

# Commercial Operations Director

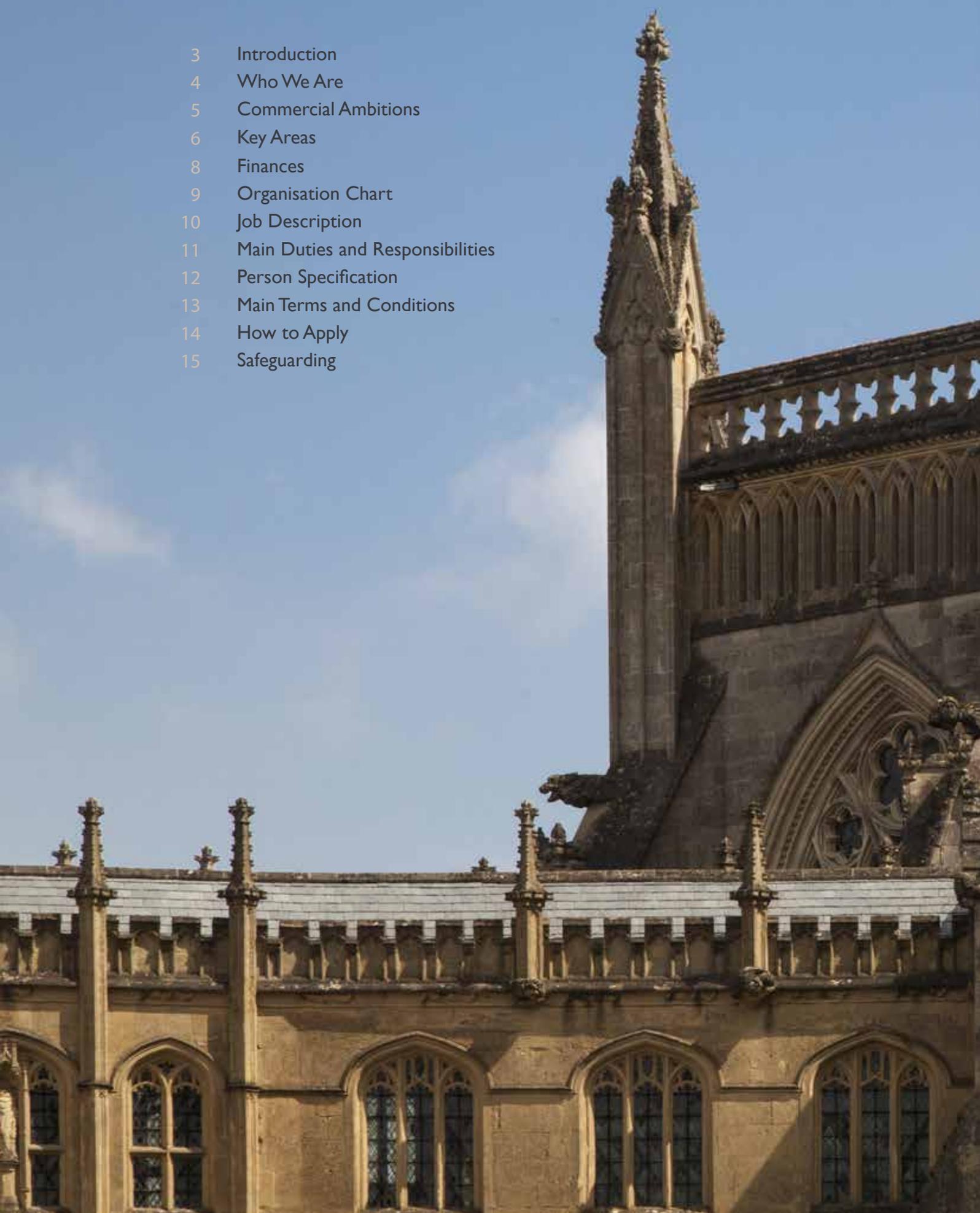
Application Pack July 2021



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# Introduction

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Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in joining the team at Wells Cathedral. Wells Cathedral is one of the great buildings of Western Europe, and Sir Simon Jenkins has recently described it as the finest Cathedral in England; we are inclined to agree! Many of the 290,000 visitors a year would probably agree too. This is a very special place.

Like many other establishments, we are seeking to 'build back better' as we emerge from the effects of the Covid-19 global pandemic. We are seeking a Commercial Operations Director initially to consolidate what is in place, review what is needed against best practice, and then to put passion, energy, skills, and experience into developing our exciting future plans. These include sustaining and developing our retail and catering offer, and providing an outstanding visitor experience through tours, concerts, and exhibitions. The role of the Commercial Operations Director is essentially to play a key and leading part in the team which is now engaged in making the Cathedral strong and sustainable for the future.

Much has happened during the Covid-19 pandemic, and we have been very successful in securing grants for major capital works and to fund the operation. As we begin the full road to recovery, we need someone with commercial experience who strives for operational excellence so our aspirations and ambitions can be realised.

The shared task for all at the Cathedral is to draw on fresh thinking and to maximise resources for new projects and work. Then this place can truly flourish! If you are excited at the prospect of being part of this journey, please be in touch with our Chapter Clerk and Chief Operating Officer. This place is magnetic and beautiful. If the role and the setting appeal, we would be delighted to hear from you.

**The Very Reverend Dr John Davies DL**  
Dean of Wells

# Who We Are

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## About the Cathedral

Set in the medieval heart of this glorious city, Wells is the earliest English Cathedral built in the Gothic style. The Cathedral has an international reputation and is the recipient of several Tourism Excellence Awards. Known as England's most poetic Cathedral, Wells has deservedly gained an enviable reputation for its lovingly maintained Gothic architecture, its world class music, and its Ministry of Welcome to some 290,000 visitors each year as well as the 150,000 or so people, drawn from local, national and international audiences, who come to the Cathedral for services, concerts, lectures and a wide range of other special events and activities.

Situated on the edge of the Mendip Hills in the County of Somerset, Wells is one of England's most beautiful and compact cities, built around the beautiful Cathedral of St Andrew. Its picturesque surroundings include a charming market square and high street, the Bishop's Palace and the magnificent Vicars' Close, the UK's oldest medieval street still used for its original purpose.

Underpinning the life, worship and ministry of the Cathedral is a diverse organisation where a lot is achieved with modest resources. It oversees and delivers a broad and diverse tapestry of activities which includes a world class choir, a works and

estates department, a team of virgers, a library and archives, a programme of education, learning and outreach, finance, HR and administration functions, volunteer management and trading companies. Funds to support the Cathedral as a place of worship and mission (involving maintaining our buildings, supporting those in liturgical roles, clergy, musicians and lay staff, and enabling the Cathedral buildings to be open to all every day of the year) come from a variety of sources. These include congregational giving, legacies, income from visitors, sums generated by trading activities, income from investments and property, donations from fundraising appeals by individuals, trusts and foundations, as well as through the generous support of the Friends of Wells Cathedral, the Wells Cathedral Trust, the Wells Cathedral Preservation Trust and the Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust.

## How we are governed

The Chapter is the governing body of the Cathedral and, with the College of Canons and the Cathedral Council, currently forms the "body corporate" of the Cathedral. The Chapter sets the strategic direction for the Cathedral, and orders its worship and mission. It also has responsibility for care and maintenance for the Cathedral and its estate. Chapter meets formally 11 times a year.



## Commercial Ambitions

Wells Cathedral has embarked on an exciting and ambitious phase of its development. The upkeep, renewal, and development of the Cathedral's estate — the extraordinarily beautiful buildings, grounds and gardens — are all part of our vision to provide the very best facilities, environment, and resources for visitors. There are myriad reasons one might visit the Cathedral: to marvel at its exceedingly rich tapestry of history and culture; to enjoy world-class choral music and events; to participate in the outstanding education and outreach programmes; or simply to pause for a quiet moment of contemplation and spiritual reflection in this treasured sacred place of worship.

As we continue to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and 'build back better', we need a Commercial Operations Director capable of working in partnership with the wider organisation and board of stakeholders to ensure that the commercial offer the Cathedral makes — as one of the premier visitor attractions in Somerset, and one of the most beautiful cathedrals in England — exceeds expectations.

As well as maximising the contribution of the catering and retail facilities the tours, the exhibitions, and the events we hold all need to be compelling and innovative. The Commercial Operations Director will work with the Chapter, and the Chapter Clerk and Chief Operating Officer to develop a strategy for commercial growth with a robust resourcing model, which can then be translated into operational plans to deliver future sustainability.

The immediate tasks are to care for and consolidate the existing offer — in the shop, café, donations desk and visitor experience — whilst researching and then (with others) crafting a strategy for commercial growth for the Cathedral. In addition, the Cathedral is committed to ensuring the creation of a "medieval quarter" as a compelling offer for visitors to Wells. This is a very exciting initiative, not only for the Cathedral but also the Bishop's Palace, the Museum, the City of Wells, and the County of Somerset.

# Key Areas

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All the surplus from the commercial operations of the Cathedral funds the work and mission of the Cathedral itself so that it can remain open for future generations to enjoy. Thus, the work of the Commercial Director and the commercial growth in their areas of responsibility are vital to future sustainability.



## The Cathedral Café

The Cathedral Café faces a lot of competition in the High Street with over 35 cafes in the near vicinity at the last count. It does its best business in wet weather when the Cathedral becomes the biggest umbrella in Somerset! There is a lovely offer of homemade food, and we use local suppliers, but there is no doubt that we need a strategy, to raise awareness of what we offer, to convert more visitors into customers, and to expand the number of regular customers to ‘spread the word’. Pre-pandemic there was a thriving external catering business and this needs to be built back even better as restrictions are lifted.



## The Cathedral Shop

The Cathedral Shop offers bespoke Wells Cathedral merchandise for sale as well as a selection of locally sourced products to promote smaller retailers, artisans, and the south-west economy. We also stock a selection of religious books and other artifacts that people expect from a Cathedral shop. We strive to ensure that the products sold are what a tourist wants as a memento of their visit, what a local resident might not be able to obtain elsewhere, and what is a compelling read for those interested in exploring faith and contemporary issues of today. The challenge is always to purchase the right things, at the right time for all people at the right price, and to sell at the right margin. We are looking for commercial acuity and a flair for retail to take the offer we make to the next level.



### **Business Development, Events, and Exhibitions**

The Cathedral has an active and ever developing programme of events and exhibitions. We operate a dual model for events based on both risk and revenue sharing partnerships with renowned artists to operating as a venue for hire. We seek to attract exhibitions of interest to international audiences and local connoisseurs. In recent times we have sought to become a venue for filming. We pursue all opportunities for the development of business in this area and it is growing in importance commercially. Careful exploration to maximise commercial opportunities, with an eye to management of commercial risk is required.



### **Donation Desk**

The Cathedral has a policy of suggested donation rather than a charge for entry as the Chapter does not want anybody to feel excluded from entry. Donations are vital to the future sustainability of the Cathedral and the income generated from the Donations Desk is key. It is a successful strategy, but the area needs care and nurturing as we aspire for more.



### **Group Visits and Tours**

Wells Cathedral offers a compelling visitor experience, with the possibility of visiting more than once and learning and seeing something new every time. The paid tours (High Parts tour, the Library Tour etc) and the free floor tour all get very good reviews, and we are hopeful that the newly established exterior tour will do the same. The Cathedral is a very popular venue in summer for coach and other group visits. We hope that the Commercial Director will cast their experienced eye over the offer made and help us make improvements to both the offer and the income generated in this area. A joint tour of the Bishop's Palace and the Cathedral is a key priority for the future.



## Finances

There are several activities within the Cathedral for generating income, including visitor donations and charges, venue hire, rental income from investment properties, music activities and collections as well as from trading activities in our shop and café.

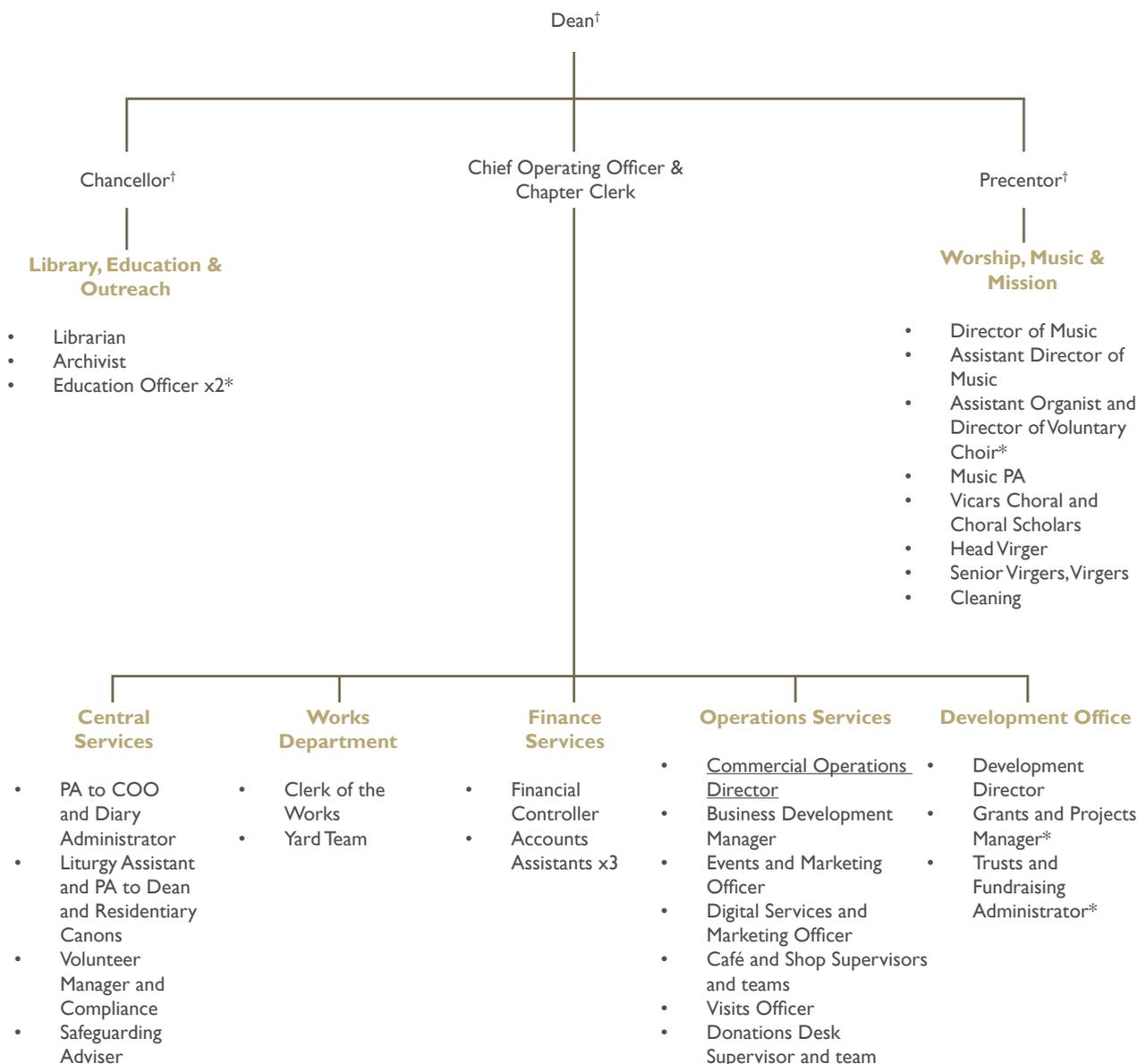
In 2019 our income was £2.7m, with £2.3m from regular activities and £400k from grants for specific projects. In 2020 there was a significant impact of Covid-19 and as a result our total income fell to £2.5m with just £1.5m from regular activities and £1.0m from grant income, including significant government support through CJRS and the Culture Recovery Fund.

When the Covid-19 pandemic emerged during 2020, all discretionary expenditure was stopped and a recruitment freeze was implemented in order to protect the Cathedral's reserves and future sustainability. As a result, despite the decrease in income we actually managed to increase our free reserves by £29k in 2020. Free reserves are those which are freely available to be spent on Cathedral objectives. The £2.6 million available at the end of 2020 represents over one year's operating expenditure on regular activities, which in 2019 was £2.3 million.

We know that 2021 will be an extremely challenging year financially for the Cathedral, and the Commercial Operations Director will be part of a team wholly committed to ensuring the future sustainability of the Cathedral. It is a very exciting time to be joining the Cathedral staff, and there are lots of opportunities for the successful candidate to make a huge difference and see immediate results from their work.

# Organisation Chart

The Cathedral employs a staff team (a mix of full-time and part-time personnel) of approximately 75 people. The current operational structure of the organisation, governed by the Chapter, is shown below:



( † = in Executive Leadership Role)  
 (\* = vacancy)

# Job Description

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## Post

Commercial Operations Director

## Key purpose of post

The Commercial Operations Director will lead a dedicated team of staff and volunteers to provide a compelling visitor experience that encourages both spend and increased stay in the Cathedral, the city, and the county of Somerset more broadly.

The Cathedral is an amazing venue with the potential to build on its reputation for managing both large scale services and unique events; a duality of purpose that sometimes needs to be balanced very carefully. The Commercial Operations Director will, in conjunction with colleagues and external partners (as appropriate), develop a strategy for commercial growth with a robust resourcing model and then turn the strategy into operational plans to deliver future sustainability.

The Commercial Operations Director will undertake key strategic projects as agreed with the Chief Operating Officer, representing the Cathedral with due authority and gravitas.

## Location

Wells Cathedral, Cathedral Green, Wells, BA5 2UE

## Reporting to

Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk (COO)

## Responsible for

Retail, Café, Visitor Engagement, Donation Desk, Business Development and Events. Significant interface with Marketing and Communications and all Central Services functions.

## Hours of Work

9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, with some evening and weekend working required.



## Main Duties and Responsibilities

- Provide vision, planning and direction for the continuing profitability in all commercial operations to both the Chapter and the Enterprises Board.
- Act as a collaborative and strategic partner to the Chief Operating Officer, taking ownership of key projects, including but not limited to the exploration of opportunities for maximising the surplus generated by Cathedral activities as well as deepening and embedding creative income generating partnerships with local heritage venues.
- Prepare annual budgets with the Financial Controller for agreement by the Chief Operating Officer, the Chapter and, where appropriate, the Wells Cathedral Enterprises Board.
- Lead and manage the day to day operation of the Enterprises, Events and Box Office function, Donation Desk and Visitors Teams, ensuring they achieve maximum sales potential; they have a compelling product range to offer; they deliver standards of customer service for both services and events that are best practice; and delivering the budgeted return on investment to the Chapter.
- Deputise for the Chief Operating Officer in their absence or as requested.
- Ensure Cathedral policies and any relevant external legislation (e.g. Food Hygiene, Health & Safety, Equalities Act, and Safeguarding) are adhered to.
- Ensure that appropriate controls, security provisions and procedures are in place and adhered to for hygiene and food handling, stock control, purchasing, as well as for cash, reconciliation of daily takings, petty cash and box office monies.
- In collaboration with the Chapter Executive team, devise marketing, external communications and visitor engagement strategies, to raise awareness of the Cathedral's 'offer', both sacred and secular.
- Any other tasks that may be reasonably requested.

# Person Specification



## Qualifications and Experience

### Essential

- Degree or equivalent
- Experience of working within retail and/or catering management
- Staff management, recruitment, training, performance management, pay and reward

### Desirable

- Marketing and visitor engagement
- Use of web-based business solutions
- Operated at Board level

## Skills and Abilities

### Essential

- Strategic orientation and proven ability to develop strategic plans
- Track record of taking a strategy and implementing it
- The ability to manage and motivate staff and volunteers with tact and diplomacy
- Experience of working collaboratively and in cross departmental project teams
- Financial management: margins & profit
- Contract management
- Personal organisation and time management
- Negotiation and persuasion skills
- IT literate, including optimisation of till based systems (e.g. Merac or equivalent)

### Desirable

- Understanding of key legislation including Food Hygiene, Health & Safety, Safeguarding, Equalities Act
- Organisation Change management
- Volunteer Management
- Business process improvement

## Work-Related Personal Qualities

### Essential

- Energy, enthusiasm - a can do attitude
- A supportive colleague with a positive outlook
- Able to take strategic/holistic view whilst being prepared to undertake detailed tasks
- Ability to take responsibility in a collaborative manner , working across boundaries where necessary

### Desirable

- Development potential

# Main Terms and Conditions of Employment



## Hours of Work

35 hours per week. Some evening and weekend work may be required.

## Salary

Salary of @£45,000 per annum subject to annual review, payable on 24th of the month, or the earliest and nearest working day thereto.

## Pension

Defined Contribution Scheme. Contributions as % of salary:

| Age   | Employee | Employer |
|-------|----------|----------|
| <50   | 3%       | 5%       |
| 50-55 | 4%       | 8%       |
| >55   | 5%       | 10%      |

## Holiday

6.6 weeks inclusive of bank holidays. The holiday year runs from 1 January to 31 December. Annual leave is authorised by the Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk.

## Discount

A discount of 10% is available from the Cathedral Shop and Café.

## Expenses

All reasonable working expenses will be met in line with Cathedral policy.

## Professional Development

The Cathedral does consider applications to fund or part-fund appropriate professional qualifications and may pay the membership for a professional body, subject to specific agreement.

## Probation

This post will be subject to a probationary period of 6 months.

## Safeguarding

The appointment is made subject to the receipt of a clear Enhanced Disclosure and Barring (DBS) Check.

# Applications

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## How to Apply

Applications must be received by **12 noon on Monday 26 July 2021**.

To apply for this position, please submit a copy of your curriculum vitae (CV), an equal opportunities form, and a supporting statement of no more than two pages of A4 describing what attracts you to the role and how you believe your skills, experience, and passion for the role match our requirements.

The information collected on the Equal Opportunities form will be treated as confidential, used for statistical purposes only, and will not be treated as part of your application. We would also be grateful if you could let us know if you will require any special provision because of any disability should you be called for interview.

Applications should be returned to the Human Resources Administrator by email to: **recruitment@wellscathedral.uk.net**

## Shortlisting

To ensure the fairness of the selection process, shortlisting will be based upon the information which you provide in your application and assumptions will not be made about your experience or skills. We will look for demonstrable evidence that you meet the criteria set out in the person specification. Information provided on the application form will be viewed by HR, the recruiting manager and interview panel. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the shortlisting process. Shortlisting will take place on **Wednesday 28 July 2021**.

## Selection Process

Should you decide to make a formal application, you will receive feedback within seven working days of the closing date. Shortlisted candidates may be required to undertake additional assessments relevant to the job as part of the selection process, as well as an interview. The successful appointment is subject to a satisfactory criminal records disclosure and written references. The selection process will take place on **Wednesday 04 August 2021**.

## Queries

If you have any queries on any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information or would like to have an informal discussion, please contact the Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk Jackie Croft on 07799 644589 or via email: **Jackie.croft@wellscathedral.uk.net**

Wells Cathedral is committed to the safeguarding and protection of children, young people and adults.

We will carefully select, train and support all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with Safer Recruitment principles.

This means that we will:

- Ensure that our recruitment and selection processes are inclusive, fair, consistent and transparent.
- Take all reasonable steps to prevent those who might harm children or adults from taking up, in our Cathedral, positions of respect, responsibility, or authority where they are trusted by others.
- Adhere to safer recruitment legislation, guidance, and standards.

Further information can be found in our Safeguarding Policy available on the Cathedral website.

All applicants are required to complete a Confidential Declaration Form as part of our recruitment process when an offer of employment is made. This form is strictly confidential and, except under compulsion of law, will be seen only by those involved in the recruitment/appointment process and, when appropriate, the nominated safeguarding lead or someone acting in a similar role/position. All forms will be kept securely in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation within the Data Protection Act 2018.



Discover more online at  
[wellscathedral.org.uk](https://wellscathedral.org.uk)



Images courtesy of Iain MacLeod-Jones, Jason Bryant, and Jason Budd

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