

Widespread support has been received for ideas set out by the Church of England to ensure the future of England's Cathedrals.

More than 300 submissions were received in response to a consultation exercise carried out by the Cathedrals Working Group, who published their draft report in January 2018.

The Group, set up in 2017 by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, was a direct response to a call by the Bishop of Peterborough for a review of the effectiveness of the Cathedrals Measure (1999) following his Visitation of Peterborough Cathedral.

The Group's final report, published today, takes into account consultation responses, and outlines comprehensive governance and financial management recommendations for cathedrals, in preparation for a debate by General Synod in July.

Consultation submissions were received from Deans, Chapters and senior staff as well as members of Cathedral Councils and others from the cathedrals world. Responses also came from the wider church and bodies such as The Charity Commission and Cabinet Office.

The majority of those responding indicated considerable support for the recommendations, and an eagerness for swift implementation.

Recurring themes also included calls for greater clarity on the role of the Vice-Chair and the composition of Cathedral Chapters, the status of Residentiary Canons, qualification requirements for Chief Financial Officers and the choice of external auditors. The Working Group has responded to these points in its final report.

Key developments since the conclusion of the consultation also include the setting up of a Cathedrals Support Group chaired by the Third Church Estates Commissioner to oversee the implementation of proposals under the remit of the National Church Institutions, to be attended by the Executive Director of the Association of English Cathedrals.

At the heart of the Group's recommendations is the retention of Chapter as the governing body of a cathedral, but with changes in its composition to ensure a majority of non-executive members are present so that its governance responsibilities are carried out effectively. Cathedrals are also advised to establish a separate senior executive team who will oversee day-to-day cathedral operations.

In addition to governance and management, the report also makes proposals on key areas of leadership, financial control, safeguarding and oversight of building projects. In line with the Taylor Review into the Sustainability of Churches and Cathedrals, published last year, the report also stresses the urgency of a dialogue with Government towards the establishment of a significant cathedral fabric fund for the UK.

The report also advocates the abolition of Cathedral Councils, suggesting that some members of Councils could then become non-executive members of Chapter.

General Synod will now debate a motion from the House of Bishops calling for the endorsement of the report's proposals. The majority of changes are expected to be implemented over the next three years, with legislative changes to the Cathedrals Measure expected to be

introduced in February 2019.

The Bishop of Worcester, Dr John Inge, the lead bishop for cathedrals, said: “England has no finer treasure than its cathedrals. Architectural beacons at the heart of our cities and regions, these are spectacular expressions of the mission of God in His world, as well as the faith, skill, and dedication of the generations who have built and maintained them.

“Cathedral congregations are steadily growing, and they attract over 10 million visitors each year. Demand for contributions to civil society is also constant with 1.2 million people attending civic events at cathedrals annually. This is poignantly the case at remembrance time where, in 2018, cathedrals and churches will be focal points of the nation’s centenary commemorations of the First World War.

“With cathedrals increasing in popularity, cultural importance and defying the expectations of a secular age, the vision behind this report is to ensure that they can continue to grow and flourish.”

The Bishop of Stepney, Adrian Newman, who chaired the Cathedrals Working Group said: “An enormous commitment to cathedrals exists up and down the country, which has been evident throughout this process.

“England’s cathedrals are an immense gift to Church and nation. This report is intended to have a positive effect on the great contribution they already make to mission and ministry.

“I would like to express my thanks to the Working Group, and to everyone who has contributed to the consultation process, and hope that both the report and the debate it has stimulated will help to resolve some of the challenges faced at the present time.

“People care passionately about these remarkable places, and their ability to resonate so deeply with English spirituality simply reinforces the importance of enabling them to flourish for generations to come. “

The Dean of Lincoln, the Very Revd Christine Wilson, said: “British society has changed a great deal in the 25 years since the last major report on cathedrals by Baroness Elspeth Howe. In that time, cathedrals’ congregations have continued to grow, and the ministry and mission of cathedrals are more important than ever.

“Cathedrals continue to seek to be centres of excellence in all areas of their life, and the proposals made in this report strengthen those ambitions by providing the conditions in which cathedrals can flourish into the future.

“I and my colleagues welcome the proposals made in the report, which are in line with our own mission strategy, and we hope that they can be brought into effect as soon as possible.”

Notes for editors

Once live, the report can be downloaded from the [General Synod papers page](#).

England’s Cathedrals:

- 42 Church of England Cathedrals across England
- Generate £220million for the national economy
- Employ 7,380 people
- 11.3 million adults go to a cathedral annually (27% of the UK population)
- 320,000 school children visit each year
- 14,760 volunteers, giving 1.96 million hours a year, a rise of 15% between 2006 and 2016.
- 78% of people living in a city with a cathedral felt it was at the heart of their city
- 59% of people nationally consider that cathedrals belong to the whole community not just the Church of England
- 37,000 people per week attended cathedral services in 2016
- 53,000 attended Easter and 131,000 attended Christmas cathedral services in 2016

Sources

The economic and social impacts of England's cathedrals, Ecorys, 2014

Spiritual Capital: The Present and Future of English Cathedrals, Theos and The Grubb Institute, 2012

Church of England Statistics for Mission, 2016

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/recommendations-englands-cathedrals-met-support>