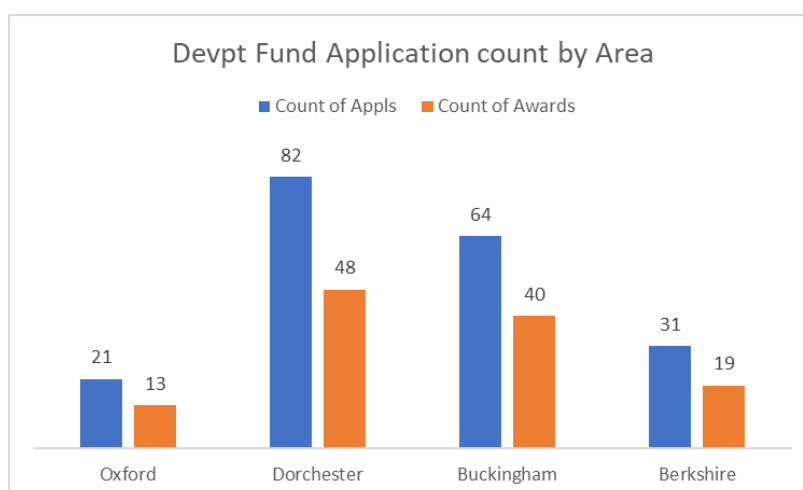


Development Fund report for Diocesan Synod, November 2021

Background

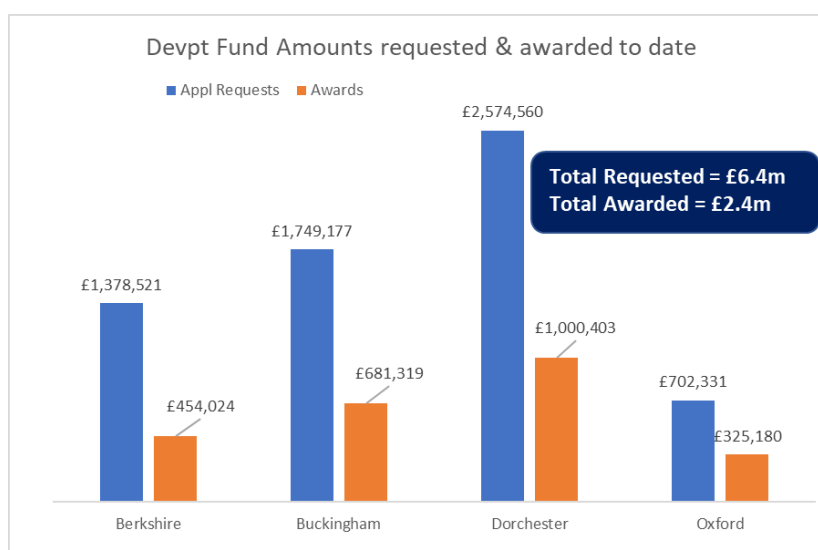
The Development Fund (<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/development-fund>) was launched at the March 2019 Diocesan Synod, to use £1m per year (later extended by £200K per year from 2021-2023) of total return money to support parishes and deaneries across the diocese to '**become a more Christ-like church for the sake of God's world: contemplative, compassionate and courageous**'.

We have now received 200 applications since the first application deadline (September 2019), from a wide range of parishes and deaneries across the diocese with 6 further application rounds (to October 2021). Applications have demonstrated an extraordinarily creative approach to mission and significant signs of progress are emerging as a result of the awards (120).



Some examples of the 120 projects supported by the Development Fund include establishing and developing Café and Messy Church, strengthening links with church schools via a chaplaincy partnership, a wellbeing café for young people, encouraging baptisms, staging a 'Narnia' exhibition, new loos and kitchenettes in churches, and an internet café to help tackle digital poverty.

In total, the Development Fund has received requests for projects totalling £6,407,089 and has made awards totalling £2,460,926. With a number of grants supporting or match funding larger schemes, the Development Fund awards represent an overall investment towards local church projects with a total value exceeding £50m.



The Development Fund was obviously impacted by Covid-19 with a number of parishes struggling to start or continue their projects, whilst others have yet to see the expected fruit (outcomes). Throughout this period, we have provided assistance to parishes to develop alternative approaches and/or to postpone activities. Nevertheless, in some cases awardees have discerned that the best option is to return the award and re-apply at a more appropriate time.

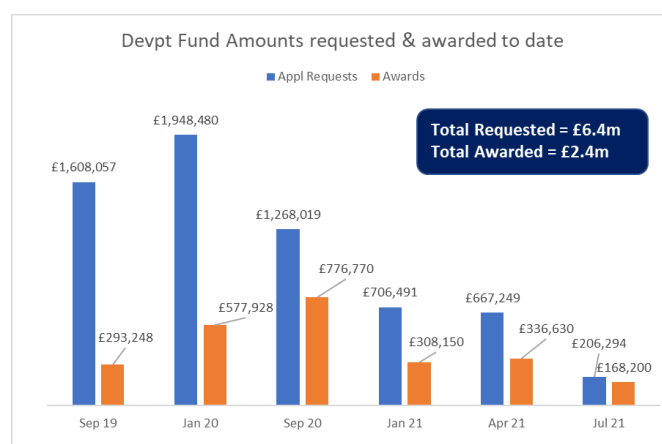
"We are called to put out into deep water and let down the nets: to tell the Christian story with love and hope and confidence. Not every new initiative to put out into deep water needs funding to get going, but some do. Parishes, benefices and deaneries can now bid for grants from the Development Fund to enable missional creativity and support local Christ-like Church projects."

About the Development Fund

The amount of money available to parishes and benefices in the Diocese of Oxford is £1m each year, with an additional £0.2m so far agreed for three years in relation to Essential Infrastructure.

Grant applications to the Development Fund must support local projects that are missionally creative, reflect where God is at work in the community and encourage wider learning across the diocese.

The Development Fund is open to all, but it is likely to be most helpful to parishes which, after paying their Parish Share and other essential running costs, have very little financial resources to invest in missional activity. We know that even modest grants can make a significant difference in such parishes.



The Development Fund Review Panel

The Review Panel, chaired by Mr John Sykes, Diocesan Lay Chair, has the challenging but rewarding task of deciding which projects should be granted an award. They have been delighted by the innovative and thoughtful nature of the applications received, involving the consumption of voluminous paperwork for each meeting. To ensure that proper time is given to the larger and more complex projects, 2 or 3 panel members are delegated to meet separately with representatives of the applicant parish/ project; and despite the extra workload, panel members have welcomed and valued this approach that provides valuable insight into the thinking and vision of individual applicants.

Members of the panel have a sense of what it means to be a 'more Christ-like church for the sake of God's world' and what missional creativity, innovation and learning looks like. Members are financially astute and able to spot both a project's and an organisation's strengths and weaknesses. Finally, the panel consists of a diverse representation of members, both lay and ordained, from different backgrounds and geographical locations across the Diocese. We are currently in the process of recruiting new members (via the Appointments Committee).

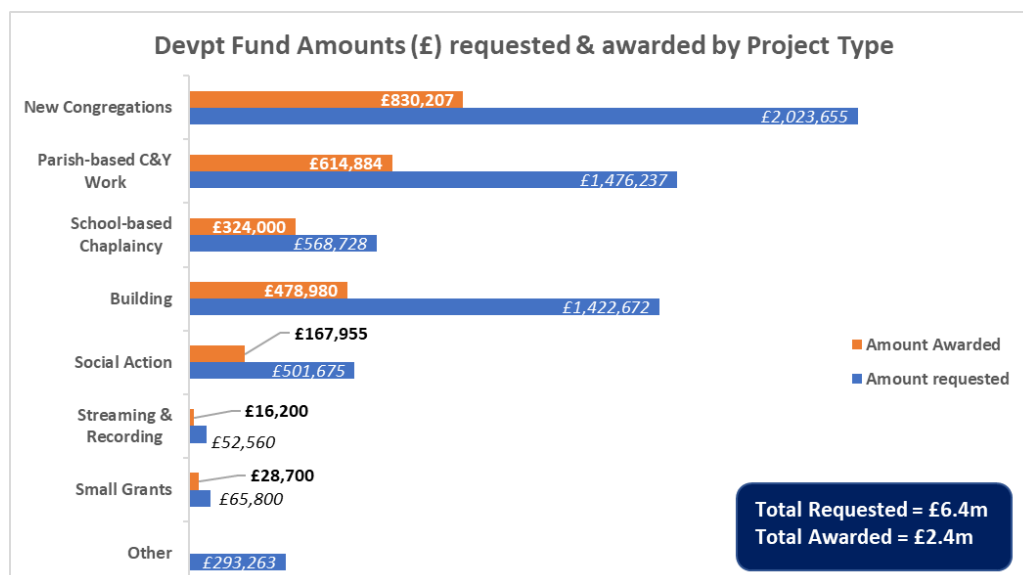
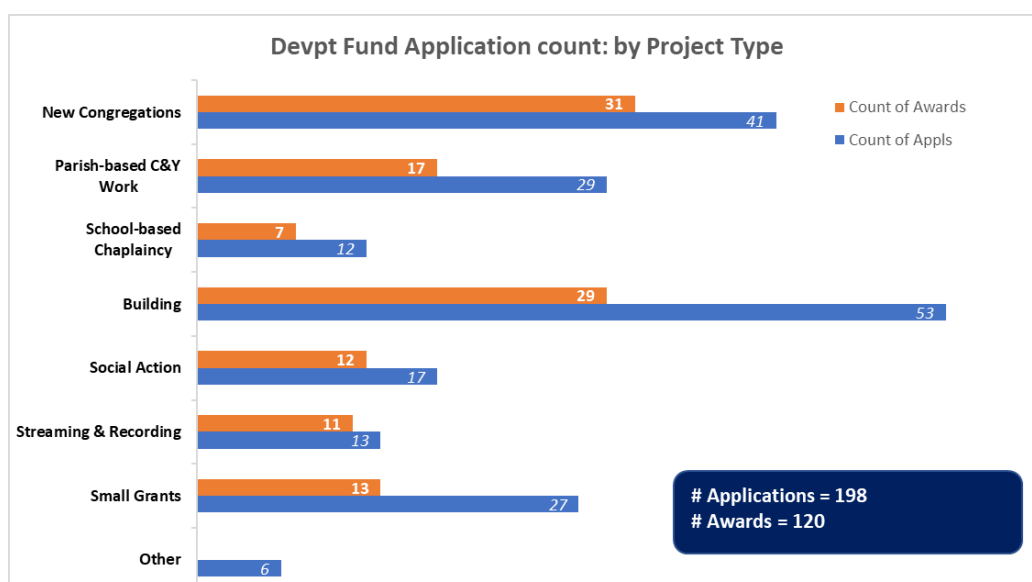
The dedication and work of the initial Review Panel members to the success of the Development Fund has been critical and we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge their outstanding contribution.

What type of projects have been supported?

Applications received have covered an impressive range of missional activities – work amongst our children and young people (both parish-based and within a school-based chaplaincy setting), work to establish new congregations (including 2 diocesan-supported ‘Resourcing Hubs’), building projects to enable mission, a range of social actions projects (particularly during and since the pandemic) and applications to facilitate via livestreaming and online worship.

The charts illustrate the *count* of each type of application received (and awarded) and the *amount* (£) associated with each application (or award). Grants supported the employment of a member of staff (e.g. a Children’s Worker) tend to be for at least 3 years and average £30-40K. In comparison, awards for livestreaming were all £1,000 or less, single payments and are now typically made instead through the separate Internet Grant Fund (through which an anonymous donor is enabling grants for up to £1,000 to be made to a parish for livestreaming)..

(Note: some projects fit into more than one category – e.g. a building project to enhance a church’s facilities for serving the community for instance running toddler’s group - so the analysis is for indicative purposes only.)



As with any over-subscribed grant fund, we have been unable to support all applications received. Where the Review Panel is not able to make an award but recognises potential missional benefit in an application, we provide encouragement and clear feedback to help parishes strengthen their applications (and where applicable, guide them to resources such as diocesan advisers for further assistance). To date, of the 27 such applications, nine (9) have been re-submitted and been granted an award.

A full list of awards is available on the Development Fund website

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/mission-ministry/our-common-vision/resources/development-fund/#toggle-id-6>.

Application and decision-making process

The aim of the Development Fund is to encourage church communities in five areas:

1. To become a more Christ-like Church
2. To encourage discernment
3. To be missionally creative
4. To learn together
5. To support initiatives that are sustainable

The Development Fund administrator coordinates the administration of applications and seeks input from area teams, relevant advisers (e.g. Church buildings team, discipleship enablers, school chaplaincy adviser), finance, HR (for applications involving the employment of staff) to ensure the best possible advice is available to the Review Panel.

Post Award activities

Following each Review Panel, the Development Fund administrator informs all applicants within 4 weeks of the meeting including any conditions the Review Panel wishes to attach to the grant to strengthen the proposed project. An important part of the Development Fund is to affirm and encourage new missional activity, so we work with the Diocesan Communications team to highlight successful projects both within the diocese and further afield in the local press and media. (The most recent awards featured on BBC Radio Oxford on 10/10/2021 and the press release is <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/sixth-round-development-fund-awards/>)

Projects are encouraged to provide informal feedback (including photographs) and are required to provide formal feedback at the end of the project (or every 6 months for longer projects).

Extension of the Development Fund – Cowley Deanery motion on basic facilities

In early 2021, the Development Fund Review Panel and the Cowley Working Group collaborated on the development of new criteria to support the 'Cowley' recommendations around the provision of basic facilities for church buildings (essential infrastructure for mission) to include the stewardship of the additional sums allocated by Bishop's Council for this purpose (£200K per year, 2021-2023).

We used the opportunity to adapt the existing Development Fund processes and to improve the guidance for ALL buildings-related projects to the Development Fund, so that where possible we align questions with the DAC faculty process to streamline work for parishes.

To handle the additional applications, and ensure a more timely response to existing applications, we increased the number of grant 'rounds' each year to four (with deadlines at the end of January, April, July and October), supported by the part-time Development Fund Administrator. This also reduces the time between application rounds for parishes.

To date, the Review Panel has made 5 awards, totalling £60,000, supporting early feasibility studies right through to the construction of new washroom or kitchen facilities. We are aware that other applications are in preparation.

Monitoring of Awards – what have we learned?

As previously mentioned we seek formal feedback from all grantees for scrutiny at each Review Panel. Project feedback forms often contain encouraging and inspirational feedback from parishes, even from smaller value grants (*'It affirmed the importance of taking steps on the journey and the value of smaller projects in helping people move on in faith.'* All Saints, Didcot.) and realise the transformational change in local communities that a Development Fund grant has enabled.

However, not all projects have progressed as expected, particularly due to Covid-19 related factors. The Review Panel has provided flexibility to projects postponed due to the pandemic and actively worked with parishes to develop alternative approaches and/or to postpone activities. Nevertheless, in some cases awardees have discerned that the best option is to return the award and re-apply at a more appropriate time. Other projects have yet to start (building construction projects) or were delayed starting due to recruitment difficulties (Children's and families workers) so have yet to see the expected fruit (outcomes).

There is considerable work involved tracking the 100+ awarded projects, but we see this as essential to ensure optimal allocation of the funds awarded and to inform future allocation of grant monies. We plan to undertake a fuller evaluation of the Development Fund in around two years once more projects have matured and more representative monitoring data available.

After two years we are pleased by the significant number of applications received and awards made to a wide range of parishes and deaneries. It is exciting to see change happening across the diocese enabled by the Development Fund, providing opportunity for important mission activity, both large and small, which would not otherwise have been possible.

John Sykes, Chair of the Review Panel
Janet Rogers, Common Vision Programme Manager
October 2021

The deadline for the next round of Development Fund applications is 31 January 2022 (with the following deadline 30 April 2022). [Guidelines and application forms](#)