

# Choosing a Future Together

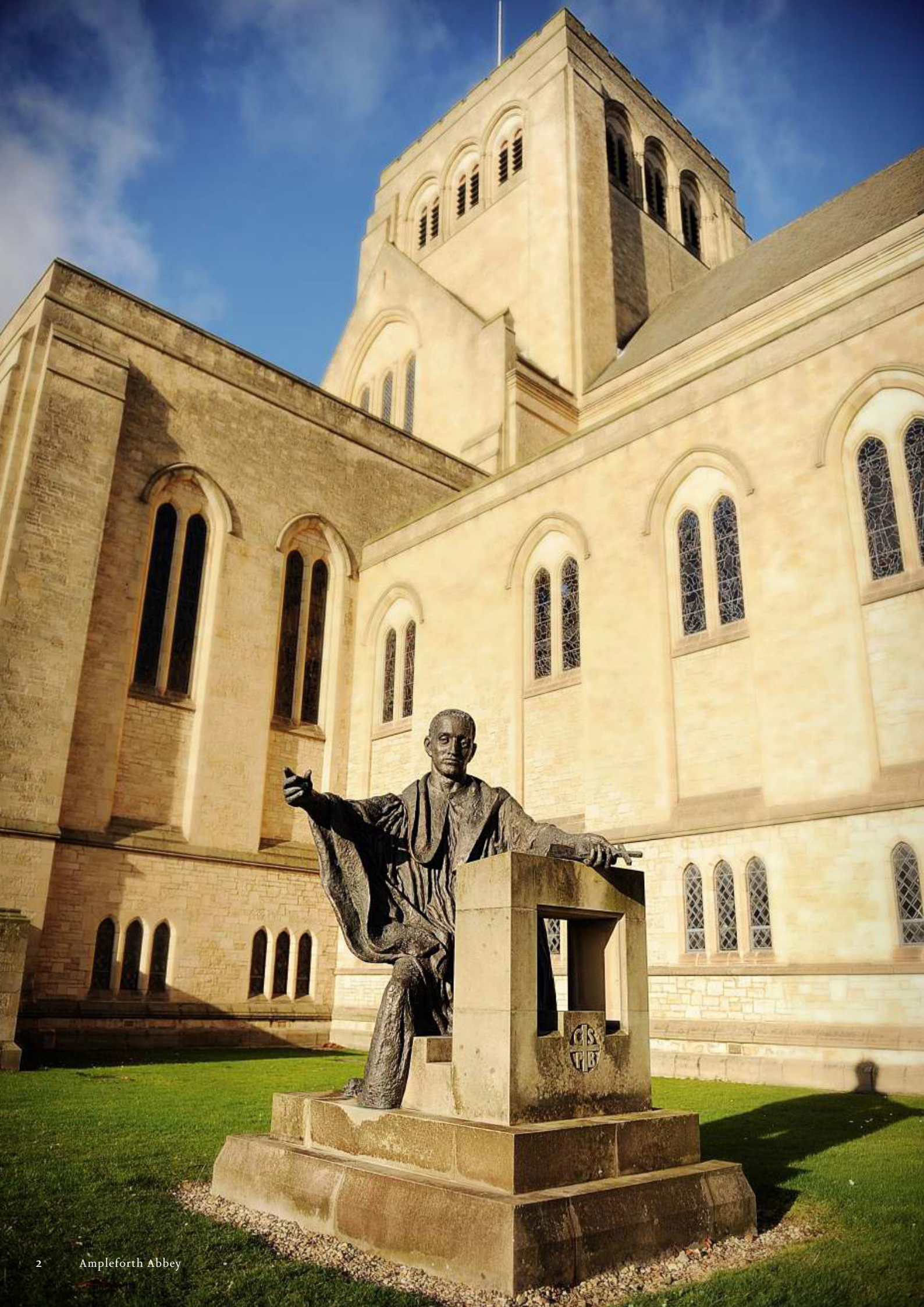
## Strategic Plan

2022-26



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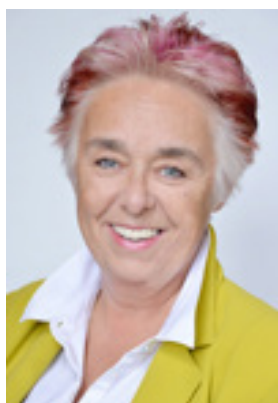
# Introduction

Ampleforth Abbey is part of the English Benedictine Congregation (EBC), the oldest of the twenty-one congregations that together form the Order of St Benedict.

The patron of Ampleforth monks is St Laurence, for it was in a church dedicated to St Laurence that they settled in Dieuloard, France, in 1608. Nearly two hundred years later, in 1802, the small community of monks settled at Ampleforth, a village situated in a valley to the south of the North Yorkshire Moors. Today, the monastic community numbers just under 50 monks, the majority of whom are resident at Ampleforth. There is also a small monastic community at the Monastery of Christ the Word in Zimbabwe. Ampleforth monks also serve in a number of parishes.

Ampleforth Abbey, as with many religious communities in the UK, is not just a spiritual entity but is also constituted as a legal charity. The Ampleforth Abbey Trust is a registered charity established and operated for charitable purposes, primarily the furtherance of the Roman Catholic faith. The Trust employs almost 100 lay staff who work alongside the monastic community to support them in their day to day life and work including the welcome of visitors to the Abbey.

*Choosing a Future Together* sets out a five-year plan in support of the vision of the Ampleforth Abbey Monastic Community, providing a roadmap to ensure a sustainable future for the community in the valley to which they came 220 years ago.



JUNE MULROY  
CHAIR OF TRUSTEES



ROBERT IGO OSB  
ABBOT OF AMPLEFORTH

# Our Monastic Community

*Our desire is to be a monastic community with a simple goal: to point to God's presence in our world through a life of prayer and service and to invite others to join us in this faith-filled search for meaning and purpose.*

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER WITH CONFIDENCE,  
FAITH, HOPE AND TRUST:

We will actively seek God by choosing to live the fraternity of the Gospel inspired by the Rule of St Benedict.

(LK 12:35-36, Eph 6:15-17; Rom 13:12; Act 2:42-47;  
RB Prol:21; 1; 4:75-78; 73:3-4)

We firmly believe that prayer is our fundamental mission and so, as the Rule teaches us, we give priority to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, the Eucharist, lectio on the Word of God, spiritual reading, and personal prayer.

(Mt 4:21-22; 10:37-39; Jn 2:14-16; 2Cor 7:15; 1Tim 4:13-14;  
RB 19; 20; 43:1-12; 48:4-6; 52)

We therefore commit ourselves to strive daily for personal and communal holiness, in fidelity to our vows of Obedience, Conversatio morum and Stability (Heb 5:7-10; 11:14-16;  
Jr 14:17-21; RB 49:4-7; 58:9-16; 73: 8-9) and strive to lovingly

support and serve each other in practical ways taking responsibility for our life together.

(2Th 2:17; Rom 12: 9-11; Dt 4:24; 1Ptr 2:18; Ph 2:1-5; 1 Jn 4:7-21;  
RB 63:16-17; 72)

We seek to become a vibrant community of faith and will look for ways to develop a joyful, simple, and balanced life of prayer, work, and time of recreation together as brothers.

(Mt 12:30-31; Lk 10:25-37; Eph 5:21; Acts 2; 32-37; RB 4:71)

We will endeavour to serve the Church and the world creatively by generating a welcoming, listening, and safe environment that recognises Christ in all whom we meet and serve. Learning from their experience we seek to establish a place of faith and prayer whose doors are open to everyone to share in our ongoing search for God.

(Mt 25: 31-46; Lk 24:28-30; Mt 28:16-20; RB53; 60; 61)

We aspire to offer to the world a living witness to the inspirational values and joy of the Gospel and the centrality of union with Christ.

(Jn 15; 1Jn 1:7; Mt 5:17-19; 2Tim 2:1-7; Prol: 8-50)





# Aim and Objectives

## Aim

The aim of this plan is to provide for a sustainable future for the Ampleforth Monastic Community, enabling it to live a monastic life in accordance with the Rule of St Benedict and to be a vibrant community of faith to which guests can be welcomed to share the search for God.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)*

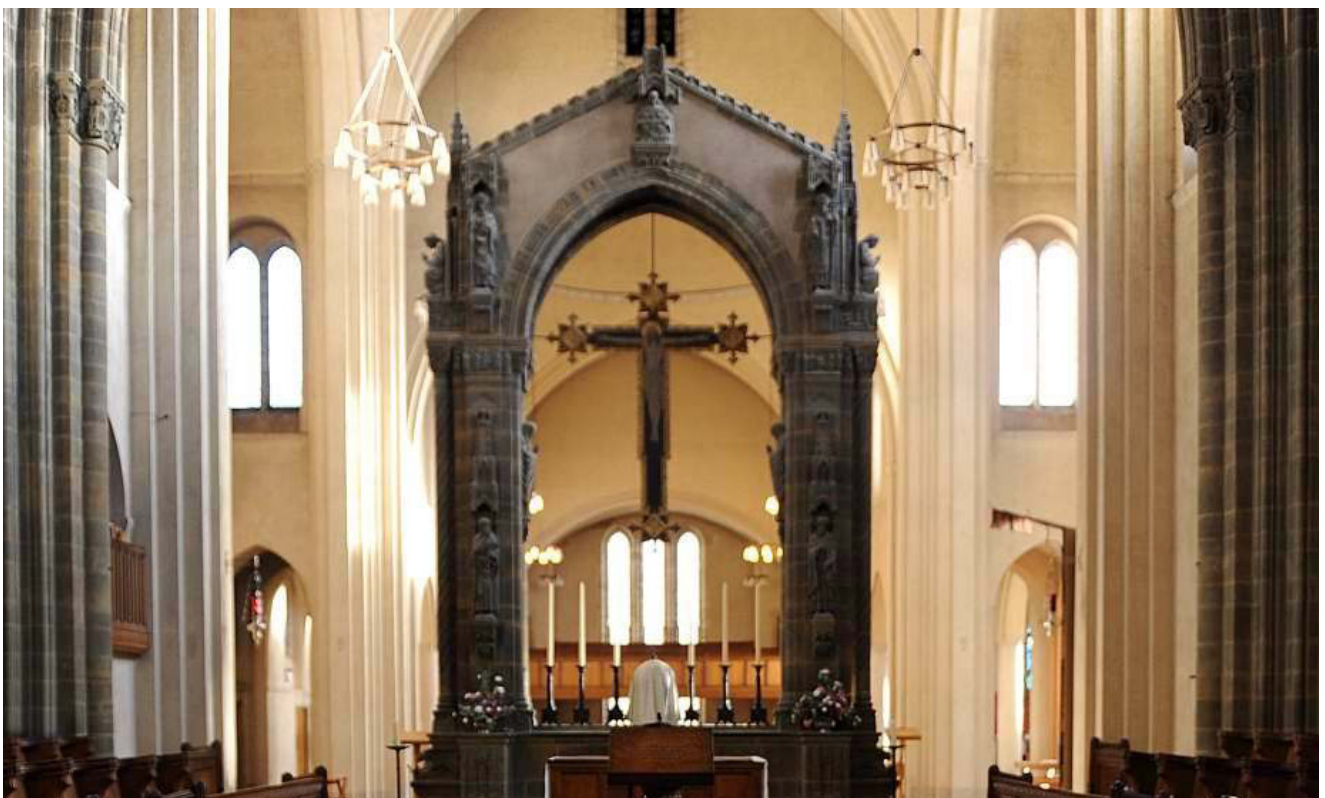
*“Therefore we intend to establish a school of the Lord’s service...Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation...But as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God’s commandments, our hearts over-flowing with the inexpressible delight of love”*

(PROLOGUE TO THE RULE OF ST BENEDICT VERSES 45-49)

## Objectives

In order to achieve the above aim we will pursue the following six strategic objectives which relate to our identity, culture and activities:

- *Affirm our Identity*
- *Align and optimise our Commercial Activity*
- *Demonstrate our Safeguarding Commitment*
- *Make our Estate work for us*
- *Enhance our Offering for Guests*
- *Enhance the Invitation to join our Community of Support*





# Affirm our Identity

Who we are determines what we do. As a community of Benedictine monks who desire to live the Gospel to the full and invite others to do the same, we seek to become a place of genuine encounter, walking in partnership with others on a journey that enables them to find meaning and purpose. The community attempts to make significant contributions in a variety of apostolic works such as education, parish work and hospitality.

Who we are also determines how we behave. The spiritual life of the monastery will be the inspiration for all we do and our work will be characterised by our Benedictine core values as these are lived out by all who work at the Abbey. These values will not only provide us with a focus but also a point of differentiation.

Looking to the future with hope, as a relatively small self-sustaining charity, the Abbey Trust aims to ensure optimal use of resources within a wider community of support, friendship, and prayer. This will be rooted in faith and built upon a strong partnership between the monastic community and its lay employees and volunteers.



*“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness”*

(ROMANS 12:4-8)



This objective is fundamental to this plan, providing the basis for all our future activities and aspirations.

## *We will:*

1. Strengthen and nurture the partnerships between monastic and lay, achieving a deeper mutual understanding and learning in order to facilitate our common mission;
2. Communicate clearly our identity and mission to a wider community of support, friendship and prayer, inviting many others to join, share and experience these with us;
3. Articulate and strengthen our Benedictine core values across the Trust, ensuring that these are central to what we do and how we do it both inside, and externally to, the Trust;
4. Ensure our infrastructure and environment serve the mission, looking for synergies across all areas of the trust, sharing our resources across functions and encouraging self-sufficiency wherever possible.



# Demonstrate our Safeguarding Commitment

St Benedict tells us that all who visit the Abbey should be received like Christ, in whose image they were made. In recent years, we have become painfully aware that there have been times when monks and others have failed to live up to this most crucial of standards. We feel deep sorrow and shame about the abuse suffered by those in our care in the past; we acknowledge the irreparable wrongs that have been done, and are determined to do all we can to ensure that these never happen again.

In the Spirit of the Gospel and the Rule of St Benedict, we are committed to ensuring that all of our beneficiaries flourish during the time they spend with us, and in particular to ensuring that they are protected from any form of harm or abuse. As a result, we seek not only to conform to our statutory obligations in the realm of safeguarding, but rather to strive for best practice, and the constant improvement that such a striving entails. We recognise that this involves maintaining and strengthening our relationships with statutory and regulatory partners, learning from the testimonies of victims and survivors of abuse, and inviting challenge and scrutiny from specialist advisors.

In short, we resolve to ensure that safeguarding across Ampleforth Abbey Trust is of the highest standard and is a thread that runs through all that we do.

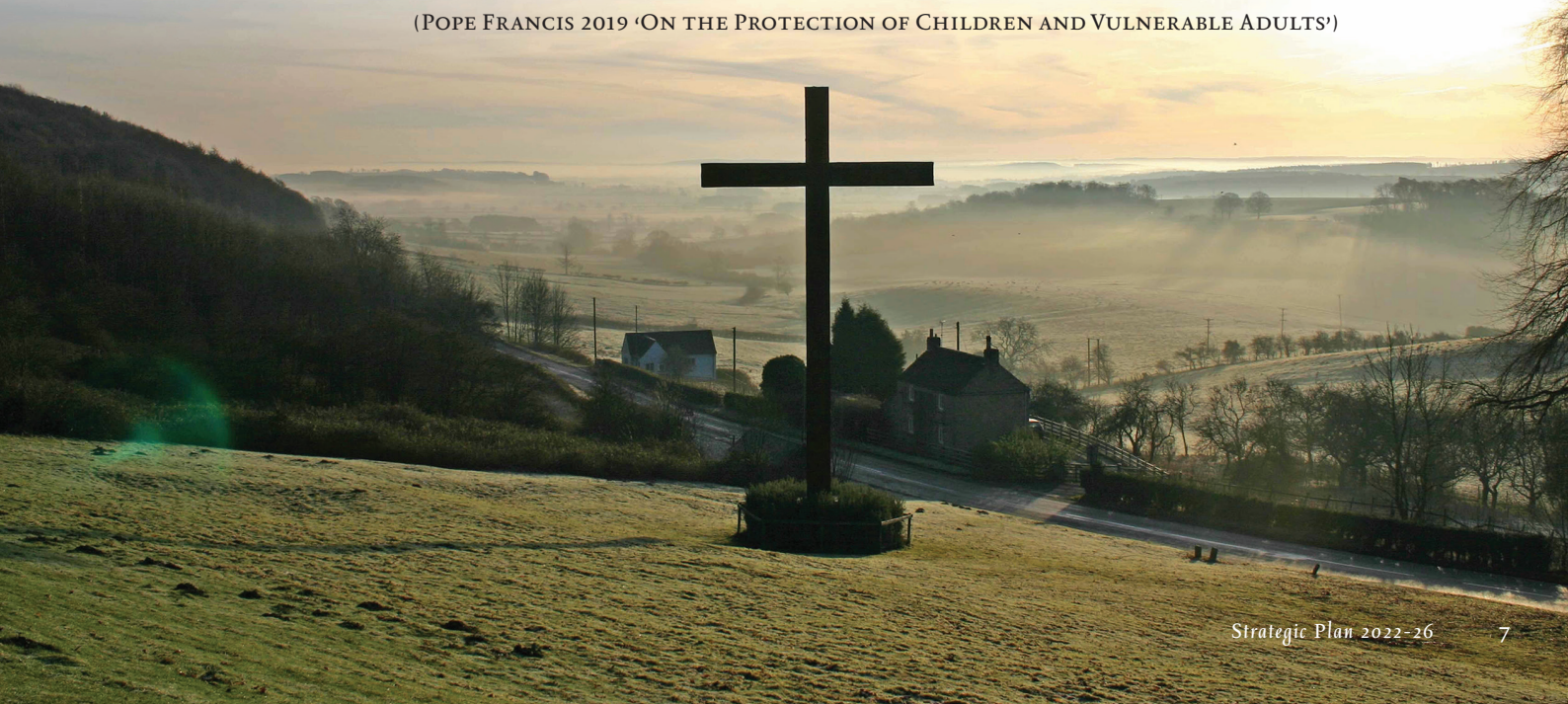
## *We will:*

1. Embed a safeguarding culture that demonstrates committed leadership, vigilance, curiosity, care and kindness;
2. Ensure that we train and support all who live and work at Ampleforth Abbey to deliver exemplary safeguarding practice;
3. Offer apology, reparation and, as they wish, support to victims and survivors, as we listen to and learn from their experiences;
4. Demonstrate legal compliance and best safeguarding practice;
5. Communicate internally and externally our commitment to safeguarding and be accountable for ensuring we demonstrate this commitment across all our activities.

*“The protection of minors and vulnerable persons is an integral part of the Gospel message that the Church and all its members are called to proclaim throughout the world...”*

*“...We all have the duty to welcome openheartedly minors and vulnerable persons and to create a safe environment for them, with their interests as a priority”*

(POPE FRANCIS 2019 ‘ON THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS’)





# Enhance our Offering for Guests

As our identity is grounded in a monastic community, inspired and shaped by the Rule of St Benedict, we need to embrace and move forward according to the vision of Hospitality presented there. As outlined in Chapter 53 of the Rule, the reception of guests is fundamental to our overall mission and is something that needs to continue to be embedded and interpreted to allow all to be nourished by what they encounter here.

*“All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me”*

(MATTHEW 25:35)

Responding to the Rule, all guests must be welcomed with “all the courtesy of love”, and with the greatest possible humanity and humility. In actively welcoming all those who come into contact with us, we expand our thinking, and broaden and enrich the community of Ampleforth. This is a genuine and meaningful approach; one that actively draws people in and invites long-term engagement and sustainable relationships. As it has for centuries, the experience of our living, working and praying monastic community can guide us into the future.

Wherever one may find oneself in life, Ampleforth Abbey is a place that extends an open invitation to discover a spiritual home, and to share in our life here. We welcome all guests, without judgement, to draw near and experience a nourishing and respectful encounter that stems from the partnership at the heart of our community.

## *We will:*

1. Define and articulate our visitor experience in practice, ensuring the charism of Benedictine hospitality is lived out in all we do;
2. Continue to build community from within, nurturing the essence of Hospitality throughout the whole community, to strengthen our mission and outreach;
3. Identify our audiences to expand our community and broaden our engagement;
4. Explore further our current and potential offer, maximising every opportunity to use the wider estate and look for points of connection across the Trust;
5. Clarify how we measure success, and establish a culture of evaluation, feedback and self-reflection, nurturing continuous growth.





# Align and Optimise our Commercial Activity

Commercial activity is a fundamental strand of income which will need to be optimised to allow the Abbey to nurture an independent sustainable future. Through targeted activity we will generate sufficient funds to meet the needs of the monastic community and the re-imaged Trust, whilst being flexible to address future demands.

It will not only explore maximising revenue from existing income streams using current resources, but identify new profitable opportunities, both on the Abbey estate and more widely. Commercial activity will allow visitors and organisations to engage and connect with Ampleforth in different ways while striking a balance between generating funds and being empathetic to the identity of the Trust.

*“The evil of avarice must have no part in establishing prices, which should, therefore, always be a little lower than people outside the monastery are able to set, so that in all things God may be glorified”*

(RULE OF ST BENEDICT 57)

With these words in mind, our commercial ventures look to secure nothing more than helping to contribute to our sustainable future, by applying the creative thinking, talents and prayers of our lay and monastic community.



## We will:

1. Review the commercial activity portfolio, considering alignment with mission, full cost, projected revenue and development potential for each activity;
2. Raise the awareness and accountability of commercial activity at Ampleforth Abbey including articulating what makes our commercial activity distinctive;
3. Work with the Estates Committee to identify all possible uses of the estate assets to maximise the commercial potential whilst understanding the full costs of using the assets for commercial activity;
4. Produce a commercial plan which identifies current and future market trends alongside required resources, and includes clear annual targets, regular monitoring milestones, delivery risk and impact assessments;
5. Develop relationships with trusted partners to aid in the growth and enhancement of commercial activity;
6. Look for synergies and opportunities with other areas of the Trust in order to make best use of resources and ensure a consistent message and approach.



# Make our Estate work for us

Ampleforth Abbey Trust owns and manages a considerable estate of land and buildings which are central to the monastery's core mission both in providing the physical setting for the mission and works of the Community and in providing revenue to support this mission and works. These physical assets also have the potential to be a financial burden to the monastery. Currently there is a diverse portfolio of building purpose, age, location and market value. This must be rationalised so that only assets that contribute in a positive way to the core mission of the monastic community are retained.

The Abbey also has a responsibility to manage the natural environment to serve the mission in a manner which does not erode its integrity, contributes to the carbon reduction and climate change agenda, promotes biodiversity, connects people to nature and roots the monastery within the local community.

All the land and buildings which the Abbey owns, maintains and uses must make a positive contribution to the sustainability of the monastic community. If this contribution is not made then consideration will be given to 'pruning the vine'.

*"The Lord was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder"*

(POPE FRANCIS: LAUDATO SI N97)

*"He will regard all tools and goods of the monastery as sacred vessels of the altar, aware that nothing is to be neglected"*

(RULE OF ST BENEDICT 31:10)



## We will:

1. Categorise the building and land assets as they currently stand as either central (core) to the mission of the Abbey, non-core but provide vital income or superfluous/liable to become a future burden;
2. Decide and articulate the principles that will guide future use and management of all the building and land assets;
3. Catalogue the current usage and commitments of our building and land assets;
4. Understand the true cost of current and future ownership of each asset;
5. Consider how our future estate, post review, will contribute to the wider environmental sustainability agenda.



# Renew the Invitation to join our Community of Support

For many years the Abbey has been fortunate to have benefitted from the philanthropic support of its extended community networks. This support takes many forms: generous financial donations and legacies and also in the gifts of time and knowledge from our volunteers and advisers.

It is essential that we communicate clearly the identity and mission of the Abbey, fostering genuine relationships, a shared search for God in prayer and a sense of belonging and mutual support within our wider Community. We will nurture these relationships as we build our community of support, friendship, and prayer, inviting people to experience and participate in the prayerful peace of the Abbey and receiving gratefully any offers of support which may enable us to live out our mission and reach out to others to join us in our search for God.

*“The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul. These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers”*

(ACTS 4:32A & 2:42)

## *We will:*

1. Clarify and better understand our current relationships with supporter groups;
2. Cultivate and nurture relationships, deepening existing links and encouraging more people to join the Abbey's wider community;
3. Ensure that our approach to communications with our supporters is structured, informed and effective;
4. Develop a fundraising plan, with a view to raising money to help support the future of the monastery, which will include invitations for regular and legacy giving as well as examining the feasibility of major fundraising campaigns in the next five years;
5. Access grant funding whenever possible to fund specific capital projects which will be of benefit to the community and to the wider public;
6. Foster and expand our volunteer base at the Abbey and in our parishes.







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Ampleforth Abbey Trust Strategic Plan 2022-26  
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