

Music Vision and Strategy 2025 – 2028

Music at Winchester Cathedral

We are the inheritors of a 900-year tradition of sacred music offered daily to the glory of God, and therefore to the highest standards. This precious heritage remains firmly front and centre of Chapter's plans.

Music makes not only an inspirational contribution to worship but is also tightly bound to the mission of the Church. Listening to music and participating in making music opens possibilities of transcendence, wonder, unity and well-being to people of all ages, who engage at different levels and in different ways.

OUR VISION

Our vision is of a thriving, sustainable Choral Foundation, driven by musical excellence, which engages with people from all walks of life, furthers the Cathedral's mission and supports its role as a trustworthy place of faith, hope and love for everyone.

Our Objectives

1. Continue to consolidate and develop the excellence of the choral tradition.
2. Widen high quality engagement and participation.
3. Sustainable funding for music within a sustainable Cathedral.

Our Plans

Chapter seeks to secure excellence by retaining a full complement of boy and girl choristers and Lay Clerks at the core. We will continue to invest in chorister recruitment and the chorister experience for both boys and girls. The Junior Choir, Youth Choir, Chamber Choir and Nave Choir will extend musical opportunity to others. We will ensure that our music repertoire is invigorated with new work, maintaining a rich and varied repertoire of composers ancient and modern, male and female. We believe, furthermore, that breaking new ground has the potential to attract new congregations, while providing fresh challenges and opportunities for our musicians.

Our vision includes offering our musicians further opportunities for performance and development, including concerts, recordings, and a tour every five years. We shall continue our special relationship with The Pilgrims' School in the education and nurture of boy choristers. We will invest in bursaries, music and activities for girl choristers, offering greater opportunity to girls, while maintaining the expectation of singing services and rehearsal time for the boy choristers.

Our Lay Clerks will be valued, consulted and included for their professional musical skills and gifts. Their contribution to the mission and worship of the Cathedral community forms a vital element of our offer of excellence and participation.

We have a bold ambition for the role that music can play across the whole life of the cathedral, both in terms of our mission impact and in the service of the wider community and diocese. We recognise that the development of these wider ambitions may take time to explore, fund and establish. We seek to maintain excellent relationships with our stakeholders, with the Diocese, and the wider music and education communities in Hampshire.

The Director of Music is a key player in this, having oversight of the work involved in these ambitious plans. Part of that oversight is to focus on the best use of departmental time and resources to meet the objectives for excellence, participation and sustainability. The Director, the Precentor and the Dean will work together as a creative community, with each respecting the expertise and experience brought by the others to the table.

To succeed in these aims, we must put the Choral Foundation onto a secure financial footing. This will be done in collaboration with the Cathedral Development Department so that other fundamental responsibilities, including maintaining the priceless built heritage, are balanced with those for music.

OUR STRATEGY

Strategy 2025 – 2028

In a period of transition and anticipating the arrival of both a new Dean and new Director of Music in 2026, we will focus on strengthening and consolidating our core activities, removing barriers to participation, strengthening relationships with our existing stakeholders and partners and ensuring the wellbeing of our musicians and teams.

Objective 1: Continue to consolidate and develop the excellence of the choral tradition.

- 1 Recruit and retain 12 committed Lay Clerks, increasing the number of deputies without compromising quality.
Metric: number of lay clerks and deputies; data from annual appraisal of Lay Clerks
- 2 Recruitment of a permanent Director of Music, supported by an Appointment Advisory Group of experts.
Plan to be in place for Recruitment of the new Director of Music, to be advertised from September 2025.
- 3 Recruit boys more effectively to The Pilgrims' School, and in consultation with The School, develop ways to increase breadth of participation while maintaining choral excellence. We have an aspiration to recruit from as wide a pool as possible and to retain boys to 13. *Marketing Strategy and Plan to be produced and its impact measured. Key metrics: number of probationers recruited, and retention 11-13.*
- 4 To develop the distinct offer for girl choristers to ensure that their musical opportunities are commensurate with those for the boys. *Metrics: expanded repertoire; singing opportunities beyond cathedral; girls' tour to alternate with boys'*
- 5 Ensure that all choristers find in the Cathedral community a safe place committed to their wellbeing and flourishing. *Metrics: Safeguarding and welfare surveys*

- 6 Establish a Music Advisory Committee, a sub-committee of Chapter with appropriate Terms of Reference to support and discuss musical strategy and development. *To be convened after arrival of new Director of Music (2026).*
- 7 Support musical and professional development for musicians through tours, recordings and concerts. Ongoing. *Metric: annual report on these activities and their impact from Director*
- 8 Continue to remunerate our professional musicians competitively and maintain a reputation as a sought-after employer. Ongoing. *Metric: salaries against benchmark and all-employee survey.*

Objective 2: Widen high quality engagement and participation

We believe that widening engagement and participation can co-exist happily with the pursuit of excellence. It can actively support choral standards by drawing in talented young singers from a wider pool. Chapter is committed to our boy choristers' continuing education at The Pilgrims' School, and to their singing to the highest standards, but it does not accept the need for boarding seven nights a week at every age; in practice, this is already not required, and we shall make this clearer to all enquirers. We believe that greater flexibility in the boarding offer will attract more parents to consider the life of a chorister for their son, especially in the early years, now reflected in the option of being a dayboy in Year 4.

We will maintain excellent relationships with established partners and widen and extend engagement with new groups. We will ensure the continuing development of the music repertoire to ensure excellence and flexibility across high-profile services and events, community engagement and the daily worship of the Cathedral. We will ensure a high quality live-streaming service, so that more people locally and across the world can join Cathedral music and worship and benefit from sharing our life together.

- 1 Build and maintain excellent key relationships internally and externally in Winchester and the region, including The Pilgrims' School, choir parents, Winchester Cathedral Old Choristers' Association (WCOCA), Hampshire Youth Choir and music societies. Ongoing. *Metric: annual feedback and hosting concerts with these groups.*
- 2 Maintain (leading to development when the capacity exists) 'Cathedral Crescendo' outreach to Hampshire Schools. This requires further funding. Ongoing. *Metrics: funds raised, and participation statistics.*
- 3 Extend the repertoire to support excellence across a range of different services and events, engaging different congregations and audiences, and representing male and female composers. Ongoing. *Metric: analysis of worship rota and audiences.*
- 4 Maintain our live-streaming service (leading to development when funding and capacity exist), thereby growing online congregations. Maintain the necessary cameras, screens, audio, Virger training and performance; improve sound quality on livestream. Ongoing. *Metric: annual livestream statistics.*
- 5 Develop the Junior Choir and Youth Choir and other attractive routes into singing in church, to broaden participation in the choral tradition and engagement with Christian worship and faith. *Metric: number of participants.*

- 6 Keep patterns of boarding under review, to maximise engagement and participation without sacrificing choral excellence. *Metric: feedback from those not taking up choristerships; impact report from Director of Music*

Objective 3 Sustainable funding for music within a sustainable Cathedral

Fully aware of the long-term sustainability crisis facing English Cathedrals and the expense of maintaining traditional choral foundations, we remain committed to funding this vision and being energetic in our efforts to support and promote this cornerstone of Cathedral life and mission. Our spending on music is over three times the average spent in other cathedrals and is the highest figure outside London.

- 1 Seek to build a £10m Music Endowment as part of the Cathedral's major project funding plan. Plan in place by Spring 2026 *Metric: progress to target.*
- 2 Draw on the skills of the musicians, in person and online, to support income generation for Music Endowment and General Cathedral funding over time. *Metric: annual report of events supported.*
- 3 Integrate the Liturgy & Music Department further into the mission and operations of the whole Cathedral and use these wider resources better in its support. *Metric: Director of Music to champion these issues and opportunities in the Senior Executive Team*
- 4 Develop Communication Plans for internal stakeholders and external use. Key stakeholders will include the musicians, choir parents, The Pilgrims' School, and interested external parties such as WCOCA and the Cathedral Music Trust.