1500 people enjoying themselves on the Croquet Lawn. Our Artisan Market was also our most successful yet, showing that our classic annual events also remain popular with our supporters.

If it ever stops raining, I imagine that even more visitors will be uplifted by our beautiful Christmas Illuminations, and the decorations inside the Palace, which I believe are the best yet. Don't forget to let your friends and family know that we are only closed from 24th-26th December this year, so there are plenty of opportunities for a post-Christmas visit.

By the end of the year, we will have completed two wonderful, and much anticipated projects; The Dragon's Lair Splash Play Zone, and the new Visitor Reception and Shop.

The latter will officially launch on 8th January, and you are all welcome to come to celebrate the opening at 4pm on the same day. I am aware that for many of our volunteers, the new reception will mean a slight change in operation, and I appreciate that change is always difficult. I know that we will work together in the New Year to ensure that we have the best outcome for both visitors and volunteers once the building is open.

You will be pleased to hear that the Trust has done well this year financially, despite a very difficult trading environment, and it looks like we will hit, or even exceed, our budgeted surplus.

I am so grateful to you all for choosing to give your time and energy to our charity this year – it feels like a cliché to say it, but we simply wouldn't be able to do what we do without your generosity. My conversations with you are always a highlight of my week, and I'm only sorry that there are some of you who I don't get to see and talk to more regularly.

I wish you all a peaceful and joyful Christmas, and I very much hope to see you and continue to share this special place with you in 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Merryn' in a cursive script.

Merryn Kidd
Chief Executive