

What happened to our glebe land?

People often ask about glebe land; who owns it and what happens to the income – our income say some. So here are the answers.

It all started in 1978 when the Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976 came into effect transferring the ownership and management of glebe land from incumbents to Diocesan Boards of Finance (DBFs).

Before 1978 an incumbent could keep the rent from the glebe land in his parish and indeed, sell the land and use the proceeds to supplement his stipend. This resulted in some clergy, who owned a lot of glebe land, enjoying a high income while others, with little or no glebe land, struggled with low incomes.

From 1978 onwards the ownership of all glebe passed to DBFs and all income arising from glebe land has to be used towards the payment of stipends. Consequently the income from glebe land is enjoyed by all parishes in the diocese because it reduces the amount of parish share requested from them. In this way, many parishes where there was no glebe land benefit from the land now held by the DBFs and all parish clergy in a diocese are paid the same stipend.

At the present time the Hereford Diocesan Board of Finance (HDBF) owns 156 parcels of land totalling 1,309 acres together with a number of commercial properties and houses valued, in total, at c£8m. The houses are used to accommodate curates and when not so used are let to generate further income in support of stipends.

When glebe assets are sold proceeds from the sale of glebe land are reinvested either in more land or buildings (such as a curate's house in another location) or in quoted investments. Currently the HDBF has some £13m of glebe investments.

The income generated from lettings and investments amounts to c£460k p.a.

The letting of agricultural land, commercial and housing properties are managed by professional agents as is the management of invested funds. The HDBF has an ethical investment policy that is designed to grow the long term value of glebe assets whilst recognising the need broadly to maintain the income generated.

Day to day management of all glebe matters is the responsibility of the Property Secretary, who is part of the Diocesan Secretary's senior team in Hereford, with oversight provided by nominated Directors from the Diocesan Board of Finance Executive Committee.

May 2016