

Consultation to establish a Devon Good Stewards Trust (DGST) for the Gospel in the Diocese of Exeter and the County of Devon

Q & A

The establishment of a DGST should be closely examined by all those who might contribute to, benefit from or in other ways be impacted by the Trust. We offer responses to some of the questions raised so far and include others where at this stage, the answer is less clear.

This document will be updated after General Synod meets in November 2023. This will include responses from this consultation and any further information from the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC).

What is the purpose of setting up the Trust?

To enable parish churches in the Diocese of Exeter to work together in promoting the Gospel with the legal structure of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), registered with the Charity Commission and governed by the terms of its constitution. It will also demonstrate the unanimity of purpose of the contributing churches, standing together for Biblical ministry and evangelism.

How will the Trust operate?

The Trust is planned to be financed by supporting churches, individuals and other sources.

The Trust will be a vehicle for churches who wish to pay some or all of their parish share to the Diocese of Exeter via the Trust. The Trust has no plans to carry out activities directly itself but rather support other projects. It is a mechanism to bring together and encourage gospel ministry and the finance required to support it.

The Trust will be set up in such a way as to be able to receive legacies and individual donations

How can PCCs be assured that funds contributed to the Devon Good Stewards Trust will be used properly ?

The Devon Good Stewards Trust will be a restricted fund. Under Charity Law, money held within this fund can only be used for the purposes for which it has been established.

How can we ensure widespread support for the Trust ?

The working group is endeavouring to include many churches and individuals in the consultation, particularly through the involvement of the Exeter DEF. However, it is important that PCCs keep their own church families apprised of the work going on to establish the Trust.

What about money laundering ?

All charities are required by law to have appropriate systems and controls to forestall money laundering. The new Trust will be established with policies, controls and reporting systems to reduce this risk.

How will Trustees be appointed ?

Currently a project team of 5 people is working to set up the Trust from four Devon churches and are discussing how best to appoint Trustees. It is intended that some initial trustees will be sought from the immediate network of supporting churches with the aim that there will be at least six trustees rising to 10 including a wide mix of backgrounds.

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What other skill sets will you require ?

IT skills, Web design, Legal, Accountancy and PR

Is the Church of England's position on human sexuality a factor in establishing the trust ?

Yes. The Trust will have a Statement of Faith that is clear on the Biblical foundations of its work in line with the CEEC's Statement of Faith

Will there be one or more funds restricted to supporting non-diocesan projects ?

Yes; it is envisaged that there will be opportunities to support local orthodox Gospel ministry.

How might the Trust address the risk that churches not paying the entirety of their Common Fund contribution will have to pay for their own curates ?

At present, the principle is that churches that do not pay their Common Fund in full do not get curates in training provided by a diocese. A church seeking help to pay for staff (lay or ordained) could apply to the Trust for support.

Could the Trust help in a situation where the diocesan Bishop refuses to licence ordained clergy ?

This would fall beyond the remit of the Trust but is certainly an issue that needs consideration within our diocese and nationally. The Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) are aware of this and may offer further information in due course.

What criteria will the trustees apply when deciding how to use surplus funds ?

The criteria used will be those set out in the Constitution of the Trust as the 'object' of the Trust.

Can the Trust help with the oversight / support / supervision of clergy ? What about patronage ?

The Trust is established to provide a way of continuing to support Gospel ministry within the Church of England. These issues remain within the remit of the C of E.

Will the Trust want to develop good working relationships with the Diocese of Exeter ?

Yes. Whilst the Trust is in receipt of funds from churches with stipendiary clergy, a good relationship with the diocese is critical. Also, if the diocese comes forward with a specific project promoting Gospel ministry and teaching, once fully established, the Trust might be able to offer support.

Who are the members of the working group ?

Bill Duncan, St Andrews Plymouth
Jack Knightly, PPT Bovey Tracey
Simon Merrett, PPT Bovey Tracey
Jonathan Porter Goff, Trinity Exeter
David Rees, St Leonard's Exeter

Comments please to DevonGSTrust@gmail.com by midnight 31 October 2023