The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn

Newsletter

October 2026



Welcome to this new digital Newsletter keeping you up to date with *The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn* project

The information in this newsletter is taken from the minutes of the latest Board Meeting and the Project Management Plan, with other details by way of explanation.

National Lottery Heritage Fund Grant

Wednesday 15 July, 2026, St Edmundsbury Cathedral, West Suffolk Council and English Heritage announced a £7.137m grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, contributing to a total project of £9.83m.

Made possible thanks to National Lottery players, the Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn project reunifies the fragmented 60-acre Abbey of St Edmund site.

Project Board Meeting, August 19th, 2026

Capital works programme

The Project Board welcomed Alasdair Travers and Nicki Whetstone of Purcell, the project architects. They provided an update on the Delivery Phase programme. The update covered the development of the procurement and construction packaging strategies to support an efficient and deliverable construction programme. They stressed that this was an unusually complex process due to the different types of consents required.

English Heritage Hoardings



The large project hoardings installed by English Heritage on Angel Hill were discussed and recognised as a valuable asset in promoting the project and raising public awareness. They were not sure how long the hoardings can remain in place, due to any relevant planning restrictions which may mean they need to be taken down for a while. Also, whether the content could be refreshed or updated throughout the three-year delivery programme. The forthcoming branding tender should be considered alongside this to ensure a consistent approach to project communications throughout the delivery programme. Similar hoardings should be considered for other works, to provide consistent and effective communication and promotion of the project.

More Questions? If you want to know more about any of the topics discussed at the Board Meeting, then ask for a link to join the Zoom online Q&A session, each month, by emailing alantbaxter@btinternet.com

St Edmundsbury Cathedral

West Suffolk Council

English Heritage

Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership

Heritage Fund update

A draft grant contract has been issued, proposing a joint grantee arrangement between the Cathedral and West Suffolk Council as landowners. All three Project Partners have now provided comments, with consideration given to the grant conditions, grantee responsibilities and landowner insurance requirements. The grant contract has not yet been signed, and Permission to Start has not been received.

***Update**: Draft contract now signed by all parties, and awaiting the official Permission to Start. Project start up meeting on 15th September has now taken place.*

Project Board Review

A skills assessment of the Project Board is ongoing and will be discussed further at the next meeting. In advance of the next meeting, Mark Rogers and James Mellish will review and assess the skills requirements and make recommendations to the Project Board, including a proposed timeline for recruitment. Subject to the Project Board's agreement, any new roles will then be openly advertised.

Abbey Heritage Partnership proposed reception

The Project Board discussed and welcomed the ideas raised by a member of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership. They supported the proposal to hold a Spring reception involving the Project Board and key stakeholders, providing an opportunity to celebrate the project and build wider support for the NLHF project.

ABBEY OF ST EDMUND
HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP

Abbey Heritage Partnership (AHP) and the CIO

The Project Board supported involving the AHP in shaping the project's legacy and future charitable structure, noting that three AHP members are also members of the Project Board.

It was noted that the advisory subgroup is being set up to support the Project Manager and Project Board during the Delivery Stage. A separate working group is to include members of staff from the Cathedral, English Heritage and West Suffolk Council as well as AHP members.

English Heritage Conservation in Action Day, August 5th, 2026

English Heritage hosted a free Conservation in Action Day in the Abbey Gardens, on 5th August.

This special event offered a rare opportunity to see skilled conservation specialists at work as they repair the Abbey's historic flint walls using traditional materials and techniques.

Visitors were able to meet the conservation team, explore completed repairs, learn why these works are essential, and discover the fascinating history of the Abbey's surviving structures. There were also live demonstrations of stonemasonry, hot lime mortar techniques and rope access on the Abbey Gates. These demonstrations were alongside hands-on activities including stone carving.

Families were especially welcome, with children's activities such as soapstone carving, colouring and a treasure hunt running throughout the day.

Whether you're interested in history, heritage, traditional crafts, this was a celebration of the conservation of one of Suffolk's most treasured historic sites.

Below: some images from the Conservation in Action Day









St Edmundsbury Cathedral

West Suffolk Council

ENGLISH HERITAGE

ABBEY OF ST EDMUND HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP

Project Board Meeting, September 16th, 2026

Greene King becomes Community Sponsor

A review of the Community Partner Sponsorship and Heads of Terms documents has been undertaken with Greene King in relation to the £60,000 grant. Greene King has verbally agreed to the proposed changes and will review and approve the final documents before agreeing the shortlist of activities to be supported through the sponsorship.

***Update**: Contract now signed and payment received. Photo shoot taking place in November followed by an official press release.*

Project Board skills assessment and composition

Following completion of the Project Board skills self-assessment, the Project Board and partner organisations are considered to have strong professional and specialist expertise across heritage, construction, conservation, buildings, accessibility and inclusion, governance, finance and legal matters. The assessment has identified the following areas where additional skills and experience would strengthen the Board:

1. Natural heritage and local biodiversity
2. Community engagement, education and learning
3. Visitor economy/tourism, communications and marketing

It is proposed that the Project Board comprises approximately 9-10 members, including up to three additional members recruited to address the identified skills gaps and strengthen the diversity of the Board.

Dr Sharon Goddard and Prof Darryl Newport have indicated their intention to step down from the Project Board.

***Update**: A role description and recruitment brief have now been advertised via the Cathedral project webpage, AHP website and West Suffolk Council's LinkedIn pages.*

Branding and Communications

The branding brief received four quotes, which have been reviewed by the Cathedral and AHP. The Project Board received a verbal update on the four tenders and approved the recommendation to appoint RFA Design, based on its existing project knowledge (it is already delivering the project's interpretation work), continuity and ability to build on work already undertaken.

The Project Board discussed the need to strengthen communications with AHP members and the wider community. It was agreed that a more coordinated approach should be developed, with communications jointly supported by the Cathedral, WSC, EH and AHP and, where appropriate, using shared branding.

The development of a regular newsletter was identified as an opportunity to improve engagement and provide consistent updates on the project and its wider impact.

It was agreed that a coordinated communications and engagement plan would be developed for consideration at the next Project Board meeting. This will include proposals for a regular project newsletter and opportunities to strengthen wider community and stakeholder engagement.

Who are the current Board members?

Mark Rogers, Chair (Volunteer)
The Very Rev'd Joe Hawes, Deputy Chair,St Edmundsbury Cathedral
Canon Matthew Vernon, St Edmundsbury Cathedral
Damien Parker, West Suffolk Council
Alex Sydney, English Heritage (Volunteer)
Alan Baxter, Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership (Volunteer)
Dr Sharron Goddard (Volunteer)
Prof Darryl Newport (Volunteer)

James Mellish is Project Manager

This Newsletter is produced by Alan Baxter (volunteer) for current and potential members of The Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership on behalf of the *Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn* Project Board

Want to find out more on the Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn?

There are websites, with the associated social media that you can follow:

St Edmundsbury Cathedral: https://abbeyofstedmund.com/news/
and/or
The Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership: https://www.abbeyofstedmund.org.uk/