

# Derby Cathedral and its Context

Hallowed in 1927, at the same time as the founding of the Diocese of Derby, Derby Cathedral is a lively, busy, urban, Parish Church Cathedral at the heart of the life of the city of Derby and the county of Derbyshire, serving local populations and communities. Derby Cathedral plays a vibrant part in the musical life of the East Midlands and hosts a wide range of key civic occasions each year including many special services. Derby Cathedral Choir's reputation for excellence is spreading far and wide and both Sunday and weekday services continue to grow both in numbers and diversity, representing the diverse nature of the city.

The history of Derby Cathedral is of an Anglo-Saxon site which has hosted Christian worship for 1100 years. The tower is a fine example of the pre-Reformation perpendicular style, and dates to the 1520s. The nave of Derby Cathedral was re-designed and constructed just after the adjacent Silk Mill, reputedly the first factory in the world, was completed in 1725. This makes Derby Cathedral unique as the only neo-classical Cathedral in England and in the early Georgian period, with its clear glass windows signifying the importance of light as a metaphor for reason, it sent a key message about the importance of faith for new ways of thinking that emerged during the Enlightenment era. This engagement with the contemporary world has continued into the present day as a key theme of the Cathedral's mission and ministry.

A fourth historic period for the Cathedral is represented by the construction of the Retrochoir, completed in 1972 to enable the old parish church of All Saints Derby to make the full transition to Cathedral status. Derby Cathedral as a Grade 1 listed building is the outstanding heritage landmark in the city of Derby and holds within it many stories of significance for the East Midlands Region and beyond.

In what may be described as a 'smaller cathedral', Derby Cathedral seeks to maximise the use of its liturgical space and over the decades has always been flexible and creative in what it does, adapting to changing requirements readily. The need for the interior of Derby Cathedral to be re-envisioned to host more effective liturgy that enables the local church, including the Cathedral community itself, to have a broader vision for Christian worship is key to the future that Chapter envisages.

# Strategic Development Plan

In December 2021, Chapter adopted its current vision and strategy ([Strategy | Derby Cathedral](#)). In doing so the Chapter sought to embrace the Derby Diocesan vision: 'The Kingdom of God, Good News for All: Transformed Lives, through Growing Church and Building Community.' The Cathedral vision and strategy aims to add value to and support the diocesan vision and see both strategic plans evolving together.

Chapter sees learning and community outreach, including social justice, at the heart of its developing life. The strategic focus area of 'Learning' demonstrates Chapter's vision to:

Be a 'go to' place for individuals, communities and groups to explore challenging matters. We aim to provide for the nurture of Christian faith for those who are new to Christianity and those who have worshipped for many years. We wish to offer the opportunity for all to engage with God's vision for humanity and the place for spirituality within the life of society. We aim to be a place in the public square that reflects on what makes the common good. We give priority to growing our relationship with Derby Cathedral School and enabling children and young people to share in the Christian faith.

From this strategic focus area, a Learning strategy was born and can be found [HERE](#)

The **Community Learning Strategy** aims to establish an inclusive and engaging learning environment within Derby Cathedral, promoting personal and communal growth, fostering a sense of belonging, and encouraging lifelong learning. This strategy focuses on empowering individuals from diverse backgrounds to explore their faith, develop new skills and deepen their understanding of the Anglican tradition. It is split into two parts – an adult specific strategy and a children and young people strategy.

To implement a strategy that is both effective and sustainable it has to deliver on actual needs of the various communities we engage with. Therefore, earlier in the year, a needs assessment was completed using a mixture of methods, such as the Cathedral's digital newsletter, surveys with the congregation and other partners. This work now needs to be analysed to determine the key areas of interest and potential learning opportunities.

Chapter has ambitious plans to grow its community outreach through the expansion of the Music in Schools programme. Led by the Director of Music, Mr Alexander Binns and delivered by two Choral Directors for Schools, it enables first class musical tuition to be received by over 800 children in a large number of schools across the city and county who otherwise may not be able to experience due to schools' budget constraints.

Click [HERE](#) to listen to Mr Alexander Binns, Director of Music

Project plans are also being drawn up to open a Music Centre Hub which will allow the creation of a co-production and learning space to grow, inspire and bring transformational change to children, young people and the diverse communities of the city and county by offering first class musical and singing opportunities using state of the art facilities in a safe, warm and inclusive environment.

In July 2024, at a Chapter Away Day, considerable thinking and discussion took place regarding the Cathedral's role in social justice and how we can impact the lives of those in most need. The new Canon for Community Outreach and Social Justice will be instrumental in developing the vision to be a beacon of hope and bring transformational change to those living through or experiencing dark chapters in their life. The new Canon will use their skills, expertise and empathy to bring this vision to life and to become a reality, ensuring priority is given to the poor and by using the Cathedral as a beacon of hope to those most disadvantaged in society.

The future of Derby Cathedral is one of hope, optimism and excitement. Like all cathedrals, finances are stretched and the Chapter, through its work with the Finance Committee, are acutely aware of the need for tight financial controls. Apart from the financial support from the Church Commissioners under Section 28, the majority of income is self-generated. A number of lay positions are funded through the Cathedral Sustainability Fund which mitigates the risk for the Chapter in the short term. One of the successful applications through this fund is the appointment of a Commercial Manager, a post which has delivered a wide range of events and performances, bringing significant income to support the aspiration of the Chapter for a balanced budget. Although there is much more to do, this work, together with other areas of income generation, such as the carpark and a more proactive approach to congregational giving, brings a more hopeful view of financial sustainability.

