

**WORCESTER DIOCESAN SYNOD**  
the **Seventh Session of the Eighteenth Synod**  
and a general meeting of the  
**WORCESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE LIMITED**

**held by video-conference on Monday 6 November 2023**

Opening prayers were led by Bishop Martin.

Jon Evans asked the following question:

*"Following the report by the Diocese of Liverpool into the SDF funded Transforming Wigan project which highlighted some encouraging achievements but also some key failings regarding targets around finances and attendance, is there a current update on whether our SDF funded projects involving the two resource churches are meeting their targets and will there be a similar review undertaken to objectively measure the achievements and failings of the projects?"*



This was responded to by Damian Herbert, Director of the Transformation Programme who updated synod on our two Resourcing churches, which currently have a combined AWA of 632 people. There have also been 12 new ordained vocations (with three more in the pipeline) and a number of other churches have been resourced through working in partnership with either All Saints or Top Church.

An announcement was made on **support for heating costs** and Bishop John announced **Amending Canon 42** which requires each diocese to appoint a Safeguarding Officer (rather than Adviser) and ensure professional supervision for the safeguarding team.



Bishop John gave his **Presidential Address**, reminding synod that it was the first meeting for Andy as our new Diocesan Secretary and thanking him for the preparation ahead of the meeting.

Bishop John was speaking from London where he was staying for a series of meetings and then the State opening of Parliament. He explained that he had spent a good deal of October in China for an annual holiday. It was his first time there and was a fascinating experience, helped by having a personal Mandarin speaking tour guide in

the form of his wife, HJ.

Bishop John said: "Relations with China are not good. Our cultures are completely different and our political systems at odds. However, people were universally friendly and open and I found that their problems and delights were very similar to ours. We currently live in very dangerous times. A recent article in the Economist looked at the chances of a third world war and faced with that, deliberations over the budget may not seem important. But it does matter. The witness of the church matters more than ever in these dark times. Our Kingdom Vision and our priorities also matter. They will help us to make the love of Jesus more widely known in Worcestershire and Dudley. We can do something about global warming and I'm grateful that this is on our agenda this evening. Every little helps and it is incumbent on us to do our bit and set a good example. Finally, I'm delighted that Kashmir will be providing an overview of the motion she presented at General Synod in July on the probation service and updating us on next steps. I felt really proud of the Diocese of Worcester ably represented by Kashmir at the last General Synod meeting."

Bishop John presented Wadham Downing as his nomination as **Chair of the DBF** to the Synod for approval. This role was recently advertised and Wadham was subjected to an interview process to become our new Chair. Bishop John said:

"I'm delighted to present Wadham. We are fortunate and blessed that someone of his experience and expertise is willing to take on this role and I commend him to you wholeheartedly."

This nomination was overwhelmingly agreed.



Diocesan Secretary, Andy Todd fed back to Synod the results of the **consultation on stipends and wages**, and the corresponding increase in Ministry Share for 2023. He explained that Bishop's Council have reviewed the feedback and after a robust discussion has recommended an increase of 5%, reflecting the increased cost of living and ensuring that Worcester continues to be an attractive place in which to minister.

The new Chair of the DBF, Wadham Downing then gave a presentation on the proposed **2024 DBF budget**. A break-even budget is being proposed, using some money from the Total Return fund and the Ministry Support Fund to enable us to achieve this. Wadham said that we need to ensure we are putting the Diocese on a path to a sustainable future. In 2024 the national church and the Diocese will give a £1.23m or 22% subsidy to parishes to help through difficult economic times. [See Wadham's slides](#)

Questions were taken on the budget and the increase in stipends and wages.

Wadham moved that:

*"This Synod approves the budget presented by the Bishop's Council and Standing Committee for the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited, which provides for operational expenditure of £8,016,000 in 2024, and operating income of £6,921k."*



This was approved with 3 abstentions and 1 vote against.

For the following two resolutions, synod became a meeting of the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd

Wadham moved resolution no.1 that:

*"The Company hereby approves the budget of the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited for 2023, as approved by the Diocesan Synod in its immediately preceding business."*

This was approved with 1 vote against and 1 abstention.

Wadham moved resolution no.2:

*"That Crowe LLP be appointed as Auditors to The Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited"*.

This was approved unanimously.

Bishop Martin presented an update for Synod on the progress of the action plan towards achieving Carbon Net-Zero by 2030, including how these cut across the Diocesan Priorities.



Director of Communications, Sam Setchell hosted a panel discussion with Bishop Martin, Sue Adeney (Chair of the Diocesan Eco Church group) and Damian Herbert (the member of diocesan staff who leads on environmental issues) talking about the progress we're making towards the aim to be net-zero by 2030, what we can do as individuals and churches, the importance of the Eco Church scheme and what our next steps will be. There was also the opportunity for synod members to ask questions of the panel.

Synod watched a film about the Cathedral's Eco Group and the difference it is making. [Watch this here.](#)

Transformation Programme Director, Damian Herbert moved:

*"That the '2023/24 Practical Path Towards Net Zero Carbon' be received."*

There were 39 votes in favour, 1 against and 6 abstentions.



The Diocesan Lead for Transformation and Change, Archdeacon Nikki presented an update on **progress with our priorities, particularly in relation to new worshipping communities.**

She reminded synod that we want to create at least 100 new worshipping communities (NWC) and explained that this priority is a little behind compared to other priorities as we've not been able to recruit to the NWC Enabler role. We are now looking to reconfigure this post and advertise again.

Nikki said that in conducting the annual reviews with Mission Accompaniers, NWCs are being discovered that we didn't previously know about, and that it is really encouraging that new things are developing organically from parishes. A NWC learning community will be starting in January and if other parishes would like to join this, they should be in touch with Nikki.

Synod split into breakout groups to discuss experiences of NWC in their own parishes and had the chance to offer any comments back to the whole synod. All those present were encouraged to pray and ask the holy Spirit for ways in which we can imaginatively reach out and engage with new people and actively encourage them into discipleship.

Synod watched a film of Kashmir Garton presenting a motion on **the contribution of faith communities to the rehabilitation of offenders** at General Synod. Kashmir then highlighted next steps for parishes who wish to work more closely with the probation service and how as a diocese, we could model how to take this work forward. She asked each deanery to identify churches who would be willing work with probation and be listed in the Welcome Directory (any referral made will be properly discussed with both the safeguarding team and the parish before it happens). Kashmir's hope is that our diocese can lead the way to help people on probation to find hope to be able to change their lives.



Bishop John closed the meeting with prayer.

