The Digital Diocese Community
An overview

This document is intended to be read as a summary of the ideas and principles outlined in the document entitled “The Digital Diocese Community, a proposal.”
A Vision

Having delivered websites for three dioceses, we discovered that while each has a distinctly individual character, what they need from their diocese website, functionally speaking, is almost identical. So when three more dioceses approached us individually at the beginning of 2015, asking us to tender for their own web projects, an idea formed.

The list of required features includes core tools like a CMS, a news facility, a means to enable file resource downloads, the listing of vacancies, A Church Near You integration, an events calendars and a powerful search tool that wraps around it all. We asked ourselves, given the functional overlap, is there a way to build something that delivers the features that are common to every diocese, whilst enabling each diocese to express its unique identity?

Could we build a common infrastructure which fulfils the 90% that all dioceses need, with the remaining 10% representing the functions and design elements that are tailored to a specific diocese?

Rather than each diocese undertaking the process of commissioning, developing and paying for an entirely new website every few years - reinventing the wheel each time - Could we enable a platform, potentially free at the point of adoption, for them to build upon?

The Digital Diocese Community was the answer to those questions.

Open Community

An open source approach would sit at the heart of the community, enabling more efficient development of web projects for the Church of England.

Put simply, the community would identify and commission a code-base which can then be freely grown and improved by ANY appropriately skilled developer, freeing the Church of England from proprietary, locked-in platforms, and most importantly ensuring support of the system without Blanc.

There are other open source platforms out there such as Wordpress and Drupal. We would be delivering an open sources platform like them but critically, one that the Church of England would own. The tools we use enable us to deliver precisely what you need, and have longterm expandability at their core. All this builds towards a platform which will grow beyond its initial creation and evolve with the communities needs.

Cost + Value

The community approach is also valuable as dioceses might share, not only platform but also financial investment in it. The chart overleaf shows the value each diocese might receive by investing in the 90%.

Currently we have 8 interested dioceses, which reduces the cost to £2,250+VAT per diocese, but the more dioceses that get involved the cheaper it is for everyone.

By sharing costs, dioceses have more resources to invest in digital innovation which will lead to something bigger and better than ever before.
A Manifesto

If we were to set out a map as to what this model might look like, if we were to put a flag in the sand in order to align its course and measure its progress, we might start with this...

1. The development of a platform for everyone, community supported, owned by all, and funded collectively.

2. A platform which, by default, provides 90% of the features needed by each and every diocese, and makes it easy to commission the remaining 10%.

3. A platform which allows every diocese to express its unique character, whilst leveraging the power of a common infrastructure.

4. A platform which allows an individual diocese to develop their own tools and features, which can then be adopted easily by others.

5. A community where ideas can be shared, new tools imagined, and where the cost of that investment might be shared amongst interested parties.

6. A community that enables and promotes Kingdom growth through digital best-practice.