

GENERAL SYNOD

The Dioceses Commission

Annual Report 2013

1. The Dioceses Commission is required to report annually to the General Synod. This is its sixth report.

Membership and Staff

2. The Commission consists of a Chair and Vice-Chair appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York from among the members of the General Synod; four members elected by the Synod; and four members appointed by the Appointments Committee.
3. The membership and staff of the Commission are as follows:

Chair:	Canon Prof. Michael Clarke (Worcester)
Vice-Chair:	The Ven Peter Hill (Southwell & Nottingham)
Elected members:	The Revd Canon Jonathan Alderton-Ford (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) The Revd Paul Benfield (Blackburn) Mr Robert Hammond (Chelmsford) Mr Keith Malcouronne (Guildford)
Appointed members:	Mrs Lucinda Herklots The Revd Canon Dame Sarah Mullally, DBE Canon Prof. Hilary Russell The Rt Revd Nigel Stock, Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (to Oct. 2013)
Secretary:	Mr Jonathan Neil-Smith
Assistant Secretary:	Mr Paul Clarkson

4. The Rt Revd Nigel Stock stepped down from the Commission in October 2013 on his appointment as Bishop at Lambeth. The Commission wishes to place on record their gratitude to Bishop Nigel for the five years he has spent as a member.

Duties and Powers of the Commission

5. The Commission's duties and powers, laid down by the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007, are summarized in paras 7-13 of its 2008 Annual Report (GS Misc 920), which is available, with other information about the Commission and its work, in the Commission's area of the Church of England web site: www.diocom.org

Boundary Review no.2. West Yorkshire

7. The Commission's work in 2013 has been heavily focused on the major reorganisation scheme bringing together the Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon and Leeds and Wakefield – the most far-reaching scheme of its kind. The proposals had been under discussion since 2010, and an initial consultation document setting out the Commission's vision for the three dioceses was issued in October 2010, following an intensive round of meetings in the area.
8. The period of formal consultation for the first version of draft scheme, published on 1 November 2011, closed on 30 April 2012. The Commission considered over 100 written submissions and heard formal oral submissions from representatives of the three diocesan synods. The final version of the draft scheme prepared by the Commission under section 6 of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007 was published on 29 October 2012 with the report 'Moving Towards a New Diocese for West Yorkshire and the Dales', and other related documents including the Mission Statement and the Financial Estimate. Members of the Commission were actively involved in attending a number of meetings in the area following publication of the draft scheme; and representatives were present at the Bradford, Ripon & Leeds and Wakefield diocesan synods.
9. The final version of the draft scheme was considered by the diocesan synods of the affected dioceses, Blackburn, Bradford, Ripon and Leeds, Sheffield and Wakefield, in February / March 2013 (with the votes in Bradford, Ripon and Leeds and Wakefield all taking place on 2 March). It was strongly supported in all the dioceses, except Wakefield. As the Wakefield Diocesan Synod did not give its consent to the draft scheme, the Archbishop of York exercised his statutory role on 9 May 2013 in authorising the Commission to lay the draft scheme before the General Synod. The draft scheme was laid before the General Synod on 8 July 2013 and was overwhelmingly approved. In addition, the constitution of a Vacancy in See Committee was approved by the Synod so that the process of appointing a Bishop of Leeds could begin.
10. On 9 October the draft scheme went before the Her Majesty in Council and was confirmed by an Order in Council. The Appointed Day for the dissolution of the existing diocese and the creation of the new diocese of Leeds is Easter Day 2014. Although most decisions about the new diocese are for local decision, the Commission remains involved in the formal approval of transitional bodies and in setting any compensation claims for loss of office that may arise.
11. The Commission recognises that there are lessons to be learned from this Scheme – the first of its kind – and at the end of the year set in train an evaluation process which it hopes to conclude by June 2014.

Diocese of York

12. As part of its statutory brief the Commission undertook a review of episcopal oversight in the Diocese of York. As part of the consultation process a sub-group of

the Commission conducted interviews with a cross-section of people from the diocese in April and June and invited written comments.

13. The Commission's report was published in September with the following recommendations:
 - That the existing Instruments of Delegation to suffragan bishops be reviewed with a view to increasing the functions that are delegated, and drawing up new Role Descriptions which make it clear that all suffragans hold significant pan-diocesan responsibilities in addition to particular duties in their respective archdeaconries.
 - That no further action be taken regarding the western and south-western boundaries of the diocese, but that the York and Durham diocese together pursue a Pastoral Scheme to transfer the area of North Thornaby including the Queen's Campus of Durham University (and the Portrack Industrial Estate) to the Diocese of Durham from York.
 - That the diocese give consideration to petitioning Her Majesty in Council under s.11 of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007 to rename the See of Whitby after Middlesbrough.
14. The report was considered by the Archbishop's Council on 23 September and by the Diocesan Synod on 26 October. The Synod supported the filling of suffragan sees of Whitby and Selby with revised job descriptions, and the modest boundary adjustment in Thornaby; but a motion seeking approval to change the name of the See of Whitby was deferred for further consideration.

Joint Diocesan Working

15. The Dioceses Commission has a duty, when carrying out its duty to keep under review the provincial and diocesan structure of the Church of England, to 'disseminate, to the extent that the Commission thinks necessary and in whatever form the Commission thinks fit, guidance and information about good practice to persons and bodies involved in diocesan administration'.
16. In order to facilitate this, the Commission took the decision that, as a follow-up to the previous exercise on joint diocesan working in 2009-10, a paper was required, in essence, to ascertain 'the lie of the land' three years on. In April and May the Assistant Secretary carried out a survey of Diocesan Secretaries on behalf of the Commission on Joint Diocesan Working. There were 24 responses received from the 42 dioceses surveyed. The survey revealed that 18 of the dioceses had some form of joint working arrangement in place while 5 had plans for formal or informal arrangements.
17. A summary of the review was published on the Commission's website¹. The summary concluded the following:
 - That the benefits are rarely seen as financial: it is more a case of pooling resources to be able to afford experienced and qualified staff for key

¹ <http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/dioceses-commission/diocesan-administration.aspx>

appointments. The arrangements also allowed for complementary skills and staff to be shared and for an enhanced level of flexible working.

- That there was the opportunity to learn from the experience of the other diocese(s) as well as the chance of mutual learning and focusing on a common vision.

18. The Commission wishes to promote joint diocesan working and hoped that the summary will give diocesan secretaries and joint working groups some encouragement to develop or instigate more arrangements. In light of the responses from the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle, members of the Commission plan to meet with the Archdeacons of the two dioceses, the Chair of the Durham Diocesan Board of Finance and the Diocesan Secretary of the Diocese of Newcastle early in 2014. Further regional discussions are in prospect.

Suffragan Sees

19. Section 17 of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007 (concerning the filling of vacant suffragan sees) and the related section 12 (which requires diocesan bishops to keep the provision of episcopal oversight within their dioceses under review) came into effect on 1 January 2011.
20. The Commission carefully considered, and agreed to, submissions for the filling of the following sees:
 - Dunwich (in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich)
 - Tewkesbury (in the Diocese of Gloucester)
 - Lewes (in the Diocese of Chichester)²
 - Dudley (in the Diocese of Worcester)
 - Grimsby (in the Diocese of Lincoln)
 - Colchester (in the Diocese of Chelmsford)
 - Barking (in the Diocese of Chelmsford)
21. No requests for the filling of suffragan sees were rejected, though additional information was requested in some instances before a decision could be made. In particular the Commission was helped by submissions which included clarity about the roles and responsibilities attached to the see. In the case of the Chelmsford submission, members of the Commission had first met with the diocese's senior staff to discuss its plans for episcopal oversight in the diocese.
22. The Commission noted that in some instances, following reviews, dioceses have decided not to fill some sees. Sees which have remained unfilled in recent years are Hulme (Manchester), Maidstone (Canterbury), and Grantham (Lincoln).

Future Direction

23. The Commission is keen to put its resources and expertise at the service of the wider Church to unblock perceived obstacles to mission. In October it sought the views of

² A fresh submission made by the new diocesan bishop

all Diocesan Bishops on its work and the Commission will be reflecting on their responses with a view to some follow up discussions with regional groups of bishops.

24. In September the Commission was briefed by Mr Philip James, Head of the Resource Strategy and Development Unit of the Church Commissioners and the Archbishops' Council, and Dr Bev Botting, the Head of Archbishops Council's Research and Statistics Department on nationally held statistical data on dioceses and mission.
25. The Commission plans to engage with those involved in the follow up to 'Making New Disciples' (GS Misc 1054) and the planned Archbishops' Task Group on Evangelism which was agreed at the November Group of Sessions of the General Synod to ensure the maximum degree of joined up thinking with national mission initiatives.
26. Conscious of the extent to which episcopal oversight is being re-imagined in a number of dioceses the Commission plans to hold a symposium during 2014 to look at changing ideas and practices in respect of episcopal oversight. We hope to publish material from this on our web pages.

[On behalf of the Commission]
MICHAEL CLARKE
Chair

6 December 2013