



the governance structures of the Church of England's National Church

Becky Clark

The report, produced by a group chaired by the Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines, and published last year, made a range of recommendations including merging the oversight of most of the Church's national activities into a single body.

Members backed a motion opening the way for a detailed engagement with stakeholders in Church and State about the proposals and legislation being drawn up.

It was also announced today that a new project board, made up primarily of members of General Synod is being set up to take the work forward chaired by Sir David Lidington, the former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Bishop of Guildford, Andrew Watson, will also be taking over responsibility from the Bishop of Leeds.

Members of the project board will be:

- Rt Hon Sir David Lidington (Chair)
- Bishop Andrew Watson
- Alan Smith (First Church Estates Commissioner)
- Alison Coulter (Member of General Synod)
- Mary Chapman (Former Member of General Synod)
- Dr Jamie Harrison (Chair of the House of Laity, General Synod)
- Abigail Scott (Member of General Synod)

Speaking in the Synod debate Bishop Nick said: “The Review Group’s recommendations were about rationalisation, simplification and clarification.”

“A number of responses indicate that some people have caught the whiff of centralisation, but I would respectfully suggest that the opposite is true.”

“The ultimate goal is to make clearer who makes decisions, and how.”

“In the end it is about accountability which depends on both transparency and accessibility - optimising accountability for the good of the whole.”

In a paper to Synod, Bishop Nick explained that the approval of the Motion did not reflect an endorsement of the Governance Review Group’s recommendations.

Rather, the Synod will begin a “process of engagement” led by the Archbishops’ Council and the Church Commissioners, where questions, discussions, and challenges to the recommendations can be raised.

Bishop Andrew said: “I am delighted to be picking up the baton from the Bishop of Leeds, following the excellent report prepared under his leadership.”

“The governance structures in our National Church Institutions have grown up in a piecemeal way over many years, with much room for confusion, complexity and duplication.”

“‘Humbler, simpler, bolder’ is our aim, with a special emphasis on ‘simpler’ - enabling our governance structures to serve the mission and ministry of the Church more straight-forwardly and effectively.”

More information:

- The full wording of the Motion, as amended and approved by General Synod, is available below.

- That this Synod:

- (a) thank the Governance Review Group for its work in preparing the report GS 2239 and its Chair for update note GS 2249.â€œ

- (b) invite the Archbishopsâ€™ Council and the Church Commissioners to engage with stakeholders in the Church and State on the Reportâ€™s recommendations; and

- (c) invite the Archbishopsâ€™ Council, in the light of the outcome of that engagement, to introduce legislation for consideration by this Synod to give effect to proposals that involve legislative change.â€œ

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