

## **NORTON PRIORY LAUNCHES CRISIS FUND RAISING CAMPAIGN**

Norton Priory, Halton's much-loved historical visitor attraction, has launched a major fund-raising campaign to help ensure its future survival after the coronavirus pandemic.

Along with many organisations in the leisure and tourism sector, Norton Priory closed its doors in mid-March to comply with the Government's coronavirus restrictions and the historic monastery and walled garden have remained shut ever since.

The complex is hoping to open to visitors again in July but the independent charitable trust, which cares for Norton Priory, is projecting a loss of up to £25,000 income as a result of the fall in visitor numbers.

Normally, entrance fees are a key element of funding for the trust and cover essential operational costs. Emergency funding has been secured from Arts Council England to assist with the immediate situation but the trust has lost an important trading period, which has included the warmest, driest spring on record.

Norton Priory enjoys an international reputation as the most excavated monastic site in Europe. Boasting medieval ruins, a 12<sup>th</sup> century undercroft and a beautiful 18<sup>th</sup> century walled garden, the visitor attraction is located in an oasis of tranquil woodland and wildflower meadows on the edge of Runcorn. A new museum displays thousands of artefacts from Norton's 900 year history, including a rare 14<sup>th</sup> century statue of St Christopher.

Paul Mathews, chairman of the trustees, explained: "Every penny of our income is crucial to the continuation of our organisation and its work. A shortfall of this level represents a real risk to our future. The closure of the site and the furlough scheme have helped us to save some money but these measures are only temporary and inevitably our costs will go up once we open again.

"In real terms we are projecting a 'best case' scenario of a budget shortfall of up to £25,000 in the current year after taking into account the government's business financial support. We desperately need help to survive this crisis and would appeal to everyone who loves and values our unique historical centre to donate to our emergency fund raising appeal. Thank you."

Donations can be made via Norton Priory's website on the page 'Norton Priory Needs Your Help' - <http://nortonpriory.org/norton-priory-needs-your-help/>. You can also send a cheque or arrange a bank transfer. For more details please email: [development@nortonpriory.org](mailto:development@nortonpriory.org).

### **Note to Editors.**

**To arrange a media interview, please contact Norton Priory chief executive Rob Sanderson-Thomas on is 01928 242022.**