



England's historic cathedrals are one of the real success stories of the Church in the 21st Century, but should make changes to secure them for the future, a report published today finds.

The paper from the Church of England's Cathedrals Working Group sets out new ideas on how cathedrals could be governed and funded.

The proposals, emerging from seven months of meetings and discussions, aim to recognise and enhance the vital role that cathedrals play while building a robust framework for the future.

A consultation on the recommendations opens today, seeking views from interested groups.

They range from recommendations on how the structure of Chapter – a cathedral's traditional governing body – could be reformed to new financial auditing processes.

The Working Group was set up by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York after a small number of cathedrals highlighted challenges in governance and management.

The working group consulted with people from all parts of the cathedral sector and elsewhere, including charities and wider civil society, to develop the proposals.

At the heart of the recommendations is the retention of Chapter as the governing body of a cathedral, but with a clearer emphasis on its governance role. There would be a separate management function provided by a Senior Executive Team who will oversee day- to-day cathedral operations.

The report also makes proposals on key areas of leadership, financial control, safeguarding, oversight of building projects and stresses the urgency of opening a dialogue with Government about state funding for cathedrals.

Adrian Newman, Bishop of Stepney and Chair of the Cathedrals Working Group, said: "Cathedrals buck the trends of numerical decline, exert a growing influence in civil society, and demonstrate an effective way of engaging with contemporary culture.

"They are inspirational in their impact on our national life and on the lives of millions of worshippers and visitors each year.

"We hope that the recommendations in our report will encourage a much closer collaboration between cathedral and diocese, dean and bishop and point towards good practice in a cathedral's wider relationships with the diocese and the national church. The mutuality of these relationships is vital.

"In proposing changes to governance structures and aspects of cathedral operations, we do not wish to inhibit the entrepreneurial flair that has characterised so much that is good about the world of cathedrals nor impose unnecessary red tape.

“However, we are committed to ensure that cathedrals do not get into situations which prevent them from thriving in their role as pioneers in mission and ministry.

“England’s cathedrals are an immense gift to Church and nation, and we hope that our report can help to form a better understanding of how this gift can be nurtured and protected, celebrated and safeguarded long in to the future.”

Adrian Dorber, chair of the Association of English Cathedrals, and Dean of Lichfield, said: “Cathedrals are the nation’s treasures – from protecting invaluable heritage such as Magna Carta and ancient shrines to supporting social enterprises helping the homeless and the vulnerable and offering inspirational daily worship to lift the spirits and providing a place for the nation to come to be healed at times of mourning or national crisis.

“Surely no-one would argue with a fresh look at the way we are run and financed, so we are excited about where this report may take us and look forward to the responses the consultation may bring and the final report.

“Our cathedrals have been here for hundreds of years, vibrant seats of mission, of learning, of heritage and of love, let’s ensure they are here for hundreds more.”

Notes for editors:

- There are 42 Anglican cathedrals in England. More information [here](#).
- A review by the Faith Minister, Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, published last month found that cathedrals play a crucial role in communities. It highlighted figures showing that cathedrals draw in an estimated £220 million per year in spending to local economies per year and provide more than 5,500 local jobs. Full details [here](#).
- The latest statistics on cathedrals show average weekday attendances were up, and visitor numbers exceeded 10 million in the past year, 16,500 people attended Fresh Expression services and 310,000 young people came to cathedrals through special educational visits, both of which were significant increases on previous years.

Cathedrals continued to be centres of civic life, with 1.2 million people reported at 6,000 civic services and events throughout the year.

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