



 DIOCESE OF
Bath & Wells
Living the story. Telling the story.

The Diocese of Bath & Wells

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Front cover main photo credit: Jason Bryant

Vision and priorities

‘In response to God’s immense love for us we seek to be God’s people living and telling the story of Jesus’.

This vision for the diocese has been founded on three priorities:



- To place mission and evangelism at the heart of everything that we do



- To align our resources towards mission



- To identify, develop and release the gifts of all people

The diocese has sought to implement these three priorities by developing a number of areas of which deanery leadership development, Everyday Faith, chaplaincy and pioneering have proved especially fruitful. Two particular areas have been identified as strategically important for mission planning in the diocese; our Magnificat

Parishes, our most disadvantaged parishes, and our rural communities.

In the current situation where decisions need to be made to ensure financial sustainability, a reshaping of the diocesan support team is taking place. In order to ensure continued alignment of the team’s work to the diocesan strategy, four key threads of work have been identified, building on what has already been done and also connecting to the priorities of the emerging vision for the Church of England:

Growing Faith

Children and young people engaged on a journey of faith at school, home and church. This echoes the national theme of a church growing younger.

Everyday Faith

Christians in every community growing as confident disciples, living out their faith and engaging in 5-mark mission in their 24/7 lives. This echoes the national theme of missionary disciples.

A Carbon Neutral church by 2030

To achieve ‘net zero’ carbon emissions across the diocese by 2030, as agreed by Diocesan Synod.

Enabling Ministries

This is the programme of work to support the emerging vision for ministry in the diocese reflecting the national priority of becoming a mixed ecology church. As part of this, the diocese will offer increased capacity for parish support and development over the next few years.

The 2020 Deployment Report outlined a vision for ministry in the diocese based around a focal ministry model. This has introduced new language and ‘Enabling Ministries’ is a framework for beginning to implement that vision in an open-ended way. Over the next few years, deaneries and parishes will be encouraged and supported to explore new patterns of ministry, encouraging vocations to local leadership (focal ministry), as well as community-facing mission and ministry.

Our region

The diocese covers two unitary authorities, Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset, and Somerset County Council in the south. It broadly encompasses the historic county of Somerset, extending to include a small part of the county of Dorset.

Although two thirds of Somerset is rural, more than half the population live in urban areas. Between them, Bath, Weston-super-Mare, Taunton, Bridgwater and Yeovil account for nearly a third of the population. Most of those living in urban areas reside in conurbations of 10,000 or more and most of the housing development in Somerset is being planned around these urban centres. The local population will become increasingly urban, yet there are more than 500 settlements across the county, many of them small and rural which account for 43% of the population.



Photo credit:
Mike Haslam

Coast near Porlock

Employment

The largest employment sectors in Somerset are retail, manufacturing, tourism, and health and social care. The NHS is Somerset's largest employer with more than 18,000 employees. There are major hospitals in Bath, Taunton, Weston-super-Mare and Yeovil. Farming is important and a significant employer across the diocese, although employing fewer people than in the past.



There are good employment levels, but there are also pockets of severe deprivation in some urban areas. Rural poverty is, by its nature, less concentrated. Access to cars is higher than the national average. There are however in most villages a significant number of people on low incomes who, because of reduced public transport, have restricted access to shops, health facilities, employment, and educational and leisure facilities. →



Bath

Leisure and tourism

The region’s main assets are its attractive rural countryside and coastline, together with a wide distribution of attractions and heritage sites. In total there are more than 60 miles of coast. Somerset contains two thirds of Exmoor National Park, three Areas of Natural Beauty (the Quantocks, Mendips and Blackdown Hills) and a small part of a fourth AONB (Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs). Other distinctive



landscape areas are the Brendon Hills and the internationally important Somerset Levels and Moors.

There are some 184 visitor attractions, such as the world-renowned Cheddar Gorge and Caves. Before the pandemic around 30 of the county’s larger attractions received more than 50,000 visitors per year. The area is also strong on events, ranging from the country’s biggest music festival at Glastonbury and Europe’s largest illuminated carnival procession in Bridgwater.



Glastonbury Festival

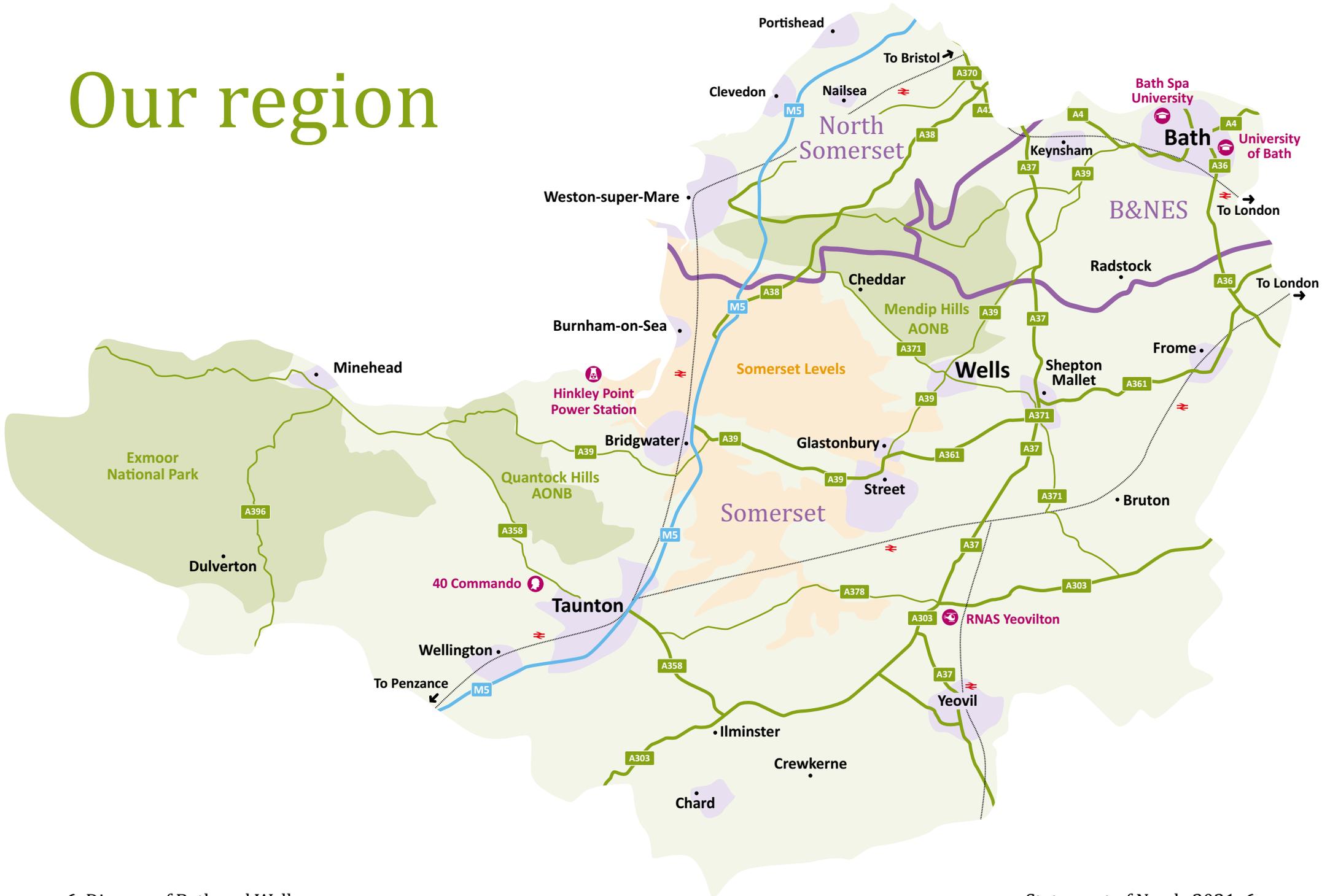
Ethnicity and religion

The region has significantly lower rates of ethnic diversity and international immigration than England as a whole, although these numbers are slowly rising.



In the 2011 census, 64% of people put their religion as Christian, which is significantly higher than the national average, but was a drop of 11% from the previous decade. During the last 10 years the number of people who specified ‘no religion’ has doubled to 250,000. Other religious groupings are small. At 3,500 the Muslim population is the next highest, followed by Buddhists and Pagans. There are mosques and Islamic cultural centres in Bath, Taunton, Weston-super-Mare and Yeovil.

Our region





Population growth



New dwellings

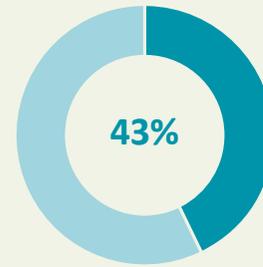
15 year projections for new dwellings July 2021



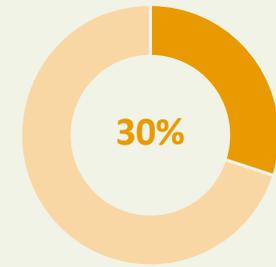
Age breakdown



Ethnic breakdown



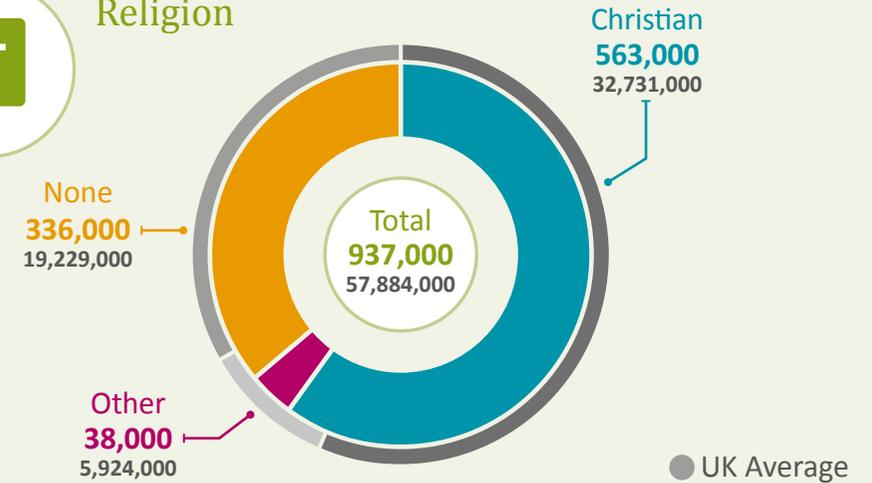
500 small rural settlements account for **43%** of population



30% of population live in 5 urban areas



Religion



MPs



Our region

North Somerset

North Somerset is a largely rural area south-west of the city of Bristol. It is one of the fastest growing parts of the West of England with significant new housing developments outside Weston-super-Mare and Portishead, with more planned over the next twenty years. With a coastline along the River Severn estuary, North Somerset is a tourist destination and attracts people retiring to the area. Its population is projected to age quicker than the other West of England areas.

North Somerset is not a deprived area overall, but it has one of the most extreme gaps between the most and least deprived in the country. Economic and administrative activity is focused on Weston-super-Mare and the majority of voluntary and community sector organisations are also located there.



Population
213,919

23%
of diocesan
population



Age breakdown

Under 18
43,820

18-29
23,652

30-54
70,640

55-70
40,665

71+
36,797



Population diversity

Total
213,000

UKME
8,000



New dwellings

15 year
projections for
new dwellings
July 2021

17,500

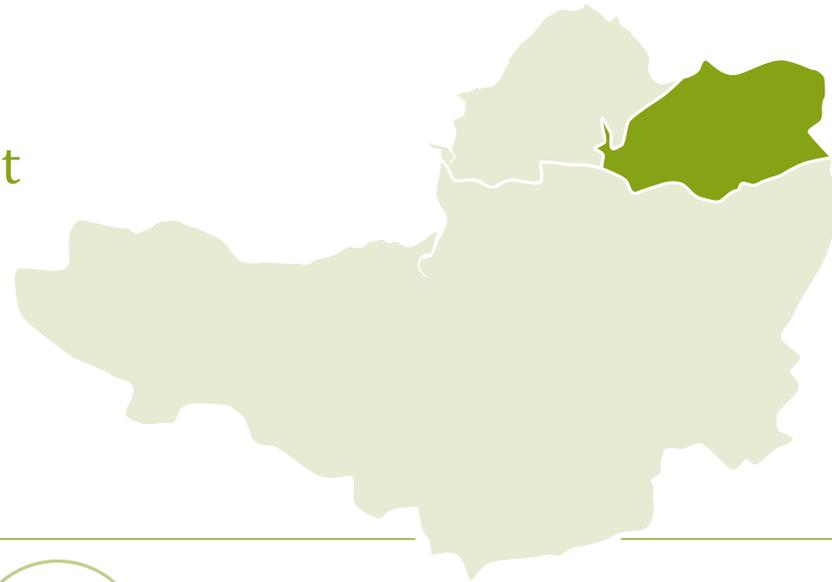
Our region

Bath and North East Somerset

Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) - is a unitary authority with the historic city of Bath at its core. Bath is a cultural heritage centre and is wealthy, but south Bath is largely sprawling social housing estates with high levels of deprivation. Many of the north east Somerset towns historically depended on mining industries. Though the last of the mines closed in the 1970s, some of the smaller towns and villages still struggle with high unemployment and low paid jobs.

Bath and North-East Somerset is home to two universities, the University of Bath and Bath Spa University. Between them, they have over 20,000 students and employ over 5,600 staff, making higher education the largest employment sector in the local authority area.

Overall B&NES is not a deprived area, but there are some pockets of persistent relative deprivation which are extreme when seen against the wealth of much of the area. The proportion of older people is increasing, whilst the proportion of children is unusually low.



Population
193,282

21%
of diocesan
population



Age breakdown

Under 18
36,675

18-29
44,243

30-54
58,339

55-70
31,241

71+
25,859



Population diversity

Total
187,000

UKME
8,000



New dwellings

15 year
projections for
new dwellings
July 2021

2,500

Our region

Somerset council area

The Somerset County Council area currently includes the councils of Somerset West, Taunton, South Somerset, Mendip and Sedgemoor. In July 2021 the decision was made to replace these councils with a single unitary council in April 2023.

The county of Somerset is largely rural, with the major population centres being Taunton, Bridgwater and Yeovil. The expansion of the nuclear power station at Hinkley Point near Bridgwater, with the construction of Hinkley C, is having a significant impact on the surrounding area in relation to housing, traffic and social issues.

Nearly 50% of Somerset's population live in a rural area, making it one of the ten most rural local authority areas in England. Over the five years to June 2019 the population rose by an average of 4,000 per year. Almost one in four of the residents of the county are over the age of 65.

In the year to June 2019, 3,548 more people moved to Somerset from elsewhere in the UK than left the county, but there was a net outflow of 902 for those of university age (18-20). Child poverty levels are around 25% and in 2019-20 the figure for Bridgwater and West Somerset was 33%.



Population
560,631

61%
of diocesan
population



Age breakdown

Under 18
111,293

18-29
62,945

30-54
175,291

55-70
116,959

71+
97,363



Population diversity

Total
552,000

UKME
17,000



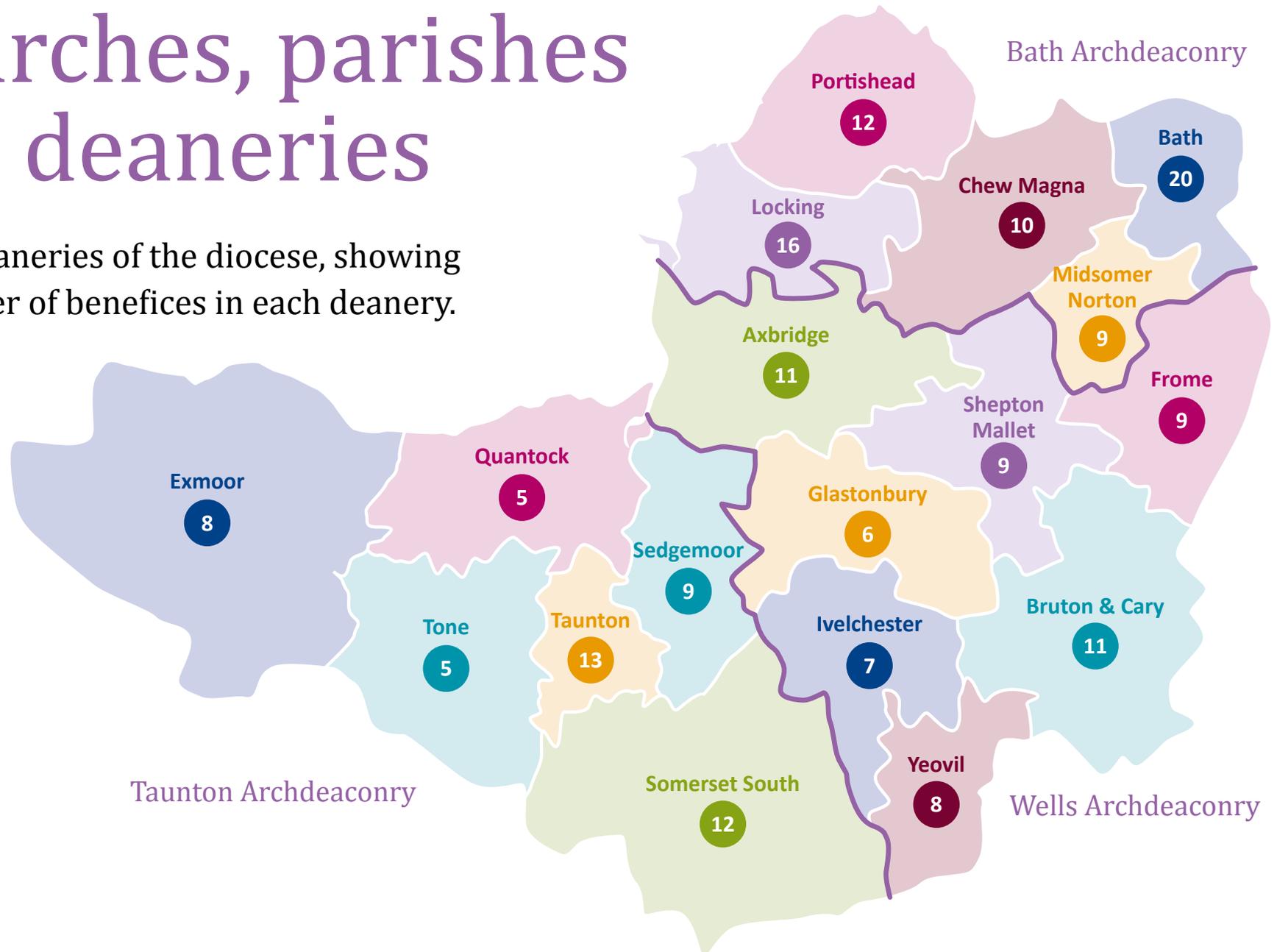
New dwellings

15 year
projections for
new dwellings
July 2021

14,500

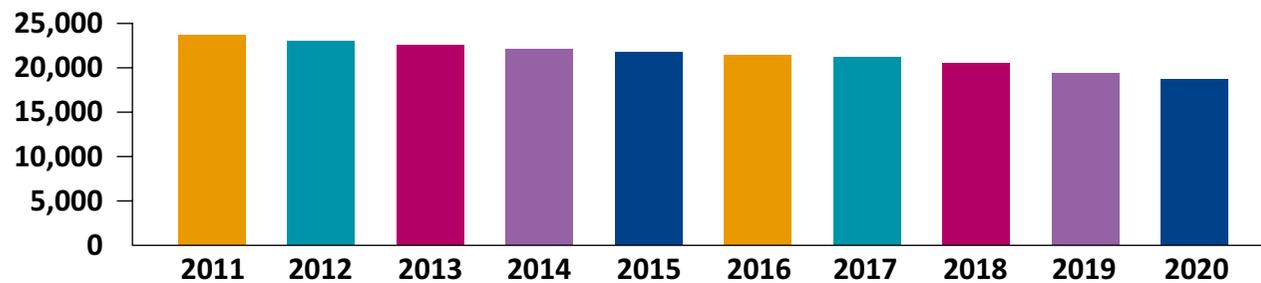
Churches, parishes and deaneries

The 18 deaneries of the diocese, showing the number of benefices in each deanery.



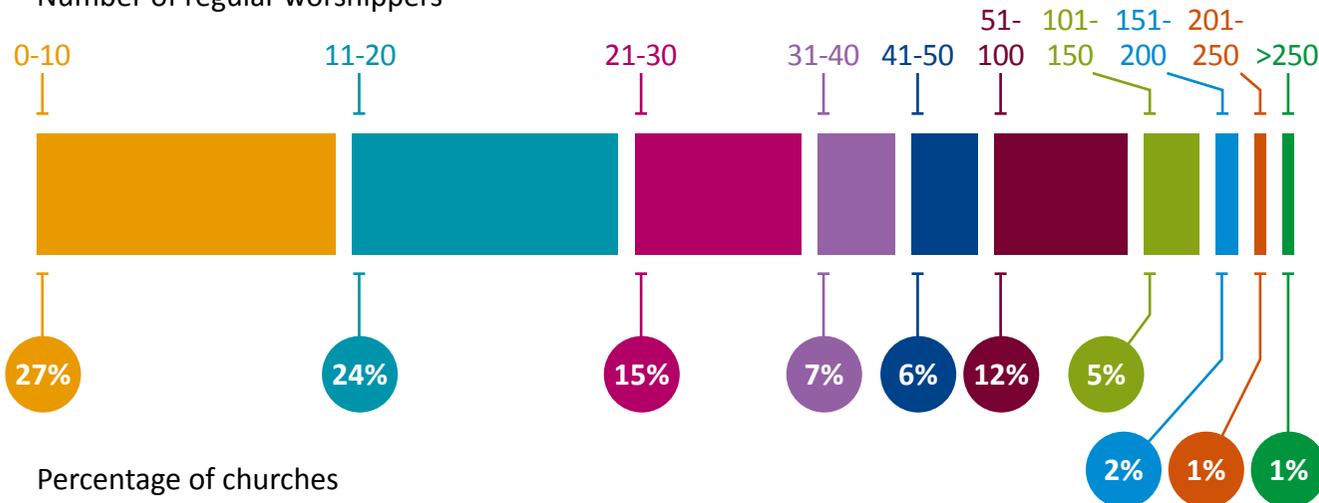
Churches and parishes in numbers

Membership figures for all parishes



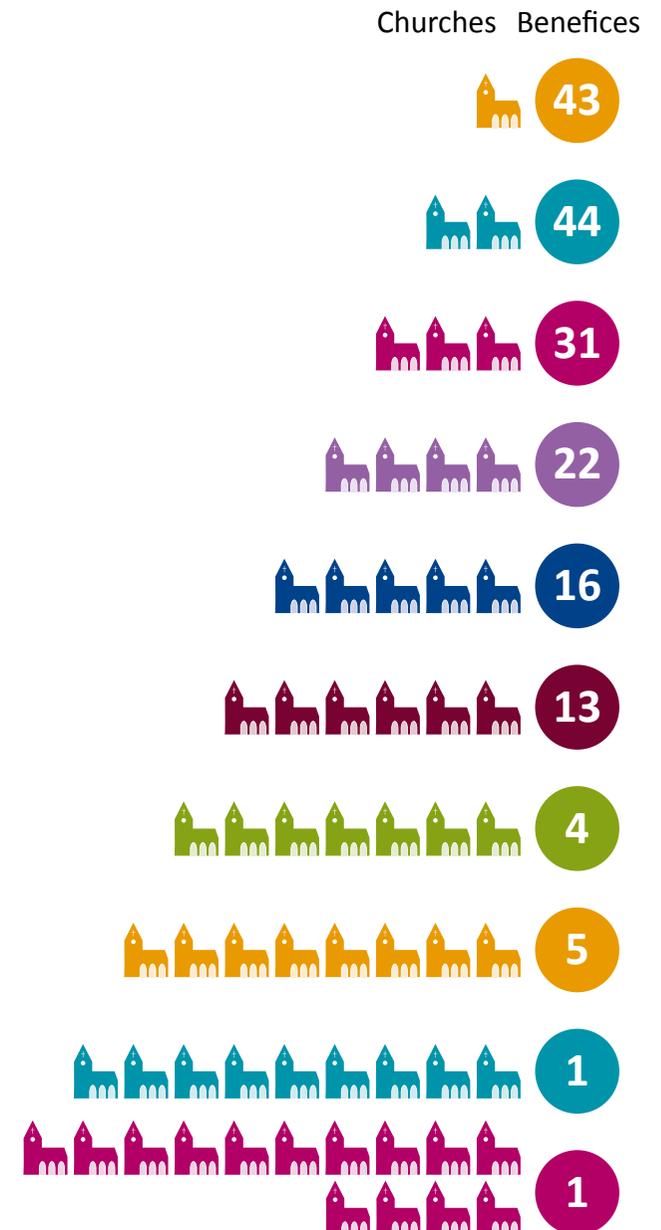
Parish regular worshippers

Number of regular worshippers



Percentage of churches

Churches in each benefice

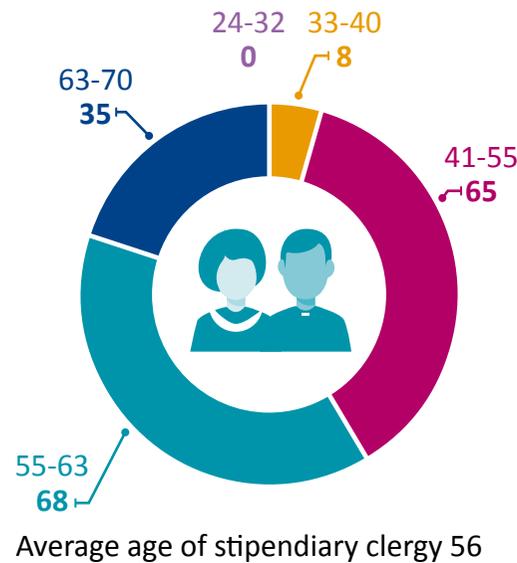


Churches and parishes in numbers

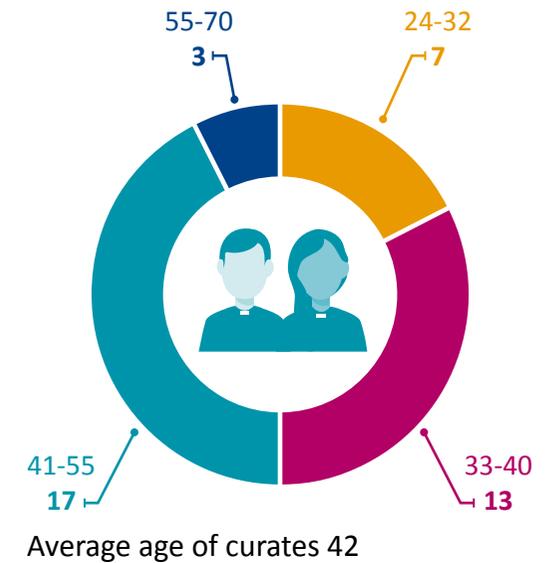
Clergy and Readers



Age of stipendiary clergy (excluding curates)



Age of Curates



Church officers



Mission and ministry in the Diocese of Bath and Wells

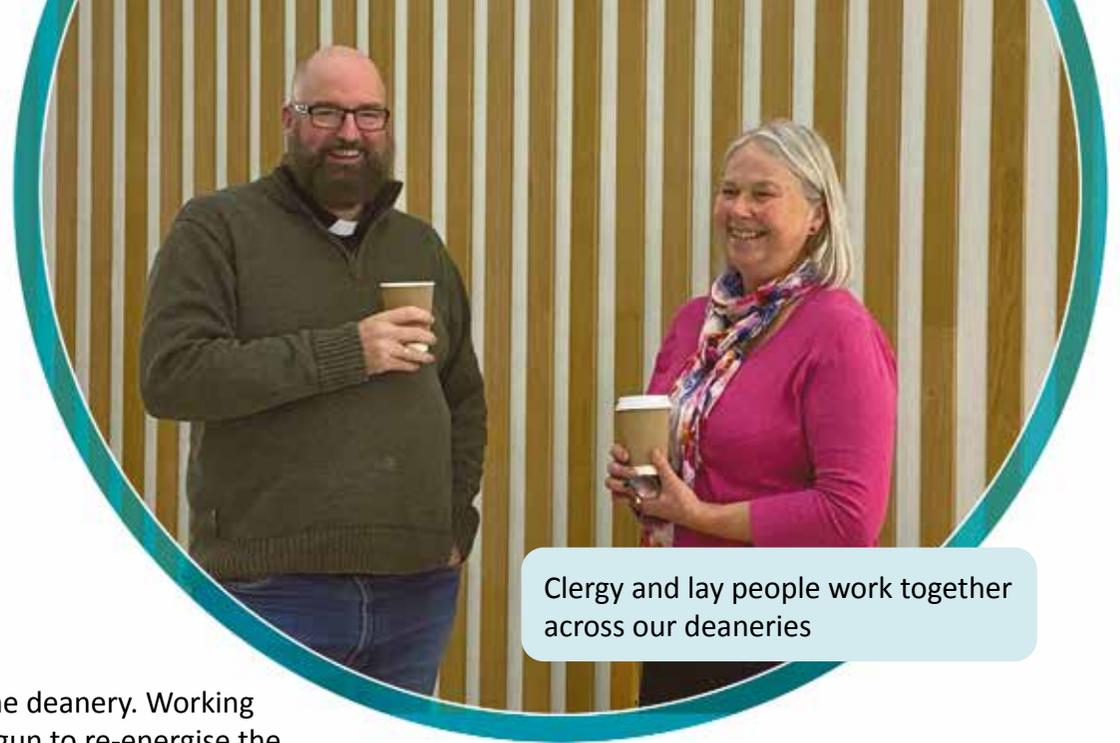
An overview of key areas



The whole community came together for St John's Wellington's Angels of Hope project.

Mission and ministry

Deaneries



Clergy and lay people work together across our deaneries

Over the last seven years the deanery has been developed in terms of its relevance within the diocese. Rather than being just a means of dealing with synodical activity, the alignment of the lay and ordained leadership has meant that the deanery has gained a greater cohesion across the geographic area.

Since 2017 each deanery has been asked to develop a deanery mission plan. Emerging locally, they are intended to identify strategic opportunities for mission

development in the deanery. Working in this way has begun to re-energise the life of some deaneries and put mission on the agenda for Deanery Mission and Pastoral Groups.

Area Deans and Lay Deans meet as a group with the Bishops' Staff three times a year and this creates a wider leadership team for the diocese, with Archdeacons and Area and Lay Deans meeting more frequently as a consequence of Covid. An increasing amount falls on deanery leadership and there are serious questions to be faced around capacity.

Mission and ministry

Everyday Faith

The diocese was one of the early adopters of “everyday faith” as a banner for discipleship in the whole of life, in every context, and this has been encouraged through a programme of support and resources, notably annual Archdeaconry days, the theme last year being “Prayer – everyone, everywhere”.

Lay ministries have been encouraged in a number of ways, including investment in lay vocations, inclusion of Readers and other lay ministers within the Learning and Development (CMD) programme, raising the profile of the role of Lay Dean, as well as the encouragement of a diverse range of ministries open to both lay and ordained, such as pioneering and chaplaincy, alongside specifically lay ministries such as Lay Worship and Lay Pastoral Assistants.



Lay and ordained have gathered in person, and online during Covid, to explore everyday faith in our Archdeaconry Days.

Mission and ministry

Growing Faith: Youth and children



Movement 'bringing young people together to meet with God in prayer and worship'

The diocese aims to support, encourage, resource, value and equip all those working with young people, children and families. This includes paid workers and volunteers, trainee students, school and university chaplains, teachers, clergy, Readers and others. The work has specific focus on:

- **Support:** Offering advice, information and guidance on a range of topics
- **Encourage:** Drawing alongside what exists and encouraging new initiatives to facilitate mission and discipleship
- **Resource:** Making available a range of distinctively Christian resources, activities and events
- **Value:** Offering pastoral care, Christian love and gathering points
- **Equip:** Providing high quality training, conferences and professional development.



LecDeck, a weekly youth-specific and versatile discipleship tool

Among the recent innovations from our youth and children advisers, which have drawn interest from across the country, are the LecDeck and the Bible Chat Mats.

Our advisers have a close relationship with Movement, a youth and young adult ministry with a vision to engage with, equip and empower our young people to be all that God is calling them to be. Movement has grown out of a local parish church, from a single worship night to now organising multiple worship nights, conference and youth leader training events across the diocese.

Mission and ministry

Schools



Loving God, we pray for those who will be making decisions about the new Bishop of Bath and Wells. We pray that as they listen to others and to You, that they choose the right person to lead the diocese and its people in the future.

Amen.

Two aims cover our education focus for our church schools. The first is that all church schools are sustainable and provide the highest quality education for all pupils, enabling all to flourish. The second is that all church schools and parishes are empowered and equipped to work well together in order to offer clear pathways to distinctly Christian support or activities in both schools and parishes.

The work of our education team helps schools and parishes to understand that good and excellent church schools will deliver high quality education that is confidently rooted in, and enhanced by, a strong Christian ethos, a clear biblical vision and tangible Christian values. Church schools are

places reflecting God's Kingdom and, in partnership with positive parish support, can provide direct and indirect opportunities for people to encounter God's kingdom, to ask questions, to develop their own spirituality, to encounter Jesus.

The successful Bath & Wells Multi Academy Trust (BWMAT) has its own leadership and governance structure. Colleagues from the BWMAT and the Education team work in partnership to deliver high quality and distinctively Christian education as well as a wide range of support including chaplaincy links. As of April 2021, 35 primary schools have joined the MAT, with more seeking to join. The central team of the BWMAT, are based in Flourish House adjacent to the diocesan support services.



Mission and ministry

Magnificat Parishes



During Covid, Rose Cottage Hub, Bath, helped coordinate supplies to hungry households.

Our Magnificat Parishes are the 24 most disadvantaged in the diocese. The term refers to rural, urban, town centre and coastal parishes which don't fit into the more common 'urban priority areas'.

Magnificat Parishes, which make up around 16 per cent of the diocesan population, have been prioritised for additional resources. They are either a parish which is in the bottom 15 per cent nationally of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) or a parish which has some areas that fall into the bottom 10 per cent of the IMD. Around 60 per

cent of them are within five miles of the North Somerset/Somerset coast.

In 2019, the Diocesan Synod reaffirmed that Magnificat Parishes are a priority. Within that commitment there was a clear affirmation of the Gospel imperative to the poor and an acknowledgement of previous failures to fully understand their context with a desire to include them in the common life of the diocese. With an ongoing commitment to prioritise resources to equip and enable mission, service and ministry, work is being focused on the design of programmes and pathways for training, calling, lay ministry, leadership development and discipleship development.



St Andrew's, Bournville was active in lockdown, but managed to gather together person on Palm Sunday.



Mission and ministry

Rural

Rural Somerset is one of the jewels in the crown of England. Underlying its richness and striking beauty, are a wide variety of different types of rural areas from established farming communities to places impacted by tourism with significant numbers of holiday and second homes. Each of these areas face their own particular challenges. A recent survey undertaken by the then collective Boroughs of Somerset asked what people consider to be the positives and challenges of living in rural communities. Positives focused on the sense of community and peacefulness while the negatives included; poor transport links, including bus services, a lack of amenities, affordable housing and poor infrastructure, such as poor broadband.

These views and opinions are reflected in many of our rural churches and given voice to

a perception that they are being overlooked or not given priority. With the support and help of the Diocesan Rural Life Adviser, focus is given to these challenges in the development of mission and ministry. A Flourishing Rural Churches Group draws together thinking and discernment of new possibilities in the light of strategic priorities, and shares good practice.

As evidenced through the pandemic, with some rural benefices engaging strongly in their communities, there is an ongoing desire to continue to build partnerships and work alongside other rural groups and agencies. Focus could be on a wide range of issues, including social care/isolation challenges as well as partnering with environmental groups.



People from across the diocese gather to hear about the challenges of rural life in Somerset and Zambia.

There are a large number of standalone rural Church Schools which are currently not attached to any Academy chains. This reflects a challenge of sustainability but they are drawing keen support from the Board of Education to help support and encourage them in making links that will make their future more certain. Although often hidden, pockets of rural deprivation and poverty are a reality. Linking into the Magnificat Parishes work, this reality is recognised, and active connections are made with clergy and lay leaders of those parishes.

Mission and ministry

Urban Areas, Church Planting and Revitalisation

Although the diocese is significantly rural, most of the larger villages, towns and cities are expanding in size due to the demand for new housing. This newer demand is reflected in the aspirations of the councils and the targets that have been set for the next 15 years: 17,500 homes for North Somerset, 2,500 homes for Bath and North East Somerset and 14,500 homes from Somerset. Change, driven by demand, is also being seen and reflected in the rising house prices of 6.9 per cent in Frome and Bruton due to their proximity to the rail link to London.

Weston-super-Mare is the second largest urban centre in the diocese (population 88,000 in 2018, up from 81,000 in 2011) and, due to housing development and population growth, is likely to become the largest in the future. Under the priority of 'aligning

resources to mission' there is a specific strand within the diocesan strategy drawing a commitment to church planting.

Drawing on the gifts and expertise of experienced local church planters the most recent revitalisation initiative launched September 2021, in the Milton area of the town. This begins at a time of real opportunity for the deanery and the diocese. Locally we are able to capitalise on the missional partnerships that have already started to form. We are also able to deploy some experienced and gifted individuals who are ready to step into some of the key leadership roles in the project.

The hope is that this demonstration of the diocesan strategy in action will have a catalysing effect for further missional schemes, providing a model both for diocesan decision making and for local leadership. Other deaneries are starting to consider how to take a similar approach.



On All Souls, St Peter's Milton and Mead Vale shone the light of Jesus out and gave out free hot chocolate and bags of hope.



Mission and ministry

Pioneering



The diocese was awarded £1.6m Strategic Development Funding in 2018 to deliver an innovative project to catalyse pioneering activity across Somerset. Nine new pioneer posts were created and phased in over the first three years, with each post planned to be for an initial five years. Each post was designed and set up in partnership with the deanery concerned, ensuring local support and engagement.

The clear purpose is to reach out to areas and communities where the church has little



impact, with a focus on areas of deprivation, new communities and work with young people, with a goal of seeking to establish new and sustainable worshipping communities and to act as catalysts of further pioneering activity. Alongside this, the diocese has been training and supporting emerging 'grass roots pioneers' through the Church Mission Society's Certificate in Pioneer Mission. These are voluntary, unpaid pioneers who have a vocation to mission in their local context.

As well as the full-time pioneers appointed by the project, there have already been a small number of clergy posts redeployed to create pioneer appointments, in response to local initiative (often as part of the deanery mission plan). In addition, two cohorts of voluntary lay pioneers have been trained and some are exploring a vocation to recognised ministry as a pioneer. With the pioneers acting as catalysts and signposts to encourage all churches and ministries in cross-cultural mission, at this still early stage, some of this impact can already be seen, both in the ministry of the pioneers

themselves, and also in the way people across the diocese talk about mission and ministry.

Having delivered the first stage of the project, the task for the longer term will be to work towards a future where pioneering is fully embedded in the life of all parishes, and no longer just a project.

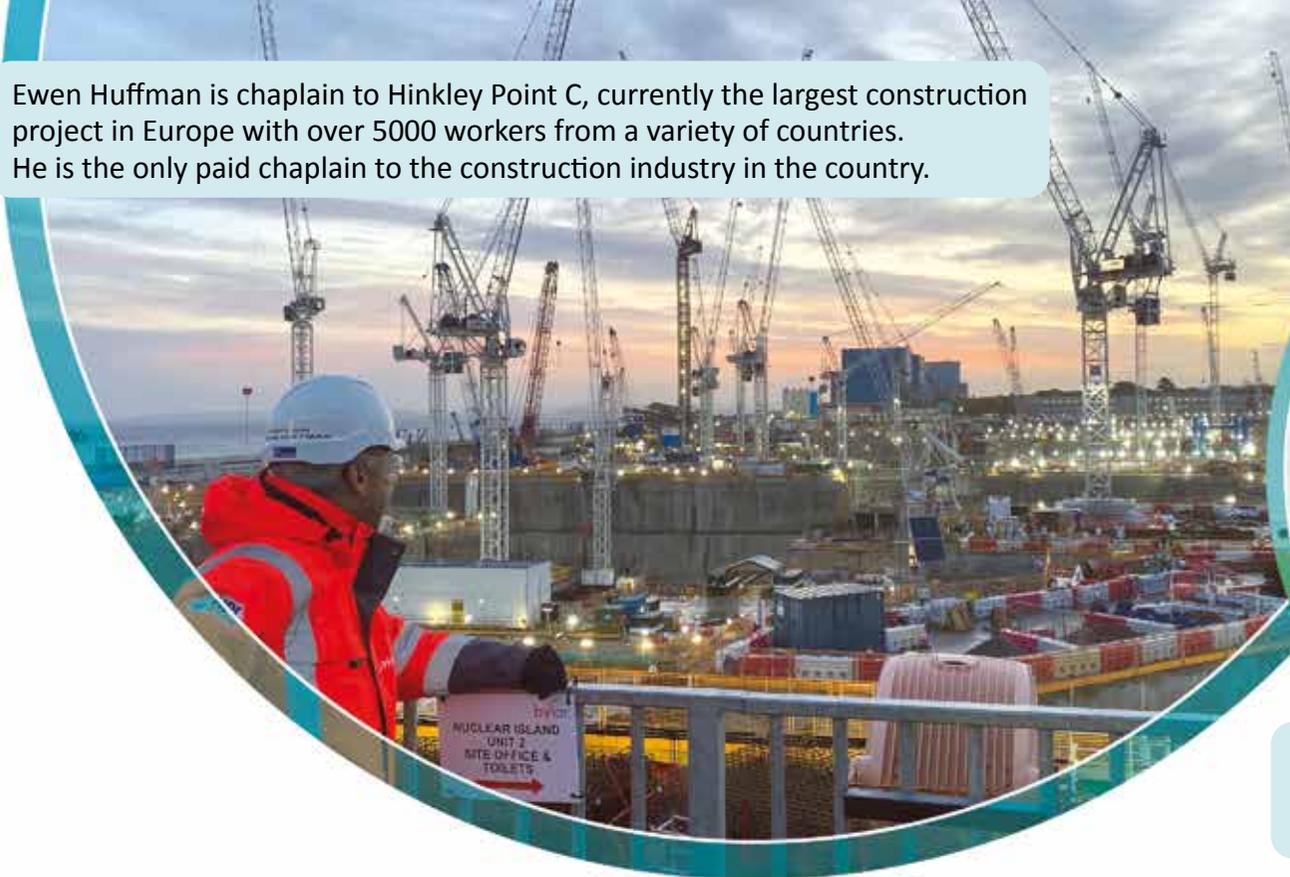


Source, well-spring and living water catch us up in the wild flow of the Holy Spirit as we discern whom You are calling to lead us through these fluid times.

May our eyes scan the edges of the horizon, our collective mind discerns the future emerging, our choices bear the mark of Your foolish wisdom. Bless and guide us as we adventure together for the sake of the gospel and kingdom in this watery diocese.

Amen

Ewen Huffman is chaplain to Hinkley Point C, currently the largest construction project in Europe with over 5000 workers from a variety of countries. He is the only paid chaplain to the construction industry in the country.



Lead Chaplain for Royal United Hospital Bath, Narinder Tegally: Our NHS chaplains are a vital support to staff and patients during the Covid pandemic

Mission and ministry – Chaplaincy

The appointment of a Chaplaincy Development Adviser has created capacity for encouraging the vocations of lay volunteer chaplains in a wide range of contexts, and for the creation of new chaplaincy posts through partnerships with other organisations. Strategically, the diocese views chaplaincy as a missional ministry,

showing the love of Christ in an unchurched society, and is a significant and rapidly growing part of the mixed ecology of church.

The past five years have seen chaplaincy growing from 100 to over 150 chaplaincies and from about 250 to nearly 400 chaplains. Chaplains (full-time, part-time, paid, honorary and from all traditions and denominations)

serve in healthcare, education, industry, the police and armed forces, villages, estates and a multitude of other contexts. Community secondary schools, courts, care homes, villages and estates, are just a few of the communities which are asking for chaplaincy for the first time. Within the communities we serve, chaplains listen, care and offer spiritual care to all.

Mission and ministry

World mission and social justice

The main emphasis of the 43 year-old link with all five dioceses of the Anglican Church in Zambia has always been on building relationships through prayer, correspondence and visits. When all the seven bishops met in Lusaka during the joint 40th anniversary celebrations in 2018, they made a commitment to building their relationship and supporting the link.



Christians from Zambia regularly contribute to our #EverydayPrayer videos on our social media channels.

One outcome was the first Zambia Sunday, held across the diocese this year, as well as a regular newsletter.

The vision for the link is an expanded number of parish and school partnerships, strengthened relationships and greater communication (including visits both ways) and engaging with young people to continue its development. When the bishops next meet face to face (at Lambeth Conference 2022) they plan to discuss how we use our shared financial and other resources to enable these developments.

On a wider canvas we now have a limited but focused plan to broaden our understanding of the Anglican Communion – the initial focus is to help people understand more about the Church in the Middle East (Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East). We have also focused our world mission working partnerships on just one local and four national organisations they are Anglican Alliance, Christian Aid, CMS, USPG and Send a Cow.



A community artwork display to mark Modern Slavery Day was held at St Mary's Church, Bridgwater by Hidden Voices Somerset.

As well as being committed to world mission, we are also active in the area of social justice. Across Somerset there has been a positive response to families who have had to flee Afghanistan with offers of accommodation and support under the Government resettlement scheme starting in September 2021. With diocesan encouragement and support many parishes have offered volunteers and resources to help in this work.

We also facilitate Hidden Voices Somerset, in partnership with The Clewer Initiative, as our local response to modern slavery and all forms of exploitation. The project has two key elements, the provision of Victim Support and building of an effective, self-sustaining Anti-Slavery Network across Somerset.



Mission and ministry

Climate emergency

The diocese has a significant track record on innovative work on environmental issues. The issue has moved from the periphery to now being central to the identity of many of our congregations. In March 2020 the diocese declared a climate and ecological emergency and in November 2020 adopted a new Diocesan Environment and Climate Change policy and a detailed rolling action plan. We are working on stressing the urgency of the situation, especially for others in the Anglican Communion, and a dual track of 'decarbonising – reducing energy use and changing energy sources' and 'improving biodiversity' which also has climate benefits.

We have postponed implementing the full plan due to the pressures on parishes and communities caused by COVID, but in Autumn 2021 we started promoting some key initiatives including membership of Eco Church as we work to become an Eco Diocese, energy audits, the request

for all churches to have a 'forward heating plan' by the end of 2023. The biodiversity work was launched in mid 2021 and has mainly focused on our very successful Wilder Churches Initiative in partnership with the Somerset Wildlife Trust. It focuses on biodiversity in churchyards and burial grounds and has involved both church people and wider community members. Key strategic issues still to be addressed include policy on land, eco work on clergy housing, and investments.



Mission and Ministry

Safeguarding

The Diocese of Bath and Wells is committed, as part of the Christian church to living in the spirit of the Gospel, to protecting and caring for everyone, particularly children, young people and those who are vulnerable.

As a diocese we are committed to:

- Ensuring a safeguarding culture where everyone is treated with respect, and all are comfortable about sharing concerns.
- Supporting all our volunteers, clergy, advisers and lay people to achieve the standards laid down in the Safeguarding Policies of the Church of England.
- Working with individuals who have criminal convictions, or where other safeguarding risks are identified, to ensure that they, and all members of the church community are safeguarded.
- Holding to account everyone responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults in the diocese.
- Supporting victims of safeguarding failures and ensuring the thorough investigation of all new and historic safeguarding complaints.



