

House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests

Submission by Women and the Church (WATCH) regarding the appointment of Diocesan Bishops

Report by the Independent Reviewer

PREAMBLE

1. Before setting out the matters raised with me, the evidence I have gathered, my reflection on the evidence, my recommendations and conclusions, I would like to set some parameters within which I have undertaken the task.
2. This inquiry has not been undertaken with a view to searching out errors in the nomination process and apportioning blame for them. Rather, I have endeavoured to look dispassionately at the evidence put before me and to offer reflections and make recommendations based on that review in several areas, some of which strictly fall outside the parameters of the House of Bishops Declaration. These are offered for consideration and in recognition that Church of England processes cannot be driven solely by the outworking of the Declaration and associated matters.
3. It became apparent very early on in my conversations that the perceptions of events and meetings vary, in some cases significantly. I have no reason to think that any of the parties is not telling the truth as they experienced it, but as all narratives are affected by the experiences individuals bring to the event the accounts of the same meetings will inevitably differ.
4. I would also like to express my regret that this review could not be completed sooner. Unfortunately, events outside my control resulted in my having to take up significant additional, though temporary, responsibilities shortly after beginning my inquiries and the process of final checking with contributors took longer than anticipated.

INTRODUCTION

5. On 11 April 2023 I received correspondence (the submission) from the Revd Martine Osborne, Chair of Women and the Church (WATCH) referring a concern regarding the appointment of Diocesan Bishops who do not fully affirm the ministry of women. The statement issued by WATCH on their website summarising the full submission is attached at Appendix 1.
6. On 25 May WATCH received an anonymous letter which was forwarded to me and on 28 May a further communication was received from WATCH indicating that others wished to contribute to the inquiry. A deadline of 10 June was given for these further contributions, and they were forwarded, together with an additional covering document, by the WATCH Chair on

9 June 2023. The 9 June submission from WATCH included a further evidence document described as ‘supplementary’ to the 11 April document.

7. The initial submission contends that recommendations made by one of my predecessors, Sir Philip Mawer, in his report *Review of the nomination to the see of Sheffield* (the Sheffield Report) had not been taken forward and also outlined specific issues in relation to the process leading to the nomination of the Rt Revd Philip North as Bishop of Blackburn.
8. The submission also raised a number of issues which are of a wider nature than the main question but relate to the ‘nomination, announcement and subsequent events in the diocese’.

APPLICATION OF THE REGULATIONS

9. The WATCH submission requests that I undertake inquiries under Regulations 28 and 29. Such inquiries are undertaken in relation to concerns which can be raised under Regulation 27. The Independent Reviewer has discretion whether to conduct such inquiries or not, and then how any such inquiries are undertaken. My first consideration, therefore, has been whether it is appropriate to consider this matter and to undertake the requested inquiries.
10. Given that the concern relates directly to the report by a former Independent Reviewer and to the wider process for the nomination of bishops to diocesan sees, I have concluded that it is appropriate for me to consider the matter and I communicated this decision to Revd Osborne. Had the submission not drawn heavily on the work of my predecessor, my decision would have required further reflection because, as observed by Sir Philip Mawer in his Annual Report for 2017, ‘the House of Bishops’ Declaration essentially concerns the making of arrangements for those who, on theological grounds, cannot accept the ministry of women as bishops and priests, rather than arrangements for those who are happy to receive such ministry’¹.

THE ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWER

11. Before I outline the concerns expressed in the submission and my consideration of those concerns, I think it would be helpful to outline the parameters of my role as the Independent Reviewer.
12. Having agreed to undertake a review for the reasons outlined in paragraph 10, I am following the precedent of my predecessors in examining all the matters pertinent to the operation of the Declaration and the Five Guiding Principles as they apply to this particular situation. My report therefore

¹ Report of the Independent Reviewer for 2017 to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York

makes comments and recommendations in relation to the whole process for the appointment of a diocesan bishop in the Church of England.

13. However, it is not the role of the Independent Reviewer to comment positively or negatively on the theological convictions of those who make or are referred to in submissions, or indeed those who are consulted as part of the inquiry process. The Five Guiding Principles make it clear that 'since those within the Church of England who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England remains committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures'².

THE CONCERNS

14. In their initial submission WATCH identified concerns under five headings. These are summarised below using the headings and terminology adopted by WATCH in that submission and website summary and without comment or expression of view by me on those concerns.

The relationship between a diocesan and their clergy.

15. The submission raises two areas of concern under this heading, the first of which is the effect of Bishop Philip's beliefs and whether it is possible for a diocesan bishop holding those beliefs to properly fulfil the role of a diocesan bishop. The submission specifically cites his unwillingness to ordain women or to receive communion from them. It goes on to say that the Bishop of Lancaster would carry out ordinations which would mitigate some of the consequences of his position but the proportion of clergy in the diocese with whom the diocesan bishop would not be in full communion would increase.
16. The second concern raised by WATCH in their submission under this heading relates to the oath of canonical obedience. The focus of the submission is the reciprocal nature of the oath, which is both given and received, but WATCH suggest the oath will be differently received by Bishop Philip.
17. The submission concludes that Bishop Philip has indicated in advance that he won't do all that you expect of diocesan in relation to ordination or have a full and mutual relationship as expected between priest and a diocesan bishop. It contends that this would be the case for any diocesan who did not 'fully affirm and support the ordained ministry of women'. Furthermore, it suggests that Bishop Philip would not be in full communion with an increasing number of his clergy.

² Five Guiding Principles

18. In their submission, WATCH acknowledge that, although this situation is possible under the Declaration, it does not regard this position as acceptable and contends that, had the work recommended in the Sheffield report been undertaken, that work would have led to the same conclusion.

Sacramental assurance and support for the clergy and laity

19. WATCH question whether a bishop can serve the needs of their clergy if they are not confident in the ordination of those clergy, and how a bishop who does not recognise the ministry of their clergy can be assured that congregations were in receipt of 'efficacious priestly ministry'.
20. They cite Bishop Philip's belief that the Church of England did not have the authority to decide unilaterally to ordain women as priests or bishops, and his involvement and membership of a number of bodies which support his theological position in relation to the ordination of women. They assert that this involvement 'goes significantly beyond' merely holding the view that, for reasons of church unity, the Church of England should not have taken the decision to ordain women.
21. The submission suggests that these considerations bring into question the bishop as a focus for unity, a phrase used in the Blackburn Diocese Statement of Needs, particularly when that bishop holds a view which is not held by the majority of the Church of England. The submission also draws attention to the theological positions of other traditionalists and conservative evangelicals.
22. In its summary, the submission highlights that the concerns expressed in this area by my predecessor in the Sheffield Report have not been addressed and goes on to invite me to recommend that no further nominations of traditionalist Catholics or conservative evangelicals be made to diocesan sees.

Statement of Needs and Secretaries' Memorandum

23. In this section of the submission WATCH set out their concerns about the process which led to Bishop Philip's nomination to the See of Blackburn. Specifically WATCH suggest that the process 'may not have been in accordance with the procedures laid down, either in letter or spirit' and that the nomination is therefore flawed. WATCH based the submission on information made available to them, most of which was anonymised in the submission document. They also highlight the failure to follow through the Sheffield Report's recommendations here.
24. The first concern set out by WATCH is that the Statement of Needs prepared by the Vacancy in See Committee was silent on whether the new diocesan bishop will or will not ordain women. They go on to say that, where a view is expressed, this should reflect the views of the diocese not just the Vacancy in See Committee and note that the Declaration states that dioceses can

express a view on this matter, but the Blackburn Statement of Needs did not do so. The submission suggests that the consultation process in the diocese did not actively canvas views on the matter from clergy, laity or the wider community.

25. The WATCH submission goes on to question whether the Secretaries' consultation included direct questions on the new bishop's position on women.
26. Finally the submission questions whether the Crown Nominations Commission can be fully informed about a diocese without explicit assurance, through the Statement and/or the Memorandum, that direct canvassing has been undertaken and recorded concerning the possibility of nominating a non-affirming bishop.

Flaws in the process that did take place

27. The penultimate section of WATCH's concerns focuses on 'flaws in the process that did take place'³. Specifically the submission suggests there were issues with conflict of interest within the process and with who was and was not consulted as part of the nomination process. It considers that the actual consultation process undertaken by the Vacancy in See Committee was not fair and truly independent. The submission concludes that the process of nomination should not continue through to appointment. WATCH's concerns are summarised as:
 - Insufficient independence in the leadership and process of consultation.
 - Space for safe expression of views among the clergy was compromised.
 - The mechanism for wider consultation was flawed.
 - Not all those who should have been consulted were.
 - The overall process of consultation was not independent or fair.

The likely effect of the proposed appointment on the diocese

28. The final section of the WATCH document returns to matters identified by Sir Philip Mawer in the Sheffield Report which, it suggests, have not been appropriately followed up. The submission presents statistical information from across the Church of England in relation to ordained women in ministry holding stipendiary incumbent or incumbent status posts, comparing percentages of women in ministry in dioceses which have a diocesan who does not ordain women with those which do. This information has not been verified by me.
29. A key element of this concern is that, whilst there is 'generous provision' for those who do not believe that women should be ordained or who believe that women's ministry should be restricted, there is no complimentary provision

³ Heading used in the original WATCH submission

their ministry. The submission, again, invites me to recommend that no nomination of a non-affirming diocesan should take place until the Sheffield Report recommendations have been fully implemented.

REVIEW PROCESS

30. As is evident from the summary of the five areas of concern raised by WATCH, this inquiry focuses on the implementation of the Sheffield Report and on the process which led to the nomination of Rt Revd Philip North to the see of Blackburn, both the Vacancy in See Committee and its work and the work of the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC).
31. As was the case during the inquiry which led to the Sheffield Report, I have interviewed individuals who were closely involved in one or both of those processes. Some approached me and I approached others. Some had also contributed to the Sheffield Report for which they had been given an assurance of confidentiality.
32. In addition to those who I have contacted or have contacted me directly, early in the process WATCH invited contributions from interested parties to be sent to them. These were forwarded to me on 9 June in the form of 'Referral to the IR - Further evidence' with a covering letter from the Chair in which the question of confidentiality was raised in relation to the submissions. She noted that the contributions to the further evidence document had been anonymised.
33. In order to ensure that I was given a full picture of the nomination process and that all interviewees or contributors were treated equally and were able to speak freely, I adopted the same approach to confidentiality as was taken by Sir Philip Mawer. I have therefore treated all contributions, whether in writing as part of the submission or the further evidence documents or verbally as part of my inquiries, as confidential.
34. In its conclusion paragraph, the 9 June WATCH further evidence document invited me to make their Referral of Concern document public in order to encourage more witnesses to come forward. I have not done so as the 9 June submission includes a number of further submissions which, taken alongside the original referral, provide a substantial evidence base from which to undertake my inquiry.
35. In relation to the specific concerns about the implementation of the recommendations of the Sheffield Report, I have studied both the Sheffield Report itself and GS 2225 Update arising from the work of the Implementation and Dialogue Group. I have also met with the Chair and Vice-chair of the House of Bishops Standing Commission on the House of Bishops Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests as it begins its work to discuss how the roles of the Standing Commission and Independent

Reviewer interface with one another. I then met with the Commission itself in November to discuss further how recommendations arising from the Independent Reviewer's work might inform the work of the Commission and be taken forward.

THE DIOCESE

36. Each diocese within the Church of England holds its own vision, developed for its own particular circumstances. The Statement of Needs sets out that context and vision. Some key features are noted below as part of the context for the nomination process:
- The diocese covers 930 square miles with a population of 1.37 million.
 - It is divided into 14 deaneries in two archdeaconries with 173 benefices, 235 parishes and 272 churches.
 - It has parishes of all traditions and is 'strongly committed to the principle of mutual flourishing'.
 - 13 parishes have a population which is over 40% of Asian heritage.
 - The diocese has 164 Licenced clergy, 119 Licenced Lay Ministers and 114 Authorised Lay ministers.
37. While the Statement of Needs did indicate the total numbers of clergy and licenced lay ministers in the diocese at the time of preparation of the document, the numerical split between male and female was detailed graphically only. It was notable that female self-supporting ministers outnumbered male self-supporting ministers.

ASSESSMENT OF THE EVIDENCE

38. The evidence presented and available to me comes from:
- The original referral from WATCH (the submission) (Website summary in Appendix 1)
 - The Further Evidence document (further evidence) sent by WATCH
 - 4 April 2022 Letter sent by Bishop Jill Duff in her role as Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee to all contacts on the contact management database (Appendix 2)
 - 20 April 2022 Letter sent by Bishop Jill Duff to those on the contact management database (Appendix 3)
 - Interviews with individuals, including ordained women inside and outside the diocese, the Acting Diocesan Secretary, the Appointments and Prime Ministers' Appointments Secretaries, members of the Vacancy in See

Committee, Bishop's Council and Crown Nominations Commission (CNC) and correspondence received

- Minutes and other documents requested from Blackburn Diocese
- The Review of the Nomination to the See of Sheffield and Related Concerns Report (the Sheffield Report)
- GS 2225 Report of the Implementation and Dialogue Group (IDG) on the House of Bishops' Declaration (GS 2225)
- Statements of Needs for diocesan vacancies for vacancies from 2017 to December 2023.
- The Vacancy in See Committees Regulation and Briefing for Members of Vacancy in See Committees (January 2020)

39. I will address the matters raised in the submission and further evidence document in two groups, those that relate specifically to the Blackburn nomination process and then those that link this process to the Sheffield Report and the work of the IDG.

THE NOMINATION PROCESS

40. This tranche of concerns relates to the process leading to the nomination of the Rt Revd Philip North as Bishop of Blackburn and then the announcement of that nomination in the Diocese of Blackburn. The concerns centre on the timetable, the operation and membership of the Vacancy in See Committee and the consultation process which culminated in the preparation of both the Statement of Needs and the Secretaries' Memorandum.

41. I have considered this aspect of the concerns in the order presented in the WATCH further evidence document.

Timetable and consultation timescale for the Vacancy in See Process

42. The timeline below has been assembled from information provided to me during my enquiries.

1 February 2022	Bishop's Council elects Rt Revd Jill Duff to Chair the Vacancy in See Committee and agrees 4 additional members of the Committee
30 March 2022	First meeting of the Vacancy in See Committee
4 April (Appendix 2)	Bishop Jill wrote to the Diocese in her capacity as Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee. This communication was sent to all those on the diocesan contacts management system. This

	<p>includes as follows: all priests and office holders, PCC Secretaries and Churchwardens. The letter was also posted on the diocesan website.</p> <p>The letter:</p> <p>Reported on the first meeting of the Vacancy in See Committee</p> <p>Set out the dates for the CNC and noted that this was <i>'faster than we expected....We have jumped the queue for CNC dates over Lincoln & Winchester'</i>⁴</p> <p>Set out the consultation timetable</p> <p>Provided links to the Jotforms for feedback. This section suggested the form would take 5 mins to complete and noted that the closure date for receipt of the forms was 17 April 2022 <i>'if at all possible'</i>.</p> <p>Noted the opportunity to suggest names would arise after the Statement of Needs was signed off on 24 May 2022, the final meeting of the Vacancy in See Committee.</p>
20 April	<p>Invitation from Bishop Jill, to the online open consultation meeting with the Appointments Secretaries scheduled to take place on 28 April 2022.</p> <p>The QR codes for the Jotforms were circulated as part of the invitation with a completion deadline of 29 April 2022.</p>
20 April to 24 May	Further consultation period including the meetings with the Appointments Secretaries
26 April	Second meeting of the Vacancy in See Committee
28 April	Zoom Open Consultation Meeting
24 May	Third and final meeting of the Vacancy in See Committee which was attended by Stephen Knott (Archbishops' Appointments Secretary and Helen Dimmock (Prime Minister's appointments secretary/Ecclesiastical Secretary to the Crown and Lord Chancellor)

⁴ Appendix 2 Letter from Bishop Jill Duff

25 May	Website update following the final Vacancy in See meeting. Attention drawn to the date of the Church Times advertisement and opportunity to submit names.
27 May	Church Times advertisement inviting comments and names
End May	Archbishop's advisers draw up the Secretaries Memorandum
June & July	In her 4 April 2022 letter Bishop Jill advised that during this period of time names could be suggested. WATCH advise that this period was shortened to end on 12 June.
End July	Longlist of candidates drawn up by the CNC
21 September	CNC Shortlisting meeting
8 & 9 November	CNC meets and interviews candidates.

43. The timing of the CNC meeting for each episcopal vacancy is determined by the availability of the Archbishops and the timing of the various episcopal retirements and resignations. A number of sets of dates are agreed and dioceses allocated to those dates as vacancies arise.
44. In the case of Blackburn, both the letter from Bishop Jill and the submission from WATCH suggest that Blackburn 'jumped the queue'. It is true to say that Blackburn was considered 'out of order' by the CNC however, they did not jump the queue, rather they 'moved up' the queue due the dioceses of Lincoln and Winchester needing to delay, for their own particular reasons. Blackburn was then next in line to fill the CNC meeting dates which had become available. This was, as Bishop Jill noted, a surprise to the diocese. The submission suggests that the time available for the Vacancy in See process, including consultation, was unduly curtailed as a result.
45. Neither the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation nor the Briefing document set out any timescale or expected timescales for a vacancy process to be completed. The time from first meeting of the Vacancy in See Committee to its final meeting therefore varies, as does the time from then to the first CNC meeting, the final meeting and the arrival of the Bishop in the diocese.

46. As part of my inquiry I consulted with the Appointments Secretaries and also, separately, reviewed the timeframes for a number of other recent appointment processes. The timescales vary significantly, though some of the variation is due to inconsistency in terminology between dioceses in relation to what they define as the consultation process. Some include that period after the final Vacancy in See meeting during which there is still the opportunity to suggest names and others only use consultation for the pre-Statement of Needs consultation undertaken by the Vacancy in See Committee and Appointments Secretaries.
47. In spite of that variation, both the correspondence I received and the conversations I had with individuals involved in the diocese, some with experience of Vacancy in See processes in several other dioceses, suggest that there was an actual or perceived sense of time pressure. It is possible that some of the perceived pressure was exacerbated by the language of 'jumping the queue', what some interviewees understood from comments in meetings, and the Jotform completion time messaging and deadline. I will return to this later when looking at the consultation process.

Election of the Chair and membership of the Vacancy in See Committee

48. The concerns raised in relation to the membership of the Vacancy in See Committee centre on the election of the Chair, the membership of the Committee and the involvement of Bishop Philip in the Vacancy in See process.
49. Bishop Philip was involved in both the election of the Chair and the appointment of additional members of the Committee. Evidence presented by WATCH suggests that Bishop Philip was expected to be interested in becoming the new Bishop of Blackburn. This is perhaps not surprising given that his nomination to the see of Sheffield is evidence that he has the qualities which would be looked for in a diocesan bishop. The submission questions whether, if that was the case, it was appropriate for Bishop Philip to be involved in the promotion of Bishop Jill Duff as Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee. The submission goes on to suggest that Bishop Philip remained a member of the Vacancy in See Committee, in spite of the inevitable conflict of interest in him doing so if he hoped to be a candidate. My inquiries indicate that, although technically a member of the Vacancy in See Committee according to the website, Bishop Philip did not attend any meetings of the Committee.
50. The election of Bishop Jill as Chair of the Committee took place on 1 February 2022. At that time Bishop Julian was absent due to illness. The information provided by WATCH, including from a member of both the Bishop's Council and Vacancy in See Committee, indicates that the meeting concerned was an extraordinary meeting. This was confirmed by the minutes provided by the diocese. The submission suggests that the meeting was

called in the expectation that the see would be declared vacant in the spring but that the meeting did not need to be called with the apparent haste that it was called, and that Bishop Philip advocated strongly for the election of Bishop Jill as Chair.

51. I reviewed the minutes of the Bishop's Council meeting concerned and also received oral evidence from individuals at the meeting. I noted that:
- Bishop Jill was not present at the meeting.
 - Three nominations had been received for Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee, all duly nominated and seconded. No candidate had been nominated or seconded by Bishop Philip. Oral evidence presented suggested that the number of candidates was influenced by the ineligibility of the Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee to stand as a diocesan representative of the CNC. Bishop Jill was already ineligible as she was a bishop in the diocese. The two of the candidates who were members of the Bishop's Council and present at the meeting left while those nominating candidates explained why they had nominated their candidates. They returned for the vote.
 - Bishop Jill was elected on the first round of voting.
52. The submission also states that Bishop Philip brought forward the additional names for nomination to the Vacancy in See Committee, appointments which are allowed within the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation as a mechanism for addressing questions of balance and diversity. The focus of the question raised in the submission is that others did not have the opportunity to suggest candidates for appointment and, therefore, in making these appointments Bishop Philip was making nominations to the body which would be an 'integral part of the process that might lead to his appointment' as Bishop of Blackburn. Again the submission suggests that there was no need for this action to be taken at that time.
53. Whilst it is unusual for either of these events to take place at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Bishop's Council, the timing of both the election and the appointments is consistent with the life cycle of the Vacancy in See Committee. Elections to the Diocesan Synod took place in Blackburn in 2021 and the newly elected Vacancy in See Committee therefore began its term of office in January 2022⁵. Knowing that Bishop Julian was planning to announce his retirement it is understandable that any vacancies or imbalances in the Vacancy in See Committee might be addressed promptly in order that, at the imminent announcement date, the Committee was at full strength as no appointments can be made to the Committee once a Bishop formally announces their retirement or they vacate the See for any other

⁵ S2a Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 1993 as amended, in effect from 13 July 2021

reason. At the time of the meeting the Committee was carrying one casual vacancy for an elected representative from the Lancaster Archdeaconry.

54. The minutes of the meeting report that that the additional names were suggested with a view to addressing diversity balances. The balance being addressed was identified in relation to each proposed candidate and these were set in the context of the overall balance of elected and ex officio members on the Committee, as set out for the Council at the meeting by the Acting Diocesan Secretary. The minutes also indicate that other candidates were proposed or suggested during the meeting though some names were withdrawn during discussion because they did not address any of the diversity gaps. The identified gaps were: UKME community representation, gender balance, youth and disability. The Council also noted that representation from the Education sector would be beneficial. One member of the Council did suggest a delay to gather more nominations, but the Council declined this request. Two candidates, one man and one woman, from the UKME community were elected. The Committee then received information in relation to 4 other female candidates and an election took place. Two were elected, the Dean of Women's Ministry and a headteacher.

Conflict of Interest on the Vacancy in See Committee

55. The initial submission suggests that Bishop Jill had a conflict of interest in her role as Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee as she was the remaining suffragan in a diocese where her colleague suffragan might be appointed as her diocesan, ie she might be chairing a group which was an integral part of the appointment process for someone who would have authority over her.
56. Whilst it is permissible for a suffragan bishop to chair the Vacancy in See Committee under the Regulation, it is clear from the evidence I received, that there are pros and cons to having a suffragan in the Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee, whether they are the only suffragan in the diocese or one of several. The submission suggests that:
- Unconscious bias was a possibility, particularly in this situation as Bishop Jill was known to be supportive of Bishop Philip.
 - Bishop Jill would be under the authority of Bishop Philip during the vacancy.
 - These factors could lead to a lack of independence in the consultation process.
 - Clergy in the diocese might feel under duress to toe a particular line in relation to the appointment of a new diocesan as a result of Bishop Jill chairing a process in which both she and Bishop Philip had a significant interest.

57. Whilst a potential conflict of interest will always arise when a suffragan bishop, or indeed any member of the senior team in a diocese, is involved in appointing what will be their superior, this has to be balanced against their knowledge of the diocese and its needs, and the expectation that they should have the necessary skills to chair the meeting well, fairly and in the interests of the whole diocese.
58. Similar conflict of interest issues were identified by Sir Philip Mawer in the Sheffield report in relation to the presence of Suffragan Bishops and the Bishop's Chaplain among the six diocesan representatives on the CNC. That matter was addressed by changes to the Regulation such that episcopal members and Vacancy in See Committee chairs are now precluded from standing for election to represent the diocese on the CNC. The principle of who chairs a Vacancy in See Committee would benefit from review in light of the potential conflicts of interest which have been identified here.

The timing, nature and scope of the consultation process

59. A number of questions were raised about the timing, nature and scope of the consultation process in the submission and the further evidence documents:
- Was the leadership, within the diocese, sufficiently independent given the relationship between Bishop Jill and Bishop Philip and the conflict of interest addressed above?
 - Was the consultation conducive to free and safe expression of views by clergy who might wish to present a view contrary to that expressed by those in senior posts?
 - How was the consultation period publicised across the diocese?
 - Was the consultation sufficiently wide to give a rounded view of the diocese?
 - Who was formally consulted, and were there serious omissions?
 - Should those being consulted have been asked, specifically, whether they would be willing to accept a bishop that did not ordain women?
 - Whether the use of Zoom contributed to uncertainty about the safety of the consultation space because consultees were unable to know whether others were listening in, off camera, or whether sessions were being recorded and listened to by others at a later date?
 - Was sufficient time allowed for the consultation process and completion of the Jotforms?
60. The initial submission from WATCH considers that these issues were not appropriately dealt with and that, as a result, the consultation process was flawed. In addition to considering the questions in the submission, it is also reasonable to question whether this consultation process was 'normal' when

compared to other dioceses, and therefore whether there is wider learning to be applied in respect of any flaws identified in the process.

61. Turning to **timing**, the process of consulting interested parties in the diocese took place between 20 April and the final sign off of the Statement of Needs at the Vacancy in See meeting on 24 May. This included both the Vacancy in See consultation process and the wider consultation undertaken by the Appointments Secretaries which resulted in their Memorandum.
62. From the evidence presented, in the communication from Bishop Jill and from the actions noted at the first meeting of the Vacancy in See Committee, the following can be established:
 - Bishop Jill wrote to the Diocese on 4 April to launch the consultation within the Diocese. She highlighted the opportunity to contribute through the online form. The deadline for completion of the forms was 17 April but she also highlighted the opportunity to make comments and submit names after the sign off of the Statement of Needs.
 - This message was reinforced in a further communication on 20 April 2022 which detailed the Zoom consultation scheduled for 28 April 2022 at 7pm. The QR codes for the Jotforms were included again, this time with a completion deadline of 29 April 2022.
 - The Jotform does not specifically ask whether the new bishop should be someone who would ordain women.
63. As indicated by the timetable, two different completion dates were given for the Jotforms. The later date of the end of 29 April gives a total time of 25 days for completion of the forms, the response from which would be fed into the preparation of the Statement of Needs.
64. From my conversations with those in the diocese, the evidence presented in the submission and the further evidence documents, a sense of haste was evident in respect of the consultation. This sense was triggered or exacerbated by a number of factors:
 - The two different Jotform return dates, the first of which appeared to give less than 2 weeks for completion.
 - The language in respect of completing the forms. 'It only takes a five minutes to prayerfully complete'⁶ is intended to suggest the form is not long and difficult to complete, but risks trivialising the input as it does not indicate the importance of reflection in advance and the seriousness of the process being undertaken.
 - The language of 'jumping the queue' may well have generated a sense of pushiness on behalf of the diocese, suggesting rush and ill-preparedness,

⁶ Letter from Bishop Jill dated 4 April 2022

when in fact the diocese moved up the list and did not jump others, rather they moved for their own reasons.

- One of those who spoke with me and had significant experience in other dioceses said the process felt more rushed than they had experienced in the past and this sense was supported by the further evidence and conversations with others, who had not experienced similar processes before.
- Another I spoke to suggested that there would be a significant, 12-24 month, delay in having a new diocesan bishop in post if the diocese chose not to take the slot they were offered, again creating a sense of pressure around the appointment. This was replicated in one of the written contributions.

65. Although individuals in the diocese felt that the consultation for the Statement of Needs was rushed, this does not mean that there was a breach of the Regulation as there is no set period or minimum period defined for the consultation.
66. In order to assess whether the time allowed for consultation was unduly short, or shorter than other processes, I reviewed the consultation timescales of a number of other dioceses in relation to their Statements of Needs ie the time window allowed for input to the Statement of Needs process through the completion of online forms or sending correspondence to the relevant Vacancy in See Committee. Overall there was approximately 25 days in Blackburn. This was not atypical among those I researched, though as I have noted above there are factors which were likely to make the time feel more pressured.
67. With regard to the second consultation period, that from the final meeting and agreement of the Statement of Needs (24 May 2022 in Blackburn) to the closing date for comments and names to be submitted (12 June 2022 in Blackburn), the period varies but Blackburn is not the shortest in more recent years, with many having 2-4 weeks. I must, however, emphasise that there is not consistency of terminology in relation to these timescales with some dioceses reporting only the dates for comment feeding into their Statement of Needs and others taking that period to the time window referenced in the Church Times advertisement.
68. Greater clarity about a minimum expected consultation window, prior to the completion of the Statement of Needs and Secretaries Memorandum might go some way to averting perceptions of pressure, or indeed inaction, in future.
69. In this particular situation, a consistency about the Jotform dates, with the later one being consistently reported and more moderate language in respect of the 'moving up' of Blackburn to an earlier set of CNC dates, would

probably have eased some of the sense of urgency and pressure which was undoubtedly felt by some.

How was the consultation process communicated?

70. The communications from Bishop Jill on both 4 April and 20 April were sent to all on the diocesan contact management system (CMS). This included all priests, PCC Secretaries and Churchwardens. They were also referenced on the website and could be downloaded from there. An update was also posted on the website (Appendix 4) following the final Vacancy in See Committee meeting which signalled the publication of the advertisement in the Church Times and the opportunity to comment and submit names directly to the Secretaries.
71. That being said, evidence from conversations with individuals in the diocese and in the submissions from WATCH suggest that the communications had not been particularly effective in generating awareness or understanding of the process. Blackburn diocese is unlikely to be unique in this regard but, with the other factors already noted, this was probably more keenly felt.

Who was consulted?

72. Two areas of concern were raised which will be reviewed under this heading. The list of consultees, and whether there were explicit questions about whether the new bishop should be someone who would ordain women.
73. The consultation for the Statement of Needs was undertaken by the Vacancy in See Committee. As Chair of the Committee, Bishop Jill made contact with other dioceses (Chester, Newcastle and Liverpool) to get advice and learning on how to undertake the consultation in a way which enabled access from across the diocese and more widely. The Jotforms used were part of the product of this process. The forms did not include a direct question eliciting views on the future bishop's position on the ordination of women. This is similar to the approach taken by others.
74. As indicated in the above, the letters of 4 April and 20 April were circulated widely within the diocese through the CMS and should therefore have reached officers from each parish and all ordained ministers, though as already noted not all communications are effective in engaging their recipients and prompting action.
75. The process of assembling those to be involved in the formal consultations undertaken by the Secretaries, as opposed to the consultation by the Vacancy in See Committee for the Statement of Needs, is that the Appointments Secretaries reach out to the diocese for a list of those to contact. The list includes all traditions within the diocese, people at different stages of their ministry and people representing the wider community. Those on the list are invited to be part of the consultations. The list of those who accepted invitations to attend was provided as part of the inquiry process. A

number of individuals fell under several categories but did not necessarily attend under each. The meetings with the Secretaries took place over 3 dates and the timetables show that the consultation was comprehensive in respect of various voices across the diocese, though some individuals were concerned that the individuals on the invitation list had been hand-picked in order to provide a consistency of view. Bishop Jill and other senior staff from the diocese were not present in these consultation meetings, most of which were conducted online.

76. Consultees were, as is the usual custom, invited to suggest names and while there was support for a bishop who would ordain women, Bishop Philip's name was the one most commonly mentioned in the consultations, even though people were aware of his position on the ordination of women.
77. The Secretaries and Diocese also arranged a public meeting, conducted over Zoom and chaired by Bishop Jill. This was publicised through the 20 April letter from Bishop Jill who also went on local radio to encourage participation. Most of those who attended were clergy. The general direction from the meeting was a desire to continue the vision and to encourage mutual flourishing. There is no record of participants being invited to express a view on whether a non-ordaining bishop would be welcomed and no small group discussion as part of the meeting.
78. Comments were, as is part of the standard process, invited nationally via the *Church Times* advertisement which was published 27 May 2022.
79. Alongside the general consultations, members of the Vacancy in See Committee reported that the Committee had formed a sub-group to prepare the Statement of Needs and that the sub-group had taken soundings from around the diocese.
80. The processes outlined should have given the opportunity for participation by:
 - Parishes
 - Clergy in the diocese
 - The public
 - The wider church
81. The further evidence document does report that at least one parish promoted the consultation, drawing attention to the Jotform, and discussed the nomination, formulating a submission from the parish as part of the consultation process.
82. However this does not mean all those who wished to participate in the consultation process will have felt able to express their views fully, in particular in the open meeting as the same considerations in relation to

conflict of interest and potential career and ministry impact of expressing views contrary to the perceived 'line' apply.

83. The submission also noted that neither they (WATCH) nor the National Association of Diocesan Advisers in Women's Ministry (NADAWM) were consulted in relation to this nomination. This was raised with the Appointments Secretaries in order to establish if this was the usual process and how it had been applied. The process in Blackburn was no different to other nomination processes. No campaigning groups are formally consulted in CNC nomination processes but any and all are able to contribute through the Church Times consultation invitation, and indeed from time to time such submissions are received by the Secretaries.

The Consultation process

84. A number of questions were raised in respect of how the consultations were undertaken. The first of these was whether individuals could be honest in their contribution to the consultation because of the position they were in relative to Bishop Jill. The second was whether the use of online consultation mechanisms impacted negatively on the sense of confidentiality and safety experienced by consultees. The third was whether consultees were asked about the possibility of having a non-ordaining bishop as their new diocesan.
85. My assessment of the evidence from the submissions and one to one conversations has already raised concerns about the potential impact of having Bishop Jill, a suffragan bishop in the diocese, as Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee. These concerns also apply to her chairing the only formal consultation meeting scheduled as part of the consultation process. It is logical that the open meeting be chaired by the Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee as the contributions in that meeting would be used to inform the Statement of Needs. Nevertheless, my conversations leave me in little doubt that the presence of a person who is, in effect, line manager of ordained and some lay attendees and who has an interest in the appointment process, because the new bishop will have authority over them, will probably stifle open contribution from those individuals and does not make for a 'safe' space. This is unlikely to be the intention behind the process but, from my experience in other consultations of this nature, it is very likely to be the outcome.
86. I turn now to the second question, whether the use of online consultation mechanisms might have a negative impact on the openness of the contributions from consultees. The submission and further evidence documents suggest that aspects of online meetings leave participants less assured than a face to face meeting. The grounds for this view are that in an online meeting it is not possible to see who else might be in the room off-camera, meetings are often openly recorded but can easily be covertly recorded and that those recordings or information gleaned by off-camera

individuals could be prejudicial to the career or appointment prospects of meeting participants. Whilst this view is understandable, it is also the case that covert recordings have been made in face to face meetings and any information shared in a meeting can be passed on to others and used to influence careers or appointments in the future. The key to open contribution is clarity of meeting purpose and agreement to confidentiality from the outset. The appointments secretaries conduct their meetings under the rule of confidentiality which overlays the whole nomination process and there is provision for any comments not made in meetings with them to be made in writing to them as part of the Church Times advertisement process or to contact them during the consultation process to express a written view or request a meeting as they operate separately from the Vacancy in See Committee in the preparation of their Memorandum.

87. The third question relates directly back to the Sheffield Report and in particular whether the consultation process elicited wide views on whether the diocese would welcome a non-ordaining bishop or not, how this was reflected in the information put to the CNC through the Secretaries Memorandum, and how the decision not to express a view on the matter in the Statement of Needs was made. I will return to the contents of the Statement of Needs but at this point would reflect that Bishop Philip's name had come up frequently during the consultation process but that it had not been in the context of general acceptance of a non-ordaining bishop and some dis-ease had been expressed at the prospect of appointing a different non-ordaining bishop.
88. While the Jotform and covering letter do not specifically ask the question, they were not unusual in this regard. Other dioceses used questions similar to those asked in Blackburn, indeed, as already noted, Blackburn had consulted others on this aspect of the consultation. There is no evidence of extensive discussion of the possibility as part of the Statement of Needs consultation process.
89. The Vacancy in See Committee made the decision not to express a view as to whether their next diocesan bishop should be someone 'who will or will not ordain women' at its second meeting. Prior to the meeting Bishop Jill had consulted with two dioceses, Chester who had not expressed a view and Newcastle who had. As is habitual, this meeting, not being the final meeting at which elections would take place, was not attended by the Appointments Secretaries. There was a short discussion and a significant majority voted to leave the matter open in the Statement of Needs. One of the three who took a contrary view was later elected as one of the diocesan representatives.
90. A question for further consideration arising from this aspect of the process is whether dioceses should explain the rationale behind their decision not to express a view.

Statement of Needs Contents

91. Both the initial submission and the further evidence raised questions about the silence of the Statement of Needs on whether the incoming bishop should be willing to ordain women. In commenting on this content, it must be borne in mind that the contents of the Statement of Needs and the Secretaries Memorandum do not bind the CNC, rather they seek to inform it.
92. The further evidence document provided quotes from a number of Statements of Needs from other dioceses. In order to confirm the evidence provided and to provide a fully complete picture in relation to dioceses since 2017, ie after the nomination of Rt Revd Philip North to Sheffield, I obtained and reviewed all Statements of Needs published as of the end of October 2023. In my review I specifically identified what, if anything, was said about the ministry of ordained women and whether the diocese had made any statement on the incoming bishop's willingness to ordain women or not. The outcomes of my review are set out in Appendix 4.
93. Of the 24 Statements reviewed, 6 were silent on the matter of ordination, though only 2 made no reference to the ministry of ordained women and men. The further evidence cites the 2023 Truro Statement. However this has not, at the time of writing, been agreed by the diocese and the source of the text provided cannot be confirmed. The Statement of Needs from Truro for its previous nomination process fell within the review window and is included in the appendix.
94. While the Statement of Needs is a public document which tells the diocese and wider church what has been said to the CNC, it is important to remember that the Statement of Need and Secretaries Memorandum do not bind the CNC but are part of the process of informing the nomination process and consideration of potential nominees by the CNC.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NOMINATION TO THE SEE OF SHEFFIELD AND RELATED CONCERNS REPORT (THE SHEFFIELD REPORT)

95. In the background to the concerns, the submission states that recommendations from the Sheffield Report have not been fully implemented. The submission and further evidence offer a great many linked questions in relation to the Sheffield Report and its recommendations. I have therefore reviewed the recommendations articulated in that report, addressing the principles raised in the submission and further evidence. Some of my reflections here have been considered in more detail in my review of the nomination process generally.
96. While I am able to express views on some of the matters raised in relation to the implementation of the recommendations in the report, I cannot, as is requested in the submission, require that there should be no further

nominations of non-ordaining bishops until the recommendations are fully implemented. I can, as part of my liaison with the Standing Commission, draw matters to the attention of the Commission via the Archbishop of Canterbury as Chair of the House of Bishops, the body which refers matters to the Commission.

97. The concerns set out in the submission highlight matters that relate to both the Blackburn nomination and the implementation of the four Sheffield Report recommendations⁷. The concerns, as they relate to the Sheffield report are considered with the relevant recommendations, which are quoted as they appear in the report.
98. **Recommendation 1: I recommend that the House of Bishops commissions a group with balanced membership to review what has been done; distil examples of good practice within dioceses; and provide resources to help dioceses, deaneries and parishes, and theological training institutions to engage in further consideration of the issues.**
99. In introducing this recommendation, Sir Philip posed the question ‘What has been done in the Church..... to inform and educate clergy and laity about the Settlement agreed in 2014, and the effect of the House of Bishops’ Declaration within that settlement’. That question remains relevant when considering whether the recommendation has been, or has not been, implemented.
100. He went on to articulate two key challenges posed to the 2014 Settlement in the course of the nomination to the See of Sheffield, which required further attention by the House of Bishops and noted that, if the process he outlined was to be successful, attention needed to be paid to them. The first related to the underlying theology of the settlement and the need to answer the criticism of the Declaration expressed by a number of academics and theologians. The second, which he described as ‘as much pastoral as theological’ is particularly pertinent in the context of the nomination of Bishop Philp to Blackburn. It had been posed by women clergy and lay ministers in Sheffield and questioned what the nomination of a non-ordaining bishop implied for their ministry in practice. He noted that the pastoral relationship of male clergy, who are unable to accept the orders of ordained women, with a diocesan bishop who was female, also needed addressing.
101. The IDG was established as that ‘group with balanced membership’ with the remit to ‘review how the House of Bishops’ Declaration and the five guiding principles.....is being understood, implemented and received in the Church’⁸. It reported back on its work in July 2020⁹ and made twenty-one

⁷ Part 5 of Review of Nomination to the See of Sheffield and Related Concerns

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ Implementation and Dialogue Group Report GS2225

recommendations reflecting the 2014 settlement, how it has been communicated and how it is being lived out. The IDG sought statistical information from across the Church of England and, from that information base, drew the following conclusions:

- The settlement has broadly worked but this has required hard work, good behaviours, good dialogue, good practice, forbearance and love from those of all viewpoints.
- The tone of discussion has generally improved and there has been implementation but not dialogue.
- Those from the traditional catholic or complementarian evangelical positions are concerned that their positions are tolerated at best, rather than being encouraged to flourish.
- There is concern about whether someone in a senior position who does not support women's ordination can genuinely support the vocations and ministry of female clergy.
- There is a need for more theological consideration of the concepts of mutuality and reciprocity.

102. The IDG recommended the establishment of a Standing Commission on the House of Bishops Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests. The Commission is now in place and is positively engaging with me in my role as Independent Reviewer. However, it is not tasked with the further theological reflection which the IDG noted was still needed and which relates to the two challenges raised by Sir Philip in relation to Recommendation 1 of the Sheffield Report. This need for further theological reflection will be picked up further in consideration of Recommendation 3.

103. The next recommendation related to the process leading to the nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield. Sir Philip noted that the process had been conducted in accordance with the relevant procedures but that improvements could be made in that process. These were set out in paragraphs 112-124 of his report. This gave rise to **Recommendation 2:** **Since some of them (the shortcomings in the process) go well beyond the scope of my enquiry and it would, in any event, be wrong to make changes based solely on what happened in relation to the vacancy in Sheffield without further consideration of the issues in the round, I recommend that the matters I have identified are considered alongside the outcome of the review of the Crown Nominations Commission led by Professor Oliver O'Donovan, the report of which I understand to be received shortly. These should include the issue of the extent to which the cloak of confidentiality currently surrounding the work of the Commission can be relaxed in order to ensure the degree of**

preparation for the announcement of a nomination commensurate with the controversy it is likely to arouse¹⁰.

104. A number of the issues identified by Sir Philip in relation to the nomination to the See of Sheffield would appear to have resonance with some of those raised in the submission relating to the See of Blackburn:
- The Vacancy in See Committee did, as the guidance indicates, consider whether to express a view on ‘whether the next bishop should be someone who will or will not ordain women’, though I will return to the depth of that discussion under my consideration of how recommendation 4 has been implemented. However, those with whom I spoke did not provide assurance that the Committee had given consideration to the implications for the diocese of appointing a non-ordaining bishop.
 - A number of those on the Vacancy in See Committee felt that more time should have been allowed for their part of the process. This has been discussed in greater depth under my earlier section on the nomination process itself.
 - As with the nomination to Sheffield, the six elected to the CNC as the diocesan members for Blackburn did not include an ordained woman, though the Vacancy in See Committee was encouraged to think about diversity at the time of the election of the six. This remains unusual. Sir Philip considered the possibility of ring-fencing a place within the six for an ordained woman. He noted this would raise the question which other constituencies or groups might contest that a similar arrangement should be made for them. Indeed some constituencies might have a more pressing case for representation on the six from the diocese, especially if their voice is also absent from the elected central membership, for example those with disabilities, young people or those from a global majority heritage.
105. Whilst these issues appear to continue within the Vacancy in See and Crown Nominations Commission processes, none of the members of either part of the process with whom I spoke suggested that the process had not been conducted fully in accordance with the Regulation in place at that time. However, my consideration of the process has led me to suggest that some aspects of the Vacancy in See process might benefit from review. These are summarised in my recommendations.
106. **Recommendation 3: I recommend that the House invites the Faith and Order Commission to examine the theological challenge which has been posed to the 2014 Settlement and that the results of this work, together with the House’s response to the pastoral challenge I have**

¹⁰ Para 124

identified in paragraph 192, inform the ongoing process of discussion and education about the Settlement for which I have also called.

107. In the Sheffield Report paragraphs 125-130, Sir Philip affirms that the nomination of a non-ordaining bishop, Bishop Philip, to the See of Sheffield was consistent with the House of Bishops' Declaration. In the intervening years nothing has changed to challenge that position. The nomination of a non-ordaining bishop to a diocese in the Church of England remains a possibility and remains consistent with the Declaration.
108. However, he went on to note the tension between consistency and the declaration and being able to fulfil all the requirements of a diocesan bishop. The questions he raised are raised again in the submission:
- What are the consequences for the reciprocal nature of the oath of canonical obedience when it is impaired because the bishop receiving the oath does not recognise the orders of the priest giving the oath?
 - How can a non-ordaining bishop serve the needs of their priests or be assured of their 'efficacious priestly ministry' in parishes and communities if they are not assured of the ordination of the priest concerned?
 - How can a bishop be a focus for unity if they do not recognise the priestly orders of all their clergy and do not hold a view shared by the majority in their diocese or the Church of England?
109. Although the Faith and Order Commission has produced a study resource on the Five Guiding Principles, the submission notes that the recommendation has not been fully implemented as the work stopped short of addressing the theological and pastoral consequences of the appointment of a non-ordaining bishop. I concur with the submission in its view that this aspect of the recommendation has yet to be completed and that responsibility for this rests with the House as the guardians of the 2014 Settlement. This task is outside the remit of the new Standing Commission.
110. **Recommendation 4: I recommend that, together with his colleagues in the National Church Institutions, and those involved in the dioceses of Sheffield and Blackburn, the Secretary General reviews the lessons to be learned from what happened in order to avoid a similar lacuna occurring in future.**
111. This recommendation arose from the consideration of the reaction to Bishop Philip's appointment in the church and beyond and the response of the church institutionally to the nomination. The two reactions, he noted, were very different. Those institutionally a part of the nomination process, the Appointments Secretaries, Crown Nominations Commission members and the national elements of the 'National Church Institutions' were 'familiar with the terms of the 2014 settlement' and understood that the nomination to the

See of Sheffield was consistent with that settlement. In the diocese and community, that familiarity was not widespread and the possibility of the nomination of a bishop who would not ordain women had not been openly discussed.

112. The Report notes that the Guidance Notes and Code of Practice for Vacancy in See Committees incorporates paragraph 12 of the Declaration which states that dioceses *'are entitled to express a view, in the Statement of Needs prepared during a vacancy in see, as to whether the diocesan bishop should be someone who will or will not ordain women'*, in the section on Statement of Needs. The guidance states that one of the matters the Vacancy in See Committee will *'need to decide is whether it wishes to express a view as to whether the new bishop should be someone who will, or will not, ordain women'*. As indicated in Appendix 4, the majority of dioceses have chosen to express such a view, though some have not.
113. While such a view can be expressed in a Statement of Needs, the Declaration expects that all, whether or not they will ordain women, are equally entitled to be considered for diocesan sees. On this basis, Sir Philip states that any expression of a view should *'come only at the end of the conversation in a diocese conducted during a vacancy in see'*¹¹. It is not, he says *'sufficient simply to put the question without discussing it first'*¹².
114. The question in the case of Blackburn is whether the diocese was involved in the conversation, and the extent to which the Vacancy in See Committee itself had a conversation which aired the range of views present in the church and in the diocese before making the decision not to express a view in the Statement of Needs.
115. The other relevant finding in the Sheffield Report which lead to this recommendation was the failure to plan sufficiently for the announcement of the nomination. This was picked up in the Lessons Learned review¹³ undertaken by the Secretary General as part of the implementation of Recommendation 4 of the Sheffield Report. In the case of Blackburn, there was a much clearer plan developed by a planning group which included both diocesan and national membership with the relevant expertise. Key individuals were briefed in advance of the announcement.
116. Sir Philip's recommendation to learn and apply lessons is useful and applicable in any contested, or potentially contested, nomination whether it be of a woman bishop or a non-ordaining male bishop. He also noted that consideration should be given to providing personal support to the bishop or

¹¹ Paragraph 200 *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Nomination to the See of Sheffield: Lessons Learned for the National Church Institutions in supporting nominees to diocesan sees

bishop-designate concerned as this had not been available to Bishop Philip in the wake of the Sheffield nomination.

117. In the interviews and documents received, this recommendation from the Sheffield Report has been at least partially implemented in regard to the planning surrounding the announcement.
118. Whilst most dioceses do now express a view on whether they would welcome a bishop who will ordain women, or one who will not, it is not clear whether the 'conversation in the diocese' is evidenced. As noted under my consideration of the nomination process, the guidance offered in relation to a Vacancy in See Committee reaching a decision about whether to express view under paragraph 12 of the Declaration would benefit from review.

MY RECOMMENDATIONS

119. Having reviewed the information submitted to me and the information I have sought in documentary form and through conversations with individuals inside and outside the diocese, the Acting Diocesan Secretary of Blackburn Diocese and the Appointments Secretaries, I have a number of recommendations to offer. Some fall within the remit of the Standing Commission, some to the House of Bishops and the Faith and Order Commission and some to those with responsibility for the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation and guidance.
120. I must, however, preface my recommendations with a reminder that:
 - The nomination of a bishop who will not ordain women is consonant with the House of Bishops' Declaration. This was examined in detail in the Sheffield Report, and nothing has changed in this regard since that report.
 - The election of the Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee and the appointment of additional members, as documented in the minutes of the Bishop's Council was undertaken within the process set out in the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation.
 - Once the vacancy was announced, the processes within the diocese and the Vacancy in See Committee were undertaken in accordance with the Regulation. This included the consultation timing as there is no set timescale in the Regulation and the timescale was not out of line with those in other dioceses.
 - The consultation process for the Statement of Needs included communications to all clergy and parishes in accordance with the instructions noted at the first meeting of the Committee, thus providing opportunity for them to respond.

- The usual processes were followed by the Appointments Secretaries in relation to the consultation for the Secretaries Memorandum and included the opportunity for individuals and groups to respond to the Church Times notice.
121. Concerns were expressed in relation to conflict of interest and whether participants felt able to speak freely if they did not agree with the perceived 'party' line of the diocese. Some of these factors may be unique to Blackburn but others would appear to have wider application and **I therefore recommend that, in relation to the Vacancy in See Committee and its work, the following matters should be considered:**
1. Who should be eligible to chair the Committee. There are pros and cons in having a suffragan bishop in the role.
 - a. They should have the skills to undertake the role and have a good knowledge of the diocese but
 - b. the chair also oversees the diocesan part of the processes for the appointment of the bishop who will have authority over them, on behalf of the Committee, which is a conflict of interest, though in practice the arrangements tend to be made by the Diocesan office, and
 - c. because of the line management responsibility they hold it could potentially be difficult for clergy in the process to contribute to the discussion openly for fear of career consequences if they express a view contrary to that of the bishop
 2. Whether a neutral party should chair any open consultation meeting for the reasons set out in 1 above.
 3. How to ensure there is a conversation in the diocese, not just in the Vacancy in See Committee, to ascertain whether the diocese would welcome a bishop who will ordain women or one who will not, and how the outcome of that conversation, and similar discussion within the Vacancy in See Committee should be evidenced in the records of the Vacancy in See meetings.
 4. Guidance should be made available for consultation meetings held online. This should advise that participants are informed who will be using any recording and that, where possible, all participants are 'visible' to other participants ie they are on the participant list or, when several individuals are participating from one location, names are listed in the chat or the individuals are physically visible..
122. The written and oral evidence from within the diocese expressed a sense of time pressure for completion of the Statement of Needs and Secretaries consultation. Whilst the consultation period for Blackburn was not out of the norm, **I recommend consideration of a minimum consultation timescale**

for the Statement of Needs as this would have been helpful in allaying time anxiety in this case and could be similarly helpful more generally.

123. Although there has been progress in relation to the implementation of the recommendations in the Sheffield Report, a number of matters remain outstanding. Significantly these include theological and pastoral challenges identified in that report. These are at the heart of the submission from WATCH, and **I recommend that resource is identified to take the necessary theological work forward alongside the theological reflection requested in the report of the Implementation and Dialogue Group.**
124. Whilst it is, and it remains, the case that the Declaration leaves open the possibility of the nomination of a non-ordaining diocesan bishop, the consequences of so doing in terms of the exercising of the role within the diocese were not explicitly discussed and planned for. The arrangements articulated in the Declaration relate only to those who are unable, on theological grounds, to accept women as priests and bishops. In the context of a diocesan bishop who does not accept such ministry, it would not be unreasonable to expect that some review mechanism should be available to those whose ministry the bishop does not accept. Such a mechanism should not isolate female clergy from the life of the diocese but should provide for them in a reciprocal manner to the review arrangements already articulated in the Declaration.
125. As I noted in paragraph 10, Sir Philip Mawer, in his 2017 Annual Report, highlighted that the role of the Independent Reviewer, as currently described essentially only applies to the making of arrangements for those unable, on theological grounds, to accept the ministry of women as bishops and priests. It does not incorporate the review of situations relating to the Declaration, but which are affecting those who are happy to receive or offer such ministry. He suggested that the scope of the role be examined in light of his observation. In paragraph 10, I noted that I have made these inquiries because they have their foundation in his report. Had that not been the case, it is arguable whether this submission would have fallen within my remit.
126. **I therefore recommend that, alongside the implementations of the Sheffield Report, consideration is given to re-examining the scope of the Independent Reviewer's jurisdiction in light of that review and the comments and recommendation made by Sir Philip in his 2017 Annual Report.**

MY CONCLUSIONS

127. The WATCH submission invited me to be bold in my recommendations. Whether they will be judged as bold or not will be for others to determine. I

suspect that, in spite of requests at several points in the submission, there will be disappointment that I have not recommended that further appointments of non-ordaining bishops be halted until the recommendations of the Sheffield Report are fully implemented. I have not done so for two reasons. The first is that I believe it to be outside the remit of the Independent Reviewer. Secondly, and more importantly, the Declaration still envisages that all orders of ministry are equally open to all, whether or not they are able to receive the ministry of women as bishops or priests. The logical conclusion would therefore be a freeze on all CNC processes for the time being. I believe this would be highly detrimental to the church and, more importantly, to those put in the position of Acting Diocesans during vacancies. Over the winter of 2020/21 I was privileged to meet with Bishops in small groups and one to one as part of another piece of work. During those conversations I gained a new appreciation of the pressure placed on diocesan bishops. It also became clear that acting diocesan bishops have added pressure because of the capacity reduction in the diocese and it would be unfair to extend or exacerbate that pressure for what might be a considerable period of time if the theological reflection needed is to be undertaken thoroughly, which I believe it must be.

128. As I bring this report to a close, I would offer some final thoughts:

- The submission, and some of my conversations with those in Blackburn diocese, raise the question of the future of women's ordained ministry in the diocese as a consequence of this appointment. It is inevitable that a diocesan bishop will attract to their diocese like-minded people – whether that be church tradition or views on a particular area of debate within the church. It is beholden, therefore, on the senior staff within the diocese, to proactively seek to maintain the breadth of ministry experience. This might be challenging but is not something that can be delivered by regulation, measure or central action, convenient though that would be. Current statistical information suggests that Blackburn Diocese is aware of the need to take action in this regard.
- Doubtless, there was disappointment, anger and anxiety among some at the outcome of this nomination process, as is evident from the submission and the further evidence. While some of the evidence I have heard or read suggests that this process had flaws, that has not been the consistent message and the documentary evidence demonstrates that the required processes were followed.
- the anxiety about timing of the process does appear to have been exacerbated by the language and tone issues which I outlined and is a reminder that that great care needs to be taken with communications throughout the nomination process.

129. Finally I would like to come back to the preamble and particularly my comments on the variety of accounts of the process. Each person who has contributed has, I am sure, done so with positive intentions and from their particular experience and expertise and I would like to thank all those who sent information to WATCH or to me, including the various Diocesan Secretaries who dug out their Statements of Needs, and those with whom I spoke who offered their time and who I hope felt able to speak freely about their experiences.
130. It is my desire that the learning from this experience will prove valuable in taking the Church of England forward in a way that recognises and appreciates the ministry of all for the sake of the Kingdom.

Maggie Swinson

March 2024

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The Nomination of The Rt Rev'd Philip North as the next diocesan Bishop of Blackburn (<https://womenandthechurch.org/news/the-nomination-of-the-rt-revd-philip-north-as-the-next-diocesan-bishop-of-blackburn/>)

March 10th, 2023



Women and the Church (WATCH), a national campaign group for gender equality in the Church of England, notes the nomination of The Right Reverend Philip North, Suffragan Bishop of Burnley, as the next diocesan Bishop of Blackburn.

We recognise Bishop Philip's many gifts and are aware that he has been supportive of women in a range of ministerial posts in the Church, some at senior levels.

Nonetheless, Bishop Philip does not recognise the ordination of women as priests and bishops and will be the first diocesan bishop to be appointed with his theological position on the ordination of women since women were permitted to be bishops in 2014.

In that light, WATCH cannot support the nomination and has the following concerns:

1. A diocesan bishop oversees all clergy in their diocese, both women and men and so, appointing a diocesan bishop who does not personally recognise the ordination of women, could mean that **some female clergy would struggle to flourish under his oversight**. Unlike male clergy who do not fully accept women's ministry, female clergy (and their parishes) do not have the right to extended episcopal oversight by a bishop who affirms their ministries – both in their authority and ability to carry out priestly roles.
2. There are **non-ordaining bishops** who are supportive of women in the Church, as is Bishop Philip, and have encouraged them in their ministries and recommended them to senior roles but, because these bishops do not fully recognise the priesthood of their female clergy, they **do not ordain women** in their diocese.
3. Questions arise as to how non-ordaining bishops can authorise female clergy to celebrate the Eucharist, baptise, give blessings and absolve people of their sins. When a priest is licensed to a parish role, such as vicar, the diocesan bishop shares with him or her 'the cure of souls' to do these things, and usually does this in a public service so that all the parishioners can hear and see this authority being shared with their new vicar. **Parishioners need to know that their priest is affirmed by their diocesan bishop as being able to carry out priestly duties without question, and all priests need to know this too.** When parishioners come to understand that their bishop is not personally confident that female priests can undertake priestly roles, such as consecrating the bread and wine, this undermines the authority of their vicar, if she is a woman.
4. Church of England ministry statistics indicate that dioceses with diocesan bishops who do not accept the ordination of women, or which have a history of

senior leaders who do not fully accept women's ministry, have a significantly lower percentage of women holding stipendiary posts than men. **At the bottom of the table is the Diocese of Chichester, which has always had a bishop who does not ordain women, with the lowest at 16%, compared to Ely at the top of the table with 43%.**^[1] The reasons for women's ministry continuing not to flourish in many dioceses need urgently to be analysed, understood and responded to by Ministry Divisions in the Church of England.

5. Bishop Philip is a member of and on the Council of The Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda (SSWSH), which is a network of clergy who do not share in the Eucharist when it is presided over by any female priest, any male priest ordained by a female bishop, and by any bishop, male or female, who has ordained women. **Appointing a diocesan bishop who does not share in the Eucharist with the whole of the House of Bishops is a challenge to the unity of that body and the Church's teaching on this matter.**

Rev Martine Osborne, Chair of WATCH, says 'I personally struggled when my diocesan bishop was the Right Reverend and Right Honourable Richard Chartres KCVO. I was ordained by him as a deacon in St Paul's Cathedral in 2009, but he did not go on to ordain me or any other deacon, male or female, the following year. This was a position he had adopted since it became possible for women to be priests some fifteen years earlier. Instead, he delegated priestings to his Area Bishops. In the case of my priesting, my Area Bishop was on compassionate leave in 2010 and so I wrote to Bishop Richard and asked if would make an exception to his rule and ordain me and the rest of the orphaned 'Stepney Seven' of male and female deacons who were due to be priested. He refused, and I was ordained by the Bishop of Sodor and Man, a delightful man, but someone I'd never met before or since.

Fortunately today, both my diocesan and Area bishops recognise my orders, but I don't think I could personally flourish in my ministry if they did not. Even in my present situation, I find it undermining to explain to members of my congregation that some of my clergy colleagues, including bishops, would not receive bread and wine that I had consecrated. So I tend not to say anything about the situation. Nonetheless, this is a heavy burden to carry and makes me feel that I am a second-

class priest. And I fear some female clergy with diocesan bishops who don't recognise their ordinations, no matter how supportive they are, may feel this even more.'

Other notes on Bishop Philip North

1. North is a member of the Council of Bishops of The Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda. The Society was created in 2010 by a group of bishops of the Church of England who do not ordain women to the priesthood. One of the stated main purposes of The Society is to guarantee a ministry in the historic apostolic succession in which our people can have confidence – in other words, to offer 'sacramental assurance.' Only male priests and, among them, only those who have not been ordained by a women can provide such 'sacramental assurance.' This means that The Society does not recognise that bread and wine consecrated by female clergy have that sacramental assurance.
2. He is a priest administrator of the Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, a national shrine which does not permit female clergy to preside over communion there.
3. He was consecrated at York Minster on 2 February 2015. The laying on of hands was restricted to three bishops "who share his theological conviction regarding the ordination of women"; the other bishops at the service, including the only woman then consecrated as a bishop, Libby Lane, and John Sentamu, Archbishop of York, gathered around him during the consecration prayer instead.

[1] <https://womenandthechurch.org/resources/a-report-on-the-developments-in-womens-ministry-in-2021/> (<https://womenandthechurch.org/resources/a-report-on-the-developments-in-womens-ministry-in-2021/>).



The Bishop of Lancaster
The Rt Revd Dr Jill Duff

The Diocese of Blackburn

4th April 2022

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Vacancy-in-See – Prayer and Consultation

I am writing to invite your prayers for the Diocese of Blackburn and the Vacancy process. We are sad to see +Julian and Heather retire, after bringing so much faith and hope to Lancashire. We look again in faith and hope to God to provide in this next season.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him and he will make straight your paths (Proverbs 3.5-6)

We now know that interview dates for the next Bishop of Blackburn will be 8-9th November, with the announcement in January 2023. This would mean a new Diocesan Bishop in place by July 2023.

This is much faster than we expected, but it is good news for our Diocese because this significantly shortens our vacancy compared to usual expectations. Every year the Archbishops' allocate a certain number of dates in their diary for the Crown Nomination Commission (CNC) whose role is to appoint Diocesan Bishops. We have jumped the queue for CNC dates over Lincoln & Winchester.

I was elected by Bishop's Council to Chair the Vacancy in See Committee which oversees the production of the Diocesan *Statement of Needs* and elects six CNC reps from our Committee (at least three lay) to serve on the CNC. In case you wonder, suffragan bishops are not eligible to serve as one of these six. Our first meeting, last Wednesday at Whalley Abbey, was positive in building relationships both within the Committee and with our Archbishops' Appointment Secretaries, all within an atmosphere of prayer and faith for the future.

Key dates to pray are:

26 th April	Vacancy in See: Comments on draft documents in view of Diocesan feedback
24 th May	Vacancy in See: Signing off documents & Election of the six CNC Reps
June & July	This is when you will be able to suggest names of who you would like as the next Bishop of Blackburn
End July	CNC draw up Long List of candidates (8-15)

21st Sept CNC meet in York to shortlist five candidates
8-9th Nov CNC interview candidates in York

We would love to hear your views on our next Bishop of Blackburn:

To collect views as widely as possible in this shortened timescale, we are using jotforms accessed by the QR code. It only takes a five minutes to prayerfully complete.



There's an alternative for Children here:



Please complete this jot form by **17th April**, if at all possible. This can be done in groups or individuals. For those without easy internet access, the Word version is attached

Note that there will be plenty of opportunity to suggest names *after* the *Statement of Needs* has been signed off on 24th May.

Latest news

Throughout this period, for up-to-date information, please go this page on our website: www.blackburn.anglican.org/vacancy-in-see

May God continue this time of favour in the Diocese of Blackburn where the harvest fields are still plentiful, and the workers are still few.

With my thanks and prayers

+Jill

Chair of Vacancy-in-See Committee



**THE
DIOCESE
OF
BLACKBURN**
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN LANCASHIRE

The Bishop of Lancaster
The Rt Revd Dr Jill Duff

The Diocese of Blackburn

20th April 2022

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Vacancy-in-See – Zoom Consultation

Happy Easter! Christ is Risen. We hope last weekend was an encouragement to you all.

This is to notify you of the Zoom Consultation with the Archbishops' Appointment Advisers which will take place next **Thursday 28th April at 7pm.**

<https://churchofengland-org.zoom.us/j/94114694303?pwd=VXIxTlVXU3JheFFBSnlrWEVWNXZkdz09>

Meeting ID: 941 1469 4303

Passcode: 829880

The meeting will be chaired by Bishop Jill. The purpose is for our Appointment Advisers, Stephen Knott and Helen Dimmock, to hear first-hand feedback from anyone living in Lancashire on their views about our next Bishop of Blackburn and the needs of the Diocese of Blackburn. This is in addition to their individual consultations (in person and by Zoom) which they are holding over the next month, before our final Vacancy in See meeting on 24th May.

This comes on top of our own Diocesan consultation. Bishop Jill wrote about this on 4th April, but here's a reminder of the QR codes:

We would love to hear your views on our next Bishop of Blackburn:

To collect views as widely as possible in this shortened timescale, we are using jotforms accessed by the QR code. It only takes a five minutes to prayerfully complete.



There's an alternative for Children here:



Please complete this jot form by **29th April**, if at all possible. This can be done in groups or individuals. For those without easy internet access, the Word version is attached

Note that there will be plenty of opportunity to suggest names *after* the *Statement of Needs* has been signed off on 24th May.

Latest news

Throughout this period, for up-to-date information, please go this page on our website: www.blackburn.anglican.org/vacancy-in-see

May God continue this time of favour in the Diocese of Blackburn where the harvest fields are still plentiful, and the workers are still few.

With our thanks and prayers

+Jill and Stephen Whittaker

Chair & Secretary of Vacancy-in-See Committee

25th May 2022

Diocesan 'Vacancy in See' - important announcements re next steps

- [Crown Nomination Commission representatives](#)
- [Statement of Needs](#)
- [Proposing candidates](#)
- [Prayer for the next Bishop of Blackburn](#)

Our final meeting of the Vacancy-in-See Committee was held on Tuesday, May 24 at Blackburn Cathedral, writes Rt Rev. Dr Jill Duff, Chair of the Committee.

We were delighted to welcome Stephen Knott (Archbishops' Appointment Secretary) and Helen Dimmock (Prime Minister's Appointment Secretary) to meet with us over a buffet supper.

They had appreciated spending time in the Diocese and the time spent in all the consultations. We then prayer time in the Jesus Chapel before our meeting.

A song used in our prayer time at the Cathedral which resonated with many was 'Be still for the presence of the Lord'. May we all know His stillness, presence and leading in the coming months."

At the meeting which followed prayer we ...

- ... signed off the Statement of Needs (see below)
- ... elected our six Crown Nomination Commission (CNC) representatives, from of a total of 12 who stood for nomination (see below for the six names)

Crown Nomination Commission representatives

The following six people were elected to the Crown Nominations Commission and will interview potential candidates on November 8 and 9.

Please keep them especially in your prayers ...

- Rev Paul Benfield
 - Rev Munawar Din
 - Dr Laura Oliver
 - Mrs Jacqueline Stamper
 - Mr Sam Walmsley
 - Rev Dr Tom Woolford
-

Statement of Needs

The Statement of Needs document is available to view here via an 'Issuu flipbook' which allows you to view the whole document online without the need to download.

Click below and you will be taken to the document on Issuu where the best way to view is to click either 'larger view' or 'full screen' and follow the arrows at right to travel through the document.

Proposing candidates

***The Church Times* will publish notification of the Vacancy in the See of Blackburn this Friday.**

Anyone wishing to comment on the needs of the Diocese or the wider church, or who wishes to propose candidates, should write before June 12, and via email, to:

- **Mr Stephen Knott** (Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments):
[REDACTED]
 - **Mrs Helen Dimmock** (Ecclesiastical Secretary to the Crown and Lord Chancellor): [REDACTED]
-

Prayer for the next Bishop of Blackburn

Please continue to keep this discernment process for our next Bishop of Blackburn in your prayers and particularly using this prayer ...

Heavenly Father, we pray for a bishop full of your Holy Spirit:
a disciple who makes disciples,
a bold witness to Jesus,
and a Christ-like leader,
able to inspire children and young people with the transforming message of
your Gospel.
We ask this in the name of your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

We have produced a prayer card with this prayer and the Vision
prayer. [Download here.](#)

Ronnie Semley, May 2022

Statements of Needs since the Sheffield Appointment Derby to date

Diocese	Statement of Needs text	Women's ministry/ 5 Guiding Principles	Ordainer specified
Truro	Still in preparation Further Evidence cited: <i>Our new bishop, who may be female or male, must be willing to ordain women.</i> This was not from the Statement of needs as it is not due to be finalised until early 2024		
Ely	will ordain women and men and will personally fully affirm and support the ministry of both, and may themselves be male or female	Yes	Yes
Exeter	Exeter looks for a bishop who will ordain women and men and accepts and implements the 5 Guiding Principles that aim to encourage mutual flourishing.	Yes	Yes
Sodor & Man	No mention of ordination or the Five Guiding Principles		
Carlisle	No mention of ordination or the Five Guiding Principles		
Peterborough	Wholeheartedly ordains men and women and upholds the Five Guiding Principles for mutual flourishing.	Yes	Yes
Birmingham	We are seeking a diocesan bishop who is willing to ordain women. Our bishop needs to be fully and warmly committed both to the ministry of women, ordained and lay, and to the ongoing extended contribution of the bishops who offer extended episcopal oversight, as framed within the Five Guiding Principles, and our clear commitment to Mutual Flourishing.	Yes	Yes
Blackburn	We are committed to living out mutual flourishing. We strongly support women's ministry, both lay and ordained, and we have 30 Resolution parishes (including 18 Society parishes). We hope the Diocese operates as a family where theological difference does not diminish relationships and the sharing of the Gospel.	Yes	
Portsmouth	We value the ministry of men and women clergy as integral to our diocese and so our next bishop must be someone who is willing to ordain both.	Yes	Yes
Newcastle	is welcoming to all, committed to the Five Guiding Principles and affirms both the ministry of women and the contribution of all the diverse traditions in the Diocese. is willing to ordain women and men.	Yes	Yes
Salisbury	The ordained (and episcopal) leadership of women is welcomed. We believe that our new Bishop will ordain women. At the same time, we are committed to honouring the Five Guiding Principles, and to the flourishing of the small number of parishes with alternative episcopal oversight.	Yes	Yes
Liverpool	The ministry of women is warmly accepted in the diocese. We would wish to continue to have a diocesan bishop who will ordained both men and women to all orders of ministry.	Yes	Yes
Lincoln	Our new Bishop, who may be female or male, must be willing to ordain women.		Yes

Rochester	<p>The ministry of women clergy, until recently including one of our archdeacons, is welcomed unreservedly and they play a full part in the life of the Diocese.</p> <p>It is likely that our next diocesan bishop will be someone who is willing to ordain women.</p> <p>At the same time, our Bishop needs to be fully and warmly committed both to the ministry of women at every level and to the ongoing contribution of the Bishops of Maidstone and Richborough within the Diocese, as framed within the Five Guiding Principles and our clear commitment to Mutual Flourishing.</p>	Yes	Yes
Winchester	<p>We also seek a bishop who will ordain women and men, while maintaining good relationships with all expressions of Anglicanism in the diocese, in line with the Five Guiding Principles.</p>	Yes	Yes
Chelmsford	<p>The ministry of women clergy, including three of our archdeacons, is welcomed unreservedly and they play a full part in the life of the diocese.</p> <p>It is likely that our next diocesan bishop will be someone who is willing to ordain women.</p>	Yes	Yes
Bath & Wells	<p>As a diocese we are not particularly polarised between different church traditions and want to ensure that all continue to be valued. We seek a bishop who is: welcoming to all and reaches out to all; is an advocate of racial justice, is fully committed to the Living in Love and Faith process; is respectful of the Five Guiding Principles; and who ordains women and men.</p>	Yes	yes
Chester	<p>the diocese in which the first woman bishop in the Church of England was appointed.</p> <p>The priestly and episcopal ministry of women is widely accepted and welcomed.</p>	Yes	
York	<p>We seek the person, male or female, whom God is calling to the office of Archbishop of York, and who is:</p> <p>An ordainer of both men and women who is committed to the Five Guiding Principles</p>	Yes	Yes
Norwich	<p>A unifier committed to the five guiding principles who will ordain men and women</p> <p>able to unite us in love while holding the tensions in belief and practice</p>	Yes	Yes
Hereford	<p>We seek therefore a new Bishop who will ordain women to the priesthood, but be understanding of those who cannot accept such ministry.</p>		Yes
Bristol	<p>The Diocese of Bristol was the first diocese to ordain women as priests in 1994 and its Diocesan Synod voted unopposed to approve the proposals for women bishops in 2011. We feel that the Bishop of Bristol should be someone who will ordain women.</p>		Yes
Derby	<p>We don't mind whether they are a man or a woman, but we would want them to be willing to ordain women themselves, as well as being committed to the Five Guiding Principles of mutual flourishing for the whole Church.</p>	Yes	Yes

Truro	<p>Cornwall has a strong spirit of tolerance and in our church this has meant that there has been a positive welcome to the ordination of women and to clergy in same-sex relationships, as well as encouraging responses to liturgical evolution, while at the same time maintaining respect for those with different views.</p> <p>We would like our new diocesan bishop to continue to promote wholeheartedly the role of women in ministry within the diocese, including their ordination, but simultaneously respect the position of those who wish to retain, under current national agreements, a ministry preference for male clergy.</p>	Yes	
London	<p>affirms the priestly and episcopal ministry of women, and assures those who on the grounds of theological conviction are unable to receive it that they have an honoured place in the Diocese, so that all traditions can thrive.</p> <p>A bishop who is committed to affirming women in their ordained roles as priests and bishops in the church by appointing, supporting, pastoring and enabling their ministry and fostering their vocations (irrespective of the bishop's own theological position on Holy Orders);</p>	Yes	