

Strategic Rural Dean Job Description



“Our prayer is simply this: that we become an ever more hopeful, confident church that seeks the mind, heart and will of God for Cornwall, for the communities he calls us to serve, and for the wider world beyond these shores.”

The Saints Way, the vision for the Diocese of Truro

BACKGROUND

Cornwall

Cornwall is both one of the most beautiful parts of the UK, with its glorious coastlands and empty moors, and one of the most deprived. The population is 572,000, with the majority of people living in the towns of the central spine of the county running from Launceston, Liskeard, St Austell, Truro, Camborne, Redruth, Hayle and Penzance. These areas have higher levels of deprivation than the coastal villages, where second home ownership and holiday lets are popular.

The Diocese of Truro

The Diocese of Truro is made up of 320 churches in more than 200 parishes across Cornwall, the Isles of Scilly and two parishes in Devon, covering an area of 1,370 square miles.

The Diocese is divided into 12 deaneries, each of them small by national standards. There are two Archdeaconries; Cornwall, which covers the 6 deaneries in the West, and Bodmin, covering the 6 in the East. Bishop Hugh is currently the Acting Diocesan Bishop. A new Bishop of Truro is likely to be installed in spring 2025.

Although we are a ‘young’ diocese, formed in 1876 out of the Diocese of Exeter, the Christian faith has been alive here since at least the 4th century, and that history is visible wherever you go across the county, especially in the stone crosses that mark the roadsides, and in the many churches and communities that carry the names of the great saints, especially those of the early Celtic church.

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Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal

In 2020 the diocese began “On the Way”, inviting deaneries to pray, dream and plan for a fruitful and sustainable future. This work has resulted in [12 Deanery Plans](#) and an overarching [Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal](#).

The Diocesan Plan describes our key outcomes as becoming **fruitful** and **sustainable**. More detail about what we mean by these words is available [here](#).

To achieve this, the three key priorities of the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal are:

1. To change patterns of ministry to meet the aims of deanery and diocesan plans;
2. To increase by a factor of 10 the number of active young disciples;
3. To focus resources on communities with most economic, social and spiritual need.

THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC RURAL DEAN

Purpose

To lead deaneries in the implementation of their plans towards the fruitful and sustainable future discerned in each place;

The Strategic Rural Dean will:

1. lead and enable the changes described in deanery plans, practically and culturally;
2. lead and enable, at deanery level, the objectives of the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal;
3. fulfil the traditional responsibilities of a Rural Dean.

The Strategic Rural Dean will work closely with clergy and lay leaders in their deanery, providing practical leadership, growing hope in the future, supporting decision making, overcoming blocks to plan-implementation and nurturing healthy cultures so that the vision and goals described in deanery plans become a reality.

Each Strategic Rural Dean will operate across one deanery and work closely with a neighbouring deanery as a ‘buddy’ offering two-way support, knowledge and expertise. They will work closely with the respective Deanery Chapter, Deanery Synods and the Standing Committee, and will Chair, or Co-chair the Deanery Implementation Team.

The Strategic Rural Deans will work collaboratively together as a team under the leadership of the Archdeacons.

The Diocese of Truro is committed to the highest standards for Safeguarding, to building safe and healthy cultures and to supporting survivors of abuse. The Strategic Rural Deans will make this a high priority in everything they do.

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Support

The intention is for there to be three main areas of support:

- 1) 7 hours of administrative support per week, offered to the deanery and deployable by the Strategic Rural Dean;
- 2) A rolling development programme for Strategic Rural Deans to ensure professional development, training and support;
- 3) The assistance of a House for Duty colleague to offer ministry support one day per week plus alternate Sundays.

In addition each Strategic Rural Dean will have a stipend uplift (of £1500 in 2025) and an expenses budget of £1200 per annum. [The mention of stipend uplift does not make an assumption that every SRD will be a stipendiary priest; SSM and clergy with PTO are able to be a SRD.]

Job description

While each role will be locally shaped for their context, each will be built around 3 core elements:

- 1. Lead and enable the changes described in deanery plans, practically and culturally;**
 - Acting as the Responsible Person for the delivery of the Deanery plan, working closely with the Deanery Implementation Team and Project Support Officer, and reporting to the Director for Change and Renewal.
 - Chairing or Co-chairing the Deanery Implementation Team (DIT)
 - Ensuring good communication within the Deanery as plans are implemented, working with clergy, PCCs, Deanery Synod and others.
 - Reporting on progress of plan implementation to the Change and Renewal team as necessary, with regular reviews of the Deanery Plans to ensure they meet their changing needs and are fit-for-purpose.
 - Developing work with DITs to implement Deanery Plans, involving clergy and senior lay leaders, identifying the key opportunities for growth and mission.
 - Taking part in the *AMD Strategic Rural Dean Programme*; a programme of support, learning, and skills development with the Archdeacons and Director of Change & Renewal.
- 2. Lead and enable, at deanery level, the objectives of the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal;**
 - Supporting the changes in patterns of ministry, including by supporting stipendiary priests to make the transition to Oversight ministry, and encouraging the development of patterns of local ministry.
 - Supporting the Deanery to engage in the priorities of the Diocesan plan, including connecting with children and young people and serving those in need.
 - Encouraging parishes to work towards financial stability and to meet the costs of ministry identified in their Deanery Plans.

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- Providing signposting and resources to help clergy and other leaders to develop resilience, wellbeing and self-care.
 - Ensure that good practices for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults are understood and embedded in every parish.
- 3. Carry the formal responsibilities of a Rural Dean including:**
- Working closely with the Archdeacon to ensure the ministry, mission and life of the parishes are healthy, fruitful and sustainable.
 - Joining wider meetings of Rural Deans as needed
 - Keeping in close contact with clergy and lay leaders to understand the issues they are facing and providing practical and pastoral care as needed
 - Chair Deanery Chapter and co-chair Deanery Synod and Standing Committee.
 - Work with the Transitions Advisor during clergy transitions and participate in the recruitment process for clergy and other staff in the deanery, attending pre-vacancy meetings and being part of the interview process as appropriate.
 - To fulfil the statutory responsibilities of the Rural Dean, specifically:
 - To act as Returning Officer for lay elections of deanery representatives to Diocesan Synod and other committees
 - To act as the Archdeacon's representative with regard to any irregularities or breakdown of parochial systems and to conduct parish visitations as necessary
 - To act as sequestrator in a parochial vacancy.
 - Raise matters of concern regarding wellbeing of leaders (clergy and lay) with the Bishops, Archdeacons and the Director of HR.

Person specification

1. An ordained priest who:
 - is in good standing with the church locally and in the diocese,
 - is experienced in ministry, pastoral care and priestly leadership,
 - has the support of the Bishop, Archdeacon and local clergy,
 - demonstrates a commitment to the shared life of the diocese and deanery (including through participation in Bishop's Study Days, Archdeacon's Visitations, etc.)
2. The ability to lead cultural and practical change within the life of the church.
3. A willingness to be accountable in reporting on progress to the Director for Change & Renewal and the relevant Archdeacon.
4. An understanding of the deanery and diocesan plan, its aims and approach.
5. An understanding of the Canons and synodical processes, as they shape the life of parishes and deanery.

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6. The ability to work well with people, to move conflict towards resolution and to enable people and communities to flourish.
7. A clear and evidenced commitment to safeguarding.