

Meeting of the Parochial Church Council

Wednesday 10th September 2025 at 7.30pm

In the Fitzhamon Room



Members present:

Fr. Nick Davies (ND) – Chair, Peter Ireland (PI) – Secretary, Mike Bristow (MB), Elizabeth Charman (EC), Marcus Charman (MC - zoom), Paul Charman (PC), Janet Davis (JD), Ben Foster-Smith (BFS - zoom), Rubin Hart (RH), Rowan Ireland (RI), Linda Jeffreys (LJ), James Lancelot (JL), Andrew Maynard (AM), Julie Northcott (JN), Joy Pegg (JP), Peter Smail (PS), , Rachel Walters (RW), Chris Milton (CM – COO - zoom).

1. Welcome

ND opened the meeting with Prayer.

Item 5 was taken out of order to allow Jane Bamber (JB) to leave after her presentation and discussion.

2. Apologies

Rev. Hannah Barraclough (HB), Les Stamp (LS), Liz Swift (ES),

3. Previous Minutes

Minutes of the PCC Meeting 24th June 2025 – all accepted as correct by all those present and (hard copy to be signed as available following the meeting).

Standing Committee of 28th August 2025 – minutes noted; future dates to be circulated.

4. Matters Arising

a. COO vacancy

ND summarised the selection and interview process to date; the candidate offered the post has declined and no other was acceptable. The interview panel to discuss a readvertising process with Gatenby Sanderson. It was noted that their fee is based on achieving a satisfactory appointment, so additional costs should be limited.

b. Vision Purpose & Values

ND has had promising discussions about facilitating a process with Kate Stacey from the diocese, offering a cost free way to progress. It was agreed that she should be invited to the next PCC meeting.

5. Welcoming All Project Update: presentation, discussion & proposal

JB explained the thinking behind the Welcoming Project and the entrance arrangements being tested at the West End, and talked us through her proposal. This is crucial part of the strategy, necessitated by our current NHLF funding, and alongside the fabric surveys and reports to develop a strategy for applying for future funding for major projects. Entry by Donation is a necessary, but small part of the overall project. She underlined that the main purpose of the Abbey as a place of worship would remain unchanged, and that money would never prevent anyone from entering, however it is hoped that the level of donations can be increased from the current 96p /visitor.

Discussion was extensive, a representative selection summarised as follows: -

We are committed to trialling this.

The default amount (£10) set on our terminals at present is acting as a barrier and we would probably get more overall if this can be reduced to £5. There have also been issues with Gift aid at this level, but this is being addressed. There were many concerns raised with the current entry routes – there is too much of a barrier on entry, the route is too dark (the chapel especially needs to be better lit), and the ad hoc arrangements look very untidy and create a bad impression. A simple rope may be a better divider than the solid screens. But also observed that this is all part of the learning process and can be improved as we go forward. There were mixed views on entering via the rear chapel (turning away from the altar) as opposed to directly into the nave, though this will all change as the doors are shut more as we go further into autumn and winter. We could be more careful in taking people with us and not rushing into changes. We need to consider the ‘guest journey’ as one enters, and how visitors are prepared on the way in – this needs to start from the gates. The door is a portal, and we can learn from how this works in other places, especially cathedrals – some good, some very poor. The porch is a great space, a good one for welcomers, but currently gives a poor presentation. Posters and notice boards around the abbey are also very mixed (JB is working on notices as part of the project, and will be reviewing them in general around the Abbey as a whole). We need to understand more about the demographics of our visitors (JB had a selection of present visitor surveys at the meeting). We need the money, but there are questions over how this can best be achieved – at what level should we set a ‘suggested’ donation, how hard do we push this, and how do we measure success? This entrance progression is a possible first step towards implementing a bigger change to the porch – the ‘glass doors’ and how this might work. The Friends and Foundation need to be kept informed and on board. ND summarised the 3 action points for the project: - • To support the project to improve both the welcome and trial entry by donation; • To approve the timeline for testing and introducing Entry by Donation in February 2026; • To approve the expenditure of £16,000 after September 2026 to allow the 2 visitor assistant posts to be advertised as 12 month contracts (Lottery funding currently only covers 7 months) • Prop: PC, 2nd: JL, passed unanimously	
6. COO report CM’s previously circulated report was acknowledged as a good report, and received with no comments.	
7. Safeguarding JN circulated previously the current state of the action plan. PCC now mostly up to date; the biggest area of concern is apparently Popits. RW is now taking on the role of Deputy SO.	
8. Reports: PI requested future meeting dates from all committees please. Finance – Has now met, and is returning to regular meetings. <i>1. Approve PC Replacement</i>	

Request previously circulated, to replace office PC's in the sum of £6,781+VAT – JD noted that a portion of the VAT should be recoverable. • Prop: PI, 2nd: MB, passed unanimously 2. <i>Approve PA system purchase</i> Request previously circulated, to replace the portable sounds system in the total sum of £1,891.80 – JD asked that it not be lent out to minimised risks of damage. • Prop: PI, 2nd: JP, passed unanimously 3. <i>Approve increase in Ley Clerks remuneration</i> Request for increase for Ley clerks from £30 to £34/service in line with salaries over the same period (since 2022). Fees to be revised alongside staff in future. CM clarified that Ley clerks are freelance, not employees. • Prop: PC, 2nd: JL, passed unanimously 4. <i>Approve Statement of delegated authority</i> – deferred for more consideration of CM's draft proposal. 5. <i>Abbey Lodge Update</i> – deferred for more consideration and confirmation of business plan. Roof repairs are underway. 6. <i>Parish share and budgeting for 2026</i> Requested increase is considered very affordable, and less than our budget, so Diocese recommendations can be accepted. ND requested that the budget be updated – this will be done once focus can move on from the current priority of implementing the new Sage system. TAL accounts show very positive performance; BFS proposed that we should express our thanks as the PCC to the shop and café staff teams for their hard work in achieving this. Fabric –the chairman's report was omitted and needs to be circulated, so 2 points need to be addressed: - The PCC is requested to approve repair work to the Cartland Memorial: funding is in place for this. This was agreed. The PCC is requested to approve that the Architect is to prepare a schedule of works for Abbey Lodge to allow accurate pricing. A quote for this should be the first step; BFS believes this is underway with Brian Hoggard. JD noted that the architects report was also omitted from the papers (to be circulated after this meeting). L&M – minutes and reports circulated; JL asked if Vergers and MD's reports be circulated as well? Yes. Mission – nothing further to report. Eco – Church – no meeting since May so nothing to report, though there were upcoming activities and meetings planned. EC thought that the notice boards were out of keeping with the Abbey. PI noted that this (with the PCC board) was simply the result of working with boards available at the time; acknowledged that these (and notices generally) need regular refreshing. Deanery– No minutes from previous meeting	
9. AOB - ND noted that HB is on extended sick leave, so PCC business is to continue without troubling her at this time.	
The meeting ended with Prayer at 9.25.pm. 10. Next meeting – Thursday 20th November @ 7.30pm. Approved as a true record: Fr. N Davies Chair; 20th Nov 25 Date	