

The Bishop's Palace

Volunteer Handbook 2026



The Bishop's Palace

WELLS - SOMERSET

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Key Contacts

The Palace Trust Office – 01749 988 111

Community Engagement Manager – Siobhan Goodwin 01749 988 111 ext. 202
Email: siobhan.goodwin@bishoppalace.org.uk

Community Engagement Assistant – Gemma Palmer, 01749 988 111 ext. 204
Email: gemma.palmer@bishoppalace.org.uk

Administrator – 01749 988 111 ext. 200 / 208
Email: info@bishoppalace.org

Ticket Office – 01749 677 698

Timesheets – Email: siobhan.goodwin@bishoppalace.org.uk

Your Team Leader is: _____

Tel: 01749 988 111 ext: _____

Email: _____@bishoppalace.org.uk

Welcome

As a volunteer for The Palace and Trust, you are a vital part of the team. Our role is to ensure that visitors have a fantastic time here and have lots of reasons to want to come back again, tell others about it and form an ongoing relationship with us.

The Palace Trust is the charitable organisation which manages the Bishop's Palace and Gardens as a visitor attraction. The Trust exists to protect the Bishop's Palace by ensuring financial stability through engaging with a wide range of people for their enjoyment and learning. The Trust wants the Palace and Gardens to be recognised as one of the best visitor attractions in the South West.

The majority of our volunteers live locally and help the Palace play its part at the heart of everyday life in Wells and in Somerset.

Volunteering allows us to engage with people from all backgrounds and ensures that the Palace is a place for everyone.

Volunteers compliment the staff team and allow the Trust to do much more with its funds and resources. You bring a wealth of skills, expertise, enthusiasm and commitment to the Palace, the natural and the built heritage, and to the local community.

The Palace Trust recognises that for volunteering to be successful, it must be mutually beneficial. In return for the gift of time from volunteers, the Trust must be proactive in recognising and providing for the social, experiential and other needs that you have.

This handbook aims to give you information that will help you to make the most of your time as part of the Palace Trust team. All documents referred to in this handbook can be viewed on the volunteer website <https://bishoppalace.org.uk/information-for-volunteers/> password: **Wellpools246**.

Alternatively, you can access the Volunteer website via the "About" section of the main Bishop's Palace website and click on "Volunteering".

If you need access to a paper copy, please contact your line manager or the Community Engagement Manager.

The Palace Trust

The Bishop's Palace and Gardens

Set in the heart of the smallest city in England, the Bishop's Palace has been, and still is, the residence of the Bishops of Bath and Wells for over 800 years. Visitors are welcome to come and enjoy the stunning medieval architecture, moat and gardens within the rampart walls. Highlights of the historic grounds include the well springs that give the city its name, located next to the arboretum, and the famous Wells swans that ring a bell by the drawbridge over the moat to be fed.

The Palace Trust

The Palace Trust is the charitable organisation which manages the Bishop's Palace and Gardens as a visitor attraction. Palace Enterprises (Wells) Limited is the trading arm of The Palace Trust and this includes the Bishop's Table (café) and income from private functions such as wedding receptions and corporate events, such as training days.

Purpose and Vision

Purpose: To conserve and share the Palace and its story as a place of enjoyment and reflection for the benefit of all.

Vision: To inspire and touch the lives of many by offering joy, healing, hope and wellbeing.

Registered Charity

The Palace Trust is registered with The Charity Commission, charity number 1160830. To view the information held by The Charitable Trust, please go to: www.charity-commission.gov.uk and enter The Palace Trust's registered charity number in the 'search' box.

Multi-use Site

The Bishop's Palace and Gardens is a multi-use site. It is a home for our residents, a place of work for the Bishop's side and, of course, a visitor attraction and venue for private events.

Further Information

For further information about the Palace Trust, please see our website: www.bishopspalace.org.uk

Volunteer Website

Please check in on the volunteer website regularly. There will be fortnightly news updates and it is the main means of updating the volunteer team

<https://bishopsalace.org.uk/information-for-volunteers/> Password: **Wellpools246**

Trustees

The Palace Trust is directed by a Board of volunteer Trustees who give very generously of their time. The maximum number for the operation of the Palace Trust is 17 Trustees and they are recruited for their skills and experience in matters like heritage management, financial and legal expertise. Please visit www.bishops.palace.org.uk to see more information about our current Trustees.

E-Learning

The E-Learning can be used to access online training. Please visit Wells E-Learning Network and then sign in using your own email and a password of your choice. Currently (January 2026) there are five modules:

1. Safeguarding Refresher
2. History of the Bishop's Palace Gardens
3. Wildlife at the Bishop's Palace
4. History of The Bishop's Palace
5. Tourist information.

We will be adding more in the coming months.

https://wellselearning.thinkific.com/users/sign_in

Volunteer Roles

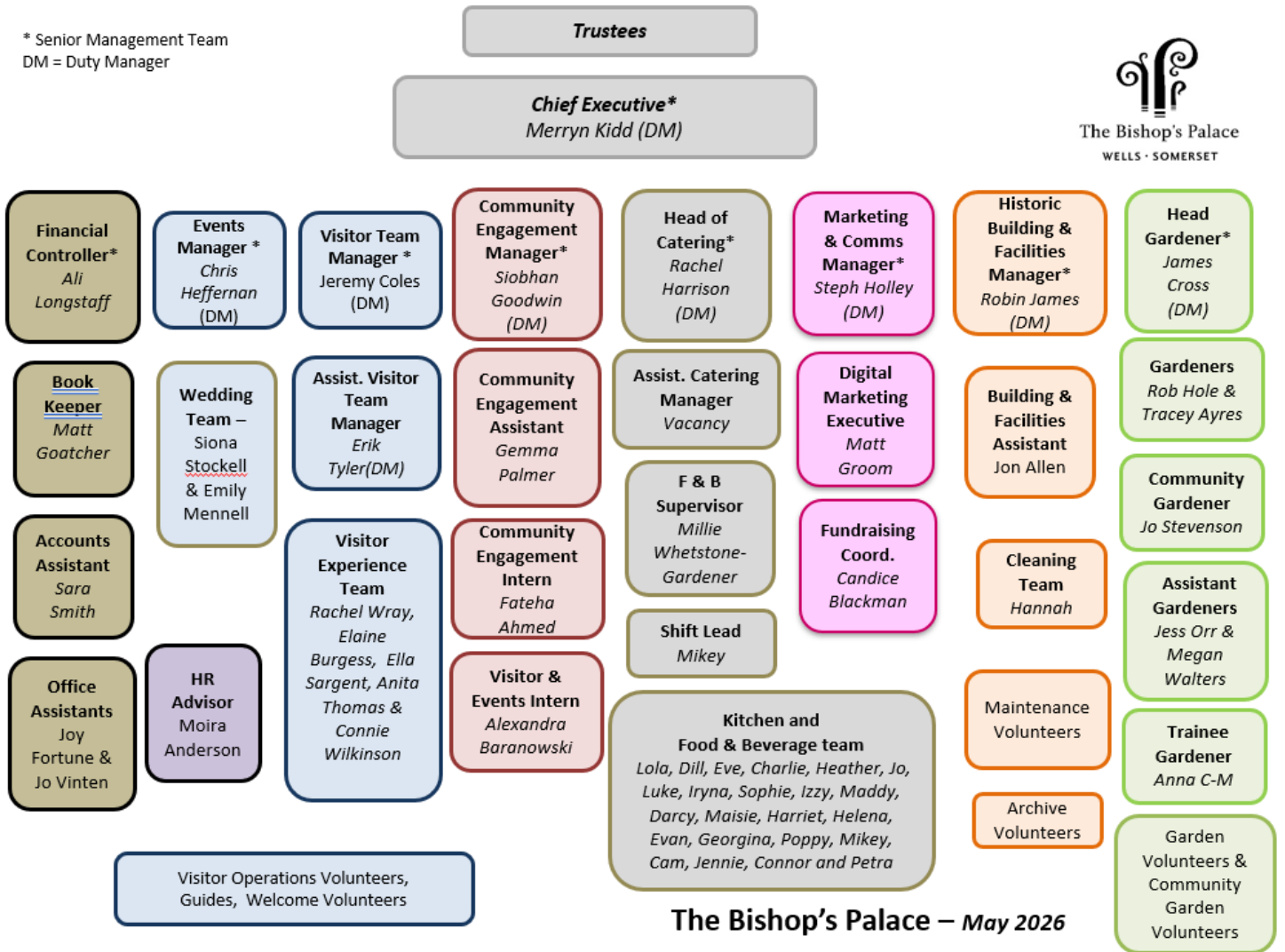
Volunteer Role	Department	Head of Department/ Team Leader
Office Volunteer	Admin	Ali Longstaff
Archives Volunteer	Collections	Robin James
Collections Volunteer	Collections	Robin James
Community Garden Volunteer	Gardening	Jo Stevenson
Gardening Volunteer	Gardening	James Cross
Maintenance Volunteer	Operations	Robin James
Family Activities Volunteer	Learning	Chris Heffernan
Volunteer Guide	Visitor Services	Siobhan Goodwin
Palace Welcomer	Visitor Services	Jeremy Coles
Drawbridge Welcomer	Visitor Services	Jeremy Coles
Welcomer	Visitor Services	Jeremy Coles
Costume Volunteer	Collections Manager	Robin James
Research Volunteer	Collections Manager	Robin James
Oral History Volunteer	Community Engagement	Siobhan Goodwin

Who's Who

* Senior Management Team
DM = Duty Manager



The Bishop's Palace
WELLS · SOMERSET



The Bishop's Palace – May 2026

Induction Information

Welcome to the Bishop's Palace and Gardens team of volunteers. You are a valued part of the organisation, working with other volunteers and staff to create a service that promotes the Palace and the work of the Palace Trust to all our visitors.

You are giving us your time, abilities and energy. We will give you an opportunity to develop your skills and interests and make new friends. You may hope to use this experience to help you get a job or to get a place on a course of study. If so, please let us know and we will do our best to offer advice and suitable training.

This document serves to give you a good understanding of what you can expect while volunteering at the Bishop's Palace and Gardens and details of the commitment we ask of you. If you are unsure of any part of this document, please refer to your supervisor, who will be able to clarify working arrangements in the area in which you are volunteering.

Getting Started

Before you start volunteering with us, you will be asked to complete a volunteer agreement, emergency contact details, medical details (that we may need to know) and a confidential declaration. You will need to complete an induction session which includes safeguarding training. Once that is done, you will receive your identity lanyard.

We Offer You:

- A chance to serve the community in an exciting project
- Meaningful, necessary tasks
- Professional orientation and training
- Opportunities for continuing personal and professional growth and development
- Recognition of a job well done
- Opportunities for new friendships
- A shared stake in the success of the Bishop's Palace and Gardens

We Ask You:

- To be loyal to the values, goals and procedures of the Palace Trust
- To serve as goodwill ambassadors
- To keep confidential information out of the public domain
- To participate in the prescribed induction and training programmes
- To be prompt and reliable in reporting for assignments
- To observe the same standards of practice as your staff colleagues
- To notify your supervisor as early as possible if unable to report for duty.

In all roles you will be volunteering alongside regular staff. This will free you from the responsibility of managing the area with which you are involved. The experience that volunteers bring to the Bishop's Palace and Gardens is invaluable and complements the work undertaken by the regular staff. If you feel that you could help some aspect of the organisation to run more smoothly, please be tactful and careful not to undermine other members of staff. Comments about the way things are run are most appropriately made to your line manager, Duty Manager, or Community Engagement Team.

Benefits of Volunteering at The Bishop's Palace

- Ongoing training programme
- Support from the community engagement team and your named supervisor.
- Tea and coffee making facilities in the Bevy Room: **Door Code: C7890X**
- Social events for volunteers
- Accreditation of your skills, training and time volunteering
- Opportunity to meet people and make new friends
- 10% discount in the cafe and shop when you show your lanyard
- You can join in with 'Friends of the Palace' only events

Out of Pocket Expenses

You can claim up to 20 miles of travel per day @45p per mile (max. £9). You can also claim the cost of using public transport. Please note, we do not cover parking charges.

Dispute Resolution Policy

Please visit the volunteer website or see the paper copy on the noticeboard in the Bevy Room. This policy is to help us resolve any problems in a fair and consistent manner.

Equal Opportunities

The Palace Trust is committed to ensuring that volunteers are not discriminated against either at the recruitment stage or during their time volunteering with the Trust. A copy of the Equal Opportunities policy is on the volunteer website.

If you are aware of any way in which we could help you fulfil your volunteering commitment, such as providing written material in a different format, or making particular provision for your needs, please do not hesitate to speak to your line manager or the Community Engagement Manager. Such conversations, as with any personal information, will be treated as confidential. By drawing attention to any particular needs that you might have, you are not only making it easier for us to support you, but you are also potentially helping us to become more accessible to a wide variety of people with differing needs. When you volunteer, we do need you to conduct yourself according to our Equal Opportunities policy with visitors and colleagues alike, regardless of your personal views, eg making sexist or racist remarks.

Supervision

In order to help volunteers operate happily and effectively as part of the team, regular opportunities will be provided to speak with your line manager.

- Each day that you are volunteering at the Palace, your line manager will ensure that they see you at some stage to check that everything is running smoothly. Please don't hesitate to raise any concerns and ask questions about anything that has arisen during your volunteering in your catch-up
- If you have been unable to speak to your line manager about a problem, please feel free to contact the Community Engagement Manager.
- Your line manager will arrange a time to meet with you once a year to review your volunteering. This will provide an opportunity to identify any training needs or additional information that would help you, to raise any concerns on either side and generally to ensure that you are properly supported and that the Trust is making the best use of your talents.

It is hoped that by having an effective support and supervision structure in place, most issues and problems that arise can be resolved swiftly and fairly informally. Should that not be possible, the Palace Trust has a Dispute Resolution Policy that can be used to ensure that matters are dealt with fairly and transparently.

Practicalities

This section will, hopefully, make sense of what happens on a day-to-day basis.

Parking

There is one parking space on site for volunteers. This must be booked in advance through the Community Engagement Manager. Blue badge holders may park on site. Please notify the office to reserve a space in advance. The Bishop's Palace is a short walk from all central car parks. A map showing local on-street parking in Wells is available from the Community Engagement Manager.

Signing In

When volunteering, please sign in and out on the sheet in the 'Bevy Room'. Remember to record your volunteering hours, including travel time.

You should attend the daily briefing session at 9.45 am (9.15 am in the winter) if you are on duty. If you are coming in later on in the day, please check the briefing sheet which will be on the table in the Bevy Room. Another copy is kept in the Ticket Office. Please notify your line manager in advance before coming on the site. You are not allowed to walk unaccompanied around the site unless this has been agreed with your line manager.

Valuables

In the Bevy Room there are lockers available for storing valuables and other things that you would rather not carry around with you. You will find locker tokens by the microwave.

Breaks

The Bevy Room is available as a place to sit and to make a drink. Tea and coffee will be provided and it has a fridge and a microwave. Garden volunteers also have access to the gardeners' mess room.

Information for Volunteers

The main source of information is on the volunteer website:

<https://bishoppalace.org.uk/information-for-volunteers/>

Password: Wellpools246

There is a notice board and leaflet racks in the Bevy Room. There is an iPad next to microwave where you can access the volunteer website to keep up-to-date. Some of the documents which are available include the Training Programme, the Fire and Safety Plan and a leaflet explaining how to use the Palace Radio. The secure box for posting completed expense forms is also located here in the alcove with the velvet chairs! It also doubles up as a comments box.

The code for access to the Bevy Room is **C7890X**

Senior Manager

Your first point of contact for day-to-day matters will be your line manager or the Visitor Operations Team. There is a Senior Manager on duty daily (referred to as the Duty Manager) when the Palace is open to the public and can be contacted on the radio at all times for emergencies or serious matters.

Visitor Care

At the Bishop's Palace and Gardens, as part of your duties you will be expected to work with the visiting public, some on a frequent daily basis; others will have less of a customer facing role but will still come into contact with our visitors when working.

We have a duty to generate their interest in what we do, both in the Palace and locally, and we must ensure that visiting the Palace is an enjoyable and rewarding experience. As a volunteer, you have a crucial role to play:

- Making people feel welcome, at all points of contact. This includes visitors and those who call by telephone, or contact us by mail
- Helping people get the most out of the Bishop's Palace and Gardens, by encouraging their interests and answering their questions
- Looking out for ways in which you can be of assistance, to enhance the visitor experience
- Helping to maintain a safe and secure environment for our visitors

Your Commitment of Time

Your help as a volunteer is vital in making the Bishop's Palace and Gardens a success. You have kindly agreed to help at certain times; please turn up when you have promised or, if you are unable to attend, please advise the Duty Manager as soon as possible before you are due to start. If you agree to swap your time with another volunteer, then please let your supervisor know.

Found Property

If you find property or it is handed to you by a visitor, please hand it in at the Ticket Office.

Be Identifiable

Please make sure that you wear your lanyard at all times when volunteering at the Palace (unless you are a gardener, in which case tuck it inside your jumper). The purpose of your badge is to send out a clear message to all those visiting that there is a staff/volunteer presence in the area. This lets visitors know who they can ask for help and it will assist in deterring those who have bad intentions. If you lose your badge, please report this to your supervisor.

Please dress appropriately for the task, ie suitable work clothes for site maintenance or smart casual for guiding or front of house visitor welcoming events or office-based work (no faded jeans please). Please do not wear your lanyard when you are off-duty and just visiting. Show it at the gate for entry and then pop it away.

Access

We have a lift in the main Palace building; make sure you hold the button for ground floor/first floor down continually until you have reached your floor.

We have accessible toilets in the stable yard block, on the ground floor of the Palace and in the Dragon's Lair. There are wheelchairs for visitors on the ground floor and first floor of the main Palace building. We also have a mobility scooter which can be booked free of charge at the Ticket Office.

Be Alert

Volunteers should be alert at all times to prevent theft and damage and to watch for signs of suspicious or disruptive behaviour. If you are unsure of anything, please alert the nearest member of staff or radio the duty manager.

You should be vigilant to the use of video equipment/drones. Any suspicious behaviour surrounding filming or picture taking must be reported as soon as possible, eg filming of doors or exit/entry routes.

Always avoid answering detailed questions on parts of the Palace that are not open to the public. In particular, avoid any questions on access, eg, "Where does that doorway or staircase lead?" or on burglar alarms, staffing or methods of hanging/fixing of paintings or other objects.

Never disclose, discuss or speculate with visitors on the value of any item. The contents of the Palace are not for sale and therefore the value is meaningless.

If you find a suspicious package, the following action should be taken:

- Radio the Duty Manager with 'urgent help needed'
- Don't approach the package and keep people away using all means available
- If no owner of the suspicious package comes forward, management will decide whether to evacuate the area/building

Be Careful

- If help is asked for, (eg if a person asks to take your arm for guidance) there should be no problem, but otherwise avoid physical contact. If a visitor is violent, do not physically intervene; ensure your own safety and inform a member of staff
- Do not campaign for a particular cause, whether political, religious, etc and do not wear campaigning badges or pins while on duty.
- Avoid language, attitudes or behaviours that could be seen as offensive or prejudiced against any group or individual.

Daily Briefing

Each day there is a staff and volunteer briefing, usually held in the shop. This is at 9.45 am (or 9:15 in winter) and lasts about 5-10 mins. A briefing sheet is prepared each day. If you are coming on site after the briefing and, therefore, you are unaware of what has been said, please read through the briefing sheet before starting your duties. It will be on the table in the Bevy Room.

Safeguarding Training

You will need to complete the one-hour Introduction to Safeguarding session as part of your induction. This will also require you to complete the Palace Trust Confidential Declaration form.

Social Media and Press

Please support The Bishop Palace's social media posts by liking and sharing them. If there is anything in the press or on social media that is in any way controversial or negative about The Bishop's Palace, please do not comment or share but report it to your manager straightaway.

CCTV and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)

For more detailed information please see our Monitoring policy and GDPR policy on the volunteer website. We have CCTV across the site (you will see signs up in the various locations).

Health and Safety

General Emergency and Fire Evacuation Plan

KEY INFORMATION

The alarm is a continuous warning siren and it can be set off by pressing/activating any of the call points across the site.

Main Evacuation Assembly Point:

Croquet Lawn (for those already inside the moat walls)

Secondary Evacuation Assembly Point:

Wells Pools (for those already in outer gardens)

Offsite Evacuation Point:

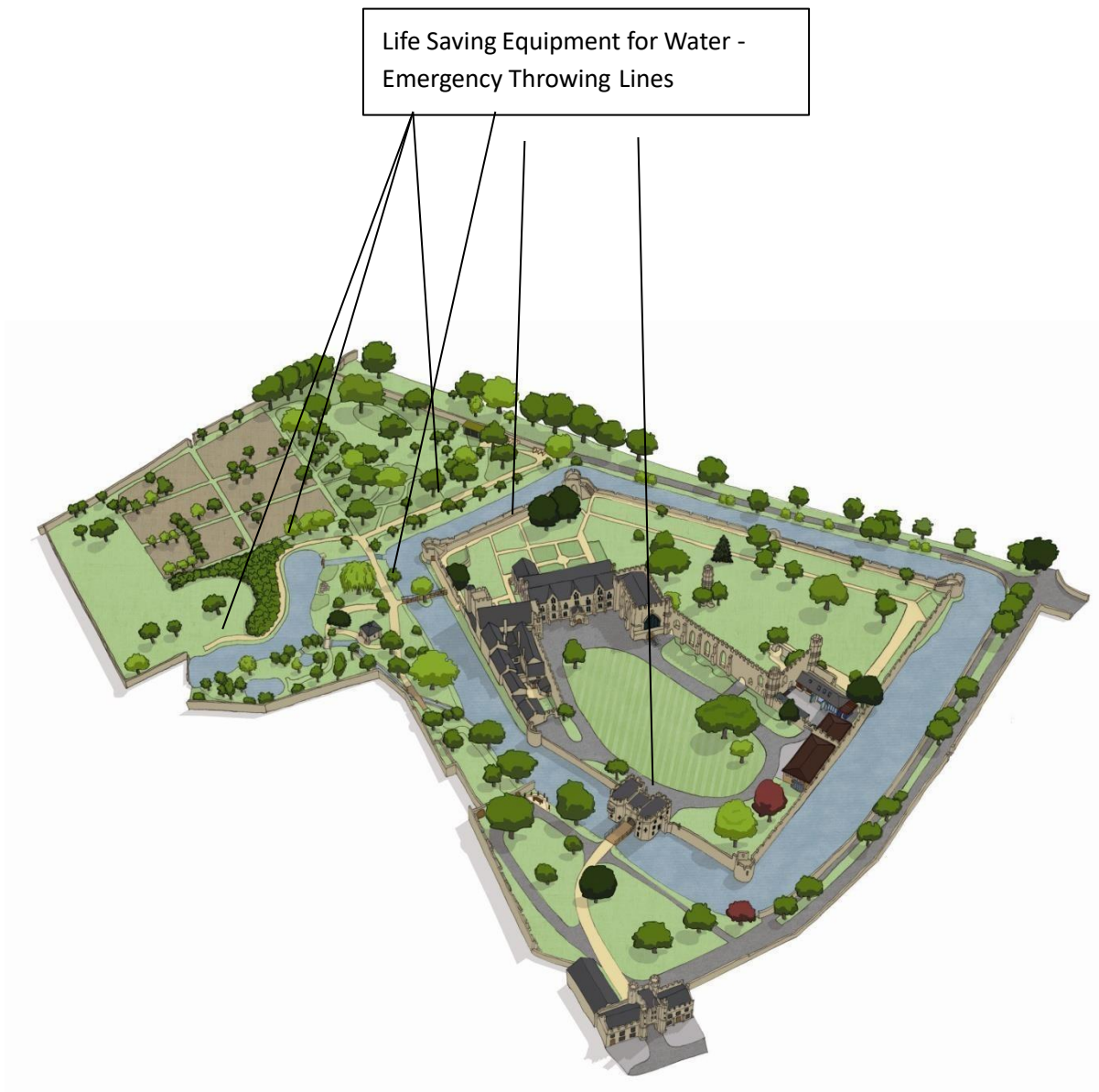
Cathedral Green (you will be notified if you need to go there)

ACTION FOR ANYONE DISCOVERING A FIRE WHEN THE BISHOP'S PALACE IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

1. Activate nearest fire alarm call point
2. Contact the duty manager by radio
3. Use available fire equipment if trained and only if it is safe to do so
4. Leave the building by the nearest exit, advising others to do the same
5. Proceed to the middle of the Croquet Lawn (or Well Pools if in Outer Gardens) and report to Duty Manager.

Map Showing Life-Saving Equipment

The emergency throwing lines are found in five locations in the Palace grounds; two adjacent to the Moat, two near the Wellpools and one in the Gatehouse Porch as indicated on the map below.



Emergency Throwing Lines

The emergency throwing lines are housed in large red tubular containers as shown below.

Instructions for use of the Emergency Throwing Line

- Remove the lid as shown by the direction of the arrow.
- Open the Velcro flap at the neck of the bag
- Open the end of the bag with the throwing hand.
- Grasp the rope loop firmly in the other hand.
- Take care to stand securely (it may be more stable to sit once you are pulling in the person who is being rescued) so that you don't fall or get pulled in yourself.
- Throw bag and contents at the person to be rescued keeping a firm hold on the loop.
- Swing the bag underhand for more accuracy.
- Wait until the person to be rescued has wound the red loop on the bag securely around his wrist before starting rescue operations



After using the Emergency Throwing Line

- Rinse the rope with fresh water.
- Dry the rope and the bag.
- Pack the rope carefully – Do not coil.
- Leave the loop outside the bag.
- Close the Velcro flap tightly and return to the red storage container.

Training will be given in the use of the emergency life line. If the line is deployed, radio contact should be made with the duty manager as soon as is practicable, informing them of the situation and notifying them if help is required to haul someone out of the water.

First Aid

There are numerous First Aiders on duty every day. They are identified at the briefing. If in doubt contact the duty manager who will usually be a first aider themselves but, if not, will know who is.

An individual finding a problem should alert the duty manager in the first instance or a first aider who should immediately visit the injured or ill person and make a decision about what other help is required, in particular whether an ambulance should be called. If the matter is obviously extremely urgent, then the individual coming across the problem should call an ambulance immediately and inform the duty manager straight away.

If you are told about an accident on site: find out where the person in trouble is and roughly what the problem is, immediately contact the Duty Manager or ask the nearest member of staff for First Aid assistance. If necessary, an ambulance will be called. Do not try to treat any injury yourself (unless you are qualified). Injuries should only be treated by a qualified First Aider.

Ensure that you or someone else stays with the injured person until help arrives. Remember it's very important to stay calm, even when under the utmost pressure.

Until skilled help comes:

- as a general rule, do not move injured people unless they are in further and immediate danger if left where they are.
- Stay calm and reassure them (and their family/companions)
- if someone has been electrocuted, switch off the power source if possible.

The First Aider will normally alert the Emergency Services if an ambulance is needed. We are **NOT ALLOWED** to give aspirins or any other medication. Again, refer to the First Aider Duty Manager. Anyone using any of the first aid box contents must let the Duty Manager know so that the box may be quickly replenished.

Incident Report Books

These are A4 size, have a green cover and are kept in the Ticket Office and the Brewery Office. All accidents should be reported as soon as possible, no matter how trivial it may seem.

If a member of the public chooses not to give information to be recorded in the accident book, the member of staff should complete as much information as possible.

Reporting Dangerous Diseases, Incidents or Near Misses

Please report any 'near misses' or dangerous incidents that happen to a visitor, another volunteer or yourself. This is important so that precautions are taken for future safety.

Bins

All rubbish bins (they are labelled to enable recycling) are outside the café and horsebox. We have a dog poo bin on site in the free area against the north wall by the shed.

Hostile Reconnaissance

This is the information-gathering stage that often takes place before crimes such as theft, vandalism, or terrorism. Individuals may try to observe security measures, staff routines, access points, or valuable items in order to identify weaknesses and avoid detection. As a volunteer, you are often the organisation's 'eyes and ears' on site and it's important to stay alert to unusual behaviour. This may include people asking detailed questions about security, checking whether doors or windows are locked, leaving bags/packages unattended, taking photos of restricted features, or attempting to access off-limits areas. Please respond by engaging with the individual if you feel comfortable to do so, politely refusing to share sensitive information and reporting any concerns to staff. Your awareness and visible vigilance play a key role in protecting the site and deterring potential criminal activity.

Radios

Please collect a radio from the Ticket Office and return it at end of duty. There are some matters that should **not** be transmitted over the radio and for which you should ask for immediate assistance from the Duty Manager (eg bomb threats/lost child). Please be aware that anyone within earshot of the radio, including visitors, can hear what you are saying.

When returning your radio, please switch it OFF. Ensure that the charger is ON and it is sitting correctly in the charging unit.

PALACE RADIOS

Basic Instruction and Standard Protocol

- 1.) Make sure smaller knob is set fully anti-clockwise to channel 1.
- 2.) Switch on radio by turning larger right hand knob clockwise (radio should emit a series of beeps; when beeping stop it is ready for use. Fully clockwise is maximum volume).
- 3.) Press larger oval button on left side of radio with index finger (counting silently to three before speaking). Whilst keeping the button pressed, identify yourself and transmit your message. (Indicate that you have completed your message segment by ending it with the word, "...Over").
Example: *"This is Steward Four calling shop. Do you read me? ...Over."*
Then release index finger pressure on button to await answer, e.g. *"Yes, this is the shop here, reading you loud and clear. What is it? ...Over"*
Press button with index finger (once again counting silently to three before speaking) e.g. *"Thank you, shop. Just testing radio; all is well."*
(And if you have completely finished your communication, end with the words) *"Over and out."*



Walk the Ramparts
Tread in a Bishop's footsteps on the rampart walkway and experience views across the historic Somerset landscape. Can you see Glastonbury Tor?



Stableyard Community Room
meeting room / community Room

Stableyard Office
Events and Community

Gatehouse
Bevy Room – staff room
CE Office, Property Manager, Head Gardener, Marketing Manager

Bishops' Offices

Laundry

Brewery Office
Finance/Admin/HR
Marketing

THE DRAGON'S LAIR
Children's Area & Picnic Area

THE WELL POOL
View of Wells Cathedral

ENTRANCE TO THE PALACE

ENTRANCE TO GARDENS

RUINS OF THE GREAT HALL

RAMPART WALK
Views of Glastonbury Tor

Private

THE ARBORETUM

ALLOTMENTS
COMMUNITY GARDEN

THE CHAPEL
SOUTH LAWN

ST. ANDREW'S WELL

THE CROQUET LAWN

THE STABLEYARD

THE QUIET GARDEN
A contemporary, tranquil area of our gardens.

GATEHOUSE

SHOP

NORTH WEST BASTION

LIFT



THE BISHOP'S SWANS
The Bishop's swans first learned to ring a bell for food in the 1870s. The tradition continues to this day.

THE BISHOP'S TABLE
Serving tea, coffee, light lunch and the best of locally sourced food

Step inside the Palace
Push open the 13th century door to encounter the many lives of the Palace, from medieval to modern times. Since 1209, 60 bishops have had a residence here – look out for their coats of arms in the CHAPEL.

THE BISHOP'S EYE
To the Market Place and Wells city centre

Explore the Gardens
Stately and tranquil, they offer a sanctuary from the world outside. Enjoy playing on the South Lawn – and head to the Arboretum to discover THE DRAGON'S LAIR

Discover the Wells
The presence of water has shaped the unique architecture and landscape of the Palace. Join a Palace tour to find out more about this fascinating story.