

Minutes for a meeting of Truro Diocesan Synod 18 November 2023 at Chy an Bobel, Heartlands, Pool, TR15 3QY and online by "Zoom".

Meeting as members of the Truro Diocesan Synod

Revd Canon Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

He drew members' attention to the fact that Mr Bevan Osborne, long time Diocesan Synod member, who had also served for many years as a Churchwarden, PCC Treasurer and on the Diocesan Board of Education, sadly died last month. Simon said that Bevan will be fondly remembered.

Opening Worship

The Diocesan Environment Officer, Revd Ben Lillie, and the Environment Team led the opening worship.

Presidential Address

The Acting Bishop of Truro and Bishop of St Germans, The Rt Revd Hugh Nelson, gave his Presidential Address, which can be found on the diocesan website [here](#)

Members then discussed in small groups what Bishop Hugh had spoken about and also matters that would be covered at this meeting generally.

Report on the diocesan strategy and plan to "Cherish Creation, Cut Carbon, and Speak Up,"

The Rt Revd Hugh Nelson introduced Revd Ben Lillie, Diocesan Environment Officer.

Ben introduced himself to members. He noted that in the small group discussion he took part in, it was recognised that climate care and social justice are issues that young people are interested in and involved with; if churches wish to engage with young people, this is one way of doing so.

Ben then introduced Dr Annabel South, who is a member of St Kea church and of Diocesan Environment Board.

Annabel spoke of the disastrous effect of climate change on our environment and all the areas this affects, and stated that there is very little good news about this topic. She observed that it can be tempting to react with fear, despair, depression, guilt, grief, all natural reactions but this can be paralysing. Another way people can react is by denying that there is a problem, or ignoring it and hoping it will go away.

She explained that her talk today would be about why the church in Cornwall is called to live as good news for God's creation, and of the advantages that come from caring for our creation. She also stated that an even more important reason why Christians should care for God's creation is because it is an expression of love and respect for God the Creator, and also about loving our neighbours. If we continue with actions that cause damage to others, that is not loving. We have a choice to keep doing what we are doing, or changing.

The Bible is clear that we need to protect the poor and vulnerable. Annabel is widely travelled and wherever she goes she hears of the problems and the effects that climate changes has on all people but which disproportionately affect the poorest people. It is inherently unjust that those who are affected most are those who have contributed least to causing the problem.

Responding to climate breakdown is an act of mission. The third mark of the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission is to respond to human need by loving service. The fourth mark is to transform

unjust structures of society and the fifth is to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth. As churches, we should be at the forefront of engaging with these issues, to show that we care for the world and for our neighbours and to be a witness to others. When the local church steps up, opportunities arise to engage with members of our communities who do not usually have anything to do with the church.

2 Chronicles 7 vs 14 provides a pattern for how we should respond. The people of Israel disobeyed the Lord many times, and disasters came upon the land. In these verses God gives a template for how to respond to these situations, by:

- Humbling ourselves, including not putting our needs and pleasure ahead of others
- Praying for God to intervene, for courage, wisdom & vision for local, national and international leaders to take the radical steps needed to limit climate change
- Seeking God's face, through spending time in worship and studying his word
- Turning from actions such as everyday decisions that have implications for the rest of the world, such as what we eat, buy, and how we travel. To live sustainably.

If the goals seem overwhelming, it is important to remember that we are Christ's pilgrim people, on a journey to become more like Christ. Rather than be daunted with how far we have to go, we need to focus on taking the next step and push on towards the goal.

The Eco Church scheme helps churches identify what that next step is. However, the impact the church could have could be multiplied if members of the church also took action in their own lives. This is why Annabel has developed the Creation Care scheme, which is an award scheme like Eco Church, but for households, and which is designed to help Christian households identify what their next step is to better care for God's creation. It helps those taking part to feel more in control, and also saves money, improves health and connects us with our neighbours.

The passage from Chronicles finishes with the good news that when God's people are obedient to His ways, He will "hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land"

Taking action encourages others to take action. God will multiply our seemingly insignificant actions. God promises, if we turn from our damaging lifestyles, to hear our prayers, and to heal his beautiful world.

Annabel concluded by encouraging everyone to pray, seek God's face and, as Christ's pilgrim people, to take the next steps on their creation care journeys.

Members expressed their thanks to Annabel with a round of applause.

Revd Ben Lillie then spoke to members.

He gave a brief summary of some of the significant and serious foundation stones laid by the diocese which have contributed to our vision to Cherish Creation, Cut Carbon, Speak up. These include:

- Creating and launching the Kernow Green Church Award
- Creating and empowering the role of Creation Care Champions
- Establishing the Creation Care Network
- Building relationship with A Rocha Eco Church
- Establishing a Net Zero Partnership (EXTRA) with Exeter diocese, through which significant funding has been achieved
- Divestment from all fossil fuels and reinvestment in renewables.

Other achievements in the last 2 years, include:

- 20 Creation Care Network Gatherings
- 250+ annual attendance at Network Gatherings
- 12 Deanery Visitations with Creation Care representation
- 5 Partnership events with Transformation Cornwall
- 3 Creation Care Pilgrimages
- 3 fantastic annual services of celebration
- 6 hours a week of incredible admin support
- 24 hours a week of 1 Diocesan Environment Officer

Targets and aims for the next 7 years include:

- Net Zero 2030 - some dioceses have extended their deadlines but we are a small diocese so can continue to aim for 2030.
- Provide decarbonisation audits and plans for our top 20% highest CO2 emitting churches
- Provide decarbonisation audits for all 43 of our church schools
- Upgrade all Vicarage's to aim for 'A' rated energy performance
- Explore how diocesan land (glebe) can be used creatively to help achieve Net Zero
- Invest in essential biodiversity
- Speak and act boldly in church and beyond to promote the cherishing of creation
- Resource churches and clergy to Speak Up through training and support
- Cut Carbon and reduce our overall Co2 emissions
- Build partnerships that increase our reach and impact

These things are being done for many reasons:

- As an expression of our Christian obedience, as a response of love to the God who first loved us.
- As an expression of God's mission and purpose for all creation, as expressed in Colossians 1 vs 15 - 17.
- To love our global neighbour as ourselves
- To fulfil the 3rd, 4th and 5th Marks of Mission
- If issues of justice are at the core of the person of Jesus, then the same must be true for his Church

Ben then welcomed Julia Havard, Creation Care Champion for Ludgvan parish.

Julia explained why this initiative is important to her and to St Paul's Church, Ludgvan. She sees the effects of climate change - storms, drought, less birds and believes caring for creation is the responsibility of all of us.

She is one of three Creation Care Champions in her parish who are working to make their 14th century church more sustainable. It is a lengthy process and not easy to achieve when money and time are short. The support they have received from the Kernow Green Church campaign has been greatly appreciated. Environment issues are on every PCC agenda, they also hold annual creation care services, and have appointed Champions. The Eco Church awards scheme takes them gradually through the workings of their church, helping them to make changes.

Their annual carbon footprint return was very revealing and they were shocked to learn that their church does have a very high carbon footprint. This was worrying, but they are glad to know because now they can do something about it.

Future plans include having a decarbonising audit which will show how they need to change. They are also currently changing their lighting, and are making various small changes towards becoming more

sustainable. By doing this are raising the profile of creation care in their church, and more people are becoming interested and involved, in church and at home.

Other activities they are involved in include:

- Sewing wild flower seeds
- Bird boxes
- Recycling
- Speaking with their MP
- Involvement with various societies such as SAS, Plastic Free Penzance, RSPB, Eden Project, Cornwall Wildlife Trust.

Cutting Carbon is the hardest thing to achieve, but the help, support and guidance from the diocese and the network is crucial, and gives the opportunity to share knowledge, and to learn from others.

Julia finished by thanking Creation Care for all their support and encouraged everyone to carry on building and strengthening creation care because it works.

Ben thanked Julia and members gave a round of applause.

Kate Cortez, Head of Operations at Church House, introduced herself. She works closely with Ben and colleagues in the area of Creation Care. Her mother-in-law, Rosario Lobo, lives in Honduras, and has made a video which shows all the things she and others are doing to make an ecological difference in Honduras. The video can be found on the diocesan website [here](#)

Members expressed their thanks with a round of applause.

The Rt Revd Hugh Nelson, Acting Bishop of Truro, requested that a message of thanks from Diocesan Synod members be recorded and greetings and love sent to Honduras.

A question and answer session followed during which the following points were raised:

Q: Andrew Prince, Powder deanery, commented that church buildings are usually inefficient energy wise and impossible to insulate. The Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) has visited his church and concluded that their proposals for ground source heating would not work. Andrew asked whether our buildings should really still be in use, as they are such a big problem.

A: Ben Lillie, Diocesan Environment Officer, replied. He agreed that some heating methods do not work in the church setting, as it is necessary for the building concerned to be well insulated. The response to this dilemma is to heat the person and not the space, using items such as heated gilets and heated cushions. Devoran church have replaced their heating with a heated pew system, which also works extremely well. These are effective solutions, whilst maintaining the building.

The Acting Bishop of Truro and the Bishop of St Germans, the Rt Revd Hugh Nelson proposed that:

“This Synod approves the ‘Action plan for the Environment’ to deliver the diocesan strategy to Cherish Creation, Cut Carbon and Speak Up”

Members voted:

In favour 40 (25 in person, 15 via Zoom)

Against 1 (0 in person, 1 via Zoom)

Abstain 2 (1 in person, 1 via Zoom)

The motion was carried.

Update on the work of the Vacancy in See Committee

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright, Chair of the House of Clergy, introduced Canon Simon Robinson, Dean designate. Simon updated members on the recent work of the Vacancy in See Committee; a copy of his report can be found [here](#)

Mr Martin Saunders, Pydar deanery, asked if a copy of the report could be distributed to members ahead of the minutes of this synod meeting being circulated. Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright agreed that they would be.

A proposal for a Scheme for the representation of lay members of St Gregory's Church, Newquay

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright, Chair of the House of Laity and Rural Dean of Pydar, drew attention to an error in the accompanying covering note. He said that St Gregory's should be referred to as being associated with Pydar deanery, not Newquay, and requested that this be corrected.

Revd Canon Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, confirmed that the error had been noted and would be corrected.

Simon then gave synod members some background information about the BMO. He explained that, as St Gregory's is not a parish church and does not have a PCC, consideration needed to be given as to how their lay members could be represented. The proposed scheme will solve this issue by bringing St Gregory's under the Church Representation Rules, thus requiring them to maintain a Church Electoral Roll, and to hold an annual meeting and elections to deanery synod. There is no requirement for Churchwardens and there will be no changes to the BMO, which simply permits representation in accordance with CRR 24. St Gregory's Electoral Roll number in 2024 will determine the number of Lay Deanery Synod Representatives they will be permitted to elect.

Mr Martin Saunders, Diocesan Synod member and Deanery Synod Secretary, Pydar, urged members to approve the proposal. He commented that it is obviously wrong that the laity of St Gregory's are excluded from Deanery Synod and that this needs to be put right.

He also commented that, as far as he is aware, Diocesan Synod has not discussed BMOs and their effect on the Anglican church in parts of the county. He remarked that this particular BMO was not discussed within the deanery; simply that they had been told that help was needed in Newquay and that there would be a BMO, with no other options being given. He observed that there was a risk that this could result in the deanery having two Anglican churches in the same area with two priests who may not necessarily see eye-to-eye. He asked which would be the parish church in such a scenario, and how would people decide which priest to go to?

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright acknowledged Martin's comments, but observed that these did not make a difference to the voting taking place today. He said that hopefully at some point in the future, when there are more BMOs in place, there will be an opportunity to review these questions in a more productive and efficient way.

Revd Sian Yates, Penwith deanery, asked if similar proposals had been offered to New Street BMO in Falmouth.

Revd Canon Simon Cade confirmed that this had already been done.

Mrs Sarah Vinson, Trigg Major Deanery, observed that the church she attends at Tregadillet, an LEP mission church established in the 1880s, was not a parish but they were required to have Churchwardens and be financially accountable to the Church of England. She asked if these requirements applied to the St Gregory's scheme.

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright explained that this scheme did not require churchwardens. As far as finance is concerned, there are plans for an MMF consultation in 2026 when it is hoped that many queries and anomalies will be sorted out, including ones such as this. He thanked Sarah for her question and for raising this point.

The Rt Revd Hugh Nelson, Acting Bishop of Truro, commented that many, if not all, these questions are reflected in the detail of the BMO. The BMO is for 5 years, and includes detail of how the leader of the BMO should react with other local clergy.

Robert Perry, Chair of House of Laity, commented that he was not aware of the background to Mr Saunders' remarks, but said he would hope that when a BMO is discussed and planned, that there would be extensive consultation.

Revd Canon Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, proposed:

"In accordance with Rule 24 of the Church Representation Rules, and noting the direction of the Bishop of Truro, this Diocesan Synod approves and makes the Scheme for the representation of St Gregory's Church, Cornwall on Pydar Deanery Synod."

Voting took place:

In favour 43 (27 in person, 16 via Zoom)

Against 0

Abstain 1 (0 in person, 1 via Zoom)

The motion was carried.

Diocesan Synod electorate numbers

Revd Canon Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, explained that Diocesan Synod was required to establish the number of members for this body and that a formula for calculating this had been agreed in 2017. The 2017 formula was applied in both the 2018 and 2021 elections, and so it has been presumed that this calculation will continue to be used for the 2024 elections. The formula is complex and can involve rounding numbers up or down, resulting in the number of clergy and laity on diocesan synod being roughly similar. The calculation for 2024 has resulted in 63 clergy and 62 laity for the 2024 - 2027 triennium.

Revd Laura Bushell-Hawke, East Wivelshire deanery, asked how the Deans of Area (once appointed) and Rural Deans would fit into this structure. She asked if they would be ex-officio and, in the case of the Deans of Area, how they might become members of diocesan synod if they want to be.

Revd Canon Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, replied to say that they will not be ex-officio members. He asked Laura Chesham, from the Diocesan Registry, how the Deans of Area could become members of Diocesan Synod if they wanted to be.

Laura Chesham replied to say that this is a new post, newly created, which does not fit easily within the CRR structure. She said that she will look into this and come back later with her answer.

Paul Zaphriou, St Austell deanery asked if the representation of PTO clergy elected as retired representatives to deanery synod would impact on the numbers of Diocesan Synod.

Revd Canon Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, replied to say that retired PTO clergy who are elected within their deanery would be among the clergy numbers who are on this list.

The Chair proposed:

"This synod approved the number for election to Diocesan Synod and the use of first-past-the post-election system for the 2024 election to Diocesan Synod."

Voting took place:

In favour: 43 (26 in person, 17 via Zoom)

Against: 0

Abstention: 2 (1 in person, 1 via Zoom)

Proposals for the use of assets

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright, Chair of the House of Clergy, introduced Mike Sturgess, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF).

Mike noted the composition of DBF assets which total £115m on the 2022 Balance Sheet, including £48m of investment assets. The proposal is that this is the right time to invest some of our assets directly in achieving the plans that we are making, rather than simply watching their book value increase.

Mike presented a graph detailing the decline in clergy numbers in the period 2001 - 2021. He explained that during this time the value of assets had risen, not because of a surplus but because they have steadily increased in value. He also drew attention to the fact that last year's budget included an extension over the next 10 years of the diocese's current plans, that this budget includes an increase to these plans, with a proposal to increase expenditure from reserves from £11 million to £22 million over 10 years. The proposed expenditure would come back to diocesan synod each year for approval, so the diocese would not be tied into it but, if this is approved today, an aspiration will have been set and more detailed planning can then take place.

There is increased confidence to do this now that MMF collection, which had been low, has increased to 90%. Part of the "On the Way" process was to ask parishes and deaneries what a sustainable MMF call would be and then to expect them to honour that.

Mike explained that even after taking £22 million from diocesan reserves, the overall value of assets would be likely to still increase. However, if this is not done, diocesan assets would continue to increase and then it would need to be asked what the money is being saved for. It could be argued that it is being saved for a rainy day, but Mike pointed out that it is raining now and there is a need to invest in these plans. Also, the Charity Commission requires that excess reserves should be used to achieve the aims of the Charity.

Another query that could be asked is why the money is not being used to increase stipendiary priests. To this, Mike would reply that the deanery plans are being honoured; the DBF wishes to stand behind the plans and support them, to halt the fall in stipendiary clergy and, where it can, reverse that trend. However, resources are needed to achieve this.

A question and answer session took place during which the following points were raised:

Andrew Prince, Powder Deanery, commented that in his deanery there has been frustration over the sale of property, particularly clergy houses, and then buying replacements that are not as good and at a higher rate. There was a situation in the deanery where a property was sold, resulting in the church not having the right to access their property in order to do repairs. Andrew requested that, in future, when property is disposed of, proper local consultation be initiated.

Mike Sturgess, Chair of the DBF, replied to say that, as far as he was aware, the incumbent is contacted in situations such as these. However, there was disagreement to this statement from a diocesan synod clergy member who had experienced similar problems.

Revd Canon Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, replied to say that the DBF is currently looking at the process. He explained that where parsonage houses are concerned there is a legal obligation to consult, and he believes that in the past these were the only consultations that took place. However, a decision has now been made to consult over the sale of both parsonage and Board houses.

Mike Sturgess, Chair of the DBF, pointed out that trying to retrofit old houses with a bad EPA rating can be very expensive. The DBF has had to look at the best way to achieve this and in some cases that may be selling the property, as the purchaser often has more money to upgrade. The diocese can then buy a more efficient house, in line with Net Zero aims.

Revd Andrew Yates, General Synod, asked whether consideration had been given to the poor when proposing to sell houses. He observed that in the recent past a scheme was set up with St Petroc's Charity so that they could lease a diocesan property, and he asked whether the diocese could consider other such arrangements in the future, with the aim of helping the current housing crisis.

Revd Canon Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, said that all the houses identified for potential sale have been flagged with St Petroc's, Cornwall Council, and others, but that the properties involved are not always suitable. Cornwall Council used to have more capacity than it has now, and other charities have explored some possibilities. He also pointed out that the DBF has worked directly with Cornwall Council to house a refugee family in one of our properties.

Mike Sturgess, Chair of the DBF, added that the Glebe portfolio is shared with a list of developers. In addition, Glebe land has been sold for the building of affordable homes and has been offered to Cornwall Council for use for homeless pods. The Glebe Committee is aware of the issues and working towards solutions.

Martin Saunders, Pydar Deanery, commented that a better title for this paper would be "Selling Off the Family Silver". He said that the diocese is relying on the charity of its forbears to make life easier for itself and at the expense of its successors.

He stated that the diocese is "dangling carrots" to members e.g. if they agree then MMF will be reduced, but he urged everyone to think more carefully, saying that proposals such as these are great in the short term but leave a person or company poorer in the long run. He said that the diocese must not allow its profligacy to make it harder for future generations, and stated that the DBF, as temporary trustees of the money bequeathed to it, has a fundamental duty to pass on its money to its successors and should use only the income. It should use only the current actual income from assets to support the current work of the church, particularly the priesthood.

Martin agreed that MMF should be reduced but that this should be achieved by cutting down on costs, particularly those of Church House and non-PCC parish based mission. He commented that the paper accompanying this synod item does not specify which funds the money will come from, and that in reality there are only four funds that can be used.

He went on to say that income from the Capital Endowment Fund should be used to support the parish priesthood, whereas these plans propose using £22 million to support ever-increasing revenue deficits which is a concern, but the solution must not be solved by using capital to fund the deficit. He queried whether the diocese needs seven senior clergy without parish responsibilities, as well as thirty-five Church House staff, and stated again that the capital should not be used and should remain intact. He urged members to vote against the proposal.

Mike Sturgess, Chair of the DBF, thanked Martin and responded to his comments. He stated the assets in question were not bequeathed by our ancestors, and that these have increased through the hard work of the diocese, through its investment policies and Glebe, and through the good fortune that property has increased in value.

Mike pointed out that Martin's proposal to maintain all reserves completely and only use the income, would effectively turn all funds into restricted funds and endowment funds. This is not legally correct, and goes against Charity Commission rules. He stated that our assets are projected to rise in value and

that he does not accept any of Martin's points, adding that the DBF must not do what Martin proposes, and that investment in the diocesan vision must be done, otherwise we are just in vague wishes.

Martin Saunders, Pydar deanery, replied to say that he was not talking about all funds, just the four big Capital Funds. He stated that Synod did not buy these assets, they were bought by our forebears, and they are not ours but for us to hand over.

The Rt Revd Hugh Nelson, Acting Bishop of Truro, thanked Martin for his comments and observed that it is good for Synod to have these conversations.

He commented on three things that Martin had said:

- He noted that Martin refereed to the diocese as 'they'. Bishop Hugh reminded everyone that we are the diocese. We can engage in these discussions and then give a decision.
- He does not agree with Martin's statement that we have a fundamental duty to pass on in total to future generations. Bishop Hugh believes that the fundamental purpose of the Church of England is to *be* the Church for England, to build the kingdom, to support those who preach the good news. Assets, whether bequeathed or granted, are to be used for that purpose and not simply to be handed on.
- He observed that if we enacted what Martin is proposing, we would end up being a very small but very rich church, which he does not believe is scriptural.

Mike Sturgess, Chair of the DBF, observed that if we do not face the current threat to the Church of England then there will be no-one to leave it to in the future.

Mary Wooding, Penwith Deanery, pointed out that the statement that the diocese is supporting deanery plans with this proposal, is missing the point; deaneries were told not to vote for anything they could not afford, thus their plans do not reflect their dreams. She asked whether, now the financial the situation has changed, deaneries should revisit their plans in the light of what sounds like high-level investment over the next 10 years.

Mike Sturgess, Chair of the DBF, thanked Mary for her comments. He pointed out that £22 million, when divided by the number of churches in the diocese over 10 years, is not a massive amount of money. He also pointed out that a large amount of the money will be spent on the Diocesan plan, with its emphasis on expenditure on work with children and families, investing in school chaplaincies, and keeping MMF payments down. The cost of ministry detailed in the budget shows what the cost would be if the diocese was not underwriting it.

Jeremy Stuart Pydar Deanery, commented that funds bequeathed to us had been contributed for the good of the church and should therefore not be retained but used for good purposes. He stated that it would appear foolhardy to have substantial reserves alongside a deficit, and that it is normal practise to use reserves to pay off a deficit. He stated his support for the proposal.

Michael Thomas, Kerrier Deanery, said that he understood Martin Saunders' observations about not using capital as revenue, but said it could be argued that an alternative view is that massive plate collections over the last few years have given this revenue.

He also commented on the point made by Mary Wooding. In Kerrier the message that came across to their deanery synod was dire, so their plans took account of that, and they would be keen to see the deanery reviewed under the lines suggested. He pointed out that Kerrier has an excellent new Rural Dean, but there is a major town/parish in the deanery, Helston, that does not have a Rector and he would urge that this would be a good way to use the money.

He also urged that the diocese consult with local members of the council when selling land, not just council officers, commenting that local members know what is best for their area.

Lastly, he asked whether the committee were scrutinising this matter, or putting it forward.

Mike Sturgess, Chair of the DBF, replied. Concerning deanery plans, he commented that he fully supported plans being kept under review and adjusted where necessary to fit in with where God is working.

He thanked Michael for his comments about consulting local council members and said he totally agreed.

Concerning Michael's query about scrutiny, Mike explained that the papers come out of Episcopal College and the Directors, then typically go to Finance, Assets and Risks (FAR), which Mike chairs. FAR scrutinises, then comes back with challenging questions. When they are happy FAR recommends to the Bishop's Diocesan Council (BDC) for approval, and then the item goes to Diocesan Synod.

Charlotte Irwin, Bishop's Nominee, commented that the gospel reading of the Five Talents should be borne in mind. Many are afraid of change, but the person who hid the talent did not receive a good response, while those who used their talent were commended. She encouraged not allowing fear to hinder, but to look to grow.

Paul Zaphiriou, St Austell Deanery, asked whether the £3 million to fund work with children, youth and families, was outside deanery plans and outside parish ministry.

Mike Sturgess, Chair of the DBF, replied. He reiterated that if members approve today the basic direction of travel, then more detailed plans will begin to be developed. However, he did say that it looks as though many initiatives, such as chaplaincies, will be outside the plan, and states that there are no direct plans to give deaneries money outside of the mission funding.

Bishop Hugh confirmed this to be the case and said that his hope and prayer is that the National Church will join in partnership and will increase the sum of money available.

Mike Rowe, St Austell Deanery, commented that St Austell deanery constantly reviews its deanery plan to see if it is still fit for purpose. They have already made a change, which was accepted by the Bishop's Diocesan council, and they are also looking at another possible proposal for another future change.

The Chair proposed:

"This Synod approves the proposals for the use of assets. Noting that annual arrangements will continue to be subject to the statutory annual TDBF budget setting process."

The proposal was seconded by Charlotte Irwin, Powder Deanery:

Voting took place:

In favour: 35 (21 in person, 14 via Zoom)

Against: 1 (1 in person, 0 via Zoom)

Abstention: 2 (1 in person, 1 via Zoom)

The motion was carried.

Meeting as members of Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd

Presentation of the 2024 Diocesan Board of Finance Budget

Mr Robert Perry, Chair of House of Laity, introduced Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets.

Sophie thanked Robert.

Sophie explained that her presentation would be in four parts; headlines, income, expenditure and conclusion, followed by a time for members to ask questions. She also said that she was pleased to be able to say that, for the second year in a row, the budget is mission and ministry led, not finance led, and is based on various strategic documents i.e. the deanery plans, the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal and the Asset Strategy. The result is a proposal for an overall budget with a deficit of £3.266m, which is an increase from £2.517m for 2023. Unlike deficits in the recent past, this one is planned. Income and costs are now under control, enabling the proposal to use £22m of reserves as per the Asset Strategy.

Sophie showed members two charts detailing overall income and expenditure for 2024, the difference between the two overall figures being the deficit as mentioned above.

Sophie then gave further detail about income and expenditure for 2024:

Income:

- A proposed increase to MMF of 3%, with a predicted collection rate of 90%, and the budgeted figure originating from the deanery plans.
- Any changes to the finances in the deanery plans, including the use of LICF and mission funding to pay for MMF, will be fed into future re-profiles of the budget that take place through 2024.
- Other income has reduced overall, with some income streams increasing and others reducing. LICF has increased, investment income is budgeted to be almost identical to the 2023 forecast, a reduction in Parsonage rental income, no increase in Parochial Fees, and an increase in the income from grant funding, with the addition of new funding streams.

Expenditure:

- Ministry costs are the largest area of spend and have been based on the clergy numbers from deanery plans plus the three new Dean of Area posts.
- Stipendiary clergy FTE numbers in 2024 are budgeted to be about 20% higher than those being forecast in 2023 (53.81 compared to 44.59). However, the original budget for FTE numbers in 2023 was 54.28, but this dropped considerably with an unexpected higher than average clergy turnover.
- A 6% cost of living increase for clergy from 1 January 2024, costing £131k.
- An increase in the property maintenance budget by just under £200k. There is currently a high level of vacant properties so this budget increase will enable the opportunity to be taken to carry out maintenance work whilst the properties are empty. Also, building costs continue to increase.
- Mission funding to be made available to those deaneries that do not have TM projects, amounting to £2m over 5-7 years.
- Expenditure for functions carried out at Church House totalling £1.9m for 2024, some of which is funded by grants from the national church.
- A 6% cost of living increase for lay staff amounting to £100k.
- LICF funding to be passed on to the deaneries, £574k in the form of mission grants, as per deanery plans.
- A budget of £752k for Carbon Net Zero 2030. The largest element of this budget, £600k, is for property works and allows for works to be carried out on the large number of vacant properties. The rest of the budget is for expenditure associated with funding awarded by the national church which will enable resources to be employed to assist parishes and schools with this work. This budget is all funded from reserves or funding awarded and does not impact on the figures in the toolkit for the parishes.

Sophie went on to explain that a new report has been included in this year's budget pack showing the movement of funds and how the different funds held by the DBF are impacted by the income and

expenditure included in the budget. It shows which funds are unrestricted (this includes some designated funds), those that are restricted and also the endowments. Sophie shared a chart showing the sub totals of each of the categories of funds and how they are expected to move in 2024. In total they are budgeted to be £111m at the end of 2024, a reduction of just over £4m. This is as expected because the reserves are being used to fund the deficit.

Sophie concluded by saying that the most important thing about this budget is that it is, again, mission and ministry led by the deanery plans, the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal and the Asset Strategy. The diocesan leadership continue to be committed to drive change for a fruitful and sustainable diocese. FAR and BDC think this is a realistic budget for 2024 and are therefore recommending it to Synod for approval.

Members expressed their thanks to Sophie with a round of applause.

A question and answer time followed during which the following points were raised:

Martin Saunders, Pydar Deanery, commented that this was a depressing budget. He believes the present financial situation is largely due to there being no increase made to the number of stipendiary clergy and that no-one seems to understand that. He believes the number of stipendiary clergy should be increased, even if this means curtailing other activities.

Martin also commented that using reserves to balance the books is profligate. He urged members to consider what money is currently being spent outside of normal parish budgets, and asked for evidence of where savings had been made on Church House expenditure, stating that he believed any savings made had immediately been spent on something else.

Martin observed that the ratio of clergy to Church House staff used to be 5 to 1, but is now 2 to 1. He queried whether three Deans of Area, new Church House managers, and five more staff to help implement deanery plans were really necessary, when the money would be better spent on increasing the number of parish priests. He believes deaneries need to be given more detail on what is spent and how. He also queried the statement that Church House has tighter control of its budget, and asked whether any difference could be seen in the expenditure in this year's budget.

Martin believes it should be for deaneries to approve how they spend their money, and said that there will be financial consequences for overspending, that the bubble will burst, and that income will reduce as reserves will have been spent. The Stipends Capital Account is for clergy stipends only, and he does not believe the money is being spent within the charity rules that parishes should be following.

Martin concluded by quoting from a Church Times article of 27 October, which stated that the church is not a mission machine. The article also stated that the true treasures of our churches are the worshippers and that they deserve diocesan money to be redirected to make the parish priest's burden bearable, not used towards an abandonment to vacancies, mega parishes and the financing of mega mission.

Martin concluded by stating that he believes that the proposed budget is not good for the long term health of the church of England in Truro diocese, either spiritually or financially. He urged people not to vote in favour of this motion.

Revd Canon Chris McQuillen-Wright, Chair of House of Clergy, responded to Martins' comments. As Vicar of the benefice of Towan Blystra in Pydar deanery, and Rural Dean of Pydar when the OTW process was undergoing, he believes the diocese is more concerned with the future and, through the implementation of OTW, has an opportunity to grasp the work that is being done and continue with it. He believes God has been present in this, that it is not just management speak, and that he is someone who is trying to grasp a chance to do ministry and mission. The Church of England is set up for its non-members and Chris believes that Martin's final comments are against everything for which he became a

priest. Concerning Martin's statement that he wishes to protect and support Parish Priests, Chris would say that the plans in the budget do that far more than an antiquated system that was in place in 1995 when he was first ordained.

Members responded to Chris's comments with a round of applause.

Mr Mike Sturgess, The Chair of the Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd proposed that:

- a) "the budget be approved; or
- b) that the budget be referred back to the Bishop's Council and Standing Committee"

Seconded: Laura Bushell Hawke

Voting took place on whether the budget should be approved or referred back to the BDC.

In favour: 35 (21 in person, 14 via Zoom)

Against (i.e. refer back to BDC): 1 (1 in person, 0 via Zoom)

Abstain 0

The motion was carried.

Members noted that two visitors who were not members of Diocesan Synod had attempted to register votes online, although not entitled to do so. The vote for members attending via Zoom had needed to be re-run to ensure that the vote properly represented the view of members, these are the numbers described above.

Meeting as members of the Truro Diocesan Synod

An update from **General Synod** members

Revd Jeffrey Terry and Mr Vivian Hall reported.

Jeffrey explained that he had recently been elected as a General Synod member and that November's meeting of General Synod was therefore his first. He gave an overview of his first impressions and gave an overview of the business conducted at these sessions, including the following:

- The Archbishops' Presidential address, which focussed on the on-going hostilities between Israel and Gaza, as well as LLF issues.
- The Safeguarding Redress Measure and the scheme for compensation for victims and survivors of Church-related abuse. It is not clear how this will work in practice. However, the Church commissioners have set aside £150m for that fund.
- Churches Conservation Trust Order 2023; the £4.6m put forward by the Church Commissioners will be matched by the government.
- LLF. An amendment to the main motion, which would permit stand-alone services of blessing for same-sex couples to go ahead in trial form, was passed by a narrow vote.

Mr Vivian Hall then spoke to members. He attended General Synod via Zoom and did not attend the earlier sessions, but did attend all those relating to LLF. He said that the debate was a continuation of the discussions that took place at the July sessions, and that there was a church-wide commitment to learning from each other, albeit with the caveat that there would be no change to the doctrine of marriage that had been agreed in February. He said that debate was contentious and that numerous ethical issues were raised around Holy Matrimony, keeping unity in body of Christ, and the sacramental nature of union between man and woman.

He concluded by saying that the Archbishop of York spoke for unity, that there were various other speakers, for and against, and a concern had been raised that temporary changes, if agreed, would not be reversed.

The Chair, Mr Robert Perry, thanked both speakers.

Revd Garry Swinton, West Wivelshire Deanery, commented that these issues affect him personally and that he had been appalled by the tone of some of the comments made at these General Synod sessions. He stated that some of the language was appalling and possibly amounted to hate crimes.

Mr Robert Perry, Chair of the House of Laity, responded. He said that some of the speakers had been extremely direct in the way they expressed their views. However, he observed that overall debate was more courteous than it had been in February in York.

Reports and items to note

- Minutes of the meeting of Synod on 16 September 2023
- Report on the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal
- Report from the Safeguarding Team
- Report from the Bishops Diocesan Council, including an outline plan for the work of Diocesan Synod in 2024

The Chair, Mr Robert Perry, asked if there were any questions on either the minutes or any of the reports.

Mr Martin Saunders, Pydar Deanery, asked if he could be assured that all the issues discussed by the BDC, apart from confidential ones, had been included in the Report from the Bishop's Diocesan Council.

Revd Canon Simon Cade replied to say that he drafts these reports and that no, they do not always include everything, and that it is not normal practice to do so.

Martin subsequently asked which criteria are used when determining which items are reported to Synod and which are not.

Simon replied to say that the focus of the reports is on delivery of the strategic plan, to assure members of the work that the BDC is doing to further the objects of the company.

The meeting concluded with Mr Robert Perry, Chair of the House of Laity, thanking Revd Ben Lillie and the environment team for their work and presentation. He also thanked the Church House and Finance teams for all they do, and Alan Porter and his team for providing IT support.

Members expressed their thanks with a round of applause.

Robert then asked everyone to keep the Vacancy in See committee in their prayers at this time. He stressed that its tasks are important and have implications not just for our diocese but also for the church nationally and internationally.

He also asked for prayer for Bishop Hugh as he leads this diocese during the time of transition.

The Rt Revd Hugh Nelson, Acting Bishop of Truro and Bishop of St Germans, closed the meeting with prayer at 14.43 pm