



DIOCESE OF BRISTOL

2025 Diocesan Synod Report

Diocesan Synod is the largest and most representative governing body in the Diocese. It supports the bishop in shaping the strategic direction of diocesan life by providing a forum for engagement and debate, a sounding board for emerging priorities, and a setting in which formal decisions are taken through prayerful discernment and collaborative relationships. In summary, Diocesan Synod is the place all voices and wisdom come together to discern God's calling focus and his kingdom is the Diocese.

Below is an overview of the topics discussed and motions approved during 2025. Full Synod Minutes are available on the [Governance page of the Diocesan website](#).

Living in Love and Faith (LLF)

LLF was discussed at every Synod meeting during 2025.

March: The Rt Revd Viv Faull, Bishop of Bristol, updated Synod on national discussions regarding the ordination and licensing of individuals seeking or in same-sex marriages. Members were invited to reflect on:

- What discussions around Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) had taken place within PCCs and Deanery Synods, and what their impact had been.
- What further information would support constructive conversations locally.

June: The Very Revd Mandy Ford, Dean of Bristol Cathedral and a member of the National Programme Board overseeing the LLF process, updated Synod on recent developments.

- The Rt Revd Martyn Snow, Bishop of Leicester, appointed in November 2023 as lead bishop for the LLF process stepped down from his role
- Over the summer, dioceses will convene to discuss and respond to the proposals, contributing to the next phase of the LLF process
- Resources to support Diocesan Synod discussion will be made available at diocesan level
- Diocesan Synod members encouraged to attend Nationally run LLF Webinars to gain clarity and opportunity to ask questions.

September: A dedicated LLF session enabled members to:

- Listen and engage with one another
- Deepen understanding of our diverse diocesan perspectives
- Reaffirm unity in Christ
- Prepare for the House of Bishops' October 2025 decisions

No formal minutes were produced.

November: The Rt Revd Neil Warwick (Acting Bishop of Bristol) outlined the House of Bishops' decisions:

- Prayers of Love and Faith can continue to be used within regular services of worship or privately with a couple at the discretion of the incumbent
- Standalone services will be referred to General Synod

He also provided context, reaction, and an overview of next steps.

March 2025

Carbon Net Zero (CNZ)

Synod received an update confirming greater clarity surrounding carbon measurement. Bristol continues to be recognised nationally for leadership in solar installations and environmental initiatives. A list of grants and schemes awarded was shared.

Dissolution of DBAT

The transition of Diocesan Board of Academies Trust (DBAT) schools to other trusts concluded successfully, reinforcing long-term benefits for children, young people, schools, and communities. The Diocese of Bristol School Partnership Programme (DBSP), co-constructed with trusts, will launch in September 2025.

Transforming Church. Together (TC.T)

An update was provided, including a presentation from Holy Trinity Horfield on its use of [Sharesy](#), which has increased bookings and improved efficiency.

Echo: Youth Voice

Synod watched a video on insights from trusted adults working with young people, highlighting their desire for safe and welcoming spaces.

Other business:

- Bishop's Council reports from 10 December 2024 and 25 February 2025 were approved.

[Link to 22 March 2025 Minutes](#)

June 2025

BDBF Annual General Meeting

- Chair: Richard Bacon re-elected
- Vice Chair: John Sutherland elected
- 2024 Accounts: Received and adopted by Synod. Subsequently formally approved by Trustees
- Auditors: Haysmac appointed for the year ending 31 December 2025

Safeguarding Annual Report

A comprehensive audit reflected exceptionally strong safeguarding practice across the Diocese. A new national framework now enables leadership training to be completed in a one-day session.

All Saints Roof Repair

Following an overview of the proposed works, a presentation from the Racial Justice Team, and extended Q&A, Synod reaffirmed its previous decision to proceed with the roof repairs.

Church Buildings

Highlights included:

- Support for parishes across maintenance, accessibility, reordering, and housing schemes
- Increased staffing, including a dedicated fundraising adviser
- [Resource Hub](#) useful tools. An improved version will be launched in due course
- National funding pressures requiring coordinated planning
- A film showcasing reordering work at St Stephen, Southmead, and St Andrew, Castle Combe

Other business:

- Bishop's Council reports from 24 March and 13 May were received
- Synod approved the election arrangements for the Diocesan Board of Education for 2025–2028
- Bishop Viv's last Synod was marked with reflections on her time in Synod, and grateful thanks for her leadership

[Link to 14 June 2025 Minutes](#)

November 2025

Budget 2026

Synod reviewed the significant financial challenges facing the Diocese. Key points included:

- The 2026 Budget marks the start of essential restructuring
- Long-term sustainability planning is required
- CNZ commitments remain firm, with a new funding plan to be developed
- Parish Share methodology, expectations, and support resources were explained

The budget presented a total 2026 deficit of £3,540,000. After round-table discussion and Q&A, Synod authorised the BDBF to expend the sums set out in the budget. A 10-year Financial Plan will be developed during 2026.

Priority Communities Network (PCN)

The [PCN work](#) is cross-departmental and integrated within the broader TC.T context and workstreams. Updates included:

- PREPARED leadership development programme
- 9 of 14 lay workers recruited
- Positive signs of engagement and growth

Synod approved becoming a formal partner of the Church Urban Fund (CUF) and joining the Together Network.

Other business:

- Bishop's Council reports from 8 July, 18 August, 14 October, and 31 October 2025 were received
- The Church Representation Rules (CRR) Scheme for Concord Church [Bishops' Mission Orders \(BMO\)](#) was approved
- Synod agreed that lay representation on Deanery Synods should remain proportionate to parish electoral roll numbers, using the formula approved by Bishop's Council

Minutes currently in draft, will be approved at March 2026 meeting

Thinking of Joining Diocesan Synod?

The current Diocesan Synod triennium ends in July 2027. If you are considering re-standing or standing for the first time, now is an ideal time to begin reflecting and finding out more.

Diocesan Synod plays a vital role in shaping the life of the Diocese, and we encourage anyone passionate about the Church's mission to consider putting themselves forward.

For further information, please contact the Governance Support Team:

governance.support@bristoldiocese.org