

# Output from The Abbey Visioning Workshop (21 October 2023)



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Javier Takamura, Abbey Director

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# Contributors & Attendees

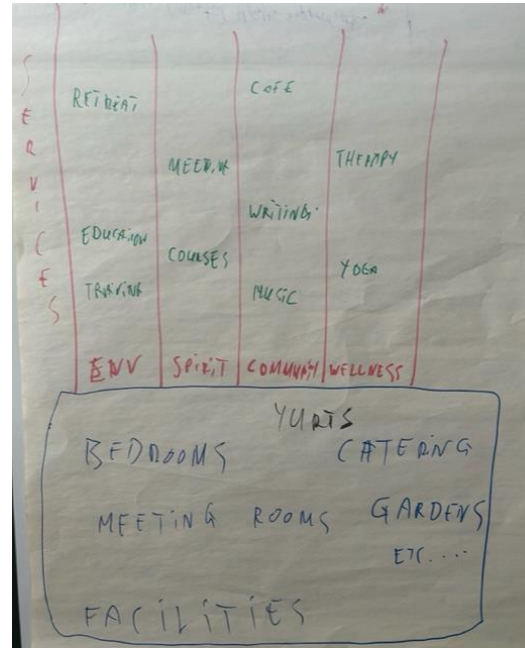
- Shlomo Downen
- Callum Mackenzie
- Danielle Rowe
- Bonny Astor
- Nancy Winfield
- Cliff Jordan
- Trish Lyth
- Jon Willis
- Rosalind Pearmain
- Miles Stanger
- Helen Gates
- Richard Gates
- Manuela Sprink
- Jennifer Mahony
- Mike Malin
- Jane Taylor
- Javier Takamura [Director]
- Adrian Rance-McGregor [Trustee]
- Jason Warwick [Trustee]
- Wyon Stansfeld [Trustee]
- Jane Humphreys [Accountant]
- Olivier Hubert [Volunteer]
- Pascaline Bazart [Volunteer]
- Henrietta Weekes [Volunteer]

Please advise if you have been omitted from this list

# Vision Capture Process



1. Discussion on Abbey Vision and thematic areas



2. Outlined Abbey Facilities and service offerings for thematic areas



3. Detailed service offer concepts with support

# Ideas for future Abbey Activities & Services

Activity	Themes	Volunteer(s)
Wellness + Holistic support, personal growth & spiritual development	Wellness, Spiritual	Helen Gates
Counselling + Mental Health support, peer support/ victim support	Wellness	Callum McKenzie
Hosting Enviro-based activities, including eco-therapy support, repair café, library of things	Environment	Jon Willis, Bonny Astor
Arts – Musical events, arts, Community cinema	Community	Henrietta Weekes
Make more of gardens	Community	Jane Taylor

# Summary of workshop discussions on a possible future vision for The Abbey

The Abbey offers a range of activities and services to nurture Wellness, Community, Environment and Spirituality for a wide range of beneficiaries, stakeholders and clients to be as inclusive as possible. Interfaith spirituality is at the heart of the what the Abbey offers, enabling growth and development of individuals so that they may learn to live more fully as persons in the community.



# Abbey 2024 Vision Plan

1. Review and build Vision with Director & Trustees
  1. Review and build Abbey Vision Wording & consider fit with current Abbey mission wording
  2. Expand/further define thematic areas (Environment, Community, Wellness and Spirituality) & consider fit with current 7 ways in which Abbey mission is offered to the public
  3. Consider if update to Abbey charitable objects is needed.
2. Workshop lacked input on spiritual aspects so further thought and definition of the 'Abbey Spirit' is required to guide behaviour and enable a spiritual view & community. Sense of Service, learn from past activities and events. How to live together.
3. Present Abbey Vision 2024 Plans to Company Members at The Abbey AGM (December 9<sup>th</sup>)
4. Communicate Vision 2024 Plan more widely to all interested parties
5. If considered necessary, develop a plan for formal update of charitable objects to align to Vision
6. Call to Action – Javier to co-ordinate volunteers to take forward ideas for Abbey Activities & Services, integrated with usual volunteer and activity management

# Call to Action

Javier to co-ordinate volunteers to take forward ideas for Abbey Activities & Services, integrated with usual volunteer and activity management

- Confirm proposed activities, willing volunteers and who will lead / support
- Activities to be prioritised using 3 criteria:
  - Fit to charitable Mission & Objectives
  - Available resources; volunteers , equipment and finance
  - Cost benefit analysis
- Arrange a kick off meeting for volunteers
- Each Workstream lead to provide
  - List of proposed activities for each area
  - Who will deliver and support those activities
  - Any resources, equipment etc which is needed



# Background: The Abbey Current Charitable Objects

*TO **STUDY** AND PROMOTE THE APPLICATION OF THE **CHRISTIAN FAITH** AND TO **EXPLORE THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER FAITHS** IN THE LIGHT OF THE JUDAO-CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS AND OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE TO THE **NEEDS OF SOCIETY** AND TO THE **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALS** SO THAT THEY MAY **LEARN TO LIVE MORE FULLY** AS PERSONS **IN THE COMMUNITY***

# Background: The Abbey Current Mission

- The Abbey is an open and inclusive multi-faith centre for spiritual education and retreat. We welcome people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, and beliefs to our historic manor house and gardens in the beautiful Oxfordshire village of Sutton Courtenay
- Through sharing in the daily rhythm of work, retreat living, spiritual education and play, we encourage people to reconnect with the spirit that is at the heart of all religions and spiritual practice and find personal renewal.
- Our education programme aims to explore the relationship between spiritual growth and finding a path to leading a more fulfilled life, caring for our natural world and showing compassion for its people.

# Background: 7 key ways in which The Abbey Mission is offered to the public today

1. As a place for spiritual growth and exploration, welcoming those of all faiths and those who are simply spiritual searchers. The Abbey's planned core programme of educational events in interfaith and peace issues is an expression of this.
2. As a space for courses to be offered to the public by workshop leaders in spiritual exploration and the arts, including meditation, yoga, qigong, tai'chi, dance, singing, poetry, horticulture and creative writing.
3. As a community resource for local people, whereby members of The Abbey team interact with the local community groups. In particular, The Abbey aims to contribute to social cohesion and well-being in our society and will develop programmes to offer help to those suffering trauma and at risk of suicide.
4. As a place for individuals to experience short term retreats, or to spend longer as volunteer residents & members of the team that looks after the Abbey and its users. We work with local agencies to offer a proportion of our resident volunteers places to refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants.
5. As a place for practical exploration of ways of living which are healthy, ecologically sustainable (e.g. styles of cooking and gardening) and which incorporate the spiritual dimension in daily life.
6. As a harmonious and peaceful setting in which public and private sector organisations can explore self-development during their away days and training sessions.
7. As a living history in the making. Looking after The Abbey historic building & archive, restoring and renewing where needed, and providing opportunities to inspire and broaden involvement as widely as possible.

Additional Slides used at the Visioning  
Workshop for reference

# Plan for the workshop

11 AM	Call to order, introduction of session (including Ground Rules) - Shlomo
11:10	Welcome (including fire safety, practical matters, and introduction of Trustees present) - Adrian
11:15	Participant introductions
11:30	Brief presentation touching upon on where we are now (Regeneration Plan, progress on growing the business, financial pressures, staffing and core programme development) - Adrian
11:40	Consideration of the 'charitable object' – Adrian and Shlomo, followed by participants
12:15 PM	Initial consideration of a range of ideas / suggestions - focus on why each idea might be desirable
12:40	Light lunch of soup, bread and cheese
1:15	More in-depth consideration of ideas / suggestions - focus on feasibility
2:10	Narrowing (reframing) the range of ideas / suggestions for deeper (practical) consideration
2:40	Refreshment break / set up for 'endorsements'
3 PM	Endorsement session
3:20	Discussion of the favourite ideas and how these can be progressed

Between 4 PM and 4:30 PM - Event closes

# Ground Rules

- Mutual respect
- Mutual support (even if we are not keen on someone's ideas / suggestions)
- Collaborative, not competitive culture
- Spirit of exploration and creativity
- Here to listen to understand, not listen to contradict - this is a visioning workshop, not a debate
- No losers, we are all winners - Even if an idea proves unfeasible it can still teach us something
- While Trustees are expected to take endorsements seriously, ideas endorsed by workshop participants are not binding on Trustees
- Workshop intended to be enjoyable, uplifting, thought provoking, and crucially: of lasting practical value! Perhaps nourishing a renewed sense of purpose...
- Participants, including Trustees, Committee Members, supporters, and others from the community, are invited to work together for mutual benefit, including by pledging to volunteer again in the future to support the realisation of shared visions and ideas that attract widespread endorsement
- Just so much – Keep in mind that today will be less than everything, and more than nothing!

# Adrian's welcome

- Health & Safety (including fire exits, etc.)
- Practical matters (location of toilets, etc.)
- Trustee introductions

# Participant Introductions

- From 11:15 AM
- Names
- Something about what drew you to attend / your connection with The Abbey



# Adrian's Brief Presentation

- Where we are now
  - The Regeneration Plan
  - Progress on growing the business
  - Financial pressures
  - Staffing, and
  - Core programme development

# Consideration of the charitable objects

- *To study and promote the application of the **Christian faith** and to explore the experience of **other faiths** in the light of the **Judaeo-Christian traditions** and of **modern psychological and social science** to the **needs of society** and to the **growth and development of individuals** so that they may learn to **live more fully as persons in the community**.*
- Adrian to start us off with a succinct presentation (maximum 10 minutes) on:
  - The legal status of the charity,
  - The role of company members, and
  - Who has authority to change the objects and how.
- The Charity Commission would need to approve any amendments to charitable objects.
- Participants to be invited to comment by 11:50 at the latest!
- Participants invited to say something about what the object means to them
- Consideration of any suggestions to update / improve upon the wording of the object

# Initial consideration of ideas / suggestions

- From 12:15 PM
- Thanks to those who shared their ideas with me in advance
- This consideration is intended to reflect a wide range of potential directions, without getting into too much detail
- You are invited to focus on why each idea might be desirable (with practical considerations to be explored later)
- Ideas, presented in no particular order, include:
  - (Environmental) Theme-based activities
  - Local community connection / Sanctuary
  - Intergenerational outreach
  - Involving Abbey Residents

# (Environmental) Theme-based activities

- Many of the ideas shared in advance relate to theme-based activities
- Activities could include:
  - Talks from prominent religious thinkers and environmentalists
  - Seminars, workshops, conferences and perhaps practical sessions
  - Building sustainability into the life of the residential community
  - Providing sacred places for people to meditate / pray
- Themes could include:
  - The environment (Mission to build a better physical and social environment)
    - Explore Judaeo-Christian perspectives on environmental protection ('saving the planet')
  - Climate change (Both limiting and preparing for big changes)
  - Eco-anxiety (Especially amongst younger people?) – [More about this later]

# Local community connection / Sanctuary

- Some suggest there is a need to connect with the local community – including as part of building a strong inclusive sense of community, as well as addressing mental health issues – coupled with a hope this would attract more volunteers to support The Abbey
- Suggested activities intended to create / support community include:
  - a truly multicultural Café and Wellness Centre, featuring healthy produce and recipes from different cultures as well as wellness practices, classes, advice, and spiritual links from around the world
  - Using the Abbey as a place where people can gather, think, share ideas and come together for collective effort
  - Offering something positive in relation to mental health issues - offering space, inspiration, comfort and maybe in association with other charities in this area  
This could be linked to responding to the many people who are troubled / over-whelmed by the climate crisis, the ecological emergency, the polarisation of contemporary politics and the growing encroachment of corporations and their economic interest into many parts of everyday life
  - Creating positive models for community interaction and offering life skills training, e.g. active listening, non-violent communication, anger management, how to focus and be present in mindful ways
  - Resume musical events, especially for a Christmas / Winter Solstice event (to see if there is interest in reforming a singing group and/or choir of some kind)

# Intergenerational outreach

- Attracting younger people (as a mission) – with an emphasis on assisting, inspiring, transferring and sharing knowledge and skills.
- Ensure young people are reflected in the trustee board membership.
- There is potential for mutuality, e.g. younger people could help seniors with computer-related issues.
- *I believe there is real demand for interactive in-person events where people can explore these contemporary issues (e.g. climate crisis, ecological emergency, breakdown of society - polarisation, fragmentation, isolation) and how best to respond. If connections can be made with locations, and networks where younger generations engage with these issues, it would be fruitful to treat them with respect and curiosity and there seek key individuals whose leadership potential can be supported and given space to find expression. This will take commitment and consistency over time.*

# Involving Abbey Residents

- *I would support a concerted effort to ensure the work of the Abbey is done by residents. Active service and offering of hospitality with love is a fundamental lynchpin of all faiths and the way Abbey guests were looked after by residents embodied this and showed a personal touch which is unique and unavailable in a more impersonal style guest house.*

# Any additional ideas, suggestions, notions...

- As time allows...
- ...taking account of how lunch is due to be served at 12:40 PM
- You are also invited to put pen to paper during the lunch break to outline any additional ideas, suggestions, notions, aspirations, inspirations, etc. for further consideration



# Plan for the workshop

12:15 PM	Initial consideration of a range of ideas / suggestions - focus on why each idea might be desirable
<b>12:40</b>	<b>Light lunch of soup, bread and cheese</b>
1:15	More in-depth consideration of ideas / suggestions - focus on feasibility
2:10	Narrowing (reframing) the range of ideas / suggestions for deeper (practical) consideration
2:40	Refreshment break / set up for 'endorsements'
3 PM	Endorsement session
3:20	Discussion of the favourite ideas and how these can be progressed

Between 4 PM and 4:30 PM - Event closes

# More in-depth consideration of ideas / suggestions - focus on feasibility

- From 1:15 PM
- An opportunity to explore a range of ideas and suggestions in order to consider 'feasibility', which includes identifying potential problems and how such problems might be avoided / overcome / embraced
- We will start with:
  - (Environmental) Theme-based activities
  - Local community connection / Sanctuary
  - Intergenerational outreach
  - Involving Abbey Residents

# Feasibility of hosting environmental-based activities & offering eco-therapeutic support service

- Activities could include:
  - Talks from prominent religious thinkers and environmentalists
  - Seminars, workshops, conferences and perhaps practical sessions
  - Building sustainability into the life of the residential community
  - Providing sacred places for people to meditate / pray
  - Providing some form of eco-therapeutic support service
- Themes could include:
  - The environment (Mission to build a better physical and social environment)
    - Explore Judaeo-Christian perspectives on environmental protection ('saving the planet')
  - Climate change (Both limiting and preparing for big changes)
  - Eco-anxiety (Especially amongst younger people?)

# Feasibility of core focus to enhance local community connection / providing sanctuary

- Some suggest there is a need to connect with the local community – including as part of building a strong inclusive sense of community, as well as addressing mental health issues – coupled with a **hope this would attract more volunteers** to support The Abbey
- Suggested activities intended to create / support community include:
  - A truly **multicultural Café and Wellness Centre**, featuring healthy produce and recipes from different cultures as well as wellness practices, classes, advice, and spiritual links from around the world
  - Using the Abbey as a place where people gather, think, share ideas and **come together for collective effort**
  - Offering something positive in relation to **mental health** issues - offering space, inspiration, comfort and maybe **in association with other charities in this area**  
This could be linked to responding to the many **people who are troubled / over-whelmed** by the climate crisis, the ecological emergency, the polarisation of contemporary politics and the growing encroachment of corporations and their economic interest into many parts of everyday life
  - Creating **positive models for community interaction** and offering **life skills training**, e.g. active listening, non-violent communication, anger management, how to focus and be present in mindful ways
  - Resume **musical events**, especially for a Christmas / Winter Solstice event (to see if there is interest in reforming a **singing group and/or choir** of some kind)

# Feasibility of adopting intergenerational outreach as a core mission

- Attracting younger people (as a mission) – with an emphasis on assisting, inspiring, transferring and sharing knowledge and skills.
- Ensure young people are reflected in the trustee board membership.
- There is potential for mutuality, e.g. younger people could help seniors with computer-related issues.
- *I believe there is real demand for interactive in-person events where people can explore these contemporary issues (e.g. climate crisis, ecological emergency, breakdown of society - polarisation, fragmentation, isolation) and how best to respond. If connections can be made with locations, and networks where younger generations engage with these issues, it would be fruitful to treat them with respect and curiosity and there seek key individuals whose leadership potential can be supported and given space to find expression. This will take commitment and consistency over time.*

# Practical considerations associated with involving Abbey Residents

- *I would support a concerted effort to ensure the work of the Abbey is done by residents. Active service and offering of hospitality with love is a fundamental lynchpin of all faiths and the way Abbey guests were looked after by residents embodied this and showed a personal touch which is unique and unavailable in a more impersonal style guest house.*

# Narrowing (reframing) the range of ideas / suggestions for deeper (practical) consideration

- From 2:10 PM
- By now we may, or may not, be ready to narrow the range of ideas and suggestions, or perhaps to change the way some of the ideas have been grouped together (or split into more than one idea), e.g. arts-based activities as a focus.
- Initial ideas include:
  - Hosting environmental-based activities & offering eco-therapeutic support
  - Core focus on enhancing local community connection / providing sanctuary
  - Adopting intergenerational outreach as a core mission
  - Involving Abbey Residents
  - Any other emergent ideas to be put forward for possible endorsement
- Ideas you put forward are expected to reflect your energy to help realise!
- Refreshment break from 2:40 PM to set up the Endorsement session
- Endorsement session to run from 3 PM to 3:20 PM

# Endorsement session

- From 3 PM to 3:20 PM
- Each participant is invited to use up to 3 dots to endorse up to 3 ideas
- Circles are reserved for the use of Trustees
- Ideas you endorse are expected to reflect your energy to help realise
- Voting will be followed by further discussion, as time allows, of the favourite ideas and how these can be progressed
- The workshop is due to wind down between 4 PM and 4:30 PM



# Progressing the most endorsed ideas first

- Further discussion, as time allows, of the favourite ideas and how these can be progressed
- Intended to initiate practical planning for next steps
- Identifying concrete actions and who will be progressing these
- This workshop is due to wind down between 4 PM and 4:30 PM