

The Church of England's Strategic Investment Board will invest £24.4 million in funding for projects across the country as part of the Renewal and Reform programme.

An ambitious project aimed at opening new churches in deprived urban estates has been singled out for funding.

The scheme in the Diocese of Blackburn is one of eight across England to receive a share of £24.4 million to support major work on growth and change in the Church of England.

Other schemes to receive Strategic Development Funding (SDF) include projects in Leeds, Liverpool and Sheffield as well as piloting new approaches to mission in rural areas in Winchester Diocese.

A total of £1.54 million has been allocated for the programme in Blackburn Diocese over six years to fund work in outer urban estates and parishes.

The Blackburn Diocese project will focus on training new leaders, both lay and ordained, with a view to providing a model for other dioceses, while also strengthening mission in the areas where the work is located.

As part of the work, a lead evangelist and pioneer evangelist, based at Grange Park Church Army Centre of Mission in Blackpool, will be funded to continue work already under way by clergy and congregation on the estate.

The award will also fund 20 young adults to take part in the Blackpool Ministry Experience over the next six years, living on the Mereside estate in Blackpool and working with local residents, as well as in nearby deprived urban parishes in Blackpool.

Bishop of Burnley, Philip North, said: "I am delighted to hear the news of the success of our application for SDF funding. I believe passionately that if we are serious about the renewal of the Church we must commit ourselves afresh to proclaiming Good News to the poor.

"This project will share the Good News with people living on our urban estates by planting a number of new congregations. However, it will also ensure that church life is sustainable over the long term in these areas by forming quality lay and ordained leaders both from and for our estates. Our aim is to call and form local leaders who can be good news for their communities."

The other seven dioceses to receive funding are:

- **Bath and Wells – nine new pioneer posts to be created as catalysts for pioneering activity right across Somerset** – £1.61m.
- **Bristol** – Resourcing evangelism with younger generations, social action and church planting in the city of Bristol – £1.45m.
- **Leeds – Strengthening mission across the city of Leeds** through church planting – £3.09m.
- **Liverpool – Developing mission in St Helen's, Warrington and Widnes** – £1.88m.
- **London:**

Church growth learning communities and revitalising churches across the diocese - £4.80m.

2. **Supporting the national Church through leadership training for curates to be deployed across the Church** -£3.89m.

- **Sheffield – Developing mission and ministry to children, young people and families** – £1.84m awarded.

- **Winchester – Piloting new approaches to rural mission;** reinvigorating urban mission in Southampton and North Hampshire; **investing in mission in new housing development areas; and revitalising student ministry** – £4.23m.

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