

Section 1: Introduction

How we got here

The Church of England's vocation is and always has been to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ afresh in each generation and to be a Christian presence in every community. Since the Diocese of Liverpool was established in the nineteenth century, the bishops who have led it have wanted its structure to serve its mission. J.C. Ryle, the first bishop of our diocese, wanted every person, lay or ordained, who was then 'sleeping' to become 'active agents' of the Church.

To answer the question 'what does it mean for an *individual* to become an active agent of its mission' the Diocese of Liverpool adopted the Rule of Life. The Fit for Mission programme is intended to help those *parishes* who have entered it to become active agents of the Diocese's mission, introducing people to Jesus, deepening discipleship, developing Christian leaders, and working for justice.

Now the time has come to ask the question 'how can the *whole of our Diocese* become an 'active agent' of the mission of God? How can we be sure that there are no 'sleeping' parts of our diocese, and that every part is an active agent for mission in and for every community?

The Diocese recognises that the church has reached a fork in the road. In the same essay quoted earlier, our first bishop said 'if we believe danger is impending over the Church, let us not wait till the storm bursts', rather 'let us gird up our loins while we can and attempt Church Reform.' If the dangers of waiting were evident to J.C. Ryle in the nineteenth century, they are seen even more clearly now.

Plans, priorities and funding

To achieve this vision we recognise that we need a church that is simpler, bolder and humbler in its self-understanding and approach to mission. Our primary means of delivering this in Liverpool is through establishing larger single parishes through the Fit for Mission pathway. We are and will need to continue to develop leaders - both lay and clergy - who are equipped to lead such generational change. We know we need to focus our missional ambition through sharper choices and more determined implementation.

This Funding Proposal takes a whole system approach, building on and learning from our recent mission development projects. It is hugely missionally ambitious, seeking to turn around decades of decline and creating a virtuous circle of numerical and discipleship growth, rationalised governance and administration and diversified income streams to create an ever more sustainable diocese with the scope to make its own missional investment decisions. It is based heavily on the learnings and emerging successes of Fit for Mission with deep-rooted culture change and accountable missional leadership at its

heart. It seeks to maximise and release missional capacity onto the frontline. It expects to deliver unprecedented levels of growth.

As reflected above we are at a hinge point in our diocesan life. There is a very strong sense of lots done, lots to do and lots to lose if we don't move at pace and scale on the Fit for Mission journey. To return to J.C. Ryle, *individuals* have become active agents of mission through adopting and living out the Rule of Life; *parishes* are starting to grow through Fit for Mission; this proposal is intending to make the *whole diocese* an active agent of God's mission.

The national church and the Diocese of Liverpool share three priorities:

1. To be a church where variety is the norm as existing churches are refreshed and revitalised for mission and new congregations and worshipping communities are regularly born.
2. In doing this we want particularly to be a church that is younger and more diverse, doubling the number of children and young people, fully representing the communities we serve and committed to moving from repentance to repair in key aspects of racial justice.
3. In order to achieve the first two priorities we need to become a church of missionary disciples in which all of our churches and worshipping communities become hubs for formation so that every Christian becomes a disciple of Jesus working out their vocation to serve and witness in the context God has placed them. In pursuit of this we continue to focus on 4 missional priorities:
 - a. Introducing people to Jesus
 - b. Deepening discipleship
 - c. Developing Christian leaders
 - d. Working for justice

Our four priorities are an ongoing interlocking relationship of investment, resourcing and action which, in every part, is born out of an understanding that every Christian has a 'lifecall' of their own journey of discipleship, formed within and sent out from the Body of Christ. Discipleship, and our aim of deepening discipleship, can be difficult to measure in ways that do not become reductionist (eg merely attending courses). However, a rich culture of intentional discipleship can be more confidently articulated and measured by the outcomes of new Christians/joiners, increasing numbers of emerging and trained Christian leaders and specific, identifiable justice initiatives. This ongoing maturing of the Body of Christ is the sustaining and life-giving essence of ensuring vibrant, diverse, viable parish ministry which is meaningfully expressed in every geographical context and networked community. In short, we want a church in and for every community.

This focus on a strongly interconnected approach to mission and ministry is the product of extended and wide-ranging conversations over a number of years and on-going learning from our successes and our mistakes. But we recognise that we are at a hinge

moment in the life of the Diocese of Liverpool. We have a range of exciting missional possibilities; we have a series of potentially debilitating constraints. Through Fit for Mission we have already courageously begun a 'whole system' change and alignment to ensure that our structures and processes allow for the next step of mutual support and accountability. Because of the experience we have gained on the Fit for Mission journey we now know where we need to get to and how we can get there. We have the knowledge and experience to make radical change possible. With additional DIP investment we can look more expectantly to a hope-filled future.

Section 2: Some core assumptions

Our thinking and approach to these challenges has been based on a set of assumptions some of which are common across the Church of England, but others are more particular to our knowledge of the culture, history and circumstances of the parishes of the Diocese of Liverpool. The following 8 interlocking assumptions are key:

1. We are not building on stable foundations. Our long-term pattern of decline means that the parishes of the Diocese of Liverpool are not in a stable position either in terms of finances or of people. Even where there is apparent strength our parishes are vulnerable to demographic change, personnel change, societal change. The future does not look like keeping what we have and improving on it in the areas we choose; rather it looks like managing change well and supporting and resourcing all our parishes to become more sustainable and fruitful.
2. The continued rollout of Fit for Mission is vital and forms the key part of our confidence in being able to deliver this programme. The creation of larger single parishes, with clergy and lay people supported to work together in a new way, is essential to us having the institutional capacity for our parishes to do mission at scale. The larger single parishes already existing or in formation are:
 - Creating real teams with real accountability for mission locally
 - Releasing people into fruitful missional activity (in the two cohort 1 deaneries seeing 17% growth in adults in worshipping communities and 25% in children in the last 12 months)
 - Creating the institutional capacity which will enable the deanery resources, youth and schools work and other elements of this bid to be used effectively and release as many people as possible into frontline mission.
3. We share the national church's view that mission and ministry to children and young people is the priority of priorities. We are starting from a low base so need to invest significantly to create sustained growth.
4. We must continue to build on our learning. We have a history of trying creative missional programmes, seeing real fruit and growth from them, learning where they could be improved, and then doing the next thing with that learning in mind. These include Transforming Wigan, Joshua Centre, Transform North West and Missing Generations (all with SDF support), but also Deanery Mission & Growth Funds (small grants for local mission projects), Together Liverpool (enabling social justice work, in partnership with others and with external funding), Good Funeral Company and others. What we propose with DIP support is to build capacity to do more and in more places, with more accountability but with less burden and fewer barriers.

5. We recognise that every parish needs additional help and support, and under these proposals will get it.
6. We also recognise that we have an interlocking eco system where there is a clear sense of and need for an understanding of covenant, that mutuality of gift from and obligation to each other. It's not about taking just the blessings or cherry picking the bits that we like from these proposals. That is why we talk of a whole system approach. We assume that within the diocese that there will be a balance of mutual support financially, and in collaboration of people and parishes in mission.
7. We are reaching a tipping point where we can see several existing or in formations LSPs now genuinely working, and real prospects of LSPs in every part of the diocese by the end of the period covered by these proposals. By 2032 we think this will be normalised across the diocese: at the same time, not all churches will be part of LSPs, and the resources unlocked here will serve all local parishes of whatever size.
8. Furthermore, we fully endorse the national church's view – expressed in their Diocesan Finance Review – that: *The Spirit of the Lord anointed Jesus 'to bring good news to the poor' (Luke 4:18). For the Church of England to continue to bring this good news to the poor in England today, it must gladly embrace the fact that church life in some parishes will require ongoing financial support. The 'privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints' is one to be exercised not with grudging reluctance as if a problem to be overcome, but with 'abundant joy' as a grace-gift of God (2 Corinthians 8:1-3). Lower income parishes, moreover, must not be seen or described as 'dependent' or 'subsidised.' Rather, it is that some communities supply another kind of riches to the church (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:14) within the economy of one Body whereby each part is dependent – in differing ways – on all the others (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)*

Section 3: A continuous focus on growth and sustainability

We are committed to a clear understanding of a local church as the central focus for the nurture, development and releasing of disciples to invite others to encounter Jesus and work for justice in their communities and the world. We have developed a health and viability (H&V) framework which clearly articulates how we become a sustainable diocese in terms of missional strength and financial resilience underpinned by sustainable parishes. The framework is based on RAG rating (RAG = Red, Amber, Green with Green being good). The framework is designed to achieve 2 things:

- Give a clear understanding of where we need to be as a diocese to be sustainable – with and without Low Income Communities Funding (LInC) from the national church
- Give each church their own understanding of where they need to get to in order to become sustainable.

Greater local clarity in H&V is already providing a new ability to plan locally for mission, people development, diversity and finance.

We need to recognise that we are some distance off green as a diocese. Similarly most churches are not green. Our whole diocese plan seeks to address that. It is based on an on-going rhythm in every church and every parish of:

- Robust evaluation – a church by church analysis of missional and financial health with a clear articulation of what constitutes Green for that church
- Refreshing – a process to enable every church to determine how it can move out of steady decline into sustained growth
- Renewing – re-energising and, where necessary re-imagining our inherited worshipping communities

This will be supported and accelerated by a series of strategic interventions, especially through Larger Single Parishes, through:

- Planting – both a multiplication model of regularly establishing new and often small-scale worshipping communities and through a Resource Church model renewing and re-energising existing churches
- Revitalising – a series of inputs to enable accelerated growth, particularly in the following areas:
 - Children and young people
 - Social justice
 - Racial justice
- Resourcing – nurturing and providing people and financial support to release the missional ambition that each church has, including:
 - Funding the Future grants
 - Resource hubs
 - Advice and problem solving

It will be dependent on key people developments such as:

- Local Missional Leaders
- Youth leaders
- Larger Single Parish Rectors
- Clergy and lay leadership development and support

And will need to be underpinned by:

- Re-evaluation – honest, robust and regular church by church assessments as to whether progress is being made and what additional support or refinements are needed

None of the above are instant fixes. We need to retain a long obedience in the same direction. For example, we can't simply pluck youth leaders from the air (although the potential to train youth workers has a potential pathway from September 2024 which has until now been unavailable); we will have to grow a sustained and sustainable stream of energised and equipped Local Missional Leaders (which our learning from Wigan and FFM shows is possible through the Cultivate pathway). It will take time, focus and discipline. It will take all that we have learned both in the day-to-day life of parish mission and ministry over many years plus the more recent learnings from our various strategic development projects. In particular it will take the very best of what we already have across our churches and seeking to make our best practice routine.

This is why the plan and its various milestones is expressed in 3 broad time frames:

- 2025: a year of detailed planning, preparation, recruitment and identifying pilots
- 2026 – 2028: the first 3 years of implementation (coinciding with the next triennium for the national church) with ongoing learning and reflection
- 2029 – 2031: the next cycle of delivery and implementation, following a review of learning and reset at the end of 2028

There are 6 key buildings blocks to support and enable this vision and missional ambition:

1. Measurement and Planning, including
 - A health and viability tool – to enable a granular church by church analysis of their missional and financial strength and progress and an understanding of what progress we are making as a whole diocese towards sustainability
 - A missional and financial planning tool – to enable sustained missional growth and financial resilience
 - Dashboards – very simple dashboards enabling each church to monitor their progress around missional growth and financial resilience

2. Mission – a series of investments in missional growth and health both to give substance to the priority around children and young people as well as enabling accelerated growth in key areas
3. People – a series of investments in people, lay and ordained, to enable confident discernment of a 'lifecall' for all God's people and, in particular and in line with our diocesan priorities, to deepen discipleship and develop Christian leaders
4. Money – a series of investments in financial capacity at church and diocesan level to support growth and health initiatives and to address key areas of historic under-investment (most notably clergy housing) and a culture change in our fiscal disciplines
5. Structures – to continue to invest in the Fit for Mission programme, forming and supporting Larger Single Parishes (LSPs) to enable growth to happen at greater pace and greater scale
6. Advice and problem solving – a series of resources and people to enable us to tackle the most intractable problems and barriers to change, especially around buildings

This document will seek to lay out how each of these buildings blocks works in its own right and how they fit together to deliver the whole diocesan change referred to in section 1. It assume that significant progress on net zero carbon is outside the scope of this work.

Section 4: A whole diocesan approach

One of the core aims of this plan to put strengthening churches and local mission and ministry at the front and centre of all that we do. We want as much resource as possible to reach that frontline. However, before we can do that we need to recognise that the Diocese of Liverpool is unsustainable on its current operational model. This is caused by 3 factors:

- i. Sustained underinvestment in mission and growth because of a combination of demographics, land values and lack of endowment
- ii. Financial weakness among our parishes
- iii. Lack of missional growth capable of generating new resource

Our whole diocesan approach brings together 3 key concepts:

- i. How to invest in discipleship culture in every parish and tradition so that we can plan for a sustainable, resourced, shared and hope-filled vision of the future of Church of England in the Diocese of Liverpool, in which we are introducing people to Jesus, deepening discipleship, developing Christian leaders and working for justice effectively and in every community.
- ii. How to ensure we have a clear church by church understanding of and engagement with mission and financial strength as well as the impact of their work
- iii. How to evidence that we are investing national church funding (including LInC monies) well

There is the associated challenge of delivering this in a way that balances 3 core themes:

- i. The need and desire to release local leadership, decision-making and missional energy
- ii. The recognition that no church has an absolutely free pass where they continue to set their own terms – every church in the diocese is part of a covenantal relationship, generous mix of giving and receiving mutual support
- iii. The need within this context of local decision-making for mutual accountability – we each need to be confident of our role and contribution to the flourishing of the Diocese of Liverpool and equally confident to hold each other to their full part in this

To that end we need to be clear that any support for local mission and ministry released through this plan will be based on a series of core commitments from all participating parishes:

- i. To commit to working to the 4 diocesan priorities with a focus on making a younger and more diverse church possible
- ii. With support to develop a Mission Planning & Review (MPR) process which is:
 - a. Contextually appropriate – recognising and drawing energy from the ecclesiology of the church and applicable to the nature of the parish

- b. Deliverable – a focus on steady, incremental growth in the number of people joining church rather than spectacular promises of radical turnaround and reinvention – celebrating the small and encouraging the faithful, seeking the ‘1’ person by person
- c. Aimed at improving the spiritual, financial and numerical strength of the church. We know that if we do not grow numerically then our leadership and discipleship base will become more and more stretched and unable to respond fully to the missional opportunities we have. Candidly, we have to introduce more people to Jesus; we have to increase the number of Christian disciples.
- iii. To produce an annual budget (again with support where necessary)
- iv. To commit to regular reporting of progress through a basic parish dashboard
- v. To pay Deanery Parish Share in full
- vi. To commit to basic fiscal rules, including the core commitment to breakeven budgets over a 3-year cycle

These commitments will enable the DBF to release Funding the Future grants and – in line with Deanery Ministry Plans – to deploy future clergy into the parish.

When we consulted widely as part of the Fit for Mission discernment it was generally recognised that there were 5 obstacles and challenges that we needed to overcome if we were to flourish as a diocese:

1. The long-standing and deep-rooted decline of the Church of England
2. Being under-resourced on the frontline
3. Unrealistic expectations on people
4. Unsustainable buildings
5. Lack of diversity

Fit for Mission started us down the road to overcoming these obstacles but we need to go further. In particular, new ways of working and changes of culture don't in themselves make a difference to being under-resourced on the frontline. SMMIB investment in the Fit for Mission programme is mostly funding the process of making that change and there is no significant funding for frontline ministry itself.

By contrast, this bid to the Diocesan Investment Programme is primarily about addressing this second obstacle directly: making more resources available to make the work of mission and ministry more effective and less burdensome, and resources to make possible frontline ministry that we have never been able to afford.

Section 5: The 6 building blocks

As mentioned in section 3 this plan is based on 6 building blocks, each supporting and reinforcing the other. To explain each in a little more detail.

1. Measurement and planning

a. Health & viability tool

The purpose of this tool is to enable a granular church by church analysis of their missional and financial strength and progress and an understanding of what progress we are making as a whole diocese towards sustainability. This tool will start by tracking 2 key numbers:

- Attendance in worship (adults and children) – as a proxy for sustained missional growth
- Levels of parish reserves (modified by income and expenditure outturns) – as a proxy for financial resilience

Each of these 2 numbers will be expressed in terms of Red, Amber or Green with a clear understanding of where each parish needs to get to in order to become Green.

Over time we will seek to develop this tool to understand:

- The levels of parish income used to pay Parish Share – that needs to come down so as to enable parishes to invest more of their money in local mission and ministry
- The likely trajectory for total Parish Share – so we can look to plan confidently (a) to eliminate the diocesan deficit and (b) to deploy the clergy that we can afford and parishes want. This planning is easier in the context of an LSP, but we need to ensure – via the Deanery Ministry Plan – that local planning and thinking is fair and transparent across the deanery. (*See section 6 Money, sub-section vi – Deanery Ministry Plans.*)

There is clearly a potential tension between on the one hand wanting to reduce the proportion of Parish Share as a percentage of parish income, and on the other hand a potential need for higher levels of Parish Share to maintain a balanced budget and – possibly – to deploy more clergy. That is why this section needs to be read alongside the other sections geared to improving the missional and financial health of each parish.

The parish Health & Viability tool builds into the diocesan Health & Viability tool, and in particular tracking the collective pathway to Green and overall sustainability.

There will be parishes and churches that, for different reasons, are unable to get out of Red or which slip back from Green and Amber. We are already developing a range of interventions to support parishes either to plan confidently for future growth or to go through a more radical process of reimagination and reinvention.

b. Missional Planning & Review (MPR) process

This is the core tool and support to enable every church in the diocese move into:

- A sustained pattern of steady, incremental growth in the number of people joining church
- A focus on enabling each church to become younger and more diverse
- A financial underpinning which is both sustainable and allows for increased investment in local mission and ministry

This tool is based on a rhythm and cycle of planning, implementing and review. The plans for missional growth (supported through an on-going 'Pyramid Review Process') will be continually reviewed to embed learning as it happens ensuring that this appreciative enquiry, asset based approach fully engages with the potential of each individual context. All this is based on parishes understanding their current strengths and areas for growth. From there they will produce an action plan for medium-term growth and development. This process will be supported and enabled by a facilitator and each aspect of the tool will be reviewed with the facilitator every six months to build an encouraging, measurable celebration of success and immediate incremental planning for next step development. This approach (developed in Wigan and through FFM) is proving to bring about missional change in achievable steps with positive mutual accountability modelled and embedded as a culture.

The aim to become financially stronger will be supported by the Generous Disciples and Sustainable Churches processes. These enable churches to plan their stewardship practices alongside understanding new possibilities about income generation and cost control. Where necessary it will also involve support in preparing and monitoring an annual budget.

Assuming there is a budget in place these processes can also become a means of generating financial support via a Funding the Future grant.

c. Dashboards

The Health & viability tool and the MPR process will be supported by a simple dashboard.

The dashboard will be updated on a termly basis and will:

- Track weekly attendance across all worshipping communities in the parish – adults and children
- Provide an annual assessment as to levels of parish reserves, modified by income and expenditure outturns
- Provide confirmation that the most recent Pyramid Review happened at the appointed time and the next review date is scheduled
- Provide confirmation that the most recent Generous Disciples and Sustainable Churches reviews happened at the appointed time and the next review date is scheduled

Continued payment of any Funding the Future grant will be dependant on the parish dashboard being up to date.

4. Mission

Building on the above foundations we want where possible, to support locally contextual plans to accelerate growth in numbers and diversity with a series of key strategic investments. These investments will not necessarily be available to all parishes and churches but will be targeted where they look likely to make the most impact in the short to medium term. The investments will be based on 6 key themes and drivers for growth:

Large-scale planting of small-scale churches and congregations – building on the work and learning of the Joshua Centre, Warrington Church Collectives and the Cultivate programme within Fit for Mission we want to see the flowering of planting and nurturing new worshipping communities across the diocese. This is and will remain a key missional driver within the Larger Single Parishes (LSP) – indeed that is where we expect to see the majority of this planting activities as the LSP creates a level of capacity to enable the planting to happen. The on-going work of Cultivate will be central to the envisioning and encouragement of new missional leaders and – crucially – supporting them as they plant and grow new worshipping communities and developing disciples as Christian leaders through an LML pathway

0 – 18s work – Liverpool diocese does not have a comprehensive 0 – 18+ strategy to reach children and young people and it does not currently have the resources to fully form or implement one.

The diocese commissioned a scoping report in 2023/24 to gather an understanding of current youth work across the diocese and to reflect on key learning from youth work and SDF projects to date. The report also gathered information from other dioceses who had commissioned similar work, for comparison and learning, plus a wide range of stakeholders.

Key findings were:

- Youth work has drastically declined in the last decade
- The youth work that is flourishing is disparate and disconnected
- There is not sufficient training or standards for paid youth workers and recruitment is difficult due to a lack of training and the low value of youth ministry. (Full-time and part-time positions have been advertised in the Diocese for months with no suitable applicants.)
- Volunteers are hard to recruit because of incorrect perceptions of Youth work - that it is hard. Greater storytelling on how it works well and support and training are needed.

- Youth work is increasingly lonely and youth workers are often isolated in their roles.
- Youth ministers are too busy doing the work to strategize.
- The nature of youth work today is widely and deeply misunderstood.
- The majority of churches have between 1-10 young people in their worshipping communities and all churches have at least one point of contact with young people
- The lack of whole-church ministry: Churches that have grown youth ministry have kept young people central to their vision, committed to longevity and trust-building with young people, and been open to change their ministry as youth grow up.
- The pastoral need of young people (particularly in schools) is great and there is a lack of support for schools' workers, chaplains, and youth workers.

The DIP application offers a step-change opportunity for the diocese to bring together our previous learning, create some simple and courageous plans, and to provide new resources that are available across the diocese. Despite little central resource available and focused on the 0-18+ demographic, we do come to this with a repentant spirit for the lack of prioritisation in the past decades. We now plan to focus on 3 key areas:

- People: the priority for the diocese is to invest in training children and youth leadership to provide the strategic thinking, energy, coordination and integration that is needed to bring the ambition to life. DIP funding will enable a 'kick-start' injection of investment into a 'grow our own' resourcing strategy. Our proposal is that we attract and train youth workers for the diocese through offering qualifications through Emmanuel Theological College, and accessing National Church apprenticeship schemes once they become accessible.
- Places: there are three 'spaces' which are obvious places to focus attention to create momentum:
 - Working with schools as outreach to children and parents
 - Larger Single Parishes where there is significant opportunity to create scale and leverage effort through a coordinated, prioritised and 'joined-up' approach to children and young people across the deanery
 - Work closely with Resource Churches and other churches that have a strong track record of working with children and young people, to be centres for outreach, learning, mentoring, supporting, and further planting
- Parents and children: the 0-18+ strategy will be based on 4 main age stages and transitions with a strategy for each:
 - Ages 0-4
 - Ages 5-10
 - Ages 11-18
 - Ages 18-30

Resource churches – enabling a regular pattern of rapid congregational growth from which other churches can be planted and revitalised, thereby creating on-going missional strength and leaders formed in that context and experience. We have demonstrated that this can work in particular contexts and have a protocol for how resource churches can be rolled out. We will develop a pathway for curates either through their curacy or at the end of their curacy to be formed in this culture and also to develop a relationship with a cohort of lay people similarly geared to planting and revitalising. Designated receiving churches will be in Larger Single Parishes (LSPs) to gain the maximum advantage of flexibility of ministry and deployment of clergy, with the expectation that they will then plant and revitalise other churches in the LSP.

Social justice work – enabling a flowering of social justice activity which is lay led, organic and locally responsive, creating a coherent and sustainable network of social action. We see social justice work both as a good in itself as it is key to building the kingdom of God as well as central to our strategy for church growth. It isn't simply the bigger difference part of our strategy; it is both bigger difference and bigger church. Our experience shows that justice work directly connects with unchurched and de-churched people, as well as involving and engaging people on the fringe of church. It is key to reaching younger and more diverse communities of people. It removes barriers to people engaging with church and provides on-going opportunities to introduce people to Jesus. Within Fit for Mission there is an explicit commitment both to plant justice initiatives and for at least some to become worshipping communities in their own right. Building on models already established this justice work will be supported by a network of specialist resources coordinated by a properly resourced Together Liverpool, with core ideas being replicated and franchised to aid capacity building and income generation potential.

Racial justice – moving from repentance to repair by enabling (i) all parishes with contested heritage related to African enslavement to develop reconciling ways to tell the integrated story of their history and make a commitment to racial justice work for their local communities, and (ii) all parishes to become more diverse as they dismantle racist practices and develop a culture that promotes the equality of all people, thereby increasing participation in all areas of a parish's shared life. As parishes with contested heritage complete the *Slavery Truth Project* we will also develop a scanned repository of their research catalogued for future academic and social research. To support parishes as they use the *From Repentance to Repair Toolkit* we will develop a bank of discipleship and teaching resources for adults, young people and children to reflect theologically on race and curate worship, prayer and liturgical resources that support the inclusion of diverse cultures within church services and celebrations.

5. People

Our people strategy will underpin our plans for growth and resilience through a series of investments in people, lay and ordained, to enable and encourage the exploration of

vocation in all God's people – our individual and collective lifecall. There will be a focus on our diocesan priorities, to deepen discipleship and develop Christian leaders. This is an iterative and multi-layered process, held together under the lifecall banner and initiative but with several specific inputs in line with the particular requirements of this plan.

- Lifecall is about every Christian connected to a worshipping community in the Diocese of Liverpool having a 'lifecall' leading to a discipleship understanding and a thriving pipeline of Christian vocational leadership across the diocese. Lifecall as an overarching strategy includes an accessible gateway for Christians within Liverpool diocese to explore and engage with their discipleship and formation for mission and ministry in their local communities, workplaces, 'frontlines' and local church
- A process of exploring and discerning vocation to licenced and commissioned church roles
- Training and development pathways for the variety of lay and ordained roles we will need in the future, both initial selection training and in-ministry development
- A means by which the diocese can develop and release leaders across the missional work of the diocese, especially in planting and leading new congregations
- A means by which Larger Single Parishes (LSPs) can develop and resource their own people plans and strategies, planning for resilient and consistent vision and implementation of mission plans

The lifecall strategy will be based around 4 broad themes: Connect, Discern, Equip and Develop, with individual development plans and ongoing learning and development. This will allow an accessible core leadership programme to be accessed at the most appropriate stage with additional stages and specialist development for particular roles. It will be underpinned by a communications strategy to reach out to every Christian connected to a worshipping community in the diocese.

Specific requirements of this People plan

There are 5 key requirements if we are to deliver our LifeCall strategy with this plan. These can be summarised as follows:

Local Missional Leaders (LMLs) – if we are to see a step-change increase in church planting and justice initiatives in line with early indications in FFM, we will need a pipeline of effective LMLs who are equipped and supported to start, grow and sustain new worshipping communities with active discipleship. *Cultivate* is an established diocesan programme geared to deliver on this. Its initial focus will remain to support the growth of LMLs in LSPs, but it will also be rolled out more widely once all the LSPs have been established. All LMLs have an individual development/ministry plan and on-going support and mentoring.

Youth & Family Workers – in support of the 0 – 18s work we will need to call and nurture a new generation of youth leaders and family workers. This is challenging as there has been a downward spiral of reducing numbers of children and young people in church and therefore an ever smaller requirement for paid youth leaders (even if they can be afforded) and an ever smaller pool from which to draw the next generation of young leaders. Therefore we will look to begin to turn this around through a specific development pathway, together with a diocesan networked learning community, ensuring that this pipeline of paid and volunteer workers are fully effective in role. This will include a further expansion of the CEMES scheme in the diocese as well as a creative partnership with Emmanuel Theological College.

Rectors in LSPs – the role of Rector in our Larger Single Parishes (LSPs) is a unique role within the Church of England. Rectors operate in a multi-layered set-up and need to be skilled at and coached in leading teams well; developing others through mentoring and coaching; developing positive accountability culture and processes; stimulating and sustaining missional growth, and managing governance and financial sustainability. It is a vital role for the future flourishing of mission and ministry in the diocese. There are 3 core aspects to this work:

- The need to develop a Rector Ready pathway to ensure a good pipeline of future Rectors with focussed development for early post holders
- The need to develop a culture of Deputy Rectors both to support current Rectors and nurture the next generation and support for other key roles in LSPs (eg wardens, treasurers and safeguarding officers).
- The need to use the clergy appointment process more efficiently to enable the rapid fill of any Rector vacancy, so as to avoid disruption to the life and mission of the LSP.

Lay leader training and development plans – we want all licensed or commissioned lay leaders to thrive in their ministry, to be clear and confident in their vocation, equipped for their current role in their LSP/parish, and supported to explore future possibilities through their individual development ('LifeCall') plan. This will require a step change in the budget and a suite of flexible training and support pathways. It will also require an on-going development review process. We also know that the role of deaneries will need to continue to be reimagined in the light both of missional and developments and the Larger Single Parish/Single parish relationship. We will need to invest in and support the key role of Lay Chair (see also section on Governance).

Clergy training and development plans – we want every serving ordained person to thrive in their ministry, to be clear and confident in their vocation, equipped for their current role in their LSP/parish, and supported to explore future possibilities through their individual development ('LifeCall') plan. Such plans will need to be flexible and adaptable to changing contexts and seasons of ministry. This will require a step change

in the level of training budget available to and for clergy and a developed curriculum and series of training pathways. We will also need to align the MDR process to the LifeCall plan format. It will need to be widely consulted, with pilots beginning in 2025 once we have recruited the relevant capacity. We also know that the role of deaneries will need to continue to be reimagined in the light both of missional and developments and the Larger Single Parish/Single parish relationship. We will need to invest in and support the key role of Area Dean (see also section on Governance).

6. Money

As regularly discussed across the diocese we have a particular financial challenge given our asset base and demographics. This plan aims to enable the diocese to grow both missionally and in terms of financial resilience through a virtuous interplay of missional growth bringing in new financial resources and improved financial capacity. We have a multi-layered challenge which involves:

- Catch-up investment – especially in clergy housing and areas of under capacity
- Programme investment to kick start growth
- The re-imposition of DBF fiscal rules and driving out of our revenue deficit – including but not limited to a return to 100% Parish Share payment
- The establishment of equivalent fiscal rules at parish level to underpin parish resilience
- Annual budgets for every parish
- The reduction of Parish Share as a percentage of parish expenditure
- Robust assessments of the future affordability of deanery clergy deployment strategies through Deanery Ministry Plans
- The mainstreaming of key costs at the end of particular programme investments
- Support and intervention where within the mutual support arrangements across the diocese parishes are clearly not sustainable as currently constituted
- A consistent and persistent move to self-sufficiency in the long-term

The plan seeks to set a determined path to achieving this long-term sustainability through the following initial 7 steps and interventions:

(i) A new accountable culture around health & viability assessment and understanding – establishing clear processes to establish the health and viability of each parish supported by the Missional & Financial Planning Framework and dashboards (see 1. Health & Viability, 2. Missional & Financial Planning Framework and 3. Dashboards above). This new culture will include:

- Routine budgeting and financial planning for all parishes
- The adoption of fiscal rules by all parishes and the re-imposition of fiscal rules by the DBF
- A return to pre Covid assumptions and patterns of expecting 100% Parish Share payment

- Holding to account those parishes where within the mutual support arrangements across the diocese mission and ministry are clearly not sustainable as currently constituted and providing appropriate support and intervention to turn this around.

(ii) Clergy housing – this has been an area of historic underinvestment (a casualty of the low financial base in the diocese) and a serious issue for clergy morale, recruitment and the future financial health of the diocese. The plan needs to address 3 key issues:

- A programme of investment to get clergy housing up to RICS Decent Homes standard to prevent further deterioration in:
 - Clergy morale
 - A core DBF asset base, and therefore diocesan resilience and responsiveness
- The need for an incremental move towards net zero carbon in core areas (eg. insulation, boilers, windows)
- The removal of the financial responsibility for curates' housing from parishes (via Parish Share and their own resources) and onto the DBF budget.

Each of these require national church support in the short to medium term.

(iii) Parish income – one of the single biggest issues in the diocese is the inability of many churches to invest in mission and growth. We need to ensure that each parish is maximising its income and minimising its costs through a sustained focus on the Generous Disciples and Sustainable Churches aspects of the Missional Planning & Review process. These will include assessment of the viability of church buildings. We have a well-established Right Buildings Process for Larger Single Parishes; we will need to develop robust processes for tackling the buildings question among the remaining Single Parishes. There will be an on-going assessment of admittedly limited glebe land and other assets, especially in the light of changes to any planning assumptions and regulations. The aim of all this is to generate new capacity to invest in local mission and ministry.

(iv) Funding the Future (FtF) grants – a new scheme to kick start missional growth and improve future missional investment capacity by offering financial support to parishes in line with the actions from their Pyramid Review (missional growth) or Sustainable Churches review (future financial capacity). FtF grants will only be available for local mission and ministry – it is not there to provide for diocesan schemes. They can only be awarded to parishes with an annual income and expenditure budget.

FtF grants will be time limited and will require national church funding for that period.

(v) Resource hubs – located in LSPs but available to the whole deanery these hubs will provide high quality and locally delivered support services to parishes (see 7. Structures below). These will be key to generating and releasing financial resources and to freeing up God's people for mission and ministry.

Resource hubs will need to be supported by national church funding in the first instance with a clear pathway to them becoming self-sustaining within 8 years.

(vi) Deanery Ministry Plans – a framework to ensure that all deaneries understand, express and can confidently meet their Deanery Parish Share obligations on a sustained basis according to the numbers of clergy they wish to deploy.

(vii) A new Parish Share system for 2026 – to support the move back to 100% payment. Parish Share has been a success story in the Diocese of Liverpool. We have had (apart from Covid) exceptionally high levels of Parish Share payment through a combination of outstanding commitment on the part of our parishes and an ability on the part of the diocese to anticipate and adapt to necessary changes in approach. Over the past 20 years we have moved from Quota by Potential to Parish Share to Deanery Parish Share. This has been supported by more stringent interventions such as Reversing the Payment Trend and the requirement for Parish Share Payment Plans where parishes fall behind. We have long held the belief that Parish Share systems go stale and there is a need to refresh and update them. We are in that season now. The 2025 budget will set an appropriate quantum of Parish Share to support the ministry that parishes tell us they deem necessary and affordable. We will introduce a new Parish Share system in 2026 to support and enable a robust understanding and expectation of Parish Share payment requirements for the next 2 triennia.

7. Structures

We need to continue to form and support Larger Single Parishes (LSPs) to create the critical mass and economies of scale to enable growth to happen at greater pace and greater scale. However, as these LSPs are formed they can become a resource for the wider deanery (if such support is welcomed by parishes in the wider deanery). This support will come via a Resource Hub through a range of high quality and locally delivered support services. These services will both underpin core aspects of church congregational life such as:

- HR – processes, policies and procedures
- Finance – bookkeeping, payroll, payments, cards, banking
- Administration – funerals bookings, other bookings, communications, record keeping, safer recruitment, Churchsuite maintenance, room bookings
- Asset management – building compliance, maintenance, records, contractors, insurance, purchasing (energy etc)
- Fundraising and income generation etc

Resource hubs in different deaneries are likely to share some services (eg fundraising and income generation) to ensure an appropriate match of capacity and demand. Volunteers can play a key central part.

8. Advice and problem solving

We need to make things as easy as possible for people to focus on mission and ministry, to grow the church and become more sustainable. However good and well thought through our plans are life gets in the way. There are foreseen and unforeseen problems and things that we have put in the 'too difficult' box. Diocesan support in these situations is patchy – great in many key areas; more patchy in others. We want to ensure that all parishes feel fully supported in delivering on this whole diocesan plan. We want to ensure that we have in place resources and people to enable parishes to tackle the most intractable problems and barriers to change, especially around buildings and income generation. Some of this will be provided at the local level via Resource hubs; some through easily available diocesan teams. We don't want any parish to feel alone or unsupported through this process, however difficult or apparently prosaic or abstruse the problem. We will need to align St James House staff fully to these support requirements – which will require investments in staff and systems.

Section 6: Governance

Governance is an increasingly complex and daunting challenge for many. Constant changes in legislation, the rightful demands around safeguarding and data protection, financial and people challenges are just a few of the demands – mostly falling on already overburdened volunteers. Got right governance can be enabling and releasing; got wrong it can come back to haunt us.

There are two aspects to this section:

- Parish governance
- Programme governance

Parish and deanery governance

We need to ensure that PCCs and other layers of governance are equipped to pray and plan for a hopeful future and can confidently navigate their way through the various legal, financial and operational demands. These include some additional burdens imposed by this plan. Indeed, the governance requirements – as with so many aspects of this plan – will almost certainly mean an up front investment of time and energy before there are significant benefits. The establishment of Resource hubs is key, as will be the various planning and review processes once they are embedded.

These plans also have very clear implications for the role and functioning of deaneries. We will need to plan through the on-going role and priorities of deaneries, especially with the mix of Larger Single Parish/Single Parish. The roles of Area Dean and Lay Chair will be key. We will need to ensure these roles are well resourced with training and good support from archdeacons and St James House.

However, we will need to develop and roll out both a governance training programme and a suite of resources to make parish governance as easy as possible and ensure that we have the capacity and structures for good mission-minded planning and decision-making, and the right people (volunteer or employed) to deliver this as a stream of lifecall vocation enabling, development and support

Programme governance

As will be clear from this project proposal this whole diocese, whole system approach is multi-layered and has many moving parts. It will need good project governance and disciplined delivery if it is to achieve its stated goals.

Overall responsibility for the programme delivery will lie with the Diocesan Secretary (this will be a major factor in the recruitment process for a new Diocesan Secretary), supported by a dedicated Programme Manager. Because this is a whole system approach it has full buy-in from all Directors at St James House amid a clear expectation that this plan becomes business as usual. As such it does not need a whole new department –

rather it needs the deployment and re-deployment of current resource into these aims and objectives. As mentioned above it will also need IT and systems investment. There will need to be full integration of Fit for Mission into this wider diocesan system – a key task of the Diocesan Secretary and Programme Manager.

In terms of programme governance and delivery it is proposed that:

- The Diocesan Oversight Team (DOT – meeting monthly) become the programme management board as DOT brings together senior clergy and the Heads of Department at St James House.
- A new Programme Delivery Unit will meet weekly to monitor delivery. It will comprise:
 - Bishop of Liverpool – overall lead and advocate
 - Diocesan Secretary – responsible for overall delivery
 - Programme Manager – programme cohesion and delivery
 - Archdeacon of St Helens & Warrington – chair, and oversight of the Mission workstreams
 - Director of Vocations – oversight of the People workstreams
 - Director of Finance – oversight of the Money workstreams
 - Other staff members as required
- Programme updates will be provided to Bishop’s Council and the DBF Finance Committee.

The programme work will be understood as a continuum but in 3 broad phases:

- 2025: a year of detailed planning, preparation (in recruitment) and piloting, and continued delivery of Fit for Mission
- 2026 – 2028: the first 3 years of implementation (coinciding with the next triennium for the national church)
- 2029 – 2031: the next cycle of delivery and implementation, following a review and reset at the end of 2028

Appendix: Acronyms

The following is a list of the main acronyms used in this report. Most are explained more fully in the main text of the document.

CEMES – Church of England Ministry Experience Scheme

DIP – Diocesan Investment Programme (the national church funding stream we are applying to)

FFM – Fit for Mission

FtF – Funding the Future grants

H&V – Health & Viability framework

LInC – Low Income Communities Funding (from the national church to the DBF)

LSP – Larger Single Parish, within Fit for Mission

MPR – Missional Planning & Review process