

ST ALBANS DIOCESAN SYNOD

14 March 2026

SMMIB OUTCOME

Background

DBF Members are aware of the funding bid made to the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board. The funding bid has support from all governance bodies that had considered it, including the DBF, Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod.

SMMIB Outcome

The outcome of the bid was delivered by letter on 17 December, attached. The outcome is somewhat complicated with various degrees of conditionality. An interpretation note prepared by Stephen Moore is also attached.

Whilst there is some inevitable disappointment over the conditionality this is predominantly felt in some parishes in Hatfield, Luton and Watford where strengthening mission resources is delayed and dependent on providing clarity and assurance to SMMIB.

Media Coverage

National church and diocesan media releases were issued on 19 January. Coverage in both the Church Times and the Daily Telegraph was led by headlines stating that strategic funding was being given to Soul Survivor Watford. Under these headlines was criticism of funding for Soul Survivor Watford following the historic safeguarding issues there which surfaced in 2023. There was also social media criticism.

The media coverage was incorrect. No SMMIB funding will pass to Soul Survivor Watford, though that church will provide support and encouragement for the revitalisation of Christ Church, Watford. Bishop Richard and I issued a letter within the diocese to correct this, also attached.

Subsequently contact has been made with the Editor of the Church Times and the CEO of its parent body. Correction and apology have been received and published.

It is anticipated that it will be necessary to make further corrections in various governance bodies including Diocesan Synod.

The Rt Revd Jane Mainwaring,
Bishop of Hertford
20 February 2026



David White
St Albans Diocese
Holywell Lodge
41 Holywell Hill
St Albans
AL1 1HE

Tom Conway
*Head of Grants
Vision & Strategy Team*

17 Dec. 25

Dear David,

Diocesan Investment Programme: St Albans Diocese

Thank you for submitting your proposal for Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP) funding. The Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board met to consider your proposal on 11 December, and I am writing on their behalf to let you know the outcome.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board agreed to award funding, on behalf of the Archbishops' Council, towards your proposals **For Such a Time as This**, as follows:

1. An award of **£2,277,178**, of which £1,134,785 is made under conditions. This award is broken down as:
 - a. **£1,142,393** for the Education, Leadership, and Programme Capacity elements in your budget.
 - b. **£1,134,785** for the central churches in each of the town mission designs, *conditional* on further work (in consultation with the Diocesan Support Team) on the designs for the plans for each church. This is so that it is clear how the interventions will lead to the anticipated outcomes, and that there is sufficient investment to enable this.

The diocese cannot draw down payment on this element until the conditions are met. The detailed mission designs should be submitted to the SMMIB via the Vision and Strategy team who will subsequently confirm whether the Board's conditions have been fulfilled.

This award breaks down as:

£200,124 for the St John's elements of the Hatfield proposals

£675,871 for the St Mary's, Linmere, and church-planting church elements of the Luton proposals

£258,791 for the Christ Church elements of the Watford proposals

2. The Board agreed in principle to consider a further award of **£1,222,822**, in relation to the remaining elements of the Hatfield, Luton and Watford plans, to be brought back as an updated proposal in the 2026-28 triennium for future consideration and decision by the Board. This is to allow for more clarity for how the plans will lead to the anticipated outcomes and achieve wider change across the towns.
3. The Board also agreed in principle to consider a further award of **£928,877**, which cannot be considered until the 2029-31 triennium, to be brought back as an updated proposal for future consideration and decision by the Board. This is for your costs budgeted from 2029 onwards.

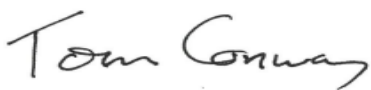
This will be subject to a review of the outcomes and impact of the programme to that date, together with updated mission designs, to be brought back for consideration and decision by the Board on the basis that an award can be granted within 2029-31.

To accept this offer of funding, please review and sign the Funding Agreement, which sets out the details of the requirements of the Diocesan Investment Programme funding, which will follow shortly in a separate email for electronic signature. On receipt of the signed agreement we will be in touch to discuss the payment arrangements.

Caroline Leveaux will be in touch regarding your next steps. This will include your immediate plans for starting the work, payment arrangements, and monitoring and evaluation.

If you have any questions about this letter, please don't hesitate to be in touch with me or with Caroline at Caroline.leveaux@churchofengland.org.

Yours sincerely



Tom Conway

CC:

Bishop Jane Mainwaring, Bishop of Hertford
Bishop Richard Atkinson, Bishop of Bedford
Tim Lomax, Director of Mission and Ministry
Dan Drew, Assistant Director Mission and Ministry
Stephen Moore, Diocesan Programme Manager
Caroline Leveaux, Diocesan Consultant

Appendix 2

How should we interpret the SMMIB feedback

Overall, SMMIB's decision is encouraging: funding has been agreed for leadership, education, and capacity, also for the central churches subject to clarifications, and there is openness in principle to the remaining elements pending a clearer town-level articulation. We will test these inferences with the V&S team through early follow-up discussions (initial meeting held but not confirmed for 29 January with David Airey and Caroline Leveaux).

Category 1a: - Leadership, Education and Capacity (£1.14m)

- SMMIB has awarded this without conditions – we can proceed immediately.

Category 1b: - Central churches (£1.13m)

- SMMIB has awarded this conditional on further clarification so that it is clear:
 - how the interventions will lead to the anticipated outcomes; and
 - that there is sufficient investment to enable this
- We provided detailed mission design documents with the bid; so this feedback may best be read as: “yes, but strengthen the investable / assurance case”, particularly around delivery readiness and dependencies, clearer discipleship pathways and sufficiency of resources (all relating to the four central churches referenced in the SMMIB letter).

Category 2: - Remaining Hatfield/Luton/Watford elements, mainly CYP/YA (£1.22m)

- SMMIB agreed in principle to consider an award subject to an updated proposal clarifying:
 - “how the plans will lead to the anticipated outcomes,” and
 - “achieve wider change across the towns.”
- This may be read as: “re-present the CYP/YA and related elements as a coherent, measurable town-level change programme,” which could differ by town, with (for example):
 - a town operating model (one page per town: governance, reporting, coordination);
 - clearer discipleship pathways (beyond high-level ‘Engage/Commit/Grow’);
 - sequencing/critical path (what happens first, what is contingent on recruitment).

Category 3: - A further in principle award (£0.9m)

- SMMIB agreed in principle to consider a further award, to be brought back as an updated proposal, subject to:
 - “review of the outcomes and impact of the programme to date,”
 - “together with updated mission designs.”
- This may be read as: “we are open to the next tranche but want evidence of traction in phase 1 and confidence that later phased roles represent contingent scale-up rather than missing core capacity.”

Appendix 3

Clarification regarding our strategic funding award

Many of you will have seen the recent Church Times article about the award of funding from the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) to the Diocese. We want to clarify some inaccuracies and impressions that may have arisen, and reaffirm our commitment to survivors and safeguarding.

Clarifications

The headline in the Church Times article was misleading. Soul Survivor Watford will not receive any funding from the SMMIB award. They are one of several churches involved in the wider work planned across Watford, Luton, and Hatfield to revitalise local churches.

Soul Survivor has been invited to offer volunteer and resourcing support to Christ Church Watford as part of its revitalisation journey. Any such support would only happen at the invitation of the parish and under diocesan oversight, and it would not involve any controlling or governance role for Soul Survivor Watford.

It is also important to address that the article named one individual in a way that may have given rise to misunderstanding. Safeguarding, oversight, and decisions relating to Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment funding are exercised collectively through established and properly governed structures, not by any one person. Including an individual name in this context does not accurately reflect how responsibility or decision-making is held within the Diocese.

Our commitment to survivors

We acknowledge the seriousness of Mike Pilavachi's abuse and remain deeply sorrowful for the harm caused. The apologies made publicly and directly to survivors are current and stand.

Much has been done to restore trust, rebuild credibility, and transform the culture at Soul Survivor Watford under its current leadership. This work is ongoing and will always continue.

Culture is paramount, but it must be underpinned by strong governance and accountability. The experience of Soul Survivor Watford and the abuse by Mike Pilavachi, through the lens of the Scolding Review, has shaped our approach to Bishops' Mission Orders and all mission initiatives in the Diocese and across the wider Church of England. These changes set a benchmark for safeguarding and healthier culture going forward.

Looking ahead

We regret that some reporting has caused confusion about the nature of this funding. The Diocese has been awarded significant support to strengthen mission and ministry, and we want everyone to have accurate information about what this means for local churches.

Full details of the programme funded by the SMMIB award are available on our [information hub](#).

Let us now focus on the purpose of this funding: to strengthen our ability to share the love of God through Jesus Christ with more people, through leadership development, mission in schools, and revitalising churches.

With every blessing

+Richard Bishop of Bedford

+Jane Bishop of Hertford

23 January 2026