



Synod Questions March 2025

Ted Hiscocks – Marlborough Deanery

'In the light of the commitment of Salisbury Diocese to the Church of England's Net Zero by 2030, would the DAC give clear guidance regarding the placing of solar panels on church roofs, including factors which might hinder or prevent the installation of these panels? Having this information may encourage parishes to make this investment and also save both time and money.'

Response: Dan Crooke, DAC Secretary / Lead for Carbon Net-Zero

Thank you, Ted, for the questions and a very pertinent one given our efforts to reduce our carbon footprint. We have discussed this at the DAC meeting in February and I have encapsulated the main points here. Please note the order in which they are presented is the order you should approach them.

The first consideration for solar panel installation is the use profile of the church building. Profiling your church use involves looking at what energy you use in your church and when. The aim is to ensure that you use most of the electricity you generate. That way you get the most out of your panels what we would call 'benefit'. There is no point producing energy to simply put it into the grid, unless you can achieve a good feed in tariff that will give the church an income. Please remember that solar panels are not guilt free installations, nor maintenance free. They are often hard to recycle, will have embodied carbon, and need regular cleaning and testing. Early research also shows many panels involve forced labour from Uyghurs in China. You need to demonstrate you are going to get the most out of them.

Once you can show you will use most of the energy you generate, the next consideration is where the panels are going and suitability. This comes in two parts. The first is visual impact of the panels. Who is going to see the panels, will they be shielded by a valley roof or parapets. Take some pictures from different angles, near and far to gauge if they will be seen. Visual impact is still considered in the application and the images will go into the application. Once you are happy the visual impact will be minimised, what is the condition of the roof? You should be able to find this in your quinquennial report. You do not want to be replacing the roof halfway through the lifetime solar panel. Equally you may wish to prepare an application for when the roof needs replacing and save time and money by doing both at the same time.

With these points complete, start a faculty application and speak to your local planning authority. Any faculty application will hinge on their being a granted planning application. This is because solar panels are considered 'development' and are not included in Ecclesiastical Exemption. Not all solar panels need planning permission depending on the visual impact, however many do. If early advice to the faculty and planning permission is favourable you can now start to speak to installers with confidence.

The single largest thing that can hinder a solar panel application is a large negative visual impact in a

sensitive area such as a conservation area etc. this would lead to planning permission being denied and no faculty forthcoming. This is coupled with a roof in a poor condition or is not strong enough to support the panels. Remember, any impact to significance will need to be outweighed by the benefit in order to get approval.

Assuming the above works out well, there are things to consider as you compile an application. As noted above solar panels are not guilt free, maintenance free, installations. They will need regular cleaning because bird droppings and dirt will degrade their efficiency. So, access is important, how are they going to be cleaned regularly and safely. Birds, squirrels etc. like to get under panels chew cables etc. so speak with the contractor about appropriate protection etc. As the panels are electrical in nature they will need to be electrically inspected on a regular basis. Do you know who will test them and can they get access to where they need to be. If you are part of a feed in tariff you will need a volunteer to be able to view and submit meter readings to the company. The inclusion of solar panels is likely to impact your insurance, so it is best to speak with your insurer to understand what the implications are. The same is true of your quinquennial inspection, remember to speak with your inspector and discuss the matter.

We are seeing an increase in proposals for battery storage coupled with solar panels. Similar considerations need to be made around use of the church and whether you would benefit from batteries. Like solar panels they are not guilt free, maintenance free, installations. They come with embodied carbon, can be hard to recycle at the end of their life and need regular maintenance. They also come with a fire risk so speaking with your insurer, contractor and local fire brigade early in the design stage is crucial.

Finally, solar panels applied correctly and maintained properly can be a real asset to a church and help reduce its climate impact, but they are not for everyone. Each church and situation is different so understanding your situation, the harms, and what you stand to benefit is the most important part of any consideration when thinking about solar panels. The best investment you can do before making an application, is in yourself to become the 'informed customer'. There is a range of help and guidance out there from [Ecclesiastical Insurance](#), The [Church Buildings Council](#), and the [Diocesan Advisory Committee](#). The Church Buildings Team is there to help you throughout the journey so please do speak to us at DAC@salisbury.anglican.org

Rev'd Mark Charmley – St Saviour's and Torteval, Guernsey

In both my parishes, Safeguarding is a standing item on every PCC and AGM agenda, we do this to stress it's vital importance to the life of the church and it gives our PSOs the opportunity to raise anything should they need to.

It is also on every Deanery Synod agenda in Guernsey, for the same reasons.

Safeguarding is not discussed every time, but there is the opportunity to do so.

I would hope many parishes and Deaneries in Salisbury and throughout the church already do this.

Is this a model that we should be encouraging at Parish meeting, Deanery, Diocesan and even General Synod? Every meeting, at every level?

Response Suzy Fitcher, Head of Safeguarding

I welcome this question from Mark which comes at a time when safeguarding in the Church of England is being discussed and debated in many forums and is under increased scrutiny. It is essential that we are all considering and reviewing our individual and collective responsibility for safeguarding, especially within the currently changeable landscape. Having safeguarding as a standing agenda item on all trustee and governance meetings is good practice, and we recently took the decision to model this within every Diocesan Synod, and Bishop's Council meeting.

I therefore encourage deaneries and parishes to make this as standing item for your meetings, but this is your decision in each case.

Helen Robinson – Fisherton Anger, Salisbury Deanery

In my parish, Fisherton Anger, there is a primary school called Sarum St Paul, and in that school there is a small deaf unit. Currently there is around 4 or 5 deaf children.

My husband is deaf himself and is full-time clergy, and chaplain to the deaf community. He sometimes visits Sarum St Paul and other schools to talk in the assembly about his testimony or share a story.

This raises questions for me to ask regarding the DBE report. I looked in the Salisbury Diocese website, saying: 192 CofE schools with a total of 42,000 children. 13 of these schools are middle or secondary.

The first question, is how many deaf units are there, and how many children are deaf, and how many teachers are teaching the deaf children? Is sign language being spoken?

The second question, how many of the clergy or layperson come to visit the CofE schools and can take part in the school assembly or even come to talk to the deaf children?

Response Katie Fitzsimmons, Director of Education,

The focus of educational provision for most children who are deaf or experience hearing loss is to keep them in their local school with their friends and support them with specialist teachers. This support is for the child and their family, plus the school team, to make sure school – its environment and the teaching – is tailored to their needs. This support goes with them on their educational journey, supporting them to be independent learners and helping families and friends in understanding how the young person can realise their full potential. In the diocese, there are two resource bases for deaf children in mainstream settings – where children attend a standard school which also has a dedicated space and specialist professionals as an extra resource. One is the one you identified at Sarum St Paul's (for primary aged children) and the other is at Sheldon School (for secondary aged children). This is the responsibility of the local authority and as such we do not have access to the exact numbers of children or teachers.

On the second question, we recently asked our schools about their engagement with local parishes and all of those who responded told us they had someone from their local church or local chaplaincy provision coming into school to either lead worship, support governance or offer pastoral support. Schools value and welcome the support of their local church, and it is good to see such a positive picture in most places. In some places there remains work to do to build lasting links. We have recently had

some questions about safeguarding, and we reassure everyone that all visitors are subject to the checks which schools must undertake. If anyone wishes to make contact with a school and isn't sure where to start, then do please make contact with us at the DBE and we can make an introduction. Thinking specifically of Sarum St Paul's school in this question, they have very strong links with St Paul's church, both holding regular whole school services in the church and welcoming the parish team into school.

Gill Verschoyle, General Synod

In view of the changes made to diocesan finances during the latest General Synod, for example, but not only, stopping Apportionment, how will these changes affect the finances of the Salisbury diocese, in particular the size of the Share?

Response: Antony Macrow-Wood

A Dioceses Finance Review has been taking place looking at the several 'flows' of money between the national church and the dioceses and the funding commitment dioceses make each year to the national church which is called Apportionment. The declared aim is to simplify the processes whilst also enabling other changes for long term missional and financial sustainability.

Salisbury does not receive the Low-Income Community Funding (LINC) which is one of the factors under consideration. The proposal is to end Apportionment, but this will be replaced by a commitment to a national Ministry Fund, driven by a formula for establishing contribution levels. The introduction of a national standardised stipend for clergy is included and a one-off increase to these recognising the historic failure to keep pace with inflation. A fund to support dioceses in the aftermath of COVID is proposed with tapered support over 9 years, and part of this will require application to the national Diocesan Investment Programme.

The draft proposals were shared with dioceses on March 11th as part of ongoing discussions that will lead to final decisions in the July General Synod. As these are still proposals it is too early to give Synod a definitive answer on the overall impact of movements but it seems unlikely that it will lead to a reduction in the Share request.

The budget for 2026 and a forward look to overall DBF finances is being developed by the Bishops Council Finance and Resources Committee and will be brought to Synod later this year; this will include any final impacts of national changes.

Rev Chris Grasske, Lyme Bay Deanery

Several of our churches have silverware, pattens, chalices, ciborium's, jugs etc that have not been used for decades. Local museums that have looked after some, are now returning them as they no longer exhibit them. They are filling up space in church safes and increasing insurance premiums. In one church in the deanery there is an item that is worth several years of their parish share that they have not been able to pay in full for several years and they are also having to pay extra on their insurance premium. Is there a process for selling these items where there is no future prospect of them ever being used again for sacramental purposes?

Response: Dan Crooke, DAC Secretary / Lead for Carbon Net-Zero

This is an issue that regularly crops up, and one that is increasing in frequency given the cost pressures on churches. This is understandable if the church feels that the items are of no practical use. However, to

equate the significance of an item with how many times it is used would be to misunderstand what we mean by significance. The British Museum holds many items that are no longer used for their original purpose, this does not diminish their international significance. Church silverware, pattens, chalices, ciborium's, jugs etc. are significant because they tell of the liturgical history of the place in which they are kept and often have a long association with that church. Taken together across the whole of the Church of England they are a valuable record of Christian history and how we worshipped and how it has changed over the years. Often the financial return from the sale of any items is relatively small compared to the pressures faced and certainly does not outweigh the damage done to its significance and its connection to the church. The sale of church plate is also not a sustainable option for struggling churches, once it is gone, it is gone. That is not to dismiss the plight of churches across the diocese but if we sell off our church silver now, we will only be having a similar conversation in the next few years.

That is not to say the sale of church silver and items of worth is impossible. There are certain circumstances where the sale would be acceptable. In every case a faculty will be needed, and certain considerations will need to be made by the PCC to the need for sale. Further guidance can be found from the [Church Buildings Council here](#). And to supplement this, below (in bold) is advice from the chancellor on a previous enquiry on the subject.

- ***There is a strong presumption against the disposal of articles which are regarded as church treasures. These items of silverware might well be regarded as such, although information on their provenance would be needed. What is the historic/artistic significance of the items? What is the history of the items? How long have they been linked to the church/parish? Who were the donors or those in whose memory the goods were given? Can their descendants be identified and have their views been sought about the disposal?***
- ***As we know from the Wootton St Lawrence case, the fact that the silverware may have been in storage, possibly at the bank (and therefore separated from the church) is irrelevant to the question of whether it should be disposed of.***
- ***The financial need is unlikely to be adequate to justify disposal. A real financial emergency would need to be shown.***
- ***If the parish are to justify a disposal, they will need to decide how they wish to dispose of the goods. They will need to show that they have considered a loan (e.g. to a museum, gallery, the cathedral treasury) first, followed by the possibility of sale to somewhere where the items will remain available to the public (e.g. to such a museum etc), before a private sale can be considered.***
- ***If the items are indeed church treasures then a hearing in open court (with consequent cost) is likely to be required to determine any petition for permanent disposal.***

Revd Jo Haine

Rural Dean of Weymouth & Portland Deanery,

I understand the need for the new policy on Historic Prior Year Share Balances and Vacancy, and I support the Diocese in addressing the financial challenges we face. I appreciate the efforts being made, including the share discount for areas of significant deprivation, and the commitment expressed in the policy to

ensuring that the "cure of souls is provided for everywhere regardless of wealth or deprivation."

However, I remain concerned that financial viability may, in practice, become the overriding factor in decisions about ministry provision. Over the next 10 years, there is a risk that, unless additional safeguards are put in place, the Diocese may unintentionally become a place where ministry is only sustainable in wealthier communities, leaving areas of deprivation underserved.

As these new policies are implemented, what specific strategies and accountability measures are in place to ensure that ministry provision does not become disproportionately concentrated in wealthier areas? How will the Diocese actively monitor and uphold its commitment to serving the poor in the years ahead?

Response: Antony Macrow- Wood

In designing the New Share Scheme, we discounted affluence because research showed there was no correlation between wealth and giving. Luke Ch. 21 v. 1-4 is as true today as when Jesus made his observation. Built into the New Share Scheme is specific relief from the income on the Stipends Capital Account for low-income communities. These communities are defined as those in the top quartile of deprivation according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation as mapped by the National Church to parish/benefice level. In 2025 this relief amounted to £88,250 with the Deanery receiving the largest amount of relief (£37,500) being Weymouth and Portland. As the transition period progresses the total of this relief across the Diocese is set to rise to £300,000 pa by 2028. At this stage, we are as confident as we can be that this relief will ensure against the risk noted in the question.

The Historic Prior Year Share Balances and Vacancy Policy contains many nuances and caveats and will involve in depth consultation with parishes affected. It aims to provide the means for constructive conversations around the future ministry provision in any particular context, recognising that the wider Diocese cannot subsidise struggling benefices indefinitely. Thanks to the relief for low-income communities, the principal determinant of ability to pay share is likely to be the number of contributors rather than the relative wealth of the parishioners.

Oliver Iliffe- Clergy and ministry numbers

Marlborough Deanery Lay Member

- 1. Please can numbers be published, for each benefice in the diocese, of vacancies for stipendiary clergy, curates or house for duty priests, alongside the total number of such posts for each benefice, as at the date of answering.*
- 2. Please can a list be published of the stipendiary clergy, curate and house for duty posts which have been vacant for more than one year (noting the benefice, in each case), as at the date of answering.*

Response: Jonathan Triffitt, Director of Mission & Ministry

Thank you, Oliver for your question. I am grateful to the Area Offices for their assistance in responding to this question. The current vacancy rate for stipendiary clergy across the whole diocese currently sits at 20% which is comparable with several other dioceses.

Specifically, in relation to the Diocese of Salisbury:

Episcopal Area	Total Stipend Posts* (not vacant)	Current Vacancies	Posts vacant for more than 1 year	PtO's recruited in the last year
Ramsbury	90	20	5	25
Sherborne	102	9	4	21

*(*includes stipendiary curates and stipendiary Associate Priests)*

Posts that have been vacant for more than a year:

Posts that have been vacant for more than 1 year	Benefice Name	Role Name	Post Type
Ramsbury	Amesbury	Priest in Charge	Stipend – housed
	Clarendon	Team Vicar	Stipend – housed
	Nadder Valley (Pastoral reorganisation awaiting approval)	Team Rector	Stipend – housed
	Upper Wylde Valley	Team Rector	Stipend – housed
Sherborne	Upper Wylde Valley	Team Vicar	House for Duty
	Gillingham Milton on Stour and Milton	Rector	Stipend – housed
	Hazelbury Bryan & the Hillside Parishes	Rector	House for Duty
	Kinson (had pastoral reorganisation)	Rector	Stipend – housed
	Upper Chase (6D Handley)	Priest in Charge	0.5 Stipend – housed (linked with Dorset retirement officer)

Both Area Offices have an up-to-date spreadsheet which tracks benefices, posts, vacancies etc and these are reviewed at their regular team meetings and the monthly Bishop's Leadership Team meetings.

The link to the database can be found here:

[Sherborne Area Posts March 2025](#)

[Ramsbury Area Posts March 2025](#)

Jonathan Baird– clergy numbers

General Synod

1. *Since the beginning of 2023, what progress has the Diocese made in terms of deploying increased numbers in frontline ministry, including stipendiary clergy, ancillary clergy, new and trained ordinands and lay preachers; and what contribution has Sarum College made to this?*
2. *At present, what quantitative and qualitative factors are making so difficult the retention & recruitment of those in frontline ministry?*

Response: Jonathan Triffitt, Director of Mission & Ministry

Thank you, Jonathan for your question in relation to ministry across the diocese, it is a timely question and comes at a time when the newly formed Discipleship, Vocations & Ministry Committee (DVMC) are in the process of developing a Vocations Framework to increase vocations across a range of ministries in line with our vision, that '*all may flourish and grow.*'

I am grateful to Nigel Done, Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Karen Hutchinson, Lay Ministry Development Officer, for providing the data to support the response to your question.

The table below shows the numbers of **Licenced Lay Ministers** (LLM) and **curates** that have been ordained in the Diocese of Salisbury over the last 5 years and those in training for 2026. The numbers Sarum College have trained are in brackets.

Salisbury Diocese	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
LLM	7 (7)	4 (4)	4 (4)	2 (2)	5 (5)	6 (6)
SSM/Associate	7 (5)	2 (2)	5 (3)	5 (5)	4 (4)	1 (1)
Stipendiary	2 (1)	10 (5)	6 (2)	6 (4)	4 (4)	4 (1)
Annual totals	16	16	15	13	13	11

In addition, local ministry is supported by **368 clergy with Permission to Officiate**. These are 'retired clergy' who continue to offer their gifts and leadership in active ministry. As a diocese we are immensely grateful for the significant contribution that PtO's make to the worshipping and missional life of the Diocese.

Local ministry is further supported by the contribution of **Commissioned Ministry**

The following numbers of lay people were newly commissioned in 2022 – 2024.

	2022	2023	2024	Total by Oct
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				2024
Lay Pastoral Assistants	37	42	24	<i>543</i>
Lay Worship Leaders	22	33	46	<i>266</i>
Anna Chaplains	N/A	2	5	<i>8</i>
Lay Pioneers	7	7	5	<i>23</i>
Total New	66	84	80	
Total No. of Commissioned Ministers				840

Nationally, the number of new ordinands entering training is down 38% since 2020. There was a national target of 600 new ordinands to commence training in the Autumn of 2024. However, only 355 ordinands commenced training, of which only 237 were offering themselves for stipendiary ministry versus a target of 400. Currently there are only 950 ordinands are in training today.

year	Level	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
New Ordinands starting training	Stipendiary	427	321	263	229	tbc	NA
	SSM	165	155	114	113		NA
	Totals	582	476	377	342	370	NA

At the national level, several factors have been noted around the reason for this drop off in those entering training for ordained ministry and LLM ministry including:

• **Societal/ wider world**

- Post Pandemic engagement with church mission and ministry,
- Institutional suspicion/reputation
- Demographic changes in society

• **National Church**

- Clergy stipend/package,
- Change in discernment process
- Living in Love and Faith and the tone of the debate from both sides

• **Diocesan factors**

- Diocesan finances that are leading to the restructuring of roles both centrally and locally
- A perception of some roles that are seen to be 'undoable'
- Training pathways and lack of flexibility

• **Local factors**

- Clergy feeling ill-equipped to lead vocational conversations
- Reluctance 'to give good people away'
- The story told by quality of life and ministry

