

A report by the Independent Reviewer Canon Maggie Swinson on the process leading to the nomination of the Bishop of Blackburn, Philip North, following concerns by the group Women And The Church (WATCH) has been published.

Canon Swinson concludes that the process of consultation and nomination, during 2022, was in line with the regulations but recommends some changes to the rules for future appointments to provide further reassurance.

She rejects a call from WATCH to recommend a moratorium on bishops who would not ordain women as priests being appointed as diocesan bishops until all the recommendations of an earlier report - by one of her predecessors Sir Philip Mawer - are fully implemented.

However, Canon Swinson also recommends consideration be given to re-examining the scope of the Independent Reviewer's role.

The recommendations include further consideration of arrangements relating to "Vacancy-in-See" committees, including the chair and makeup of the committee, and new arrangements for consultations including a possible minimum timescale.

She also calls for resources to be made available to complete theological work, called for in Sir Philip's earlier report, on the impact of the workings of the arrangements drawn up in 2014 ahead of legislation paving the way for the consecration of women as bishops.

Canon Swinson said: "I would like to thank all those who contributed to the report, particularly all those who shared so freely from their own experiences.

"Each person who has contributed has, I am sure, done so with positive intentions and from their particular experience and expertise.

"I hope that what we have learned will prove valuable in taking the Church of England forward in a way that recognises and appreciates the ministry of all."

## Notes to Editors

- Read the [full report](#).
- The Independent Reviewer occupies an ombudsman-style role in responding to concerns and disputes over the operation of the [House of Bishops declaration on the ministry of bishops and priests](#).