Southwell Minster: an update and how you can help

29 October 2026

We know that recent news about Southwell Minster has been unsettling. Media headlines have raised understandable questions and concerns about our future, and we want to give everyone an update on where things stand, what we are doing about the problems we face and how you can help.

We also know how much the Minster means to so many people: to those who worship, sing, volunteer or work here, and to everyone who visits, finds comfort here or simply feels a connection to this remarkable place. We are deeply grateful for the messages of concern and support we have received.

The situation is very serious, but not hopeless. As the Dean has explained, he is in conversation with major organisations that may be able to help us meet some of the challenges ahead (see Dean's Forum, 13 October). There is much to do, and we cannot do it alone. The support of our wider community will be vital.

Understanding the challenge

For many years, the Minster has struggled to raise enough money to pay for the things everyone expects from a cathedral: worship, music, opportunities for learning, a safe and welcoming building, heating and lighting. Ongoing maintenance of and investment in our buildings and the lands that surround them have been extremely challenging, and our nationally and internationally famous estate has suffered greatly.

We do not charge an entrance fee: the Minster is a place of welcome for everyone. We hope that visitors will be inspired by their experience of this ancient building and choose to make the suggested donation of £5 to contribute to its upkeep. However, the average visitor donation is currently £1.44. As a charity with responsibility for a significant heritage building and estate, we rely on visitor donations to help sustain vital elements of our work, and the gap between suggested and actual donations makes this increasingly difficult.

We have worked very hard to increase our income, including through events, and have secured some support from trusts and foundations to help our work, including grants for music and education. Our staff team and our many volunteers have always worked exceedingly hard to make the most of the resources available to us, but even these efforts have not been enough to meet the costs of caring for the Minster and its wider estate.

The £20 million building repair gap is a daunting figure. It reflects the cost of repairs and conservation of the Minster and its historic estate that have accumulated over many years. We must also meet the costs of worship, music, education, staffing and keeping our buildings open, and without external assistance we expect to run out of money to fund our daily operations in 2027.

Our new leadership team – the Dean, Chapter, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Finance Officer – is confronting the facts of our situation head-on before it is too late to save the Minster.

A thorough review is now underway to identify where savings can be made. We are examining how we work and how we use our resources. At the same time, we are addressing the most urgent problems and seeking the funding that will be required to care for the Minster in the years to come. The Dean and Chapter are currently seeking external support of a minimum of £3.3 million over the next three years. This funding is essential to the Minster's long-term financial sustainability.

The immediate challenge: our nave roof

One of our most immediate priorities is the roof over the nave, the great central space at the heart of the Minster, which dates from the turn of the 12th century.

The most urgent work will cost a minimum of £460,000. This is not a full roof replacement. It is just the essential work we need to do now to make the roof watertight and protect the building while we work towards funding a full replacement, which will be in the millions.

We have already secured £240,000 towards the work, thanks to the generosity of the Chimes Trust, the Friends of Southwell Cathedral and the Headley Trust, but we still have a great deal to raise if we are to secure the Minster's longer-term future.

We applied to the Listed Places of Worship Renewal Fund for funding but were unsuccessful in the first round of bidding, as the first grants have been made to places of worship in the most deprived areas of England. **We still need to raise a minimum of £220,000 for this urgent work.** We will continue to apply for grants and make best use of every funding opportunity available to us.

The nave roof is just one example of the many conservation repairs and basic maintenance tasks needed to keep the Minster watertight and open to everyone. Long-overdue, everyday maintenance and repair tasks may be less visible than a major restoration project, but they are fundamental to our future.

Our community makes a difference

Southwell Minster is close to the hearts of a wide and varied community of people and businesses. While it is a place of worship, music, history, education, reflection and sanctuary, it is also a generator of our local economy and intrinsic in sustaining a community in which people want to live and bring up their children. We want the Minster to thrive and continue serving our town and county, now and in the future.

We are fortunate to have a devoted congregation whose generosity makes a significant contribution to the life of the Minster. We are grateful to everyone who gives regularly, supports our services and helps sustain our worshipping community.

We are equally grateful to the 382 volunteers who give their time, skills and energy to the Minster. Their contribution extends far beyond financial giving: each and every volunteer is an essential part of our community and helps make so much of our work possible.

The beginnings of the Minster's choral traditions are lost in the history of pre-Conquest England. We thank everyone who supports our music today, including all who contribute to the Milo Chorister Fund and those who make and sustain music in the Minster.

Every contribution makes a real difference, but the scale of the challenges we face means we need support from beyond our existing congregation, volunteers, funders and regular donors.

If you have visited recently, please send us a message of support. If you have felt concerned about the recent news you have heard, thank you for your concern. It is heartening to know that so many people care deeply about the Minster and want to see it flourish.

Building a sustainable future

Alongside the urgent work on our historic buildings, we are taking steps to develop more sustainable sources of income. Our new catering partnership with Etto will help us welcome larger groups of visitors to the Minster and our town, generating vital income to support our work. It is part of a wider recovery plan to make better use of our buildings and strengthen the Minster's role as a key destination for visitors, as well as for the local community, the wider diocese and the region.

How you can help

There are several practical ways to support Southwell Minster:

- **Please visit us.** Bring friends and family to discover the many things the Minster has to offer, enjoy its architecture, experience its music or find a moment of quiet. We suggest a donation of £5 per visitor to help us keep the Minster open.
- **Shop with us.** Visit the Cathedral Shop in its new home within the Minster, where there are some great Christmas gifts on sale. All profits from the Shop support the Minster's life and work.
- **Visit our new café.** Whether you're stopping by for a coffee or enjoying a leisurely brunch, every visit to Etto at the Minster helps to support us.
- **Make a donation.** You can donate through our website, either to support the Minster's life and work or specifically towards the care of its historic buildings. General donations help us respond to our most pressing needs, while gifts to our Buildings and Heritage Fund support conservation, maintenance and repair. Your donation will contribute to an exciting programme of restoration, renewal and welcome.

Every gift is an expression of support for the Minster's future. Donations of every size are welcome, and we are grateful to everyone who chooses to help. If you pay tax in the UK, please Gift Aid your donation – we can provide donation receipts on request.

Thank you for standing with us at this time of crisis in the Minster's life.

We know that the news has raised many difficult questions, and we know just how much work lies ahead. We are working hard to address the challenges and secure a sustainable future for the Minster. The prayers of so many, and the encouragement and practical help already being offered, mean a great deal. We ask you to continue to hold the Minster in your prayers and, wherever you can, to stand alongside us as we take this work forward.

Thank you to everyone who worships here, sings here, volunteers here, visits, shops, gives, or simply cares about what happens next. Your support really does matter. Together, we can work towards a future in which Southwell Minster continues to serve the people of Southwell and Nottinghamshire.