

# Report from the Bishops Diocesan Council to Diocesan Synod

September 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 June and August 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.

### *Overall progress*

Ruth Marriott, Director of Change & Renewal, presented a report describing the work of Change and Renewal. BDC heard that there are some deaneries where progress is good, and others where we are still at the stage of laying foundations for future change, and some areas where there is very little progress yet. BDC noted significant headwinds, almost all of which were anticipated at the beginning of this programme of change. Key factors include the ability to recruit to key roles, sustained and effective leadership, and local willingness to work together. BDC noted that some key elements such as new work to promote work among children and families, and support for PCCs in their care of buildings were not yet in place.

Progress is being tracked carefully using available data, including attendance figures reported in Statistics for Mission and financial performance submitted through annual returns and the Return of Parish Finance, and the broader “Shared Outcomes Framework” which is supported by the national team and is likely to be crucial in securing future funding. Progress is reported at a deanery level and per priority (e.g. growing faith, children & young people, serving those in need etc).

### *People planning*

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 strategic rural dean)
- children and young people workers (paid and volunteers)

It was reported that considerable effort continues to maintain and grow the level of stipendiary clergy in post, initially to the level described in the Diocesan Plan, but the national picture for clergy recruitment remains very challenging - the numbers going for ordination is consistently outstripped by the number of retirements. However, in this diocese we have appointed 25 clergy in 18 months and Episcopal College continue to focus on planning for short, medium and long-term clergy recruitment.

Plans for the recruitment of deanery leaders/strategic rural deans have gone through several iterations as we respond to different arrangements in deanery plans, our ability to recruit to these roles, and learning from existing work. By this summer we expect 10/12 deaneries to have strategic rural deans in post.

### ***Children, young people and families***

The Church House team are now working to implement the Growing Younger strategy.

### ***Cut Carbon, Cherish Creation, Speak Up***

The BDC reviewed the updated Environment Strategy (which will be shared with Diocesan Synod at its November meeting) and considered how creation care is reflected in the wider work of the governance of the Diocese of Truro.

BDC reviewed FAQs on net zero works to parsonages intended to provide accurate information about these works, as there have been some 'myths' propagated about it.

### ***Church buildings***

The BDC considered a proposal for developing the buildings strategy for the Diocese of Truro, which will be used to direct the £2 million allocated in the Assets Strategy as part of the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal. This strategy is due to be presented to Diocesan Synod in February 2026.

#### ***The objectives of this strategy are:***

1. To identify the most effective and sustainable ways the Diocese of Truro can support our parishes to care for the 305 church buildings in our diocese in order to:
2. Preserve and restore these vital public buildings, keeping as many open as possible.
3. Provide safe, usable and welcoming spaces for worship, ministry, mission and community activity.
4. Relieve considerable pressure on clergy and volunteers, releasing them for ministry and mission.
5. Provide a framework that supports parishes to make informed decisions about their buildings.

#### ***Desired outcomes:***

The overall aim of this project is to develop a model which achieves the above objectives in a meaningful way. The key outcomes are:

1. A strategy that provides a model for how the Diocese of Truro can invest £2 million in church buildings in a way that will be proactive and have fundamental and lasting impact.
2. An action plan that outlines what will be done to deliver this strategy, including how the money will be spent and what other resources will be required.
3. Significantly improved knowledge of the current condition and needs of our church buildings.
4. A process that ensures a diversity of voices is reflected in the final strategy.

## **2. Safeguarding**

Jo Pomery, Deputy Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, presented to the BDC regarding safeguarding data. Key points included:

1. There continues to be a very high level of cases referred to and being managed by the Safeguarding team. In the first quarter of 2025 there were 135 referrals, 20 of which needed referral to statutory agencies such as the police and the local authority.
2. The updated triage process for concerns from parishes, which has been recognised as best practice nationally.
3. The threshold for accepting referrals is deliberately low to encourage reporting. The majority of concerns relate to behaviors by adults towards other adults.
4. There has been a significant improvement in Churchwardens' training compliance in the past year, 73% are now compliant. The next priorities are Local Worship Leaders and Local Pastoral Ministers. 85% of churches are now using the parish

safeguarding dashboard and the team are engaging with the remaining 15% to offer support.

5. Jo explained how safety plans work to manage individuals wishing to attend church who represent a safeguarding risk. She is currently managing 16 safety plans.

### **3. Finance**

The BDC approved the quarterly budget reforecast and considered the 2026 budget assumptions. The members approved the following:

1. To continue basing the budget on the Diocesan Plan for Change and renewal.
2. To not draw on more reserves at this point beyond that already approved.
3. To honour the proposals regarding MMF, i.e. no increases in MMF above 5.5%.
4. To continue to focus the work of Church House on delivering already agreed plans - so not new things, and recognising that parishes can't just pick up more and more.

Following the outcome of the Diocesan Finance Review and confirmation of the triennium funding settlement for the diocese the budget assumptions were reviewed. The settlement is overall slightly more positive than expected particularly in our LICF allocation, and there will be decisions to be made about how this is reflected in the 2026 budget.

### **4. Statistics for Mission 2024**

The preliminary national data (reported [here](#)) shows an overall increase in attendance from 2023 to 2024 of just over 1%, but still about 20% below 2019.

Diocese of Truro preliminary data is less promising, whilst our “worshipping community” grew very slightly or remained stable most of our other data shows that the growth we have seen either stabilised or reversed. Our most consistently accurate like-for-like figures tend to be the Sunday attendance numbers, the average Sunday attendance for adults was down 2% from 2023 to 2024 and child Sunday attendance down 3%. The “usual Sunday attendance” showed adults up 1% and children down 10%. Easter and Christmas numbers were all down (Christmas 2023 and Easter 2024), and baptisms were down 16%.

Small percentage annual changes (up or down) should not be over-interpreted, simple things like the number of weeks in the key count month can skew the data, but the trend for Cornwall is clear, flat since the initial bounceback from the lockdowns, numbers of children and young people continuing to fall overall (but with some hotspots that buck the trends).

### **5. St Pauls Church, Truro**

The Church Commissioners Mission and Pastoral Committee will consider the proposal for the demolition of St Paul's Truro is to be held at the Old Cathedral School in Truro on Friday 5th September.

## **6. Governance**

### ***Elections***

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

Elections for the new Vacancy in See committee and casual vacancy elections to the Patronage Board were held. 2 members joined the Vacancy in See committee (leaving 6 vacancies, 3 clergy, 3 lay) and 1 joined the Patronage Board (leaving 6 vacancies, 3 clergy, 3 lay).

In this period there has been successful recruitment of members for the Glebe and Property Management Committees, the Diocesan Environment Committee and the Church Uses Committee. Any members of Diocesan Synod who wish to find out more about these bodies and membership can contact [kate.cortez@trurodiocese.org.uk](mailto:kate.cortez@trurodiocese.org.uk).

### ***General Synod***

There is an election starting on 20 August for a replacement lay representative on General Synod following the resignation of Nicholas Herian. The current triennium now has less than a year to run, Nicholas' resignation came just before the cut-off for the election.

### ***Code of conduct***

The BDC approved a code of conduct for trustees, which will be rolled out to other boards and committees.

## **7. Items of note approved or received by the BDC**

- Result of tender processes for Property and Glebe management contracts
- Acting as the DMPC - the Kerrier deanery pastoral scheme
- Revised Terms of reference for
  - Diocesan Environment Committee
- Annual report from the Glebe Management Committee. Key items include:
  - Creation and approval of first TDBF Glebe Strategy and activity relating to use of Glebe for housing, the environment and community benefit whilst continuing to generate income and growing the value of the estate.
  - Re-tendering of Glebe Management Agent contract.
  - New chair appointed - William Trinick.
- Annual report from the Investment Management Committee. Key items include:
  - Yield on portfolio of 3.1%.
  - Sale of £1m of one fund to realise cash to finance major works on parsonages.
  - Dividend income slightly down as more funds held in cash as the interest earned is currently higher than the dividend.