



The Archdiocese of Liverpool's Parish Development Strategy (PDS) continues to gather momentum as deaneries across the archdiocese engage in prayerful discernment about the future mission of the Church.

Rooted in the Pastoral Plan and guided by Archbishop John Sherrington's vision of a missionary, sustainable and hope-filled Church, the PDS is helping parishes reflect on how they can best proclaim the Gospel, serve their communities, and respond to the changing realities facing the Church today.

The strategy recognises several significant challenges, including a projected reduction in the number of diocesan priests from around 100 today to fewer than 60 within the next seven years, increasing financial pressures, changing demographics, and the need to engage new generations in the life of the Church. At the same time, it presents an opportunity to renew parish life, strengthen collaboration, and focus more clearly on the Church's mission.

The three Sefton deaneries – Sefton Coast North, Sefton Coast South and Sefton Inland – have been leading the way as pilot deaneries. Having completed the initial stages of parish review and discernment, they have now published their initial proposals. These proposals are being shared more widely and are entering a period of consultation and discernment, allowing parishioners and local communities to reflect on the emerging vision and contribute to shaping the next steps.

The pilot process has demonstrated the value of listening, collaboration, and prayerful reflection. Participants have spoken positively about the opportunity to work together across parish boundaries, identify common priorities, and focus more intentionally on the mission of the Church.

Meanwhile, the deaneries of Liverpool South and Warrington & Widnes are beginning their discernment process. Following their parish reviews, they are now entering the

next stage of the journey, considering local priorities and exploring how their parishes can best respond to the opportunities and challenges of the years ahead.

In Wigan & Leigh, work is also underway. Parishes are currently gathering information, reviewing local circumstances, and reflecting on the mission of the Church within their communities. This important stage will help build a clearer picture of parish life and support future discernment and planning.

The Parish Development Strategy follows a four-stage process: reviewing the current situation, discerning future priorities, making plans, and implementing agreed actions. Throughout every stage, prayer and discernment remain central, ensuring that decisions are guided by the Holy Spirit and rooted in the mission of Christ.

As more deaneries join the process, the PDS continues to invite all members of the archdiocese to play their part in shaping the future. It is a shared journey of renewal, collaboration and hope, helping the Church in Liverpool build strong foundations for mission today and for generations to come.

For further information or queries, please contact our Parish and Deanery Development Adviser, Chris Higgins: [c.higgins@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:c.higgins@rcaol.org.uk)

## **Warrington & Widnes Deanery**

### **Parish Development Strategy**

*The journey so far:*

November 2025	Introduction to the Parish Development Strategy
January – March 2026	Comprehensive Audit of each Parish in the Deanery
April – May 2026	Deanery Meetings to review Parish Audits
May – July 2026	Steering Groups begin the first stage of discernment in Families of Parishes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• East Warrington Family of Parishes</li><li>• West Warrington Family of Parishes</li><li>• Widnes &amp; Cronton Family of Parishes</li></ul>
August 2026	Deanery Synodal Council – Vision & Mission Day