



8 May 2022

Dear Bishop Philip

Thank you for your letter of 5 May 2022. We find your response disappointing.

We called for a meeting with you and an open, honest and transparent audit of church spending in the Diocese. There are indications that your evangelical initiatives - like Transforming Mission – are failing and consuming precious funds from the Church Commissioners and Diocesan reserves.

You have rejected that call and that debate on the grounds that we have shared our concerns with the press. That is the opposite of free speech. The axing of clergy and the potential closure of Cornwall's historic churches in rural communities is a matter for discussion for all Cornish men and women – not just a process for you, your fellow Bishop, Archdeacons and Diocesan Secretary to manage and decide.

In the meantime, we have learned that you intend to recruit a new, expensive position at Church House to push these intended measures through – a Director of Change and Renewal at a salary of £45-50,000k per annum. And that you intend not just to recruit this position – but a full team of at least six further positions to manage your planned cuts.

This will inevitably result in still further bloated 'head office' spending – already at £2.7 million while parish giving is at nearly £ 3million.

Cuts through your house-keeping programme On The Way threaten to brutally change the Cornish church landscape. The process is being pushed through with some cynicism, clothed in deceptively benign language and a deeply flawed consultation process. But with one intent: to save money. In Kerrier for example there will be one vicar covering a host of churches from the Lizard to Wendron. How can Christian communities flourish in these circumstances?

STP believes in public debate and freedom of expression. You say that On The Way is an open discussion: yet the shaping of the Deanery plans which have caused such anguish across the county has been done behind closed doors in some secrecy and with carefully selected 'leadership teams'. Local people have not in fact had a voice in On The Way. They have been baffled by your jargon and your talk of 'fruitfulness and sustainability' when nothing like that seems to be coming their way.

We widened the discussion from you and your inner circle to the media as there was no reason not to. There cannot be any rational objection to these matters being aired in the press.

On the contrary, to win 'hearts and minds' it is important to be open and honest. These are qualities we would expect in a Bishop. Refusing to speak to well-meaning campaigners is the opposite of democratic discourse.



We urge you to think again and do the right thing – and meet to discuss these vital matters. We believe that the Church Commissioners need to know that their money is being well spent. And that the congregations of Cornwall – whose money you are handling – know that Diocesan reserves are not being needlessly drained.

We look forward to hearing from you

Kind regards

Peter Bellenes

Clive Dixon

Peter Hall

Vivian Hall

Andrew Lane

Susan Roberts

Neil Wallis