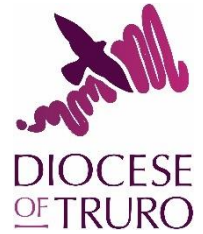


Report from the Bishops Diocesan Council to Diocesan Synod

February 2025



This report is produced by officers on behalf of the Bishops Diocesan Council (BDC) and is addressed to members of Diocesan Synod. It covers activity between November and December 2024. Because of timing issues the paper has not been specifically approved by the Board, but it can be shared by members of Synod as you see fit.

1. Fruitfulness and Sustainability - Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal

Having approved the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal in 2023 the BDC receive regular reports on implementation. Direct oversight of the plan is through the Board for Change and Renewal, which meets regularly and reports to BDC.

Among areas of high risk in the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal are high levels of clergy vacancies, and delays to pastoral reorganisation.

The target number for parish clergy is based on the deanery plans. In the context of a national shortage, attracting clergy to Cornwall, and retaining clergy in Cornwall, is a priority. So far, we have been successful in this, but BDC noted that further work will be needed to keep the vacancy rate as low as possible. In 2024 we made 20 clergy appointments, including 11 imported from other dioceses, in a typical year before 2020 we might have made 8 or 10 appointments in total.

Previous meetings of BDC had heard reports that draft and proposed schemes for pastoral reorganisation were typically being delayed by the national team by between six months and a year. We're please to report that while attending to the proper process, there seems to be significant movement in a number of proposals and this risk seems to have been alleviated for the time being.

2. Safeguarding and the Makin Report

BDC noted significant concerns in the media and public discourse regarding the leadership of safeguarding at the national level, many members shared those concerns.

BDC received the following briefing the week after the Makin report was published and we share it with Synod members for information:

Regarding the Diocese of Truro and what this might mean for the trustees of the TDBF we hope you find this summary helpful:

- 1. Cornwall is mentioned in the report because some of the abuse took place on trips at Bosloe House near Durgan. There is nothing in the report to suggest a connection with the church in Cornwall.*
- 2. No clergy or office holders in the diocesan team now, or previously, is named or implicated in the report or the furore following its release, as far as we know.*
- 3. Since publication there has been a significant increase in contacts with the Safeguarding team, both in terms of referrals and queries about progress made on existing cases.*

In terms of managing risk in relation to safeguarding there is a full risk register managed by Andy Earl, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer. There are the key existing control measures in place to ensure all concerns are properly investigated and managed:

- *Clear channels for raising a concern including website, reception and email.*
- *Whistleblowing and complaints policies.*
- *Experienced and diverse team of safeguarding professionals held to account by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) comprised mainly of independent members including the local authority and the police.*
- *This diocese was the first to receive certification under Clause 4 Canon 42 which saw the Head of Safeguarding move from being an adviser to an officer. This reflects the changes this diocese had already made to give the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer freedom to challenge and share risk.*
- *The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer receives oversight and challenge for case work from the Regional Safeguarding Lead on a six-weekly basis, this coupled with a well-resourced Safeguarding Case Management group and oversight from DSAP and its independent chair ensures decisions policy and procedures are scrutinised.*
- *Recent successful independent audit of policy and practice.*
- *Senior leaders recently completed Senior Leadership Safeguarding training.*
- *Andy Thompson is the member of the BDC holding special responsibility for safeguarding. He also sits on DSAP and meets with the Independent chair to enable triangulation of scrutiny.*
- *The Finance, Assets and Risk Committee will be scrutinising the Safeguarding risk register in December, including having the opportunity to question Andy Earl, the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.*

Throughout this turbulent time our diocesan priority has been to consider and hear survivors and victims, keeping their needs at the heart of our decision making. The December meeting of the BDC spent time discussing the Makin report and the wider concerns about safeguarding nationally. A decision arose from the meeting to publish a statement regarding the leadership of safeguarding, this was published widely across the diocese:

“Over the last three weeks the safeguarding failures of the Church of England have been laid bare yet again.

We are hearing clearly from survivors and victims of abuse in this diocese and beyond that the national church response is causing intense pain. It has deeply and repeatedly hurt the people we are here to serve, and has demoralised those who are trying to do the right thing in parishes, schools, and chaplaincies across Cornwall.

As the Bishop’s Council, we join our voice to Bishop Helen-Ann Hartley’s prophetic call for us to be a different sort of church. A church that does not seek first to protect itself, but which champions those who are most vulnerable. A church where people with power are clearly and consistently held accountable.

Fundamental changes to the way the church works have been recommended and accepted again and again, but too often real change has been delayed or denied. The House of Bishops and Archbishops’ Council appear to have failed to implement the recommendations made in numerous reports and reviews, and we call for urgent change and action to show that national leadership is ready and able to lead the changes required.”

3. Report from the Ministry team

Isaac McNish, the new Head of Ministry, introduced himself, and talked a little about his priorities, recognising the significant change that lies ahead as deanery plans continue to be implemented, and emphasising the importance of supporting discipleship and all those 'keeping the show on the road' at church and parish level. His role is to lead the provision of formation and vocations for clergy, curates and lay leaders. He presented a report from the Ministry team which focused on:

- **Encouraging vocations** including training programmes such as Foundations in Christian Ministry and Bishop's Study Days; 13 people embarking on ordination training this year; and the growing 'Community of Vocations' that supports people to explore God's call with others.
- **Encouraging equipping and enabling ordained ministry** including provision of Initial Ministerial Training (Phase 2) for 16 curates; Continued Ministerial Training open to clergy and licensed lay ministers; Accompanied Ministerial Development programmes on Posts of First Responsibility and Ministers with Oversight Responsibility; Sens Kernewek - which equips ministers to lead local church communities; training for and commissioning of Local Worship Leaders, Local Pastoral Ministers and Pioneers; developing chaplaincy; celebrating Readers and supporting clergy well-being.
- **Support for parishes and deaneries** including facilitating transitions; Generous Giving Advisors supporting 113 parishes in 2024 with generosity activities and digital giving; Meet the funders training; formation of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Board; and ongoing support to all from Deanery Liaison Advocates.

4. MMF formula consultation

BDC agreed a proposed consultation on MMF (papers with February 2025 Synod pack).

The next steps are:

1. Carry out a broad consultation in February & March 2025 with stakeholders about an MMF model based on a cost of ministry formula with transitional arrangements and eliminating the benefice charge.
2. Carry out further work to calculate potential 2026 call numbers and development of transitional and vacancy arrangements prior to consultation.
3. Present proposed model to Diocesan Synod in June 2025.

5. St Paul's Church, Truro

The published scheme proposing the demolition of St Paul's Church in Truro has received no formal objections. It now passes to the Church Commissioners to make the final decision which may be in the Spring.

6. Governance

a) BDC away day

The members of the BDC met on 9 November to continue their induction, get to know one another, and receive briefings and training on the vision, the legal and practical responsibilities of the members, finances, risk management, communications and asking good questions (holding to account).

b) Elections in early 2025

Elections for a new Vacancy in See committee (required following the election of a new Diocesan Synod) will be held in February, members should not read anything sinister into this(!) - Bishop David has not changed his mind.

Elections to fill casual vacancies on the Diocesan Board of Patronage will be also held in February.

7. Items of note approved by the BDC

- Revised Health and Safety policy.
- Governance action plan (based on Governance review by Revd Jeffrey Terry).
- Revised Terms of Reference for the Remuneration Committee (adding Chair of House of Clergy permanently).
- Closure of the Cornwall Retired Clergy Fund charity, transferring restricted reserve to the TDBF (this will not change how it operates, as TDBF staff already manage the fund and issue the grants).