



# Suffolk Heights Group

Christ at the heart of our community

## Annual Benefice Spring Gathering Review of 2025





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### **From the Rector**

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2025 has been a very busy and eventful year for the Suffolk Heights Group. This review aims to give a snapshot of the many stories and events around the benefice. May I offer my sincere thanks to all who have worked so hard to build the kingdom of God in all our communities.

The churches of the Benefice have been working hard over the last few months to discover what their mission and vision is for the future. Over days of contemplation and thought, we have come up with the following three ideas or ambitions:

- We want to engage more with our communities through the love of Christ. We can do this through actively engaging with the communities around us, praying for the growth of our church both in church and as individuals. For instance, Hargrave is specifically working to bring villagers together who may be isolated or alone.
- We want everyone to experience the sanctuary and stillness in our villages, allowing people to use the Christian space of the church for their own contemplation and meditation. Nearly all our churches are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Depden, for logistical reasons, opens just at weekends, but has a special invitation to dog walkers. Chevington also offers Iona and Taize meditative services for quiet contemplation across the group.

Finally, we want to explore how to love God and our neighbours through our Christian faith. We want to use the great festivals of the Christian world, Harvest, Christmas and Easter to build our relationship with communities and take the opportunity to share the Gospel. But this can happen all through the year in many ways. In Chedburgh, this has meant reaching out, offering folk the opportunity for the church to pray for them, while Hawkedon is actively advertising the ecological management of its graveyard – “God’s Acre”- and the care it is taking of its natural resources.



Depden's big ambition is to open itself up for Champing, letting people stay the night in the church for a small fee. It's a venture that's been taken up by over 30 churches round the country from Northumberland to Somerset. To be able to welcome visitors it needs a compostable toilet and this last year started the fund raising campaign with a BBQ in the church itself (heavily risk-assessed and monitored and made so much easier with the help of adjacent landowners). This fund raising is the biggest campaign the church has run since the rebuilding after the fire. It was jointly organised with The Depden Charities and proved to be a winner - plenty of eating, drinking and chat with locals and the not so local. When its doors open to guests hopefully in 2026 the church will be the first Champing destination in West Suffolk, with its beautiful isolation a unique setting for campers looking for perfect peace.



Depden's wine tasting and supper proved very successful for community engagement and fundraising and made the church determined to repeat the success next year. Better weather always makes community events easier and more popular. Who doesn't like an evening with friends basking in a warm Suffolk sunset.

Of course the regular monthly services continue and the church made a special effort to host a pet service as well. It held additional Taizé and Iona services, two Carol Services and a joint Christmas Day service with the Hargrave Community. Depden is thriving.





2025 was a busy year for the parish and for St Mary's. We had regular services twice a month, but most memorable were the 'specials' such as the Baptism of Teddy Cawston, grandson of Linda and Tim of Hawkedon Hall and descendant of the Cawston family of Hawkedon and Rede, who have farmed the area for many years. There was also the wedding of Mike and Pam Read's granddaughter Hannah to Matthew, also with strong farming connections in the locality. Everyone will also remember the inspirational Holy Communion service on a lovely summer's day in July, conducted by the Rt Revd Bishop Graeme.



The year would not be complete without our essential fund-raising events. Sell out activities included: A Sparkling Evening of Fizz, Finery, Gems and Jewels by master craftsman and presenter Andrew Prince; David Taylor's highly entertaining open-air production of 'Shakespeare in Love' hot from London; an enjoyable fashion and knitwear themed coffee morning; our convivial and atmospheric Christmas dinner in the village hall. But in addition to boosting the church's coffers we also raised money for the Teenage Cancer Trust through a rousing evening of traditional carol singing both inside and outside of the Queen's Head.





## St Edmunds' Hargrave

Our Community and Fundraising events continued in 2025. One of our highlights this year was our annual BBQ. On a beautiful evening in June, over 100 gathered at the Village Hall to enjoy BBQ food, homemade salads and delicious desserts. The Tombola was as popular as ever, with more games provided by village children. We were joined by local band 'Collage', who entertained guests with a variety of popular songs.

We are very grateful to all those, too numerous to mention, who helped and supported our BBQ – a great community gathering that also raised £1500 for St Edmund's Church.

A special Benefice Carol Service opened Advent with a feast of Advent Carols, opening the short season of preparation before Christmas. The Chedburgh Community Choir filled the choir stalls and sang beautifully at the Advent Carol Service.

Lusty singing in the congregation of over 40 at both services was rewarded by mulled wine afterwards. Nearly £400 in total was raised for the Crisis Christmas Appeal for the homeless.

We celebrated harvest and gave thanks for our farmers, farm workers, distributors, food producers and the abundant food we enjoy. The service started with a blessing and procession of vintage and classic tractors and finished in the church with a small round of refreshments. It was lovely to see so many local landowners bring their treasured machines and give thanks for the harvest this year.





All Saints held its third biennial Art and Flower Festival on Saturday, May 31st, and Sunday, June 1st. Once again, the weather smiled upon us, and helped by this, the attendance was excellent, with local people and many others coming from further afield. There were 17 artists exhibiting paintings, pottery and wood turning work, exactly right for the hall. The church itself was a celebration of summer gardens, beautifully decorated with flowers, and a lovely display of flower paintings by children from Little Teapots nursery in Chedburgh.

On the Sunday morning, we were very fortunate to have Dean Joe from the Cathedral, leading and preaching for Morning Prayer, making it a very special and celebratory service. The church was packed to the rafters.

On a more practical note, we realised it was time to update the church heating from the inefficient old LPG heaters. These were damaging to both the internal church fabric and the environment. After research and advice, we decided to install under-pew electric heaters in the four pews in the Chancel and in the four central pews on each side of the Nave.

The heating was installed in October 2025, and we can report that over the winter, it has proved to be a great success. Not wasting energy trying to heat the whole church, but by keeping those in the pews comfortably warm.





The Churchyard Management Project got a new information board telling visitors how and why the churchyard is being cared for in the way it is. And the big mow, when nearly all the grass is cut in July, was done this time by hand with scythes, by Pip Goodwin and Jamie Robertson. The Great Raking Party took place a week later in hot sunshine, with sandwiches and refreshments provided by Pam Mower

The year saw the completion of the building works that have transformed the interior of the church. We now have a wide open space at the rear of the church, a toilet, a servery, stackable modern wooden chairs, and new cushions on the ancient poppy head pews. Meanwhile Kevin Green repaired the cracking east wall and crumbling masonry.

In June the new space was used to full effect with a Baking Competition that filled the church with cakes, buns, muffins, tarts, biscuits and cupcakes. Entries came from villages all around Chevington, some people carrying their entries across country to get them into the competition. Best of all was the Children's Section which was crammed with every imaginable kind of baked creation. Two professional judges gallantly tasted every entry and awarded prizes before the entire stock was sold off: not a single entry remained unsold at the end of the day. To be repeated.

In November, as the nights drew in we held a Murder Mystery night at the Village Hall, which adopted an eighties theme: Murder at the Disco. Much confusion followed, bodies were strewn across the floor, suspects questioned and enigmatic answers analysed and debated, while the real murderer, as ever turned out to be the most unlikely member of the whole cast.





Throughout 2025, the church maintained a steady rhythm of worship, community engagement, and special events. Our twice-monthly services took place, and we are pleased to report that the number of attendees has risen slightly. Fun, Fellowship and Food continued throughout the year with varying numbers of both children and adults attending each session. We were pleased to host both Taize and Iona services along with World Day of Prayer, the Benefice Ascension Day Service, a 5th Sunday Benefice Service, a Harvest Festival, an Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial and Carols on the Green.

In February, we held a Chedburgh Away Day at the Cathedral, where, under the banner of Growing in God, we had the opportunity to discuss our understandings of Chedburgh Church and its place within the community. To find out more about Friends Groups and how to make the best use of our buildings, and to dream about our future.

The Church community rallied together in July to run a Cake and Pudding stall at the Chedburgh Community BBQ, which raised a good sum to help replenish Church funds.



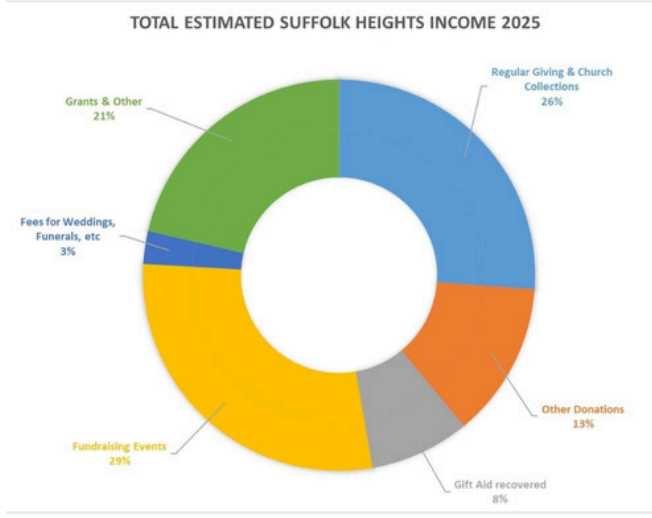
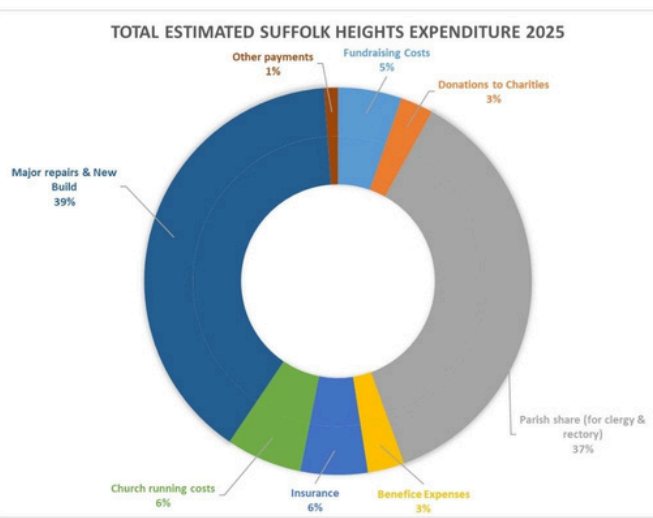
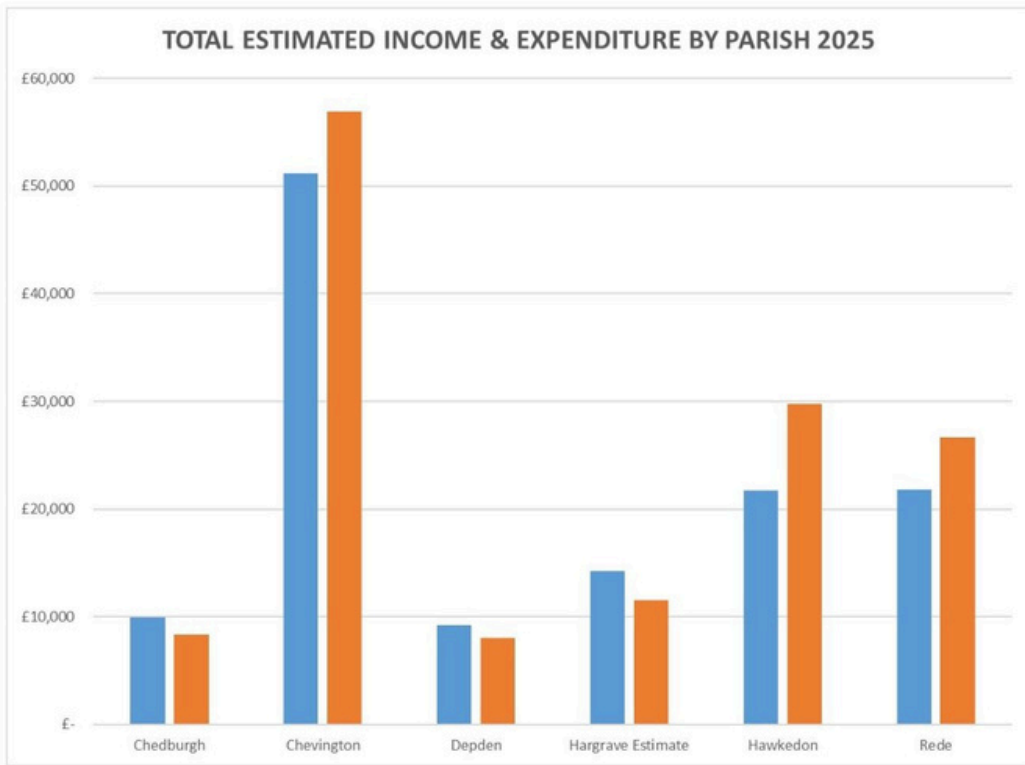
In October, Chedburgh Community Choir put on a Cabaret Evening fundraiser for our benefit with splendid finger food supplied by church members. The Erskine Centre was quite full, and a good time was had by all. The evening also raised much-needed funds for the Church.

We, as a Church community, are extremely grateful for the hard work and dedication of the Chedburgh Wildlife Friendly Village group, which has planted numerous bulbs around the Church. We also thank them for the beautiful small garden, next to the Church porch, which attracts butterflies and bees. Within this garden, we have a small 'bowl' of water with stones and pebbles in it, which we keep topped up, providing a habitat for insects and allowing birds to quench their thirst.

Towards the latter part of the year, the PCC discussed whether we should leave the Church open. Some members thought it would be a good idea to open the Church permanently, whilst others were less enthusiastic about that idea. After some discussion and guidance from the insurers, it was decided that, on a trial basis, the Church would be open from 08.00 until 16.00, during daylight hours on Monday to Saturday, and from 10.00 until 16.00 on Sunday. A new visitors' book was purchased, and we look forward to reading the comments from those who visit. This initiative took a little while to 'get going', however, after a slow start, we were delighted to read the positive comments which had been written.



# The Suffolk Heights Group of Churches Accounts



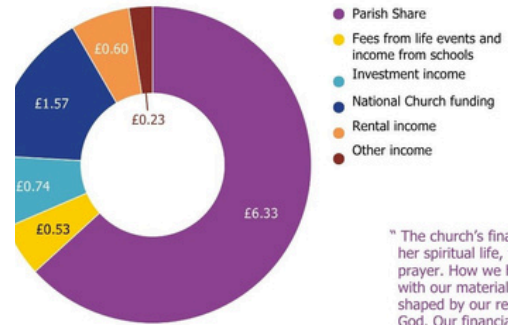
# How is our parish share spent by our diocese?



## OUR FINANCES AND RESOURCES

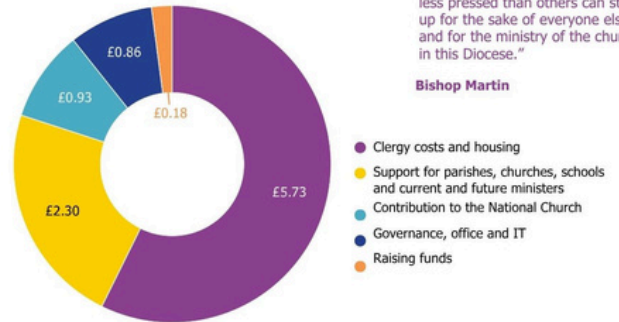
In 2023, the total Diocesan income, excluding project income, was £9,824,000. Our total expenditure was £9,859,000.

Where does our money come from?  
Every £10 we receive is made up as follows:



"The church's finances are part of her spiritual life, flowing from prayer. How we handle and engage with our material resources is shaped by our relationship with God. Our financial priorities embody our spiritual priorities. And that is true just as much for us as individuals, and our giving."

How do we spend the money we receive?  
Every £10 we receive is spent as follows:



"We need to be more comfortable talking about money. We are all pressed, but some of us who are less pressed than others can step up for the sake of everyone else and for the ministry of the church in this Diocese."

Bishop Martin

## WHAT IS PARISH SHARE:

Parish Share is the model our Diocese uses to share the costs of clergy, housing, mission and ministry, governance between every parish in order to fulfil our calling to 'Grow in God'. Parish Share is based on the principle of Christian generosity and mutual support. Parish Share enables us all to contribute together so we can:

- Fund ministry in all our parishes developing enthusiastic ministry teams in every community.
- Join together to grow our mission to Growing in God as we aim to be flourishing congregations making a difference so that together we can have a greater impact.
- Unite in a partnership in proclaiming the Christian faith.

Total costs to be covered by the Parish Share total of £7.57m:

This allocation to each area (benefice) is split into three areas, covering existing ministry, the ministry for the next generation and shared costs of church leadership, known as wider church costs:

Total costs	2024 (£k)	2023 (£k)
Cost of ministry	6,451	6,233
Training for stipendiary ministers	310	297
Wider church costs	809	619
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>7,570</b>	<b>7,149</b>

Cost of Ministry covers 85% of the costs and is split into:

Ministry cost	2024 (£)	2023 (£)
Ministry stipends & National Insurance	38,449	37,113
Ministry pensions	7,743	8,900
Property related costs (repairs & running costs)	10,137	9,668
Ministry training	3,872	4,129
Ministry team	3,849	3,937
Clergy HR fees	614	959
Contribution from other income	-1,827	-2,375
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>62,837</b>	<b>62,331</b>

Wider church costs are 11% of the total costs covering:

Wider church costs	2024 (£)	2023 (£)
Archdeacons & Rural Deans	210	225
Safeguarding	173	171
Communications	129	153
DAC	99	105
Parish resources	142	138
National synod & clergy retirement	261	281
Governance & administration	938	913
<b>Subtotal cost</b>	<b>1,952</b>	<b>1,966</b>
Other income	-1,143	-1,367
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>619</b>

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
80.3% of our expenditure goes directly back into supporting parishes.

## WHAT IS PARISH SHARE?

Local support costs include the maintenance and upkeep of the clergy houses; the training and development of clergy and lay ministry already in post and the support of those training for ministry; and funding clergy relocations when clergy move into a new post in the Diocese.

Support also includes safeguarding, the Registrar, communications and financial governance.

National support costs include the cost of training new clergy; the cost of the General Synod and the work it carries out; the Church of England's contribution to the Anglican Communion; pension contributions for Mission Agencies; and contributions to provide housing for retired clergy.

Parish Share helps cover the costs of running and supporting church ministries in every parish. This includes expenses for local (diocesan) and national church support (wider church).

It funds the ministry we benefit from today and also supports those in training who will lead the church in the future.

Thank you to the 38 churches who gifted over 100% of their Parish Share contribution to support other churches in financial need.



## The Greyhound

The Greyhound, Chevington, is a family-run country pub and restaurant at the heart of the village, offering a warm welcome, great food, and a relaxed atmosphere. We take pride in creating a place where everyone feels at home, whether you're joining us for a hearty meal, a quiet drink, or an evening out with friends.

There's always something happening at The Greyhound. Our entertainment includes karaoke, open mic nights, quiz nights, bingo, and regular live performances, bringing the community together with fun, laughter, and a friendly village spirit. It's the perfect setting for those who enjoy good company and great entertainment.

We also cater for a wide range of occasions, offering buffet options tailored to your needs. Whether you're planning a wedding reception, wake, christening, birthday celebration, or any special gathering, our team is here to help you mark life's important moments with good food and genuine hospitality.

At The Greyhound, we're proud to be your local — a place where community, comfort, and great experiences come together.

**Get in touch and follow us:**  
**Comms team - [shbenefice@gmail.com](mailto:shbenefice@gmail.com)**  
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We are very grateful to The Greyhound for kindly sponsoring the printing of this report