

The Church of England is “coming back” to the estates, reversing a trend where over decades, services like shops and children’s centres have withdrawn, the Bishop of Burnley has said.

In a speech delivered at the National Estate Churches Network, the Rt Revd Philip North spoke of how outer estates are to be a key priority for the Church, with the publication of a new **Commitment to Action** to share the Christian faith on some of the country’s most deprived estates. He also launched a new **film** outlining the work.

The plans have been prepared by the Church’s Estates Evangelism Task Group, which is chaired by Bishop Philip, and is part of the Church’s Renewal and Reform programme.

Addressing the conference at St Francis at the Engine Room in Tottenham Hale, London, Bishop Philip said: “We want to have a thriving, growing, loving church on every significant estate in the country.”

The group is also committed to training estates residents to become future church leaders and to supporting existing Christian communities on estates, which may see collaboration with other denominations.

Speaking about the work of existing estate churches across dioceses, some of which have been supported by the Church’s Strategic Development Funding, Bishop Philip said: “The Church is coming back. The Holy Spirit is doing amazing things on the estates of this nation.”

The Revd Helen Shannon, vicar of church@five on the Strawberry Estate in East Finchley, London, said: “The Church of England’s vision is 'A Christian presence in every community' that means no forgotten people; no forgotten places, even in some of our toughest estates.

“I’m so excited that the Church has a growing commitment to the revitalisation of estate churches, plans to launch new estate churches where none currently exist, and a vision to raise up local people from the estates to achieve this.”

Revd Andy Delmege, chair of the network and vicar at St Bede’s, Brandwood in Birmingham, said: “As a priest who ministers on estates, I am very excited about these plans.

“I pray it will continue to stimulate fresh energy, vision, and resources in our existing estate churches, as well as inspiring new initiatives.”

Debbie Clinton, Director of Renewal and Reform, said: “Estates ministry is vital to the growth of the Church. I am delighted that as well as encapsulating the vision for estates evangelism, these new plans build on the wonderful work already being undertaken on estates churches by clergy and lay people, who are committed to meeting the spiritual and social needs of estate residents.”