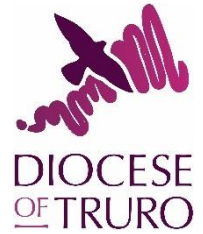


Report from the Bishops Diocesan Council to Diocesan Synod

May 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 February and May 2025. 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 progress towards its implementation. Direct oversight of the plan is through the Board for Change and Renewal, which meets regularly and reports to BDC.

Recruiting and training, including Local Leaders and Oversight Ministers

Work continues to implement the priorities of the People Plan which initially focus on:

- incumbent status clergy (including oversight ministers)
- local leaders (as in focal ministry, typically lay members of the church)
- deanery leaders (usually the rural dean, key drivers for the deanery plan)
- children and young people workers (paid and volunteers)

The key operational priority of the DBF has been the appointment of stipendiary clergy, 25 appointments in the last 18 months (excluding curates) but sustaining and continuing to increase the number of clergy in post requires us to work counter to national and local trends that see retirements far outstrip ordinations.

Children, young people and families

The BDC first considered the proposals for work with children, young people and families, as part of the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal in February. The members discussed the scope of the proposals, the risks, the finances and the level of detail provided. It was agreed that further work would be done for it to return again to the Board.

In May a revised proposal was presented. There was discussion again about the level of detail, the scope, the risks and the finances but with a recognition that the additional work had addressed concerns. The key issues included how resources will be shared amongst places, using the Many, Some and Few model, with detailed discussion around the merit of turning the model on its head and spreading more of the funding across as many places as possible rather than focusing resources. Members also asked to have more information about how the bid to the national church will be approved; how risks and 'stages' will be managed, how the programme will be monitored and reviewed; and where the people to do the work (paid and unpaid) will come from.

BDC voted to approve the strategic approach, including the objectives and the "Many, Some and Few" model and the recruitment of the two staff detailed in the proposal, to enable the next stage of work needed to further develop the programme detail with deaneries and to prepare a funding bid to the national church. Work beyond this will be subject to further scrutiny including the ongoing budget work.

Lowest Income Communities Funding (LICF) and Mission Funding

BDC noted that initial projections for the use of LICF, dating from the move to devolve decision-making to deaneries as part of “On the Way” had anticipated that a larger proportion might be used to support stipendiary ministry, BDC reports on the use of LICF to the Archbishops Council. The use of Mission Funding to support stipendiary ministry needs to be supported by clear steps towards financial sustainability, unlike LICF this funding is time-limited. Deanery plans are currently being reviewed with the Change and Renewal team and this review includes considering the effectiveness of LICF and Mission funding expenditure. The outcomes of this review will be presented to the BDC.

Cut Carbon, Cherish Creation, Speak Up

Significant progress in the property portfolio continues, currently the key measure is the assessed EPC; 24 properties are now EPC “A” - up from zero in 2021. The total of EPC “A” and “B” is now 37, up from 10 in 2021, the number of EPC “D” and “E” is down from 87 to 59. We also monitor “liveability” and cost for clergy families, as well as the impact on capital values (our portfolio has increased in value by above the Cornwall index in 2024, in part thanks to the investment in carbon net zero and other major works). Expenditure on property works has been front loaded and will be lower in following years to ensure it sits within the planned allocation in the Assets Strategy.

Finance - MMF

The collection rate for MMF for 2024 was 93.6% and for 2025 it is currently 97.7% (to April 2025). High contribution rates help the BDC to support the use of assets and the allocation of LICF to local level.

The consultation on the proposal for the MMF formula has completed and is presented, with support of the BDC, to this meeting of Diocesan Synod.

2. Safeguarding

The BDC have been informed that the Diocesan Safeguarding team continue to manage an unprecedented high number of referrals and cases. The increase in referrals is likely to be related to the publicity that church safeguarding has received recently, but this probably doesn’t explain the whole of the changing picture. Increasing caseload is impacting on the team’s ability to progress priorities such as the INEQE audit recommendations. Changes to systems have helped to maintain a very good response rate to casework referrals and disclosures.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) has been renamed Diocesan Safeguarding Scrutiny Panel (DSSP), to reflect the increased scrutiny that it undertakes. Andy Thompson is the BDC trustee who also sits on DSAP/DSSP.

Future of Church Safeguarding

The BDC considered proposed changes to the provision of safeguarding twice, once before the meeting of General Synod and once after.

Prior to General Synod the TDBF specifically commissioned legal advice regarding the implications for trustees of Model 4 in regard to how proposed changes to provision of safeguarding affects the legal duties under charity and company law.

The Diocesan Secretary also prepared a response, following consultation with the BDC, to The Charity Commission following a request from the Commission to consider whether there remain any “structural, procedural, or constitutional arrangements under

ecclesiastical law that you consider conflict with or prevent you from fulfilling your safeguarding duties as charity trustees.”

Serious Incidents

The Board has made two Serious Incident Reports to the Charity Commission in this period. Both reports arose from safeguarding matters.

There have been two incidents relating to safeguarding at the cathedral that have attracted media attention and required significant input from TDBF staff as the TDBF provides safeguarding support to the cathedral under a service level agreement.

3. Glebe strategy

The BDC approved a Glebe Strategy for the TDBF. This strategy was developed in partnership with key stakeholders including housing providers, Cornwall Council, the national church and local charities. The overall approach being to continue to ensure that glebe provides income to help pay for clergy stipends, but to seek to be more ambitious so that glebe might help the diocese achieve more with this historic asset, aligned with the organisational objects and the 5 Marks of Mission. These are the objectives:

Where lawful:

1. To manage the glebe asset to provide best value for the Diocesan Stipends Fund whilst seeking to achieve key objectives around housing, the environment and other benefits.
2. Use glebe to help deliver, with key partners, the housing that Cornwall needs, prioritising quality homes for those in need; those providing key services for local people; and supporting thriving communities.
3. To fulfil our duty of care to our tenants (residential, agricultural, etc) and third parties, maintaining safe and compliant properties for all users.
4. To use glebe to help achieve the diocesan strategy to Cut Carbon, Cherish Creation & Speak Up.
5. To specifically explore the ways in which glebe can contribute to the overall reduction in carbon emissions of the diocese.
6. To use glebe to provide community spaces such as playing fields, car parks, event spaces and footpaths to support thriving communities where our churches are at their heart.
7. To use our voice and influence to champion these objectives and encourage local communities, including local churches, to share them.
8. Working in unison with the Investment Management Committee to ensure that there is a combined approach to managing the assets that were or have been derived from Glebe.

4. Governance

Elections

The elections for a new chair of the House of Clergy are currently being held and it is hoped they will be in place for the June meeting of Diocesan Synod

Elections for the new Vacancy in See Committee and casual vacancy elections to the Patronage Board will be held in June.

Arrangements for Synod

A letter summarising the decisions around this was shared with the Notice issued on 7 May 2025.

General Synod

The clerical members of the BDC confirmed that in their view Andrew Yates is “willing and able” to continue in his role as member of General Synod on behalf of the Diocese of Truro in accordance with Canon H2 para 7 and hence he remains a clerical member of General Synod. This matter had to be considered due to Andrew’s retirement from licensed ministry in the diocese in May 2024 which meant he is otherwise no longer eligible to serve on General Synod and would be deemed to have vacated his seat unless the clerical members of the Council decide otherwise.

5. Items of note approved or received by the BDC

- Church House Annual Plan for 2025 and strategic priorities
- Church House Annual report for 2024
- Annual report from the Diocesan Secretary for 2024
- Reporting schedule from committees to the BDC
- Revised Terms of reference for
 - Finance, Assets and Risk Committee
 - Property Management Committee
 - Glebe Management Committee
 - Remuneration Committee