



Wendy Matthews
*Secretary to the Mission, Pastoral
and Church Property Committee*
Pastoral & Closed Churches

To the representors

(and copied to the statutory interested parties for
information only)

Our ref: NB 22/

14th October 2024

By email only

Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

**Benefices of St David, Childwall; St Andrew, Clubmoor; St Cuthbert, Croxteth Park; St Paul, The Apostle, Croxteth; The Holy Spirit, Dovecot; Christ Church, Norris Green, Liverpool; St Christopher, Norris Green, Liverpool; St Anne, Stanley and St Paul, Stoneycroft; and The Good Shepherd, West Derby
Proposed Pastoral Scheme**

1. The Church Commissioners met on 6 August 2024 and agreed **that the Scheme detailed below should proceed as drafted notwithstanding the representations made against it.**
2. The proposed draft Pastoral Scheme provided for:
 - the union of the benefice of Saint David, Childwall; the benefice of Saint Andrew, Clubmoor; the benefice of Saint Cuthbert, Croxteth Park; the benefice of Saint Paul, The Apostle, Croxteth; the benefice of The Holy Spirit, Dovecot; the benefice of Christ Church, Norris Green, Liverpool; the benefice of Saint Christopher, Norris Green, Liverpool; the benefice of Saint Anne, Stanley and Saint Paul, Stoneycroft and the benefice of The Good Shepherd, West Derby and the union of their constituent parishes;
 - the establishment of a team ministry for the new benefice of Christ Our Hope Liverpool. It also provides for:
 - the cure of souls in the new benefice to be shared by a team rector and seven team vicars;
 - the appointment of the team rector and seven team vicars;
 - the housing arrangements for the team; and
 - the future patronage arrangements for the new benefice;

The draft Scheme attracted eight representations against, 20 in favour and four in favour with comments.

3. This letter sets out the decision reached by the Church Commissioners and the reasons for it, and the factors they considered in their deliberation. A summary of the representations is attached at Annex A.

Reasons for the Commissioners' Decision

4. Overall, the Commissioners' findings were that the Diocese had met the requirements of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 (the Measure), and the scheme had been brought forward for a proper purpose.
5. The Commissioners considered the rationale of the Fit for Mission II (FFM II) project to be coherent and designed in such a way as to further the mission of the Church. Some of the representors had criticized the earlier Wigan reorganization scheme under Fit for Mission I (FFM I), but the Bishop's response had clearly shown that the diocesan team had learned from the FFM I experience and had changed their approach accordingly in FFM II. Parishes were given the choice to opt into the project, and those choosing to opt out would still be able to participate in some of the FFM II activities, such as the Cultivate training programme.
6. The representations showed that there was strong buy in from a significant number of benefices and parishes and the proposals were supported by both the lay people and the clergy. The Commissioners also recognized that the submissions in favour of the proposals saw the scheme as a way of approaching a positive and proactive approach to mission, not simply a response to decline.
7. The Commissioners also considered that the consultations under the Measure had been conducted pastorally and exceeded the statutory requirements, as set out in detail by the Bishop in his initial response to the representations. The Commissioners were satisfied that the door notices had been displayed correctly. In addition, the Commissioners noted that additional steps were taken to publicise the draft Scheme, which included publication on the Christ our Hope Facebook page and website, emails and an e-bulletin to those on the electoral roll and hard copy notice sheets were also circulated. Phone calls were made to those who did not have access to email.
8. The Commissioners were also satisfied that the Bishop had considered the traditions, needs and characteristics of the affected parishes, by giving each church the assurance that it would retain its individual identity. They saw no evidence to gainsay this assurance and the Commissioners were satisfied it was given in good faith.
9. As part of that deliberation, the Commissioners also carefully considered the concerns raised by representors about the parish of Tuebrook, which had passed a resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests. The representors suggested that the Tuebrook had been disadvantaged in the process because it was not able to join the scheme, because the Team Rector designate would be a woman.

10. The Bishop had shown in his response that the diocesan team had carefully considered ways in which resolution parishes could join in the FFM II programme;¹ either grouped with non-resolution parishes with appropriate protections for theological positions, or as a group consisting only of resolution parishes. The diocesan team had made it clear that there was scope for further discussions if Tuebrook wanted to explore the options around FFM II in the future. A detailed Annex looking at possible options which could permit Tuebrook to join FFM II in the future had been prepared.²
11. It was also noted that the Bishops of Burnley and the Revd Paul Benfield (on behalf of the Bishop of Beverley) had been included in discussions about the options for resolution parishes. The Commissioners were satisfied that the traditions, needs and characteristics of Tuebrook had been appropriately considered by the diocese in preparing the scheme, given there was scope for Tuebrook to join in future and they could participate in some aspects of the project, such as the Cultivate training. To the extent that there was any disadvantage to Tuebrook resulting from its status as a resolution parish, the Commissioners concluded that this was outweighed by the overall missional benefits of the draft Scheme.
12. The Commissioners supported the approach of a central services operation for managing various administrative responsibilities as it would lift burdens from volunteers and PCCs and were satisfied with the arrangements for churchwardens and finance.³ They were satisfied that this approach would contribute towards the furtherance of the mission of the Church of England.
13. In that context, the Commissioners also considered the specific point raised by a representor about the shadow PCC's ability to fulfil safeguarding duties. The Commissioners were satisfied that it would not be appropriate for the shadow PCC to take any responsibility for safeguarding across the new parish until the Scheme had been legally made, but at that point, the diocesan team would ensure that a transition process was put in place to manage the move to the new central services arrangement. It would be good practice for the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor to provide any advice needed as part of that process.
14. The Commissioners considered the point raised about a potential governance imbalance in the Deanery Synod if the scheme went ahead but were satisfied with the Bishop's reply on that point, which stated that the representation was based on both the Electoral Roll and the number of places of worship, so the balance would broadly be the same, albeit with fewer parishes being involved. Therefore, the Commissioners were satisfied that the composition of the Deanery Synod, if the Scheme was made, would reflect the natural

¹ Page 9 of the Bishop's initial response (Page E21 of the Committee pack)

² Supporting Document L of the Bishop's Response (pages E60-E63 of the Committee pack)

³ Concern relating to wills and legacies was raised by some of the representors. Legal advice on pastoral reorganisation and wills is available at [Legal Opinions concerning the Church of England | The Church of England](#)

outworking of the Church Representation Rules, and that the Scheme being made would have a neutral impact.

15. The Commissioners also considered the issues about patronage, particularly the role of the Rector of West Derby and concerns that his patronage rights would be diluted under the proposed Scheme. The Commissioners were mindful of those concerns, which were also expressed by other representors. However, the Commissioners were satisfied that the Bishop had considered these issues carefully, changing the approach when concerns were raised, and finding a sensitive compromise which enabled the Rector of West Derby to retain their patronage interest, but without extending that interest to churches where there had previously been no connection.
16. They were also satisfied that the changing of approach demonstrated an open and fair consultation process. The Commissioners carefully considered the alternative suggestions mentioned by the representors (i.e. (i) that the appointment of team vicars should be made by the patronage board, rather than the bishop and team rector; (ii) that the two lay representatives should be removed from the patronage board; and (iii) that the Rector of West Derby should be removed from the patronage board) but concluded they would not be a better solution than the one suggested by the Bishop, which had been agreed after extensive local consultation.
17. The Commissioners noted that the proposals stemmed from an approved deanery plan and directed themselves to the requirements of section 11(4A) of the Measure which requires that, unless they wished to amend the Scheme under section 11, they should decide to make the Scheme unless they considered that there were material considerations which indicated it should not be made.
18. The Commissioners noted that concerns had been raised in some representations about the approval process leading up to the deanery plan, which included references to the deadlines for papers being sent out to the deanery synod being missed. They noted that the Measure does not require the Commissioners to explore the process in connection with deanery plan approval, but they noted that this might, depending on all the circumstances, be a material consideration which they should weigh in the balance. Without deciding that question (and without coming to a view whether there were any process failures arising from the matters alleged), the Commissioners considered first whether, notwithstanding the existence of the deanery plan, they would have approved the draft Scheme in any event, based on the fact the diocese had undertaken full consultation on the draft Scheme under section 6 of the Measure. They concluded that a decision could be made on the basis that the section 6 requirements of the Measure had been met.
19. The Commissioners realise that their decision will disappoint the representors against the draft Scheme, but they hope that this statement will be helpful in indicating that their decision was reached only after careful consideration of all the relevant issues and the concerns raised in the representation.

20. The Commissioners also considered all the other points made in the correspondence but felt that none of them was of sufficient weight to outweigh the points listed above.

21. I enclose a notice, as required by the Measure, about the right to apply for leave to appeal to His Majesty in Council against the draft Scheme or any of its provisions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Wendy Matthews".

Wendy Matthews
Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee Secretary
Church Commissioners

Annex A – Summary of the main points in the representations

Summary of the themes in the Representations against the draft Scheme

1. The draft Scheme attracted eight representations against.
2. The main concerns of the representors are: i) a lack of transparency and poor communication in the consultation process; ii) the proposed patronage arrangements; iii) the number of churchwardens for the proposed new parish; iv) lack of clarity about financial aspects of the proposals; v) the lack of success of the similar scheme for Wigan; vi) the difficulty of filling proposed roles; vii) the impact of the scheme on the composition of the deanery synod; and viii) its unfair effect on Tuebrook as a resolution parish.
3. A lack of transparency and poor communication during the consultation process was a factor in the decision of Knotty Ash to opt out of the proposed benefice and parish. There was said to be issues with sharing documents and a lack of clarity on important matters such as legacies, financial coordinators, safeguarding arrangements, control over the running of the community hall and unclear deadlines for opting out. Two representors said that they had been told no churches would close and no parishes would merge. One said the consultation period should be extended because few people were aware of the proposal and the language on the notice was unclear. There was a suggestion that the use of email addresses for the new parish/benefice indicates the proposal is a fait accompli.
4. The proposed patronage arrangements received a number of objections, including from one of the patrons: the Rector of West Derby. There is concern that his role will dilute his patronage role, particularly because team vicars would be selected by the Bishop and team rector of the proposed new benefice jointly. It is unclear if he is suggesting that either the patronage board should make the appointments of the team vicars, or if the Rector of West Derby should solely make these appointments (the latter is not a legal option under the Measure because the patronage board as a whole would need to make the decisions if making these appointments). Another local incumbent is also concerned about the dilution of these patronage rights and suggests removing the two lay representatives from the patronage board. There is a suggestion that the Commissioners cannot consider the case because the patron has not consented to the arrangements prior to publication of the draft scheme but as noted in the letter to the Bishop, this is only the case where a special patronage board is involved, rather than a patronage board established for a team ministry, so prior consent is not required. There was further concern from another representor about how the patronage arrangements were handled, saying there was questionable legal manoeuvring.
5. Concern was expressed about whether the church wardens in the new parish would be able to cover for each other because of the distances involved and because some did not drive. Two current churchwardens (of St Anne's Stanley) said they were not consulted about the proposed number of

churchwardens in the new parish. They do not understand why a support team will replace the role of volunteers as churchwardens when they are happy to continue with these tasks.

6. Financial concerns were raised by several representors against the scheme, including the lack of a financial plan, especially in relation to paid positions, a lack of transparency regarding the financial futures of churches in the new parish, and a lack of transparency over Parish Share. There was also concern that a lack of parish identity would lead to reduced attendance and income and legacies. It was also noted that the reasons for parishes opting out of the proposals had not been shared and that it appeared to be the more financially sustainable ones which had opted out. Another representor suggested that concern over money had led to a reduction in the number of churches supporting FfM.
7. There were concerns over the filling of proposed roles, particularly relating to safeguarding, as well as the parish leadership team.
8. Two representors raised concern about the lack of success of the similar scheme for Wigan, particularly following a recent Church Times article, saying it resulted in continued decline and increased financial deficit, as well as loss of parochial identity and remoteness.
9. One representor raised concern about balance in the House of Clergy of the Deanery Synod because the majority would have been appointed by the Team Rector (and Bishop). The new parish would have an overwhelming influence on the Deanery Synod, as demonstrated already by a vote on a report about church buildings.
10. Concerns were also raised about parish of Tuebrook which was not participating in the FfM project because they had passed a resolution under the House of Bishop's Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests. It was not possible for them to join the proposed team ministry because the Team Rector would be a woman.
11. Other points raised by the representors against the proposals include the delay in bringing the proposals forward and the Team Rector residing outside the proposed parish and deanery.

Summary of the themes in the Representations in favour

12. The draft Scheme attracted 20 representations in favour. Several representations came from parishioners or members of church congregations, while many come from clergy in the parishes included in the draft Scheme.
13. Many of the representations refer to the positive impact of pooling resources, skills and abilities to enable more engagement with communities in new ways while avoiding the duplication of work. Specific examples of groups for young people and families are provided. It is felt that the proposals would provide a focus on mission and discipleship because administrative responsibilities would be handled centrally. Some of the representors said many PCCs

struggle to maintain their buildings and too much time is spent on administration, resulting in a lack of good policies and practice, poor compliance and inconsistent financial processes.

14. Several of the clergy refer to 'portfolio working' to build and share expertise, and the Cultivate programme to develop lay ministry. They feel that they are stronger facing challenges together and the benefits of doing so has already been seen. There is reference to flourishing relationships between the existing parishes already. With better resourced leaders, at least one representor believed that the churches would maintain their individual character and ministry to their communities. There was also reference to clearer lines of accountability within the proposed new structure.
15. Several representors in favour refer to the process, saying that it took place over an extended period of time to ensure it is fair to all affected parties and reflects the reorganisation desired by the deanery, while some also acknowledge that the process caused pain and difficulties in some parishes. There is support amongst some for the proposed patronage arrangements because they give an appropriate amount of influence to those serving in the new parish and better fit the realities and relationships in the area. A couple of the representors were also supportive of the draft Scheme because it does not dispossess any clergy in the deanery, including in opted-out parishes.

Summary of the themes in the Representations in favour with comments

16. Four representations in favour also carried comments on the draft Scheme. Challenges identified included: the size and layout of the parish for those without transport; respecting different traditions; hearing voices of smaller communities; potential duplication of work (for instance with each church still having someone to deal with finances); where the volunteers would come from; changing status for existing incumbents to team vicars; theological differences; and numbers and money. Some of these concerns have already been addressed but others remain outstanding. Two of these representations question the continuing involvement of the Rector of West Derby in patronage arrangements.

Summary of the Representors' supplementary views

17. Supplementary comments were received by four representors. The further comment from Mr Mark Cotterell included reference to a number of case law precedents. On the advice of the Deputy Official Solicitor (DOS), this representation was shared with the bishop, but he was only asked to comment on the general points made by the representor, not the case law. The Commissioners' Legal Office reviewed the case law cited by Mr Cotterell and was content that it did not raise any additional issues to the points already addressed by the Bishop.

18. Mr David White says he will be interested to hear the Commissioners' decision and that he must learn to adapt to changes and fit in where he can.
19. Mr P Taylor disputes that the question about opting out was included in earlier versions of the FAQs document, saying that Childwall PCC only believed it had agreed to explore the Fit For Mission (FfM) project. He says that the PCC has been hood-winked with poor communication and questionable manoeuvring. Mr Taylor believes there is no financial plan against which the success or sustainability of the project could be measured. He quotes the Transforming Wigan report which said that there was not an increase in giving despite increased missional activity and that there was continued decline in attendance. He is concerned the same thing will be repeated at West Derby, so he does not believe that the Scheme is a solution to prevent decline in attendance and finances. Mr Taylor believes that both those involved in the project, whose conduct he questions, and life-long churchgoers will all be gone in a few years' time.
20. The Reverend Nicholas Johnson maintains his objections and adds further comments on three areas:
- a. Patronage – he says the current proposals came at a late stage, were not included in versions 9 or 10 of the Deanery Plan and was then only suggested as a possibility. He also questions the Deanery Plan approval process because it was only shared with the Diocesan Synod the evening before which is contrary to the Diocesan Rules for Deanery Synods, which states that all minutes, agendas and papers should be dispatched seven days before a meeting. He reiterates that one third of the members voted to reinstate the Rector of West Derby's patronage rights. Fr Johnson also notes that the Rector of West Derby had not been consulted, which would be in breach of section 6 of the Mission and Pastoral Measure.
 - b. Operation of the deanery – Fr Johnson says that the Bishop did not address his concerns about the proposed new parish having the vast majority of Deanery Synod members, especially for the House of Clergy. He believes this would mean the Deanery Synod becomes a rubber-stamp for the new PCC. As well as the previous example of the report on church buildings, he also says his concern is evidenced in the changes between versions 9 and 10 of the Deanery Plan (as per your response of 28th June) with no input from other parishes, yet it was rubber-stamped by members of the proposed new parish. He does not think that this issue has been addressed for Diocesan Synods across the diocese in the light of FfM.
 - c. Resolution parishes – Fr Johnson considers the parish (and all others in the Chapter of the Transfiguration) can work towards the four mission priorities of FfM without changing its legal parochial structure by cooperating more closely with churches of the same tradition. He says it has been made clear throughout the process that they cannot access financial support, which is available to participating churches, so he was surprised about the indication that it was possible for them to take part in training schemes. Fr Johnson questions why parishes

working together to achieve the missional aims of FfM, albeit differently, cannot access funds to support them given the amount being spent on the programme.