



**SHEFFIELD DIOCESAN SYNOD AND BOARD OF FINANCE**

**TO BE HELD AT**  
**ST PETER'S BENTLEY, High Street, Bentley, Doncaster DN5 0AA**

**ON SATURDAY 7 MARCH 2026 at 9.00 am**

**NOTICE PAPER**

9.00 am      1.      **INTRODUCTION AND NOTICES**

The Bishop of Sheffield will welcome members.

The meeting will begin with opening worship led by the Reverend Dave Berry, Vicar of Bentley St Peter.

The Reverend Canon Matthew Rhodes will chair the meeting.

9.10 am      2.      **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** are shown below or can be notified to Elizabeth Lunt:

David Armstrong	The Revd Beth Keith
The Revd Canon Phil Batchford	The Revd Beth Langner
Maureen Benfold	The Revd Ali Middleton
Neill Birchenall	Sue Prestwood
Jo Brook	The Revd Marie Raffay
The Revd Tom A Brown	Canon Peter Rainford
Jackie Butcher	Susan Rivett
Steph Darbyshire	Gillis Robbie
Charlotte Darling	Liz Roberts
The Revd David Dean-Revill	The Revd Pip Salmon
The Revd Tom Finnemore	The Revd Canon Harry Steele
The Revd Canon Toby Hole	Shumaya Stephen
Helen Keane	Brian Wrigley

9.10 am      3.\*      **THE MINUTES** of the Synod's meeting held on Saturday 22 November 2025 at Tankersley Hub (Paper 3.1, circulated with the Agenda) are to be confirmed.

Matters arising

9.15 am      4.      **VISION FOR DONCASTER CITY CENTRE** – to be presented by the Reverend Stephen Edmonds (Associate Archdeacon) and the Reverend Canon Adam Priestley (Senior Minister of St Vincent's Mission Doncaster)

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| 9.30 am    | 5.   | <b><u>HOW TO NAVIGATE SYNOD</u></b> – an item led by the Bishop of Doncaster   |
| 10.00 am   | 6.   | <b><u>FINANCE UPDATE</u></b> – a verbal update provided by Tony Gardiner, Finance Director   |
| 10.10 am   | 7.*  | <b><u>SAFEGUARDING REPORT AND INEQE AUDIT UPDATE</u></b> – update from Canon LJ Buxton on the safeguarding report and INEQE audit (Paper 7.1, circulated with the agenda)  |
| 10.30 am   | 8.   | <b><u>COFFEE BREAK</u></b>   |
| 11.00 am   | 9.   | <b><u>A WINDOW ON ADWICK-LE-STREET AND SNAITH AND HATFIELD DEANERIES</u></b> – presented by the Reverend Hannah Hupfield, Associate Archdeacon   |
| 11.10 am   | 10.* | <b><u>NET ZERO UPDATE AND GOOD NEWS STORIES</u></b> – report circulated with the agenda as Paper 10.1  |
| 11.40 am   | 11.* | <b><u>GENERAL SYNOD REPORT</u></b> – a summary of the February Group of Sessions was circulated with the agenda as Paper 11.1. The Reverend Canon Amanda Barraclough will present a brief report, followed by an opportunity for questions to the General Synod reps.  |
| 11.55 am   | 12*. | <b><u>BISHOP'S COUNCIL'S REPORT</u></b> – A Report on the proceedings of the Bishop's Council since the last Synod meeting is to be received (Paper 12.1, circulated with the agenda). Katie Bell, Chief Executive and Diocesan Secretary, will present the report and there will be an opportunity for questions. |
| 12.00 noon | 13.  | <b><u>SYNOD QUESTIONS</u></b> – Questions received, together with written responses are shown in Appendix 1.   |
| 12.10 pm   | 14.  | <b><u>PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS</u></b> – Bishop Pete will address Synod  |
| 12.15 pm   | 15.  | <b><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></b><br><br>1. Diocesan Conference 2026 (LJ Buxton will outline plans for the conference, 14-16 July)  |
| 12.25 pm   | 16.  | <b><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u></b> – The next meeting will be held on Saturday 18 July at St Peter's Warmsworth  |
| 12.30 pm   | 17.  | <b><u>CLOSING WORSHIP INCLUDING THE COMMISSIONING OF THE ANTI-HARASSMENT ADVISERS AND LINK OFFICERS</u></b><br><br>The meeting will conclude with worship led by the Archdeacon of Doncaster.  |

## Questions to Diocesan Synod – 7 March 2026

From	Question	Response
1. Mrs Michaela Suckling, General Synod Rep	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How many of the current safeguarding cases have been discussed with statutory services?</li> <li>2. How many of the current safeguarding cases have been referred to statutory services?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Response from Siân Checkley, Head of Safeguarding (Diocesan Safeguarding Officer)</i></p> <p>The case numbers reported in my report (62 in this case) represent all the situations which have been deemed as cases by the safeguarding team and the safeguarding team have been involved with over the last period of time since my last report (2 months in this instance). This does not include situations where parishes or others have contacted the safeguarding team for advice and guidance. In some of the situations where we have been contacted for advice and guidance parishes may already have spoken to statutory services or we may advise that they do.</p> <p>Of the 62 cases reported 13 of these were new cases or cases where we had received new information on cases that were previously closed. Many of the 62 cases reported in this report will be the same as the 53 cases reported in November and therefore I am going to focus upon the 13 new cases reported in my current report and any new referrals that have been made to statutory services.</p> <p>We have made one new referral to statutory services and of the 13 new cases three have had some involvement with statutory services. I am not sure what is meant by cases that have been discussed with statutory services – is this the safeguarding team approaching statutory services to request information, to have an informal discussion, report a matter to the Charity Commission or the statutory services approaching the safeguarding team to share information, to request a risk assessment/safety plan of an ex-offender etc? Of the three that have</p>

			involved statutory services these have included situations where the safeguarding team was approached as ex-offenders wished to attend worship, referrals to the Charity commission and requests for information from the police.
2.	Gillis Robbie	<p>It was revealed at the General Synod that £1.66 million has been spent on the LLF process in total.</p> <p>How much of that money was spent by Sheffield Diocese?</p> <p>Where was that money spent?</p> <p>Are there any other plans in the current budget that include spending money on LLF related work and could this work be approved by the synod before the money is spent?</p>	<p><i>Response from the Bishop of Sheffield:</i></p> <p>The £1.6m refers entirely to money spent by the NCIs / Archbishops' Council, so none of it has been spent by our DBF — though some individuals from our Diocese have been the beneficiaries of this spending when they have participated in LLF residential etc. There are no plans to spend DBF money on LLF in this Diocese as far ahead as I can see.</p>
3.	The Reverend Canon Amanda Barraclough	<p>In July's Synod, Bishop Pete offered an update on the intent to deepen a pattern of Mutual Flourishing in the Diocese, including a residential with this focus. We were encouraged as a Diocese to pray for this residential when it took place in November. What progress did the residential make? What has happened since to sustain any momentum gained? And what plans exist to ensure the whole Diocese gains benefit for the future from this initiative?</p>	<p><i>Response from the Bishop of Sheffield:</i></p> <p>The Mutual Flourishing residential took place at Swanwick for 48 hours on the weekend immediately before Advent. Especially given that timing, which was less than ideal, I am deeply grateful to the 40+ participants who wholeheartedly gave themselves to the process. It was a significant investment of time, money and emotions. We were superbly facilitated by two professional mediators, and the feedback in the final session indicated overwhelmingly that participants had found the experience extremely worthwhile, if costly — and most participants indicated their ongoing commitment to mutual flourishing. However, it is fair to say the residential also exposed just how much work remains to be done. I am not certain momentum is the right category to describe what was gained. Increased levels of trust and openness to relationship across difference were the chief benefits and I do not believe these will be easily lost. Members of the Bishop's Senior Staff Team are meeting</p>

			<p>on 16 March to plan next steps, in the light of both of responses contributed on the residential and of feedback received afterwards from participants.</p> <p>The Bishop's Office has fixed 12 dates when Bishop Leah and I will together visit each deanery in turn, to seek to consolidate and build upon what was learned.</p>
4.	The Reverend Canon Amanda Barraclough	<p>I understand the ambitions to move towards Net Zero mean that the default expectation for all churches is that they will replace gas boilers at the end of their lives with a more environmentally friendly alternative. Gas boilers may only be replaced on a like for like basis if no other alternative is realistic or possible. Are the Diocese leading by example and applying the same guidelines to the replacement of boilers in domestic properties in their portfolio?</p>	<p><i>Response from Michael Lindley, Property Manager</i></p> <p>Currently existing gas boiler that require replacement are being replaced with gas boilers due to the significant capital cost of installing Air Source Heat Pumps which Sheffield DBF are unable to afford to install, the average cost being £15,000 , which after BUS grant monies brings the cost down to around £8,000. In addition these are more expensive to run for the clergy occupiers unless the houses are well insulated and Solar PV also installed, both of which add to the cost and cannot be done overnight due to lead in times but also the lack of financial resource available to Sheffield DBF to install them.</p> <p>Sheffield DBF have made inroads into improving insulation on its housing stock and when external funds have become available from Archbishops Council as well as utilising monies from the Diocesan Pastoral Account. This has resulted in a small number of houses being provided with cavity wall insulation (but not all houses are suitable for this) and loft insulation topped up where possible. In addition two vicarage have been provided with Air Source Heat Pumps and Solar PV utilising grant monies form Archbishops Council, one of which was to a stone built property that also had internal wall insulation added , all at a cost of £75,000.</p>
5.	Pete Sandford, Ecclesall Deanery	<p>Further to the question and detailed response to the last Diocesan Synod and our subsequent helpful discussion for which I am thankful:</p>	<p><i>Response from the Bishop of Doncaster:</i></p> <p>The flourishing of all God's people is important to the whole of the Senior and Central Church House teams.</p>

		<p>a) Please could you provide statistical information on take-up of the Churches Ministerial Counselling Scheme (CMCS) over the last decade broken down by category of ministry (ie. Ordained, Licensed Lay, and Authorised Lay) to facilitate better understanding of access to this important provision over time between pre- and post-pandemic circumstances.</p> <p>b) Please could you further detail the references in Diocesan documents, handbooks, websites, etc. where the availability of CMCS to ministers has been and is currently communicated, specifying the category of ministers to whom the service is offered and whether the same support is also advertised as being available to family members? Please could this review identify when these documents included the CMCS provision to facilitate better understanding of the relationship between communication of the provision and its take up?</p> <p>c) Please could you share what recent actions have been undertaken to widen awareness of CMCS provision to the different categories of ministry and what actions are planned in the coming months to ensure that all ministers, Ordained, Licensed, and Authorised, are fully aware of this provision and able to make informed decisions about supporting their mental health in ministry?</p> <p>d) Please could you also detail what other mental</p>	<p>Concerns around support, for mental health, should be raised and addressing barriers that prevent people from accessing support is vital. The most significant support we as a church provide is at the grass roots, and in our work to empower every person to be a Light for Christ in the lives of others.</p> <p>I am thankful for the opportunity to clarify the CMCS provision that the Diocese of Sheffield offers. The Diocese listing on the CMCS website is incorrect and we have asked for this to be updated with immediate effect. This provision is only available for clergy and their families. We are aware that there have been some exceptions to this 'rule' but unfortunately, we are unable to fund consistently wider provision of this service at this time.</p> <p>CMCS is accessed with complete anonymity to the Diocesan team. We do not know who has accessed it, when, or whether they have been self-motivated, nudged by a reference in the monthly bishop's letter or prompted by a pastoral suggestion made by someone else. To review its use in all of the ways requested is not possible, and the scale of quantitative and qualitative review indicated by the questions, would demand clearer aims and terms of reference than are found within the questions themselves. A review of this scale would have funding implications and need therefore to have the remit of a formal synodical motion process rather than being raised through individual questions.</p> <p>In terms of other mental health support available - much of this is accessed through good supervision, oversight and pastoral ministry - both provided by clergy, members of the church and church groups and signposted beyond the church to wider local mental health provision in the local context. We do not require records of this nature to be kept, unless they are considered a safeguarding concern.</p>
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		health support is available to Ordained, Licensed and Authorised ministers within diocesan structures, what the take up of this support has been over the last decade, how it has been communicated, and what actions are planned to support access to local provision?	
6.	Pete Sandford, Ecclesall Deanery	Expressing thanks for your diligent and prayerful engagement with the Living in Love and Faith process, both ongoing and at General Synod, and noting the appointments of LGBTQIA+ Chaplains in Dioceses such as Birmingham, Canterbury, Oxford, and Salisbury, would you commit to the appointment of an LGBTQIA+ Chaplain in the Diocese of Sheffield to provide support alongside the current Bishop's Adviser?	<p><i>Response from Bishop Pete:</i></p> <p>This question has been put to me several times in recent months and it is one to which +Leah and I are giving consideration. However, at this point I cannot offer the commitment requested. I will commit to finding out more about how the chaplaincies in other other Dioceses have been resourced and how they have been received and to forming a view with +Leah about what best to do in this Diocese in the light of that. I would also like to put on record here my gratitude to Megan Morris for the very effective support she continues to give me as Bishop's LGBT+ Advisor. Canterbury and Chelmsford also have an Advisor.</p>
7.	Vicky Vidler, Ecclesall Deanery	Elections to General Synod will take place in a few months time, and after APCMs and elections to Deanery Synods. Please can you guarantee and confirm that all communications and hustings will take place as early as possible in the process? This will hopefully encourage active participation from voters.	<p><i>Response from Katie Bell, Presiding Officer for the elections</i></p> <p>Thank you for your question. I can confirm that we will communicate as early as possible at every stage of the process for the General Synod elections. This year the national church have set the timetable for the elections with no provision for local variation (as has been the case in the past), so we will follow that timetable (we are awaiting confirmation of this from national colleagues).</p> <p>However, we also rely on communications from parishes and Deanery Synod Secretaries to help run the process. The electorate for the House of Laity elections are Deanery Synod representatives, the deadline for Deanery Synod Secretaries to let us know the contact details for parish representatives is very close to the start of the GS election process, so we would</p>

			encourage all parishes to confirm their Deanery Synod representatives as soon as possible following their AGMs to help support their Deanery Synod Secretaries and Diocesan Office to ensure the process can run as smoothly as possible.
8.	Canon Dr Cathy Rhodes, General Synod Rep	<p>The 2026 General Synod elections will begin in August with voting in September. Dioceses are able to run written question and answer exercises, where written questions are submitted and put to candidates in advance of ballots being distributed. Candidates would then be invited to reply up to a word limit on each question, with replies received collated and sent to all voters. Given the importance of openness and transparency in elections, and previous low attendance at online hustings, will the diocese commit to carrying out such an exercise so that voters can make an informed choice on who to support?</p>	<p><i>Response from Katie Bell, Presiding Officer for the elections</i></p> <p>According to the guidelines for the elections, the presiding officer may, after consulting the bishop's council, decide to put in place a process for written questions and answers. I will therefore take the matter to the next bishop's council meeting to seek their views and if they agree this will be communicated as part of the election process. An online hustings process will also be facilitated.</p>