

Minutes for a meeting of Truro Diocesan Synod 22 November 2025 at Chapter House, Truro Cathedral, Truro. Numbering of items is as the final published Agenda.

1. The meeting of Synod began with Holy Communion in Truro Cathedral

Meeting as Members of Truro Diocesan Synod, Chapter House, Truro Cathedral, Truro: Chaired by Merisa MacInnes, Chair of the House of Laity

2. Welcome Housekeeping

Mrs Kerstin Lewis, President of the Mothers' Union, drew members' attention to an empty chair placed at the entrance. This chair represents women and girls who have lost their lives to gender-based violence. She encouraged churches to participate in the 'Red Chair Project'. The initiative asks churches to reserve one chair, draped in red fabric, with a sign displaying facts about domestic violence. Mrs Lewis noted that the empty chair serves as a powerful reminder that, globally, every 11 minutes a woman or girl dies at the hands of an intimate partner or family member.

How you can help

- Join the campaign.
- Raise awareness about violence against women in all spheres of life and its long-term health, social and economic consequences.
- Be an ally: challenge unequal gender norms, sexist behaviours and comments in your churches, homes, communities, workplaces and with your friends, relatives and colleagues.
- Support survivors with empathy, without judgment, to access services and help.

The Chair of the House of Laity, Merisa MacInnes (MM) welcomed members and gave a special welcome to new members:

- **Clergy:** Revd Penny Leach, Revd Erica Payne, and Revd Caroline Husband.
- **House of Laity:** Eileen Waterhouse and Diana Favell (newly elected member of General Synod).

MM detailed changes to agenda.

Item on Palestine:

- This item was omitted as a member from the Diocese of Jerusalem was unable to attend.

Three Items Added:

- Church Representation Rules and Clergy Representation
Two items concerning Church Representation Rules and clergy representation for Bishop's Mission Order churches (New Street Church, Falmouth, and St Gregory's Church, Cornwall).
- Instrument of Delegation
One item inviting Synod to approve an Instrument of Delegation from Bishop David to Bishop Hugh, effective when Bishop Hugh becomes Bishop of Worcester on 28 November.

MM introduced The Rt Revd. Hugh Nelson, Bishop of St Germans.

3. Presidential Address: The Rt Revd. Hugh Nelson, Bishop of St Germans

The Rt Revd. Hugh Nelson, Bishop of St Germans, gave his Presidential Address, a copy of which can be found on the Diocesan website [\[HERE\]](#)

The Chair thanked Bishop Hugh for his address. Members were invited to reflect on three questions in small groups. The questions were displayed on screen:

- *What do you think makes church ‘church’?*
- *What gets in the way?*
- *What will you do to stay true to the call to be the body of Christ?*

4. Small Groups

- Members expressed how powerful the discussion was.
- Stories from the next generation were shared, highlighting their perspectives and positive independent thinking.
- Emphasis was placed on not discarding everything but also avoiding nostalgia.
- The need to reimagine what it means to be followers of Jesus today was strongly affirmed.

5. Safeguarding: Mrs. Mandy Wells, Safeguarding Trainer, Diocese of Truro

Purpose: To help members understand how real safeguarding matters are addressed.

MM handed over to Mrs. Mandy Wells (MW), Safeguarding Trainer. MW led members through a scenario exercise which involved group work. MW clarified where members can find support if they need it and emphasised how important it is to be kind and thoughtful.

SCENARIO | PART ONE

Context: The Parish Safeguarding Officer has received a call from the police to inform them that a member of PTO clergy has been arrested for a non-recent safeguarding case.

- *What is your reaction?*
- *How do you respond as a PCC member?*

FEEDBACK

Revd. Theresa Folland, Stratton

Expressed sadness but stressed the importance of avoiding judgment. Highlighted the need to consider those who may cross paths with the individual. Confirmed that the response would remain the same if acting as a PCC member.

Mrs. Janet Prescott, Pydar

Emphasised the distinction between reaction and response. Reaction is an initial human behaviour and may be influenced by how the information is presented. The PCC response should follow protocol, recognising that reactions can be subconscious.

Revd. Adam Thomas, Penwith

Noted that the initial reaction is not one to repeat publicly. The appropriate response would be to contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and agree a plan that includes pastoral support, including for the family.

Revd. Shona Hoad, St Austell

Expressed surprise that the police would contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer rather than the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

Mrs. Mandy Wells, Safeguarding Trainer, Diocese of Truro (response):

Explained that the police may contact the parish if the officer's details are publicly displayed, for example on a safeguarding poster in a church.

SCENARIO | PART TWO

Context: The member of clergy has been asked to step back pending further investigation. Church friends are discussing the situation. There has been a call from the police and information shared by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. This impacts the parish, and several people are aware of the matter. Managing conversations within the parish can become a challenge.

- *Thinking of the victim, how would you respond to the conversations and comments in your parish?*

FEEDBACK

Mr. Michael Griffiths, Carmarthen South

Advised caution, noting that the perceived perpetrator might also be a victim. Emphasised avoiding speculation.

Mr. Lee Moscato, Director of Education, Diocese of Truro

Shared the 'THINK' approach used in schools before speaking:

- Time - Is this the right time?
- Helpful - Is this helpful?
- Informed - Is this informed?
- Necessary - Is this necessary?
- Kind - Is this kind?

Mrs. Mandy Wells

Reminded members of the four safeguarding principles:

- Recognise
- Respond
- Record
- Report

SCENARIO | PART THREE

Context: The situation has now been reported in the press, and the parish is named. The press contacts the parish for comment.

- *How do you respond as a PCC member?*
- *Thinking of the victim, how would you respond to the conversations and comments in your parish?*
- *Where do you go for help?*

FEEDBACK

Where to go for help:

- Archdeacon
- Press Officer
- Diocesan Safeguarding Team
- Pastoral Supervision, Clergy
- Parish Safeguarding Officer

Reminder from MW:

- If there is an immediate risk, contact the police, Multi-Agency Referral Unit (MARU) for young people, or Adult Social Care.
- Always inform the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

Diocesan Safeguarding Team:

Queries: safeguardingqueries@trurodiocese.org.uk

Concerns: safeguardingconcerns@trurodiocese.org.uk

END OF SCENARIO AND FEEDBACK.

The Chair thanked MW and members for their contributions and expressed appreciation to the Safeguarding Team for their ongoing work. Members were asked to remember the team in their prayers.

BREAK

8. Update on the Environment Strategy: Mr. Mike Sturgess and The Rt Revd. Hugh Nelson, Bishop of St Germans

Purpose: The committee reported progress on the diocesan environmental strategy, Cherish Creation, Cut Carbon, Speak Up launched in 2021, and discussed future plans.

Summary

- **Global Context:** Climate commitments weakening; Church urged to lead by example.
- **Living Churchyards:** Project to be re-established; partnerships with Wildlife Trust and Cornwall Council.
- **Eco Church:** Bronze Awards achieved; Silver in progress; Leaders for Creation Care training launches January.
- **Carbon Reduction:** 70 churches visited; 60 decarbonisation plans produced; £30k Quick Wins grants; £70k Give to Go Green; £20k boiler hardship grants; Case studies: infrared heating, heated cushions.
- **Community Engagement:** Air-to-air heat pump replacing condemned boiler; future plans for insulation and solar panels; St Edwina's Silver Award; creation-themed services and bulb planting.
- **Schools:** 31 workshops; 14+ schools; 1,000+ children engaged; Activities: Creation Story, planting, prayer trees; Resources and loan kits available; new themed packs in development.
- **Next Steps:** Expand Living Churchyards, increase Eco Church awards, continue carbon reduction and school engagement.

Mr. Mike Sturgess and The Rt Revd. Hugh Nelson, Bishop of St Germans

The committee reaffirmed its role in overseeing implementation and reporting progress. Global political developments were noted, including the rollback of climate commitments by some governments and parties. Reform UK has even renamed Net Zero as "Net Stupid Zero."

A report by the Institute for Environmental Research and Education highlighted six consequences of ignoring climate change:

- Rising sea levels threatening major cities.
- Increasing frequency of extreme weather events.
- Crop failures and food insecurity.
- Ecosystem collapse (coral bleaching, forest fires).
- Public health risks (heatwaves, disease spread).
- Economic instability.

The Church was identified as having a moral responsibility to lead by example and advocate for long-term solutions.

Mrs. Kate Cortez, (KC) Deputy Diocesan Secretary, reported on 5 key areas:

- Churches
- Schools
- Parsonages
- Glebe
- Investment

Reference was made to the last page of the paper "TDS254(7.1) Updated Environment Strategy", which details what work is going on currently. Later this year, KC continued, there will be a full set of comparable data for the first time in the Church of England across the indicators about church divisions, property emissions etc. In relation to property, a significant amount of the work is grant funded.

Dr. Sharon Willoughby, Diocesan Environment Officer, Diocese of Truro

The Creation Care Strategy has three pillars: *Cherish Creation, Cut Carbon, Speak Up.*

Cherish Creation

Plans for 2026 include re-establishing the Living Churchyards Project. Collaborating with The Wildlife Trust and Cornwall Council will strengthen this initiative.

The Eco Church Scheme continues to grow, Work is underway towards achieving the Silver Award, focusing on building improvements and community engagement.

St Illogan | Bronze Eco Church

Part of the Living Churchyards Group, members support the maintenance of the churchyard so that it can continue to be a living churchyard.

St Adwena | Silver Eco Church

In October 2025, members of the church planted native daffodil bulbs to support biodiversity.

All Hallows, Kea Church | Bronze Eco Church

Part of the Living Churchyards Group, members work together, using their different skills to maintain and nurture the churchyard, garden, and wildlife. They manage the whole area themselves.

Cut Carbon**St Mary's, Penzance | Silver Eco Church**

Reducing their energy footprint with halo heaters.

All Hallows, Kea Church | Bronze Eco Church

St Kea Church started their Eco Church journey approximately 3-4 years ago. By gathering a small team, the congregation developed their churchyard and took part in a litter pick with a local school. All of which contributed to reaching Bronze Eco Church status.

Speak Up**St Mary, Bradoc | Gold Eco Church**

Julia Harvard led a 'Creation Care Service at this church in September 2025.

Training and resources are being developed to boost environmental literacy, including apps for species and bird identification.

The Leaders for Creation Care Training Programme will launch in January, in partnership with dioceses of Truro and Exeter, and theological colleges.

Mr. Ben Wood, Cut Carbon Support Officer, Diocese of Truro

At General Synod in 2020, a target for reaching Net Zero was set at 2030, which demonstrates the widespread commitment and dedication to care for God's Creation.

What are the benefits?

- Heating can be substantially improved.
- Community & Missional growth.
- Utility bills can be substantially reduced.
- Provide an example to others of responsible, environmental management.

Since January, the Cut Carbon Support Officer has:

- Visited 70+ churches.
- Produced 60 detailed decarbonisation plans.
- Secured nearly £30,000 for 16 churches through the 'Quick Wins' Scheme.
- Delivered £70,000 in grants to 14 churches via the 'Give to Go Green' Scheme.

- Supported 'Boiler Hardship Replacement' grants totaling £20,000, with another in progress.
- £65,000 was delivered to 2 churches through the 'Demonstrators' Project.

A video was shown to members showing the benefit of having the halo heaters installed at St Mary's Church, Penzance.

- Previous boiler was inefficient and costly and eventually stopped working. The boiler would have to be turned on several hours before a service.
- The new halo heaters provide localised heat via infrared. Unlike the boiler, the halo heaters don't need to be turned on until 10 minutes before a service.
- Previously, the church was not a warm place, and this impacted on the number of people attending church. Now, people are coming back.
- Aesthetically, the halos are in keeping with the church.

All Saints Hightown, Truro.

- Previously had gas convector heaters.
- After speaking to the Cut Carbon Officer, they researched infrared heating and decided that this was the best option for them.
- Half of the cost was funded by the 'Give to Go Green' Scheme.

St Symphorian, Veryan.

- Previously used under pew heaters which were too costly and took too long to heat up.
- Now they use 'Heat & Seat' battery powered seat cushions, which work on the basis of heating the person rather than the space.
- They secured funding via the 'Quick Wins' Scheme.

The Revd. Nicki Farr, Trigg Minor and Bodmin

Creation Care forms part of the benefice strategy. Recently, a condemned oil boiler was replaced with an air-to-air heat pump, supported by hardship funding. Future plans include improving insulation and installing solar panels. Services focused on creation care have attracted both regular worshippers and those who do not usually attend church.

Ms. Claire Green, Schools' Creation Care Officer, Diocese of Truro

Creation Care places strong emphasis on engaging children as future stewards of creation. A dedicated project seeks to build links between Creation Care and schools, recognising that while churches often find it challenging to engage schools, providing high-quality RE lessons has proved effective. Workshops are based on the Cornwall RE syllabus and encourage children to Cherish Creation, Cut Carbon, and Speak Up.

Activities include storytelling about creation, planting seeds, improving churchyards, crafts, and writing prayers or wishes on leaves to hang on a prayer tree. These prayers are later included in Sunday worship, fostering family engagement and sometimes bringing parents into church. Six workshops have already taken place in three local schools, and the prayer tree initiative was described as "amazing" and highly missional.

So far, the project has achieved:

- **12 churches** running workshops
- **31 workshops** delivered
- **14+ schools engaged** (including **11 non-church schools**)
- **1050+ children** participating

Summer activities were publicised in schools, creating further outreach opportunities. Resource packs are available for churches on the diocese website [\[HERE\]](#).

Following the success of Creation Care Champions, there are planned further workshop packs to aim at different ages of children and to make projects that work all year round.

- Harvest Heroes (Sept 25) aimed at Y3 and Y4.
- Advent Adventures (Nov 2025) aimed at Y1 and Y2.
- Easter Explorers (March 2026) aimed at Y5 and Y6.
- Pentecost Pilgrims (March 2026).
- Moving On (June 2026) aimed at Y6.
- What's Inside a Church? (Sept 26) aimed at Y1 and Y2.

A video was shown, highlighting what a Creation Care workshop looks like and the impact it has on the children, the church, and the community.

Parsonages and Property

Mrs. Kate Cortez, Deputy Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of Truro

Creation Care is not only about reducing carbon emissions; it also focuses on making parsonages liveable and helping manage energy costs. It's also about the value and compliance. Contrary to common assumptions, spending has been modest. The plan for 2026 is to continue works within the existing budget, without additional expenditure. In 2021, 27 properties were graded as 'A' and so far, 1/5 (20%) of emissions have already been cut.

Glebe Environmental Priorities (subject to the overall priorities of the estate):

- Housing.
- Environment (including biodiversity).
- Community (plus generating funds for clergy stipends).

The action plan and objectives are being reviewed for the next 3 years.

Conclusion

The update demonstrated significant progress in implementing the Environment Strategy, with strong engagement from churches, schools, and communities. Plans for 2026 include expanding Living Churchyards, achieving higher Eco Church awards, and continuing carbon reduction initiatives.

QUESTIONS

Dr. Patrick Newberry, East Wivelshire

Patrick asked whether the diocese has a strategy to avoid repeating past sustainability mistakes in church re-ordering, noting that measures such as throwing out pews or well-intentioned adaptations such as new concrete or limestone floors are "carbon disasters".

Mrs. Kate Cortez, Deputy Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of Truro (response)

It's not about discarding everything (repurpose and reuse); the focus is on finding the right solution for each church, as every situation is different. Churches work closely with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). The priority is to ensure churches are warm and usable. While specific strategies are in place, more detailed plans are expected.

Ms. Kathy Pope, Churches Together in Cornwall

Kathy asked how Churches Together in Cornwall can support ecumenical work on this agenda.

Mrs. Kate Cortez, Deputy Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of Truro (response)

The Church of England has a network of Creation Care Champions and a joint pledge on this. Kate advised Kathy to speak to the Diocesan Environment Officer, Sharon Willoughby, and other Creation Care Champions in the diocese.

The Rt. Revd. Hugh Nelson, Bishop of St Germans

Bishop Hugh drew members' attention to the bookmarks on their tables, encouraging everyone to make a personal pledge.

END OF QUESTIONS.**LUNCH with Midday Prayers: Mrs. Kerstin Lewis, President of the Mothers' Union****10. Update on Growing on Younger: Mr. Isaac McNish, Head of Ministry, Mrs. Ruth Marriot, Director of Change and Renewal, and Mr. Lee Moscato, Director of Education**

The Rt Revd. David Williams, Bishop of Truro, reminded members of the vision shared in June for work with children, young people, and families. Progress has been made, and the national church is now supporting this initiative, which will require deeper engagement with the proposed plans. Earlier in the week, 14 incumbents attended a facilitated planning session at Trinity College, Bristol, exploring what it means to place children at the centre of church life.

The Rt Revd. Hugh Nelson, Bishop of Truro

Bishop Hugh explained that they would remain largely silent during the session. This approach was intentional to ensure that the maximum amount of time was dedicated to discussion and feedback from Synod members, allowing their voices and perspectives to shape the conversation.

QUESTIONS**Mr. Martin Saunders, Pydar**

Noting the report, asked what is the current culture, and what do you see needs to be changed?

Mr. Isaac McNish, Head of Ministry, Diocese of Truro (response):

In addressing the question on the current culture and what needs to change, it was noted that while resources such as money and people are often discussed, the deeper issue is a shared willingness to embark on the journey together. Isaac pointed to the “five foundations” in the Growing Youger work, these promoted a culture of collaboration, valuing diverse ministries, and working collectively. These principles should not remain aspirational but serve as measures of success, with a culture that places children and people at its centre.

The need for change was described as deeply personal and transformative. True hospitality was highlighted as an example: welcoming others should not be conditional on them conforming to existing norms. Instead, hosting others brings mutual change, as new voices and gifts enrich the community. For the church and its future flourishing, this means openly engaging with and embracing those not yet present. Their inclusion will inevitably change the church, and it is hoped this change will be for the better—moving towards a more open and Christ-like community.

The Revd. Adam Thomas, Penwith

AT said at their deanery planning day in January, participants were asked to identify their top three priorities. One of the most notable outcomes was the emphasis on “intergenerational” ministry. This priority was unexpected but has since emerged as the strongest and most consistent theme in ongoing conversations. AT asked what they can do in helping them realise that?

The Rt Revd. Hugh Nelson, Bishop of Truro

Bishop Hugh commented how they don't want to end up having churches with just 16-year-olds in them, otherwise they end up being just as distorted as the churches with 75-year-olds in them.

Mrs. Sarah Vinson, Trigg Major

SV reported that a local primary school was invited to a harvest service, with half the school attending. During the service, while some traditional harvest responses were given, a notable moment occurred when a five-year-old stated that harvest was “all about silage.” This led to a discussion among the children, many of whom explained what silage was and why it is important. The observation highlighted that children’s perspectives can differ significantly from adult expectations and that their contributions

bring valuable insight. In this case, the local farming context shaped their understanding of harvest.

Mrs. Janet Prescott, Pydar

It was highlighted that progress should be identified and celebrated, even when it comes in small steps. In one parish, a group of children regularly attend services following their Jam Club sessions. Their involvement has shifted the congregation's attitude from passive observation to active engagement. Rather than simply reporting what they learned, the children now issue challenges to the congregation, creating meaningful interaction. This has led to unexpected outcomes, such as previously unresponsive members participating in quizzes and proudly wearing "Jesus loves me" wristbands. These moments, though small, were described as significant signs of growth and should be celebrated as part of the wider mission.

Mr. Simon Taurins, Powder

What is 'Flourish' and how does it work?

Mr. Lee Moscato, Director of Education, Diocese of Truro (response):

The Flourish initiative works on the home-school-church network and seeks to support churches in establishing worshipping communities within or for specific schools, and connecting with the families of the children involved. In Truro it was introduced as a two-year pilot involving three different locations. One location included a church using space within a primary school, while the other two were in rural areas without current church presence in schools. The pilot aimed to explore how churches could engage with schools at key transitional points as part of the wider mission strategy.

Key learning from the pilot included the importance of building relationships with schools by clearly explaining the church's vision and offer. This approach created open doors and opportunities for collaboration, aligning with the vision of education as "deeply Christian for the common good." Through these partnerships, spaces were created for worship, prayer, and shared reflection within school communities.

The pilot also demonstrated how engagement could support pupils in exploring faith and contribute to the wider school culture. Additionally, it highlighted opportunities to involve not only children but also adults within school settings, reinforcing the commitment to serve the common good. These insights will inform future strategies for mission and education across the diocese.

END OF QUESTIONS.

Meeting as Members of Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd, Chaired by The Revd. Douglas Wren, Chair of the House of Clergy

11. Presentation of the 2026 Diocesan Board of Finance Budget: Mr. Justin Day, Chair of the TDBF, and Mrs. Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets, Diocese of Truro

Executive Summary - 2026 Budget Presentation

The purpose of this Synod session was to approve the 2026 budget for the Truro Diocesan Board of Finance (TDBF), following consultation and recommendation by the Finance and Assets Review Committee (FAR) and the Bishop's Diocesan Council (BDC).

Strategic Context

The budget is strategically aligned with:

- **Deanery Plans**
- **Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal (DPC&R)**
- **Asset Strategy**

It reflects a joined-up approach, translating these plans into financial terms to support a fruitful and sustainable diocese.

Headline Figures

- **Total budgeted expenditure:** £11.75 million
- **Budgeted income:** £7.3 million
- **Planned deficit:** £4.476 million (increase from £4 million in 2025)
- **Reserves usage:** 38% of total expenditure, in line with the Asset Strategy
- **Total funds at year-end:** £114 million (reduction of £4.5 million)
- **General Fund balance:** £1.9 million (within Reserves Policy requirement of £1.65 million)

Deficit Composition

- £1.7 million to keep MMF call down for parishes
- £600,000 for Carbon Net Zero initiatives (mainly clergy housing)
- £700,000 impact from income recognition policy change
- Other smaller strategic allocations

Income and MMF

- **MMF contributions:** £3.304 million (3% increase on 2025)
- MMF formula changes approved in June 2025:
 - Maximum deanery increase: 5.5%
 - Shift from benefice charge to shared costs
- LICF funding increased by £327,000, largely passed to deaneries
- Mission funding from reserves: £230,000 for 2026

Expenditure Breakdown

- **Ordained ministry:** direct costs are 55% of total spend
 - Stipends and pensions: £2.9 million
 - Clergy housing: £1.85 million (+£185k)
 - Other ministry costs: £1.3 million
 - National ministry contribution: £340k
- **Church House:** £2.44 million (+£416k)
 - Lay staff costs: £1.35 million
 - Includes safeguarding, DAC, education, admin, finance
 - £200k demolition of St Paul's funded from reserves
- **Carbon Net Zero:** £500k for property works
 - 40 properties now rated A or B EPC (up from 10 in 2021)

Staffing

The headline figure for stipendiary clergy in the budget is confirmed as 63 FTE, comprising:

- 53.1 incumbent status clergy (as per deanery plans)
- 8.54 stipendiary curates
- 1.5 Archdeacons

Lay staff FTE: Core operational staff up from 30.9 FTE to 31.4 FTE. Total including DBF employees working in parishes, and nationally funded posts; 46.2 (no change on 2025 budget).

Stipend increase: 7.4% from April 2026 (national alignment).

Governance and Risks

- Budget reforecast and significant changes to be reported to Synod in May 2026
- Risks include:
 - Non-payment of MMF
 - Unplanned property costs
 - Inflationary pressures
 - Exposure to Cornish property market

Conclusion

The budget is strategically led, affordable within the Asset Strategy, and uses reserves in a planned manner to support parishes and diocesan priorities. FAR and BDC recommend approval.

Mr. Justin Day, Chair of the TDBF

JD outlined the purpose of this section of Synod, which was to approve the 2026 budget. The budget has been through a consultation process and comes with the recommendation for approval from the Bishop's Diocesan Council (BDC).

He explained that the budget anticipates a planned deficit for 2026. While the figure appears significant, it aligns with the financial strategy previously agreed by Synod.

Planned deficit for 2026: £4.476 million

- This is partly funded through reserves, as approved in the Asset Strategy (November 2023), which allows for the use of £22 million over ten years.
- The current deficit is within the agreed financial envelope.

Accounting changes:

- Following auditor recommendations, income from grants and central funds must now be recognised when received rather than when spent. This adjustment contributes to the apparent size of the deficit.

MMF contributions for 2026: £3.304 million

- Represents a 3% increase from 2025.
- Based on deanery plans and includes estimates for LICF and mission funds.

Consultation process:

- Began in spring with meetings involving strategic and rural deans and deanery treasurers.
- Priority was supporting parishes in implementing their plans.
- Proposal agreed: remove the previous benefice charge and replace it with “shared costs” allocated pro rata to ministry costs.
- Broad agreement that this approach and the MMF increase are fair and reasonable.

Budget preparation:

- Initial draft prepared by FAR, reviewed by BDC in summer.
- Final scrutiny by FAR and BDC before recommendation for Synod approval.

Additional Financial Details:

- **Transitional Funding:** £366,000 from the Archbishops' Council to help bridge the gap between ministry costs and MMF contributions.
- **LICF increase:** £327,000 anticipated from central church funds (allocations to be finalised by deaneries).
- **Major works on parsonages:** £1 million (same as previous year).
- **Glebe costs:** Expected to decrease due to property sales.
- **Net Zero initiatives:** £60,000 allocated, focusing on property improvements that support environmental goals and clergy wellbeing.

Key Risks Identified:

- Potential shortfalls in MMF contributions from parishes.
- Unplanned property expenditures.
- Inflationary pressures.

Mrs. Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets, Diocese of Truro

SE began by noting that a briefing session was held on Wednesday evening for Synod members. This session was designed to allow those who wished to engage in more detailed

discussion of the budget to do so ahead of today's meeting, thereby freeing up time during Synod. She emphasised that questions would still be welcomed at the end of her presentation.

She explained that any budget is essentially a plan expressed in numbers, and asked the question: whose plans are reflected in the TDBF budget? The starting point for this budget was the deanery plans, the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal (DPC&R), and the Asset Strategy. In addition, the Church House teams have their own plans, which are based on these same documents. This demonstrates a joined-up strategic approach across the diocese, with the budget effectively putting financial figures against the agreed strategy. If the work outlined in these plans is to be carried out, the budget shows the cost of that work and the level of reserves that need to be used as the diocese journeys towards being fruitful and sustainable.

The documents referred to provide key information such as the number and deployment of clergy, the use of reserves to keep the MMF call down, the structure of the Church House team, areas for mission investment, and the MMF contributions expected from parishes. All deanery plans are currently being reviewed to ensure they remain fruitful and sustainable, and it is likely that some changes will be needed. Because the budget is based on these plans, any changes to them may require corresponding changes to the budget.

SE also highlighted the development of the **Growing Younger** initiative within the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal. It is hoped that funding will be awarded for this work in 2026. If that happens, the budget will need to be revised to reflect the new funding and associated expenditure. These factors introduce a higher level of uncertainty, meaning the budget could change significantly during 2026. To address this, she proposed a new process whereby Synod would if necessary be invited to approve a revised budget, and in any case receive an update in May 2026.

SE stressed that, in her opinion, this budget is exactly what it should be: strategically led and making appropriate use of reserves. As a charity, reserves exist to be used for the purposes of the organisation. Mrs. Eddy acknowledged the complexity of diocesan finances and apologised if the published report raised more questions than answers, expressing hope that her presentation would clarify matters and inviting questions at the end.

Reflecting all the plans in the budget results in an overall deficit of just under £4.5 million, an increase from just under £4 million in 2025. She recognised that this is a significant figure and addressed the question of why Synod is being asked to approve another deficit budget, and one of this size. Part of the deficit is due to strategic work under the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal, which is funded through the Asset Strategy, and another part is due to the change in income recognition policy, which requires income to be recognised when received rather than when spent.

SE referred to the Asset Strategy, explaining that a graph illustrates how the £22 million of reserves has been and will be used over the ten-year period. While there have been some differences in the timing of expenditure, the overall release of funds remains affordable. A detailed review of the Asset Strategy will be carried out when preparing the 2028 budget to determine whether more funds can be released or whether changes are needed to the areas for which funds are allocated.

Key Financial Figures

- **Overall deficit for 2026:** Just under £4.5 million (increase from just under £4 million in 2025)
- **Reserves planned for release:** £22 million over 10 years (Asset Strategy)

SE reiterating that the budget reflects strategic priorities and remains within the agreed financial framework, despite the significant deficit.

SE continued by explaining the composition of the planned deficit. As previously mentioned, part of the deficit is due to the use of reserves for strategically planned work. This includes several key allocations:

- **Approximately 40% (£1.7 million)** is being used to keep the overall MMF call down for all parishes. This is one of the key decisions in the budget and aligns with the Asset Strategy, which allocated half of the £22 million reserves to supporting parishes in this way.
- **£600,000** is allocated to achieving carbon net zero, with most of this expenditure focused on clergy housing.
- There are various other smaller amounts allocated to strategic initiatives, some of which were listed on the accompanying slide.

The remainder of the deficit arises from a change in the policy for recognising income, introduced in 2025. This change has resulted in **£700,000 less income** being included in the 2026 budget. The adjustment was identified by auditors during the 2024 year-end audit and flagged when the 2024 financial statements were presented. Under the revised policy, grant income is now recognised in the accounts when awarded rather than when spent.

SE then provided more detail on income and expenditure. For 2026, income is budgeted at **£7.3 million**, while total budgeted expenditure is **£11.75 million**, including the use of reserves. This means that **38% of total expenditure is covered by reserves**, which she noted is a stark figure compared to other dioceses. Truro has a higher proportion of income from the national church (through LICF and other national funding) and a smaller proportion from parish contributions (MMF) than many other dioceses.

Turning to expenditure, SE explained that the cost of providing parochial ministry is by far the largest area of spend, direct costs of stipendiary clergy accounting for around **55% of the total budget**. This is represented by four categories in the expenditure breakdown:

- **Clergy stipends and pensions:** £2.9 million
- **Clergy housing:** £1.85 million
- **Other ministry costs:** £1.3 million (including glebe portfolio, ordinands, Strategic Rural Deans, training, IME and CMD, resettlement grants, and removals)
- **National ministry contribution:** £340,000 (payment to the national church for the Ministry Training Fund, replacing previous vote and pooling systems following the Diocesan Finance Review reported in 2025)

SE then addressed MMF contributions, which remain the largest income stream for the DBF aside from reserves. For 2026, MMF income is budgeted at **£3.3 million**, representing a **3% increase** on the 2025 budget. The changes to the MMF formula, consulted on and approved by Synod in June 2025, are reflected in this budget. The MMF call for each deanery has been increased by a maximum of **5.5%**, which includes the inflationary increase and the change from the benefice charge to shared costs.

She explained that this above-inflation increase is necessary because the DBF has not been passing on the full costs of ministry to parishes in recent years, which is unsustainable. While the DBF can afford to subsidise some costs, it cannot continue at previous levels. From January 2026, the DBF will begin to reduce this subsidy, aiming to cover between **£1-1.5** per year by 2032. The table shown indicated that by increasing unit costs by the higher-than-inflation amount, the costs not passed on to parishes will fall slightly in 2026, from **£1.8 million to £1.7 million**. This begins to reverse the cumulative impact of lower unit cost increases over the past three years.

The **total cost of ministry** for 2026 is budgeted at **£4.2 million**, calculated by applying the 5.5% increase to ministry numbers in the latest deanery plans. Estimates of LICF and mission funding usage by deaneries have been included to reduce the MMF call to parishes to **£3.3 million**, the budgeted amount. Actual allocations will differ from estimates, and if they vary

by more than 10%, this will be reported to Synod in May 2026.

SE noted that LICF funding to TDBF will increase by just over £300,000 in 2026, most of which has been passed on to deaneries. Deaneries have been asked to consider using this increase to help reduce the MMF call to parishes. A review of LICF and mission funding use is underway, as some deaneries are experiencing reductions in MMF contributions while not spending available funds. She stressed that funding the church in Cornwall is a three-way partnership between the national church, the DBF, and local parishes. If any of these partners does not contribute, another must cover the shortfall, which reduces funds available for other planned work. This issue has been discussed and agreed at both FAR and BDC.

SE noted that MMF collection rates have been the highest in recent years, with more parishes contributing their full call, for which the Board is very grateful. She acknowledged that some parishes have used reserves to achieve this, which is not sustainable in the long term, and that a small number of parishes continue to withhold MMF contributions. While this number is much lower than before, it remains important to understand the reasons behind this. SE explained that MMF levels have flattened in recent years and have not kept pace with inflation. While this has been manageable due to the availability of reserves, it is not sustainable in the long term. These factors have led to reviews of deanery plans and the use of LICF and mission funding.

Turning to expenditure, SE focused on the ministry category of spend. The total cost of ministry is budgeted to be **£294,000 higher in 2026** than the forecast for 2025. The main reason for this increase is the rising cost of clergy, driven by both an increase in full-time equivalent (FTE) numbers and an increase in stipends from 1 April 2026.

The largest component of ministry expenditure remains stipends and pensions, represented by the dark blue wedge on the expenditure chart. Incumbent status stipendiary clergy FTE numbers in 2026 are budgeted to be **10.5% higher** than the 2025 forecast, increasing from **48.09 to 53.13**. Archdeacon FTE reduces slightly due to the departure of Archdeacon Kelly, while stipendiary curate numbers remain at **8.5**. These figures reflect FTE numbers, as some posts are part-time, and total **63FTE** over the year. When considering **headcount**, total stipendiary posts are expected to peak at **68.02 in August 2026**.

SE explained that the difference between the budgeted stipendiary clergy figure (53.13) and the deanery plan figure (58.17) is due to the application of a vacancy rate. The budget assumes an **8.7% average vacancy rate** for 2026, equating to around five posts in transition at any time. She clarified that the 10% rate stated in the report was incorrect. High levels of transition have been experienced since 2023, and the national shortfall in candidates for ordained ministry means all dioceses, including Truro, face challenges in filling vacancies. Recruitment remains a top priority for the diocese, and while the process is complex, efforts are being made to fill posts promptly and appropriately.

The budget includes a **7.4% stipend increase from 1 April 2026**, following General Synod's approval of a national stipend level as part of the Diocesan Finance Review reported in 2025. The diocese will revert to an April increase date to align with other dioceses.

Clergy housing is the second-largest element of ministry expenditure, budgeted at **£1.85 million**. This represents an increase of **£185,000** compared to 2025, mainly due to higher professional fees following the retendering of the property management contract. This line includes not only maintenance costs but also Council Tax and water rates, budgeted at **£270,000**. Glebe costs have been reduced by **£200,000** in 2026, as major repairs budgeted for 2025 have been completed.

SE reminded Synod that ministry costs include support for lay ministry, which continues to grow and is essential for the functioning of many parishes.

She then moved on to parish-based mission, represented by the orange wedge on the expenditure chart, budgeted at **£2.24 million**. **Mission funding** from DBF reserves is being made available to deaneries without Transforming Mission projects, amounting to **£2 million over 5-7 years**, with **£230,000 included in the 2026 budget**. The diocese continues to pass on Lowest Income Communities Funding (LICF) to the communities for which it is received, with **£721,000 included in the budget** as grants to deaneries. This includes the additional amount awarded for 2026, with the remainder used to reduce MMF calls for parishes. Deaneries are being encouraged to consider using more LICF to help meet MMF contributions where necessary.

SE confirmed that the budget will be reprofiled during the year when more information is available from deaneries about LICF and mission funding usage for 2026. If the changes are considered significant, they will be reported to Diocesan Synod in May 2026.

She noted that various other funds are being made available for mission, with the aim of enabling change and supporting parishes through challenging times, ultimately leading to fruitfulness and sustainability. The Programme Board for Change and Renewal is responsible for monitoring this funding to ensure its impact and effectiveness are understood. SE also reminded Synod that the use of LICF must be reported annually to the Archbishops' Council.

Moving to Church House expenditure, represented by the green wedge on the pie chart, SE explained that this covers functions supporting parishes and the running of the diocese, including safeguarding, DAC, education, administration, environment, and finance. This category totals **£2.44 million for 2026**, with all but **£200,000** included in Shared Costs within the MMF toolkit issued to deaneries. The **£200,000** relates to the demolition of St Paul's Church in Truro and will be funded from reserves.

The largest component of Church House expenditure is lay staff costs, including pensions, budgeted at **£1.35 million**. The total Church House budget is **£416,000 higher than the 2025 forecast**, due to:

- **£75,000** for a 3.5% cost-of-living increase for lay staff
- **£46,000** for additional safeguarding resource (Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor, recharged to the Cathedral)
- **£30,000** for increased legal costs
- **£30,000** for a website rebuild
- **£200,000** for demolition costs
- It also includes reinstatement of lay staff pension contributions following the end of the pension holiday in 2026.

SE provided detail on lay staff FTE numbers. The total remains at **46.2 FTE posts** in the 2026 budget, although there are movements within teams. This total includes staff funded nationally, and staff employed locally. Core operational posts have increased slightly from **30.9 to 31.4 FTE**. As the Growing Younger work develops, staff numbers may increase during 2026, and any changes will be reported to Synod in May alongside reforecast budget figures.

Finally, SE addressed Carbon Net Zero 2030 expenditure, which remains broadly the same as the 2025 forecast. This includes **£500,000 for net zero works on properties**. She noted that the diocese now has **40 properties with an A or B EPC rating**, up from 10 (all B) in January 2021. The remainder of the budget supports capacity-building work funded by the national church, enabling resources to assist parishes and schools. All expenditure in this category is funded from reserves or external funding and does not impact parish toolkit figures.

SE referred Synod to Appendix 8 in the papers, which shows movements on funds and how the deficit is funded. At the end of 2026, total funds are budgeted at **£114 million**, a reduction of **£4.5 million**, as expected due to planned reserve use. Linked to this is the Reserves Policy in Appendix 9, which requires **£1.65 million** to be held in the General Fund. The General Fund is budgeted at **£1.9 million** at year-end, meaning the budget complies with the policy.

SE concluded by affirming that the diocese is blessed to have reserves and is using them in a planned manner to support parishes and deliver the diocesan strategy. She stressed that the most important aspect of the budget is that it is strategically led by deanery plans, the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal, and the Asset Strategy. The diocesan leadership remains committed to driving change for a fruitful and sustainable diocese. The budget is affordable, though risks remain, including non-payment of MMF, unplanned property expenditure, inflationary pressures, and exposure to the Cornish property market. Despite these risks, FAR and BDC consider the budget realistic and recommend it to Synod for approval.

QUESTIONS

Mrs. Abigail Kirby-Harris, Trigg Minor & Bodmin

- What is the cost of employing Generous Giving Advisors, and has a cost-benefit analysis been carried out?
- With the reemployment of Savills, what is the remuneration or retainer package paid to these roles? Are there any individuals within their staff who receive additional payments or benefits?

Mrs. Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets, Diocese of Truro (response):

Generous Giving Advisors:

- Team of two (1.1 FTE) costs just over £15,000.
- National funding expected to contribute £24,000 in 2026 (not yet confirmed).
- Team enables access to additional national support (e.g., electronic giving devices).
- Cost-benefit analysis for individual teams is not considered helpful; impact and effectiveness will be reviewed in 2026 as part of Church House review.

Glebe Management:

- Managed under a professional services contract (estate management), recently retendered for best value.
- Income from Glebe estate increased from £260,000 (2015) to £425,000 (2026) despite portfolio reduction.
- Income supports stipendiary ministry and reduces parish costs.
- Sales decisions rest with BDC, following consultation with parishes.
- Maximising Glebe income is essential for sustaining the Asset Strategy and reducing MMF burden.

Mr. Martin Saunders, Pydar

In his view the requirement of the auditor based on the revised Statement of Recommended Practice would lead to recognising income and the corresponding expenditure in different accounting periods, this would make it more difficult to understand the budget and annual report, and was a mistake.

MS argued that the current budget undermines the fundamental role of stipendiary parish priests in parish ministry and called for a complete review of priorities and a redirection of funds, in particular the Stipends Capital Account, to sustain and grow clergy numbers. On this basis he urged Synod to reject the proposed budget.

MS questioned whether it is appropriate for MMF monies to be used for expenditure other than clergy costs, given that most parish contributions are raised explicitly for parish ministry?

MS questioned why substantial funds such as LICF and mission funding are not being used primarily to support and increase parish clergy?

MS asked why clergy numbers are not increasing and urged the diocese to reprioritise expenditure to achieve the goal of 100 full-time stipendiary priests in Cornwall.

MS referred to an article in Church Times titled “The Church is Not a Mission Machine” and quoted its conclusion, emphasising that the true wealth of the Church lies in its people, not in money or managerial structures. MS argued that parish priests are the fundamental building block of the Church of England and must be nurtured, supported, and increased in number. They expressed concern that the proposed budget undermines this principle, risks further decline and prioritises managerial approaches over parish ministry.

Mr. Simon Taurins, Powder

ST emphasised the need for a cultural shift toward generosity across the diocese. While detailed financial discussions are important, he stressed that the Church must encourage a spirit of giving, not just financial contributions but heartfelt engagement. He shared an example from a recent five-week course on generosity, which led to significant responses—both financial and personal—highlighting the transformative impact of teaching and testimony on giving.

Mrs. Sophie Eddy, Director of Finance and Assets, Diocese of Truro (response):

Responding to Martin Saunders, SE explained that the change in accounting treatment for income recognition is due to compliance with the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP). Previously, income was matched to expenditure, but auditors now require recognition when income is awarded, not when spent. A document prepared by auditors explaining the legal basis for this requirement will be circulated after Synod to help members understand the change.

The Revd. Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of Truro (response):

Responding to Martin Saunders, SC agreed that clergy are important and that unlike almost all other dioceses Truro was now, albeit slowly, increasing the number of clergy in post. He clarified that decisions on the use of LICF and Mission Funds are made locally, with diocesan oversight, to ensure priorities reflect local discernment but that the diocesan leaders do encourage using LICF and Mission Funding to support stipendiary ministry. The Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal is not the “top down” model proposed by MS.

SC warned against making money the primary challenge, as this risks idolatry, and stressed that the diocese’s fundamental challenge is spiritual, not financial.

Mr. Jos Moule, Registrar (response):

Responding to Martin Saunders regarding the lawfulness of PCC Contributions to MMF:

- PCCs have broad powers under the **Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956**, including responsibility for financial affairs.
- PCCs are separate charities and must comply with charity law, acting for public benefit.
- PCCs can lawfully make contributions to other charities if it aligns with their charitable objectives and missional interest.
- Legal advice from the Church Commissioners confirms this interpretation.
- Therefore, contributing to MMF for diocesan purposes is considered lawful.

The Ven Clive Hogger, Archdeacon of Cornwall (response):

CH explained that clergy retention challenges are largely due to national trends, with retirements outpacing ordinations. This pattern is reflected in the Diocese of Truro. Exit interviews indicate that factors such as well-being provision, housing quality, and relationships across lay and ordained roles influence decisions. Some clergy have left because they prefer single-parish roles over oversight ministry, but this is common across dioceses. Very few clergy leave Truro to take posts elsewhere, so local losses are not due to diocesan issues but part of wider national challenges facing the Church.

Dr. Patrick Newberry, East Wivelshire

PN stated he will not vote for the budget, not because it is a deficit budget, but because he believes resources have not been well spent. He expressed concern that after three years, some strategic initiatives have failed to deliver results, and that reserves, which can only be

spent once, may be wasted. He fears that in seven years, little progress will have been achieved despite significant expenditure. Citing local examples, he noted that two strategic ministers appointed in his deanery left early, with one describing the role as “undoable,” and both moved to Exeter Diocese. He highlighted a warning in the BDC report that strategic funding often achieves short-term impact but struggles to deliver long-term sustainability. Dr Newberry called for clear evidence of outcomes from deanery plans, mid-course corrections if needed, and transparent communication to ensure the diocese remains on track.

Mrs. Janey Prescott, Pydar

JP expressed feeling new to Synod processes but encouraged members to maintain unity and trust in leadership. She acknowledged the value of the discussions and the wisdom shared but appealed to those introducing tension over financial matters to reflect on Hebrews 13:17, which calls for obedience to leaders so their work may be a joy, not a burden. Her message emphasised cooperation and support for diocesan leadership in carrying out their responsibilities.

The Revd. Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of Truro (response):

SC agreed with many of Dr Patrick Newberry’s concerns, noting that the timeframe for implementing plans may have been too ambitious. While the original expectation was to see clear progress within 5-7 years, clergy vacancies have delayed implementation, and some plans from three years ago are only now being enacted. He expressed disappointment at the limited visible change but acknowledged signs of growth where lay and clergy work together and resources are aligned. In some areas, such as Penwith, there is fruitfulness, though in other places progress remains fragile. He concluded that if there were no evidence of alignment or hopefulness, the budget and plans would need to look very different.

END OF QUESTIONS.

Voting

The Chair of the Truro Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd, proposes:

“That the budget be approved.”

In favour: 47 (incl. 3 proxy)

Against: 9

Abstention: 1

The budget was ‘approved’.

Meeting as Members of Truro Diocesan Synod

12. Questions under Standing Order XB21

NONE

13. Consideration of the number of lay members to be elected to Deanery Synod in 2026

Voting

The Chair proposes:

“that Synod approve the number of lay members to be elected to Deanery Synods in 2026.”

In favour: 48

Against: 0

Abstention: 0

The motion was ‘approved’.

14. Amendments to the scheme made under Rule 24 of the Church Representation Rules 2020 affecting the BMOs known as St Gregory's and New Street

Voting

The Chair proposes:

“that Synod approve -

- *The amendment to the scheme for the representation of St Gregory's Church, Cornwall on the Pydar Deanery Synod within the Archdeaconry of Cornwall.*
- *The amendment to the scheme for the representation of New Street Church on the Carmarthen South Deanery Synod within the Archdeaconry of Cornwall.”*

In favour: 48

Against: 0

Abstention: 0

Both motions were ‘approved’.

15. Deed of Delegation to the Bishop of St Germans

Voting

The Bishop of Truro proposes:

“that Synod approve the draft Instrument of Delegation to The Right Reverend Bishop Hugh Nelson, and thanks him for his willingness to serve in this way.”

In favour: 48

Against: 0

Abstention: 0

The motion was ‘approved’.

16. Reports and Minutes

Voting

The Chair proposes:

“that Synod note -

- *The minutes of the meeting of Diocesan Synod on 13 September 2025*
- *The report from the Bishops Diocesan Council.”*

In favour: 47

Against: 0

Abstention: 1

Both the minutes and BDC report were ‘noted’.

17. Prayer and Blessing

18. The meeting closed at 14.55

Dates of future meetings of Diocesan Synod

28 February 2026 St Erme Community Centre and on Zoom

30 May 2026 TBC

28 November 2026 Chapter House, Truro Cathedral and on Zoom