

Bristol Diocesan Synod Minutes

Date: 14 June 2025

Time: 9.15am to 1.00pm

Venue: Holy Trinity Church, Broad Croft, Bradley Stoke, Bristol, BS32 0BD

The agenda and papers for this meeting can be found on the Diocese of Bristol website at: [Diocesan Synod - Diocese of Bristol](#)

1.	Worship
Alasdair Skeil, House of Laity for Swindon Deanery, led worship and Eliana Pretorian performed a solo.	
2.	Election of Chair and Vice Chair of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd for the period from 14 June 2025 to the AGM 2028 2.1 Election of Chair 2.2 Election of Vice Chair
The Rt Revd Viv Faull (+VF), Bishop of Bristol, welcomed all members of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance (BDBF) to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and chaired the election of the Chair and Vice Chair of the BDBF. +VF informed the BDBF that one nomination for the role of Chair of the BDBF and one nomination for the Vice Chair of the BDBF had been received prior to the meeting. The former was Canon Richard Bacon (RB), current Chair of the BDBF, and the latter was Mr John Sunderland (JS), member of Bishop's Council. No other nominations were received during the meeting. 2.1 Election of Chair +VF Proposed: That Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance elect Canon Richard Bacon as it's Chair The motion was passed with a unanimous show of hands. RB was duly re-elected.	

2.2 Election of Vice Chair

+VF Proposed: That Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance elect Mr John Sunderland as Vice Chair

The motion was passed with a unanimous show of hands.

JS was duly re-elected.

+VF introduced RB and invited him to Chair the remainder of the AGM.

3.	The Directors' Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024 3.1 Presentation of report 3.2 Questions & Answer 3.3 Vote on motion to receive and adopt end of year Financial Statements
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RB thanked everyone for their confidence in both himself and JS, then introduced Mr Stephen Sheridan (SLS), Director of Finance and IT.

3.1 Presentation of Report

SLS advised that the 2024's draft financial report was easier to understand, and no changes were anticipated to the numbers; however, there might be small adjustments made to the strategic report to make it more reader/user friendly.

Importantly, haysmc (the auditors) had found no material adjusting items. There were eight process and control recommendations (three for payroll, two for revenue, two for balance Sheet and one for IT). SLS confirmed that all adjusting items had been agreed and would be implemented.

SLS reviewed over several PowerPoint slides the notes made to the Summary Analysis of the 2024 Accounts.

3.2 Questions & Answers

No questions were raised.

3.3 Vote on motion to receive and adopt end of year Financial Statements

Canon Richard Bacon, Chair of the BDBF, proposed: that the BDBF receives and adopts the Directors' Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Limited for the year ended 31st December 2024

The motion was passed with a unanimous show of hands.

RB advised that the report would be approved by the Trustees at their next meeting.

4.	Appointment of Auditors for the year ending 31 December 2025 4.1 Presentation of recommended Auditors 4.2 Vote on Auditors
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4.1 Presentation of recommended Auditors

SLS reported that the newly appointed auditors, haysmac, had conducted themselves in a highly professional and well-organised manner throughout the audit process. He noted that the audit was thorough and of high quality. Based on their performance, SLS recommended the re-appointment of haysmac as auditors for the upcoming financial year.

Mr Richard Leaman, Diocesan Secretary/CEO confirmed that haysmac had adhered strictly to their quoted fee. He highlighted that, unusually, no additional costs were incurred during the audit process.

4.2 Vote on Auditors, Chair of BDBF, Canon Richard Bacon proposed: That the BDBF appoints haysmac as auditors for the year ending 31 December 2025 and to authorise the Directors to fix their remuneration.

The motion was passed with a unanimous show of hands.

5.	Appointment of members of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd
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There were no new members of the BDBF to be appointed.

RB concluded the Annual General meeting and thanked all BDBF members for their support.

The Revd Trudie Wigley (TW), Chair of the House of Clergy, thanked RB, JS, and the Trustees for their ongoing work.

6.	Welcome Minutes of last meeting, apologies
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TW opened the Diocesan Synod meeting. She welcomed Mr Daniel Jeffery, Ordinand at All Saints Clifton, Bristol West Deanery who was attending the meeting to gain insight into the workings of the Synod. She also extended a warm welcome to +VF, noting that this would be her final Diocesan Synod meeting.

TW advised that all notices had been circulated with the agenda in advance of the meeting. She reminded members that it was assumed all papers have been read prior to the meeting, allowing more time to be dedicated to discussion, questions, and answers.

Minutes of the last Meeting

TW confirmed that no amendments had been requested to the minutes for the meeting of Diocesan Synod on 22 March 2025, however, an update would be added to the minutes for the purposes of clarification. A copy of the update was available on each table and TW read it aloud:

During Section 9 (Question Time) of the Diocesan Synod held on 22 March 2025, The Revd James Cannan had posed a question to RL

*Concern was raised on Mr Richard Leaman's answer to the question and a post meeting note has been made. **Post meeting note** – the BMO concerned has questioned the numbers given, and where discrepancies are evidenced, an amendment to these minutes will be issued*

Update to minutes

As noted in the post-meeting note referenced above, the following update to the minutes of the Diocesan Synod meeting held on 22 March 2025 will be added:

“The Diocese recognises that the Cost of Ministry quoted at Synod had not previously been explicitly and clearly communicated with the BMO in question. Conversations are now taking place to help the Diocese and the BMO understand each other’s circumstances, and to move forward collaboratively.”
This amendment reflects the Diocese’s commitment to transparency and constructive dialogue with the BMO.

The minutes of Diocesan Synod on 22 March 2025 were approved and received as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Actions from previous meetings

TW reported that two actions from the previous meeting related to the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) initiative. She noted that recent developments at the national level had impacted these actions. In light of these changes, including shifts in leadership within the National Church, TW invited The Very Revd Dr Mandy Ford (MF) to provide a brief historical overview and update on the current status of LLF.

MF informed the meeting that she is a member of the National Programme Board overseeing the LLF process. She reported that she had attended a meeting in London the previous day, which brought together members of the Programme Board and the associated working groups. The purpose of the meeting was to review recent developments and discuss the ongoing direction of the LLF initiative in light of recent national changes.

MF confirmed that The Rt Revd Martyn Snow, Bishop of Leicester, who had been appointed in November 2023 as the lead bishop for the LLF process, has since stepped back from this role. Despite this change in leadership, the LLF Programme Board and Working Group remain committed to progressing the initiative. They believe that feedback from dioceses on the proposals currently under consideration will be extremely valuable.

As such, the programme will continue as planned. Over the summer, dioceses across the Church will convene to discuss and respond to the proposals, contributing to the next phase of the LLF process.

MF noted that resources to support the LLF consultation will be made available at the diocesan level. Within the Diocese, efforts will be made to ensure these materials are widely distributed, enabling all interested individuals to contribute

their views. The consultation process is intended to be as inclusive and open as possible.

TW confirmed that the outstanding actions related to LLF will be addressed at the next Diocesan Synod meeting, scheduled for 20 September 2025. She also drew attention to a series of webinars designed to inform Synod members about the LLF process. These sessions will provide an opportunity for members to ask questions and gain clarity on the procedures involved.

Details of the webinars were included in the agenda emails and will also be displayed at the end of the meeting. All members are encouraged to attend.

Actions from previous meeting	Minute Ref	Outcome
Diocesan resources on LLF to be updated and circulated to parishes to aid with discussions	6. Living in Love & Faith 6.3 Q & A Mrs Julia Childerhouse raised question. +VF responded	To be actioned.
LLF to be discussed at Bishop's Council & Bishop's Staff meetings with a more substantive discussion expected at Synod in September	6. Living in Love & Faith 6.3 Q & A	LLF to be discussed at Diocesan Synod meeting on 20/09/2025

Apologies

TW reported the following apologies:

0 from the House of Bishops, 13 from the of Clergy and 8 from the House of Laity.

TW confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

TW outlined the structure of the meeting

- Routine Business, including Bishop's Council, Governance, General Synod reports
- Particular focus on church buildings, which would include an introduction to the Buildings Team, discussion about All Saints (Corn Street) and video about the joys and challenges of re-ordering projects.
- Diocesan Synod would conclude with an opportunity to thank +VF for her time as president.

7.	Governance Reports 7.1 Bishop's Council Report (24 March & 13 May 2025) 7.1.1 Questions & Answers 7.1.2 Motion: vote to receive report 7.2 General Synod Report Act of Synod the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 2024 as amended by the Vacancy in See Committees (Amendment) Regulation 2025 7.2.1 Questions & Answers 7.2.2 Proclamation 7.3 Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) report 7.3.1 Questions & Answers 7.3.2 Resolution: vote to approve nomination and election timetable for DBE Committee
	7.1 Bishop's Council Report (24 March & 13 May 2025) The report was taken as read. TW thanked RL, for his work in preparing a comprehensive report. She also congratulated Mrs Sally Cordwell on her appointment as an elected Lay representative on the Bishop Council. 7.1.1 Questions & Answers Name: Julian Rivers (JR), House of Laity for Bristol West Deanery Question: Following the publication of the <i>Makin Review</i>, the Charity Commission (CC) contacted all dioceses, requesting that Boards of Finance Trustees confirm there were no impediments to trustees fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities. A formal response was submitted by the BDBF. JR raised a question regarding the underlying agenda of the Charity Commission. Specifically, he queried whether the current response would be sufficient to satisfy the Commission, or whether further pressure might be expected until the Church aligns more closely with the position the Commission deems appropriate. Question Answered by: +VF Answer: As part of the Church Commissioners and in conjunction with the Archbishops' Council, representatives were summoned to meet with the Chief Executive of the Charity Commission. During the meeting, the CEO expressed significant concern and delivered a firm critique, although much of the criticism related to matters beyond the direct control of those present.



Despite the challenging tone, the meeting was ultimately constructive. It became clear through the discussions that the CEO's primary concern was ensuring that Dioceses and National Church institutions are actively engaged and taking visible steps in response to safeguarding and governance expectations.

+VF, along with others, had prepared and presented a set of practical, down-to-earth examples of current diocesan activities, which helped to reassure the Commission. While further correspondence is anticipated, the meeting served to re-establish a positive and cooperative relationship with the Charity Commission.

In parallel, discussions are ongoing regarding the entity being organised by the Church Commissioners to support the advancement of Project SPIRE. Although the matter is complex, it was noted that the Charity Commission is now prepared to approve the proposed structure. This is seen as a positive development and a sign of progress toward a sustainable and well-governed future for the project.

7.1.2 Adam Beaumont, Associate Archdeacon & Vice Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education (AB) proposed: That the Bishop's Council report be received.

The motion was passed with a unanimous show of hands.

7.2 General Synod Report

TW confirmed that there had been no General Synod meeting since the last Diocesan Synod. However, she noted that, in relation to the Vacancy in See Committees Regulations, an Act of Synod had been passed which must now be formally proclaimed to the Diocesan Synod.

7.2.1 Questions & Answers

No questions were raised.

7.2.2 Proclamation

TW read aloud the following proclamation:

"At the group of sessions of the General Synod held at Westminster in February 2025, the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 2024, in the form it takes following its amendment at that group of sessions, was formally affirmed and proclaimed as an Act of Synod."

An Act of Synod is the embodiment of the will or opinion of the Church of England as expressed by the whole body of the General Synod. Copies of the Instrument proclaiming and affirming the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation as an Act of Synod have been sent to members of this Synod."

7.3 Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) report

AB informed the Diocesan Synod that the Bristol Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) operates as a subsidiary of BDBF. In accordance with its Scheme and Terms of Reference, it is required that Diocesan Synod approve the manner, timetable, and period of service for the upcoming elections of DBE committee members.

This approval is necessary to ensure that the governance of the DBE remains aligned with diocesan oversight and statutory requirements.

7.2.3 Questions & Answers

No questions were raised.

7.2.4 Resolution: vote to approve nomination and election timetable for DBE Committee

Adam Beaumont, Associate Archdeacon & Vice Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education (AB) proposed: That the Diocesan Synod approves the proposed manner of election, timetable, and period of service for the election of members to the Diocesan Board of Education for the triennium 2025–2028 outlined in the Diocesan Board of Education report.

The motion was passed with a unanimous show of hands.

8.	Question Time
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TW explained that copies of the formal written questions that had been submitted and had been included in the meeting papers that were circulated, and a hard copy was on each table.

Name: Richard Cresswell (RC), House of Clergy, Kingswood and South Gloucestershire

Question: The new Vacancy-in-See Committee regulations being proclaimed at this meeting are already causing significant unforeseen and unintended

consequences across dioceses (Canterbury being a prime example). What plans are there, if any, from within Bristol Diocese (either the Bishops or our General Synod representatives) to ask for these regulations to be reviewed again by General Synod?

Question answered by: +VF

Answer: The new Vacancy in See Committee regulations will no doubt be reviewed by General Synod in the light of unforeseen circumstances for the Canterbury Crown Nomination Commission. Those concerned should write to their General Synod representatives (Dr Brendan Biggs, The Revd Kat Campion-Spall, The Revd Canon Alice Kemp, The Revd Canon Paul Langham, Mrs Christiana Olomolaiye, and Mr Ed Shaw)

Supplementary question: RC confirmed that he did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

Name: The Revd Melanie Otto (MO), House of Clergy for City Deanery

Question:

1. Why is the decision about the funding for the re-roofing of All Saints not being delayed until after the consultation process has finished and reported on in July?
2. How is the diocese seeking to demonstrate its understanding of the challenges facing the black community, and are we seeking to resource and empower them?

Question answered by: RL and Suzanne Semedo (SS) (Racial Justice Programme Lead)

Answer:

1. Bishops Council and Synod approved expenditure on the roof in 2023, and 2024. At the questioner's request, Synod are being asked to formally review this decision at this meeting. This has meant delaying the start of the work until Spring next year, at the earliest, which gives sufficient time to review the stakeholder feedback before the work needs to be contracted. Given that all the options for the future of the building bar one (i.e. destruction of the property) require a roof, and the longer we delay the greater the costs incurred, this is believed by Bishop's Council to be a reasonable approach.
2. Establishing meaningful engagement with the Black community is an important aspect of our objectives for racial justice in Bristol Diocese ([hyperlink to RJ strategy information.](#)). There are engagement exercises (with UKME clergy/ staff and African Caribbean community leaders) currently underway and continual dialogue with GMH communities will

continue to shape our work going forward. We have established a Racial Justice Team to coordinate the delivery of our RJ programme and help embed our racial justice priorities (including feedback, evidence and insights that impact Black communities) into our wider ambitions for transformation. We invite colleagues to contact us if they feel there are areas where further work would be beneficial.

Supplementary question: MO thanked those who responded to her questions and raised two supplementary questions:

1. Why wasn't the consultation done in 2023 when Synod agreed to the roof? Why was the question of the roof not mentioned in the recent consultation?

Answer: MF, Transforming Church.Together (TC.T) lead for Racial Justice workstream explained that in 2023, a decision was made, following careful consideration of the legal obligations to maintain the building, to explore options for the future of All Saints. At that time, consultations were undertaken, primarily at a national level, to seek external funding for necessary works.

The condition of the roof has since become a central issue in the ongoing consultations. These discussions now include consideration of the potential future uses of the building, ensuring that any decisions made are informed by both practical needs and the wider mission of the Church.

2. The Racial Justice strategy was written without any consultation with UK ME Clergy or colleagues working in the minority ethnic communities, so will the Diocese ensure that the voice of those who took part in the recent consultations and the communities that will be affected by Synod's decision will those voices be valued and heard? For example will there be a proper forum for actual feedback and dialogue face to face with those of us who were at the heart of that consultation.

Answer: MF explained that the Diocesan Racial Justice Strategy has been shaped by the outcomes of the national Lament to Action report. The Revd Dr Cathy Okoronkwo, who led the development of the strategy, worked closely with an advisory group composed of individuals from Global Majority Heritage (GMH) within the Diocese. The Racial Justice Team welcomes feedback and is deeply committed to ensuring that the voices of both clergy and lay members from GMH backgrounds are fully represented in the strategy and in all aspects of their work. It was affirmed that these voices will also be actively included in the ongoing consultation regarding All Saints, ensuring that the process is inclusive and



reflective of the diversity within the Diocese. Further details on the All Saints consultation will be provided later in the presentation.

Comment: MO was concerned that The Revd Beverley Charles and The Revd David Moore had not been consulted, MO questioned how the BDBF might have a strategy when it hadn't consulted those of us who will be affected by it or those that work in communities which will be affected by it.

MF thanked MO for her comments, assuring her that they have been heard and will be taken forward.

Name: Mr Philip Barton (PB), House of Laity for Kingswood and South Gloucestershire

Question: Why is it taking so long for the appointment of the Archbishop of Canterbury?

Question answered by: +VF

Answer: Firstly, the Church of England, guided by the Vacancy in See process, consults widely and carefully. This is a vital and deliberate approach, reflecting the Church's identity and values. For the current process concerning the Archbishop of Canterbury, there is, for the first time, significant representation from the global Anglican Communion. Establishing the appropriate employment and governance structures has taken time, but this reflects the importance and complexity of the role.

Secondly, there has been a period of taking stock, both in gratitude for what has been achieved under God and the leadership of the current Archbishop, and in prayerful reflection on the Church's future direction. While there is no sense of a vacuum within the dioceses, there is a deep yearning and prayer for the right person to be called to this significant role.

A reflection was shared recalling the election of a Pope, where the crowd waited in joyful anticipation after the white smoke appeared—loving the new leader even before knowing who it would be. In the same spirit, it was encouraged that the Church should love and support the next Archbishop of Canterbury even before they are named, recognising the weight of the responsibility they will carry.

TW offered a prayer to the person who is being called and for all our ecumenical relationships.



9.

Safeguarding Annual Report

9.1 Presentation of report

9.2 Questions & Answers

TW invited Mrs Geralyn Meehan (GM), Director People and Safeguarding, and Mr David Niven (DN), Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group, to present the Annual Safeguarding Report. Mr Adam Bond was unfortunately unwell, so GM was presenting on his behalf.

Diocesan Synod received a positive update on the work of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. It was reported that a recent comprehensive audit had been conducted. While the audit did not include formal scoring, the team performed exceptionally well, receiving 33 recommendations, all of which were constructive and manageable. It was emphasised that this was an audit, not an inspection, and the feedback reflected the high quality of safeguarding practice within the Diocese.

It was reiterated that the safeguarding team does not investigate crimes, but rather focuses on risk management. The importance of collaborative working was highlighted, particularly with local authorities and police, to build stronger, more neighbourly partnerships.

A recent community event at the Cathedral, involving local charities and partners, was praised for its success in strengthening relationships and fostering unity. Topics such as data sharing and cost-saving collaboration were discussed, and the event was seen as a model for future engagement.

There was also a reflection on public perception and media narratives. While the Diocese is confident in the strength of its safeguarding work, it was noted that media coverage often lags behind reality. There was a call to push back against outdated narratives and a recognition that the national Church may have missed opportunities to promote the good work being done.

DN has launched a regular podcast, with the most recent guest being Bishop Michael.

GM highlighted the strength and professionalism of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. Particular appreciation was expressed for the team's calm and compassionate approach, with specific mention of Katheryn Caithness, Safeguarding Parish Support Officer, who is frequently in contact with clergy and lay members and is known for being calm and kind in all interactions.



Recent changes to safeguarding training were noted, including the introduction of a new learning framework developed in response to feedback. One significant improvement is that leadership training can now be delivered as a one-day session, making it more accessible and manageable for participants. Members were encouraged to continue providing feedback, as the safeguarding team is committed to ongoing improvement and to offering the best possible support across the Diocese.

9.2 Questions & Answers

Name: Nick Orman (NO), House of Laity for Swindon Deanery

Question: Page 16 of the Safeguarding Report includes a graph that references to dashboard level but there is nothing in the report that explains what dashboard levels are. What are they?

Question answered by: GM

Answer: GM was unable to go into the detail at the meeting but confirmed that an explanation would be provided in the minutes and would be sent directly to NO.

Post Meeting Note:

The Parish Dashboard operates at 3 levels, with Level 3 providing the greatest functionality to record safeguarding activity, such as for instance, greater detail on any activity involving children/ vulnerable adults sponsored by the PCC. Parishes progress through the dashboard through levels 1, 2 and 3 with each level seeking greater detail, and it was felt worthy of note to record the number who are at the highest functionality level. There is also a means to explore how the Parish is meeting the National Safeguarding Standards.

It is noted that an explanation should have been included in the 2024 Safeguarding Annual Report, by way of a footnote on page 16. A new document just published outlines the different levels of the Parish Dashboards [safeguarding-dashboard-lights.pdf](#). Additional information regarding the Parish Dashboards and Safeguarding Hubs is available here: [Safeguarding Dashboards](#). A brief explanation will be referenced in subsequent reports.

Name: Beverley Charles (BC), House of Clergy for Kingswood and South Gloucestershire Deanery

Question: What is model 3?

Question answered by: GM

Answer: It was explained that Model 3 proposes that national safeguarding functions become a separate organisation, independent from the National Church Institutions (NCIs). Under this model, the National Safeguarding Team would operate independently, with its own governance and accountability structures. The implementation of this model is recognised as a complex undertaking, requiring careful planning and transition.

Model 4, which was not approved by General Synod, would have placed all safeguarding responsibilities—including diocesan and parish-level safeguarding—within a fully independent structure. While this model was not adopted, General Synod approved a hybrid approach, referred to as Model 3.5.

Under Model 3.5, the Church will proceed with the national separation of safeguarding functions as outlined in Model 3, while also exploring the feasibility of moving toward the more comprehensive independence proposed in Model 4.

TW thanked both DN and GM for their summary and offered thanks to all the team for the great work they do. She highlighted the excellent work of Adam Bond and the whole Safeguarding team who have been commended by an external auditor and she quoted from the auditor's report. *"this Diocese is a model of how safeguarding should work and be supported across the Church of England."*

Janet Lee (JL), House of Clergy and Bristol West Deanery, committed safeguarding to prayer.

10.	Bishop's Address
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+VF addressed the Diocesan Synod. A full copy of the address can be found in Appendix 1.

During the address the Bishop asked Synod members to briefly discuss and share their experiences of holiness with each other with some being shared to the whole Synod:

- Paul Langham (PL), House of Clergy for Bristol West Deanery, highlighted that it was the people, more than the building, that carry the significance of



the Church. The sense of being in the midst of God's people was described as central to the experience of worship and community.

- Helen Clifton (HC), House of Laity for Bristol West Deanery, shared a moving account of leading an Advent Carol Service for the first time, describing a profound sense of beauty and light during the service.
- David McGladdery (DMc), House of Clergy for City Deanery, emphasised the holiness of encounters with people. While individuals may come and go, the precious moments shared within the Church community remain deeply meaningful.
- It was noted that church buildings often draw people in through their peace and silence, even when services are not taking place. This quiet presence offers comfort and reflection.
- One member shared their experience of seeking a new parish, looking for familiar symbols of faith that bring comfort. Upon finding them, they chose to remain and continue their journey there.
- Penny Gray (PG), House of Laity for City Deanery, shared experience of welcoming Iranian asylum seekers, offering baptism, and learning about their journeys and faith. Their stories and the way they are walking with Jesus were described as deeply precious, highlighting the beauty of place and purpose in the Church's mission.

+VF noted that most of the experiences were with the people, our buildings are gateways to heaven.

Link to National Churches Trust – The House of Good

Capture and showcase the social and economic value your church brings to its community using a free online tool.

<https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/houseofgood-local>

11.

Roof Repair for All Saints (Corn Street)

11.1 Presentation of report

11.2 Questions & Answers

11.3 Vote on motion (see motion below)

11.1 Presentation of report

TW invited RL and MF to present.

RL provided a brief overview of the proposed repairs to the roof of All Saints Church, Corn Street, and the recent history of funding decisions related to the project.

He reminded Synod that at the November 2023 Diocesan Synod meeting, the costs for the roof repairs were approved. However, due to delays in the completion of architectural drawings, the works could not proceed as planned. As a result, the repair costs were resubmitted for approval as part of the 2024 budget at the November 2024 Synod meeting.

Since that time, MO has requested that Diocesan Synod reconsider its decision to fund the repairs. The concern raised was that investing in the building could be seen as controversial, given that All Saints contains a significant memorial to Edward Colston, which some may view as creating a “shrine” to Colston and his family.

RL emphasised the following:

- While there is a desire to allocate funds to other priorities, there is a legal obligation to maintain a closed church and the cost of repairs will only increase the longer the work is delayed.
- The church is interconnected with neighbouring buildings, and any structural failure could lead to liability for damages to those properties.
- In the event of further deterioration, there would be serious public safety concerns, which could lead to legal and reputational risks for the Diocese.

MF presented on the Racial Justice Team’s consultation work.

A brief historical context was provided: on 7 June 2020, during a Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol, the statue of Edward Colston—a 17th-century slave trader—was toppled by protestors and thrown into the harbour

1. This event became a global symbol of the movement to confront and reassess historical legacies of slavery and racism.

In light of this, the Diocese remains deeply committed to racial justice and recognises the complexities surrounding the All Saints building, which contains a significant baroque monument to Colston, as well as human remains.

Key points raised included:

- The artistic and historical significance of the Colston monument.
- The controversial legacy of Colston in Bristol, and the city’s ongoing journey to understand and respond to that history.

- The need for the widest possible consultation, while managing expectations about what outcomes are realistically achievable.

Work Already Undertaken:

1. Detailed consultations have taken place with Black community leaders locally and nationally, recognising the contested heritage across multiple generations and cultural backgrounds.
2. A Black artist has been commissioned to produce a creative resource that can be used in future engagement and interpretation.

Next Steps:

A staged consultation process will be launched, including community outreach, to explore key questions such as:

- Can the building be used in its current form?
- If so, under what conditions (e.g., relocation of human remains or the Colston monument)?
- Should the building be demolished?
- Should the Diocese withdraw from the site for a period of time?

It was noted that the consultation will take at least eight months, and if demolition were ultimately pursued, it could involve up to ten years of legal proceedings.

11.2 Questions & Answers

Name: David Jones (DJ), House of Clergy for Kingswood and South Gloucestershire Deanery

Question: Has selling the closed church of All Saints (Corn Street) in it's current state been explored fully? Have we approached organisations that might be interested in acquiring it, for example The Colston Society would likely have a couple of million that they might use to purchase the building.

Question answered by: MF

Answer: Initial enquiries were not promising; however, more might have been done to explore this option. MF politely disagreed that the Colston Society had sufficient funds to purchase All Saints (Corn Street)

Name: Beverley Forbes (BF), House of Laity for City Deanery.

Question: With regards to the ongoing consultation process for All Saints, Corn Street, what was:

- The involvement of community leaders in the process;
- The nature of the questions posed to the community;
- The responses received; and



- The risk of creating unrealistic expectations about what outcomes are possible.

Question answered by: MF

Answer: It was noted that a broad, open consultation has not yet taken place. The current approach has drawn on previous work, including that of the Bristol Legacy Foundation and other organisations. However, it was acknowledged that there is a degree of consultation fatigue within some of these groups.

Diocesan Synod Members were invited to submit names of individuals or organisations who should be included in future consultation efforts, to ensure a wide and representative engagement.

Name: PG, House of Laity for City Deanery

Question:

Timing of decisions related to All Saints, Corn Street, specifically:

Why must a decision be made now, before the consultation process has concluded?

It was emphasised that there is a need to listen carefully and proceed at a measured pace.

Question answered by: MF

Answer:

It was noted that the current discussion is in reference to a decision already made by Diocesan Synod regarding the roof repairs at All Saints, Corn Street. The project has already experienced delays, with work now postponed until late spring/summer of next year. Any further delay is expected to result in increased costs, both financially and in terms of time and energy.

It was acknowledged that this has already been a costly and resource-intensive process, with significant investment made to date. Looking ahead, it is anticipated that an additional £20,000 to £30,000 will be required to support the second phase of consultation, which aims to engage as broadly and inclusively as possible.

The work is being undertaken with the utmost care and sensitivity, and it was stated that if anything has been missed or overlooked, the team offers its sincere apologies.

Name: MO, House of Clergy for City Deanery

Question:

MO shared her reflections of a recent visit to All Saints Church, Corn Street. She described a visceral reaction to the building, particularly to the tombstones,

windows, and plaques commemorating the Colston family, characterising the space as a “shrine” to Edward Colston and his legacy.

MO raised a critical question:

Should the Diocese invest £500,000 in repairing the roof of a building so deeply associated with a controversial figure?

She questioned whether the city of Bristol, which had spoken with one voice in removing the Colston statue in June 2020, would support such an investment.

Praise was given to the M Shed Museum for its work in documenting the events surrounding the statue’s removal, and to Bristol Cathedral for its thoughtful engagement with the city’s history. The speaker urged Synod members to visit All Saints Church, encouraging a managed and reflective approach, and emphasised the importance of hearing the voice of Bristol in any decision-making.

The reflection concluded with a powerful ethical question:

“Just because we can, should we?”

The contribution was met with applause from Synod members, and TW thanked MO for her passion and thoughtful engagement.

Name: Sally Cordwell (SC), House of Laity for Bristol South Deanery

Question:

SC expressed her appreciation for Melanie’s earlier comments, noting that they raised important ethical and emotional dimensions of the discussion. She reflected that within the Church of England, it can sometimes be too easy to defer to legal frameworks, which may unintentionally obscure the moral and pastoral implications of decisions. SC asked if Bristol Legacy Foundation had been consulted?

Question answered by: MF

Answer: Confirmed that the Foundation had been appraised and the Trustees consulted.

Name: Julian Rivers (JR), House of Laity for Bristol West Deanery

Question: Noted that the legislation that requires closed churches to be maintained includes the caveat “so far as it is reasonable”. JR queried legal advice had been sought.

Diocesan Synod applauded JR’s question.

Question answered by: Lee Coley, Diocesan Register

Answer: There is an inherent tension between the DBF’s duty to maintain the building and the broader ethical, pastoral, and reputational considerations. The

DBF also has a duty to provide advice to the Church Commissioners in relation to the building's future.

It was noted that if Diocesan Synod wished to formally reconsider its previous decision regarding funding for the roof repairs, this would likely require referral to the Charity Commission, due to the legal and financial implications involved.

Name: Beverley Charles (BC), House of Clergy for Kingswood and South Gloucestershire Deanery

Question: Queried the evidence of critical risk associated with the All Saints, Corn Street building. As those responsible for managing risk and safety in parish buildings, clergy are acutely aware of the importance of evidence-based decision-making.

The question posed was twofold:

- What is the current evidence supporting the assessment of critical risk to the building?
- Have alternative options been considered that might buy time for the consultation process to be completed before major financial commitments are made?

Question answered by: RL

Answer: Surveyors have inspected the church roof and advised that it is now beyond the stage where patch repairs are effective. Without timely intervention, the roof may soon pose a public safety risk to both the church and neighbouring properties. Given the legal obligations involved, this is a matter of urgency. However, due to seasonal constraints, repair work cannot begin until Spring/Summer next year. Delaying action further could limit future options for the building's use. The surveyor's report is available and can be shared with relevant parties.

BC queried whether the surveyors had given an indication of timescale for roof failure and costs?

RL advised that the full report was available should anyone wish to read it.

Lindsey McCullam (LMc), Director of Property & Estates and Deputy Diocesan Secretary, advised that no exact date has been given by the surveyors.

Name: Simon Pugh-Jones (SP-J), House of Laity and DAC Chair

Question: Made a statement of behalf of the DAC.

SP-J acknowledged the complexity of the situation but highlighted the following points:

- Legal Framework: Ecclesiastical law places a duty on the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) to ensure the proper maintenance of closed church buildings.
- Moral Consideration: A church building is a sanctuary and has a shared heritage. There is a moral obligation to care for it.
- The roof has been identified as failing since 2001, and the cost of repairs will only increase the longer action is delayed.
- It was noted that postponing essential maintenance not only increases financial risk but may also jeopardize the long-term viability of the building.

TW asked for a moment of silence to reflect on the discussions.

11.3 Vote on motion

The Revd Dr Mandy Ford proposed: Diocesan Synod has considered Bishop's Council's review of the future options for All Saints Corn Street, and concurs with its conclusion to proceed with the roof repair.

A vote of by raising hands was taken and counted by RL and Emma Bakewell (EB), Head of Governance.

Motion	Number of votes
In favour	40
Against	14
Abstained	12

The motion was carried.

TW thanked the Synod and MO for bringing this motion back to the Synod for its consideration.

Bishop Neil led a prayer.



12.	Church Buildings 12.1 Introduction of Church Buildings Team and support available to parishes. 12.2 National Funding Streams 12.3 Joys and Challenges of re-ordering a church building 12.3.1 St Stephen, Southmead 12.3.2 St Andrew, Castle Combe 12.4 Questions & Answers
TW invited LMc and Mr Neil Buckland (NB), Church Buildings Senior Adviser to give their presentation. 12.1 Introduction of Church Buildings Team and support available to parishes. LMc gave an overview of the work of Church buildings Team. Church buildings that serve our communities Traditionally serving as spaces for worship and occasional community gatherings, churches are now increasingly becoming diverse and dynamic community hubs. These buildings now host a wide range of vital services, including: • Warm spaces • Addiction support groups • Clubs for older people and youth • Debt counselling • Music and arts venues • Cafés, foodbanks, and clothing banks • Safe spaces for vulnerable individuals It was noted that repairing a roof is not merely a structural necessity—it is an enabler of these essential community services. Furthermore, sustainable upgrades such as installing photovoltaics or modern heating systems significantly reduce environmental impact and operational costs, supporting long-term viability. In response to the growing complexity and opportunity within church building use, a Church Buildings Team has been established. This team integrates: • Community engagement • Building maintenance • Project management and development support • DAC secretary functions	

- Collaboration with the TCT, Core DSS teams, and the Church Development Agency

The team is actively supporting a wide range of initiatives, from gutter clearance tenders to accessibility improvements, reordering projects, and housing schemes. The overarching ambition is to ensure resilient, future-focused, safe, and well-maintained church buildings that serve and support their communities. The team exists solely to assist parishes with their buildings—whether in pursuit of new opportunities or in navigating challenges.

At this point, Neil Buckland, Senior Church Buildings Officer, was invited to provide a brief overview of current team activities.

NB highlighted the range and scope of support available to parishes. Key points included:

- The Buildings Team does not work in isolation; it collaborates closely with other diocesan groups and agencies to provide integrated support.
- The team is involved with Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) from the early stages of project planning, ensuring guidance is available from the outset.
- The Resource Hub is designed to assist with repair and maintenance needs. While it is acknowledged that the current website requires improvement, it already contains a number of useful tools and resources. A new and improved hub is scheduled for launch in the near future.

NB encouraged all members to contact the team

(church.buildings@bristoldiocese.org) for support, regardless of the size or complexity of their project. The team is committed to assisting with everything from minor repairs to major redevelopment schemes.

RL advised that there has been a significant increase in this team, a dedicated fundraising parish person will shortly be in place so there will be an end-to-end support system – planning, fund raising etc helping our parishes.

TW thanked NB and LMc and all their team for all their ongoing work and support to the Diocese.

12.2 National Funding Streams

+VF requested a show of hands to gauge experience with major building projects. A significant number of members indicated prior involvement, and many also

anticipated involvement in future projects. This highlighted the ongoing and widespread need for support and planning around church buildings. It was noted that church buildings must remain high on the national agenda. Nationally, buildings are the third highest cost after clergy stipends and housing. A coordinated plan is needed both within this diocese and across others to ensure sustainability and stewardship.

Members were encouraged to become familiar with key funding bodies and resources, including:

- County Historic Churches Trusts
- The National Churches Trust
- Major secular funders, many of whom are open to supporting church-based community work
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund, which now permits grants to churches
- The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, which reimburses VAT on eligible repairs

However, there is growing concern about upcoming changes to the VAT reimbursement scheme. From April 2025, a new cap will limit claims to £25,000 per listed place of worship per year, regardless of project size. This change, effective until March 2026, may significantly impact larger restoration projects. There are ongoing discussions in Parliament regarding this issue. Bishop Viv encouraged all Synod members to write to their local MPs, urging them to support churches in recognition of their vital role in community life.

Action: All Diocesan Synod members to write to the local MPs regarding the Listed Places of Worship Scheme, a template letter can be found on the [National Church trust website](#).

TW thanked +VF for her voice at a national level.

SP-J highlighted that a list of grants could also be accessed on the Diocesan website.

<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/churchlife/resourcesforparishes/parishfinance/fundraising/fundraising>

12.3 Joys and Challenges of re-ordering a church building

12.3.1 St Stephen, Southmead

12.3.2 St Andrew, Castle Combe

A short film showing the work being undertaken by two churches: St Stephen, Southmead; and St Andrew, Castle Combe was shown to Diocesan Synod.

TW thanked the churches for their support in making this useful film giving insight into the thinking and undertaking of re-ordering a church building.

12.4 Questions & Answer

No questions were raised.

13. The Rt Revd Viv Faull's (Bishop of Bristol) final Diocesan Synod

TW presented +VF with a card and flowers. The front of the card was a photo taken by The Revd Debbie Dewes and had been selected by +VF to be the photo +VF's first Easter card as Diocesan Bishop. TW invited SP-J and Steve Wilkinson, House of Clergy for North Wiltshire to reflect on +VF's time as Diocesan Bishop.

+VF explained that when she was consecrated as Diocesan Bishop, the Archbishop of Canterbury charged her with the following:

- You are to broaden and deepen the Discipleship of your Christian sisters and brothers so that they may grow in faith and holiness, grow in confidence and rejoice in diversity of church tradition and expression;
- You are to share the Gospel in your own witness and in encouragement of clergy and laity, attending to the wider diocese's approach to evangelism, enriching strategies and plans through theology and prayer;
- You are to seek opportunities to reach out to children and young people, to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and to draw parishes and other worshipping groups into a sense of shared mission and ministry;
- You are to seek creative ways of developing and funding new mission and ministry initiatives;
- You are to build on the connections with community and civic leaders, especially in Bristol, and to be a voice for the excluded and marginalised in the city's social transformation agenda;
- You will pay especial attention to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, ensuring that the culture and practice of the Diocese of Bristol leads to a church that is safe, truthful and transparent; and

- With your fellow bishops, you are to exercise collegial leadership of the Church of England, enabling it in the witness and mission to which we are all called.

+VF concluded by thanking Diocesan Synod for its work and common sense of purpose which +VF knows will carry through to the 57th Bishop of Bristol.

Nathalie Marshall, House of Laity for Swindon Deanery, led a prayer.

14.	Blessing and Close
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Appendix 1 – Bishop’s Address

Diocesan Synod Address

Saturday 14 June 2025

In 1982 I was ordained Deaconess to serve at St Matthew and St James Mossley Hill Liverpool, its funder Matthew James Glenton seizing one of the finest sites in Liverpool to build one of the finest Victorian churches in the north west...and thereby beatifying himself. And there was the ambiguity. Matthew James Glenton was bookkeeper to a family whose wealth originated in the production of sugar in the Caribbean. The fortune which built Mossley Hill church derived from chattel slavery.

The church was the first to be bombed in Liverpool in the second world war and repairs were not completed until 1952. Visiting around the parish when I arrived (we did that then) women recalled walking the plank across the gaps in the Nave as they arrived for their weddings. I commented to the archdeacon that the completed restoration was glorious. He was perhaps having a bad day when he retorted that he wished that Hitler had finished the job by dropping many more bombs on Mossley Hill Church. There was the second ambiguity. The rebuilding had taken so much resource. Was it genuinely constructed of living stones, or had it become not just a memorial to Matther James

Glenton but an idol? With so much poverty in down the road in Garston docks, could not the money have been used to relieve their need?

And that ambivalence is there at the heart of the gospel, and particularly in the account of the earliest days of the church as those first known as Christians burst out of the constraints of buildings to speak of the transforming power of the risen Christ and to enact that transformation in sign and miracle.

This new movement of the spirit and the momentum of the evangelists across the vectors of the Roman Empire created an ambivalence towards the sort of specially constructed spaces which were familiar from the Temple in Jerusalem and community synagogues. Christianity was, in its earliest form, domestic, with gatherings to discuss faith, to pray, to organise all home based.

And yet so very quickly places began to be experienced as sacramental, places where the presence of the risen Christ was particularly known and encountered, that touching on something that reached back to the story of Jacob waking from a dream of heaven and earth linked by a ladder and angels and exclaiming 'how awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven'. And that sort of encounter with God is far more common than we recognise. Including for those in this place today.

Table conversations of experience of an awesome place where you have known God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, powerfully with you.

Jacob takes a stone which he has put under his head and pours oil on the stone and names it Bethel as a sign that something holy happened here. And holiness continued in that place.

Table conversations: when has your church been for you the gate of heaven?

The Church of England is a church of place. It is there in the title. England is divided into parishes to which the clergy are called and within which they have **the cure of souls**, that extraordinarily evocative phrase for our calling to care of the body mind and spirit of all who live there, a care which is pastoral and evangelistic. I have the cure of 1.2m souls and thank God every day I have shared that with the clergy and lay people of the diocese.

Our church buildings record, in graveyards and monuments and community memory the story of a particular place. Our church buildings create and sustain identity for us as individuals and in community. That is one of the reasons I think why there was such anger when churches were closed during Covid. Our identity, our purpose, our destiny was being shaken to the core by mortal threat. The loss of our open churches, those gateways to heaven, and through that gate the hope that all would indeed be well, was deeply felt.

Our church buildings also offer space where people can own their deepest questions, their deepest fears. The political journalist and music critic John Harris has written eloquently about his life with and care for his autistic son. Each Sunday John and James, whose home is in Frome, go for a walk and James usually asks 'is there a

church?’ and they go and sit together in silence, James’ preferred way of being, and sometimes James gets to play the organ (and they are very very careful! And James plays Autobhan by Kraftwerk or something by the Smiths). John reports that occasionally they encounter the vicar *‘when we’ve met them, and that has happened quite a few times, they’ve always been really brilliant and helpful’*. John describes himself as a devout agnostic and he urges us to keep our churches open saying *‘that the Church of England, with all its scandals and attitude which seem so off putting, sits in the middle of a world in which people’s yearning for a more profound experience hasn’t gone away and seems to be increasing as the world gets more and more troubled’*.

Churches draw people in, if (and it is an if) we enable the threshold to be low enough not to trip people up. And that is why, with prayer and worship at the heart of our church life, there is so much more we can offer and which is received as a sign of hope, as we discovered during the cost of living crisis and continue to discover during the current loneliness crisis. The National Churches Trust, using government financial criteria, has demonstrated what we know anecdotally. In its report House of Good it calculates the economic and social value of churches as £55 bn annually. In its more recent report on health it calculates that the National Help Service we provide contributes the equivalent of £8.4 bn to health and social provision. And if you would like to calculate the contribution of your church to its local economy the National Churches Trust website offers a free calculator.

But we do know that the future of our church buildings is increasingly precarious. We look at the closure of chapels over the border in Wales and the fire sale of Church of Scotland building. If a PCC can no longer sustain the energy, the volunteering capacity

or the money to keep the building open the Diocesan Board of Finance takes on the legal and financial responsibility, as it has with All Saints Corn Street.

At the moment in this diocese the church community and the wider community is just about keeping our churches open and safe...and as we have seen through the Annual DAC awards there are heroic examples of reordering, new heating and lighting and kitchen and loos and accessibility provision. More than that, during my time in the Diocese we have celebrated the reopening of St Nicholas in Bristol and the opening of the Pattern Church in Swindon, and more recently the move of the Well into its own church building. And all this is done as a freewill offering to the glory of Christ and to the local community as we create and sustain places of love for God and neighbour

*O God, make the door of this house
wide enough to receive all who need human love and fellowship,
and a heavenly Father's care;
and narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride and hate.
Make its threshold smooth enough to be no stumbling block to children,
nor to straying feet,
but rugged enough to turn back the tempter's power:
make it a gateway to thine eternal kingdom.*

Thomas Ken, Bishop of Bath and Wells 1684 – 1691, buried in St John's Frome.