

Diocese of Newcastle
Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee (DMPC)
2023 Annual Report

STATUS = APPROVED BY DMPC AT ITS MEETING ON 24th JULY 2024

Background

1. The Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC) operates within the framework of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 and subsequent amendments. This provides the legal basis for structural and organisational changes to enable the local church to be more effective in its mission and ministry while balancing needs and resources. The Measure requires every diocese to have a Mission and Pastoral Committee representative of both clergy and laity.
2. The DMPC is responsible for keeping the mission and pastoral arrangements in the diocese under review and in line with the diocesan strategy agreed by the Diocesan Synod. The DMPC is responsible for making recommendations to the Bishop and ensuring that, where changes are proposed, the formal procedures including consultation are observed. Examples of when proposals for pastoral reorganisation may be made include:
 - responding to changing demographics or physical development in the community;
 - changes in the availability of resources for ministry;
 - unsustainability of the church fabric;
 - a desire locally for parishes or churches to become more closely aligned and work together.
3. The DMPC's constitution, approved by Diocesan Synod in 2009, provides for two sub committees to deal with Closed Churches and Bishop's Mission Orders. The functions of the sub committees have traditionally been carried by the Archdeacons and reported to the DMPC. A review of the DMPC's constitution has continued to be 'on hold' in 2023 pending the outcome of the national review of the Measure.

Committee Membership

4. In addition to the Chair (the Bishop or their nominee), the membership of the DMPC consists of both Archdeacons (ex-officio) and six members elected by the Diocesan Synod (two from the House of Clergy and four from the House of Laity). The main diocesan officer supporting the Committee is the DMPC Secretary and this post had been vacant until a new Secretary was appointed from 7 February 2023.
5. 2023 marked the middle of the 2022 – 2024 triennium of the current DMPC.
6. Membership in 2023 was as follows:

Members:

Chair, appointed by the Bishop
(ex-officio) Archdeacon of Lindisfarne

Liz Kerry
The Ven Dr Catherine Sourbut-Groves

(ex-officio) Archdeacon of Northumberland	The Ven Rachel Wood
(elected) Clergy Member (Lindisfarne)	The Revd Louise Taylor-Kenyon*
(elected) Clergy Member (Northumberland)	vacant
(elected) Lay Member (Lindisfarne)	Alice Murray
(elected) Lay Member (Lindisfarne)	Carol Griffiths
(elected) Lay Member (Northumberland)	Aidan Evans
(elected) Lay Member (Northumberland)	Susan Ramshaw

*Appointed to be Vice Chair, 14th July 2022

Officers in attendance were:

Registrar's Clerk	Janet Forrest
DMPC Secretary	Christopher Young
Diocesan Secretary	Shane Waddle

Meetings

7. Six meetings were held in 2023:

- January, hosted by Zoom video conferencing.
- April, hybrid in person at Church House, North Shields and via Zoom video conferencing.
- May, in person at Church House, North Shields.
- July, in person at St Hilda's, Jesmond with deanery officers from Newcastle Central deanery.
- October, an extended meeting at Shepherds Dene.
- November, hosted by Zoom video conferencing.

Additionally, keeping-in-touch (KIT) meetings with the Chair, the Archdeacons and the DMPC Secretary were helpful to support the ongoing work between DMPC meetings.

Pastoral reorganisation: formal procedures

8. The national review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure continued in 2023. The outcome of the review is expected to introduce simplified and more accessible procedures to help facilitate changes in pastoral arrangements to meet the needs of parishes and the communities they serve. The most frequently used are suspensions of presentation and pastoral schemes and orders. These all involve formal procedures including consultation; many can be approved by the Bishop, although some require the approval of the Church Commissioners or even the Crown.

Suspensions of Presentation

9. The term 'presentation' relates to the right of the patron(s) of a benefice to present (nominate) a new incumbent when a vacancy arises. A suspension provides an opportunity for both the Bishop and interested parties to consider the most effective pastoral care for the parish, or parishes within the benefice, and whether changes might be beneficial. Usually, a Priest-in-Charge is appointed as the parish priest during the period of suspension (up to five years and subject to renewal). The Bishop remains responsible for the cure of souls which otherwise would be 'held' by an incumbent, with the Priest in Charge carrying out all the other responsibilities of a parish priest. The Measure makes

clear the primary purpose of suspensions of presentation (to facilitate pastoral reorganisation), that they should be used sparingly and not be applied any longer than necessary.

10. A proposal to consult about suspending the presentation is made by the Bishop, with the agreement of the DMPC. The DMPC is responsible for ensuring the consultation is carried out with the interested parties in accordance with the formalities laid down in the Measure. Each of the interested parties is able to seek a meeting with the Bishop or their representative as part of the consultation. All views are considered by the Bishop before a final decision is made.
11. The formal (legal) processes and the associated language can lack accessibility and this is a point the DMPC made to the national team reviewing the Measure. In addition to some minor changes to the formal letters of consultation a 'plain English' letter and answers to frequently asked questions accompanies correspondence from the DMPC. This approach has been shown to provide clarity and reassurance to many, including Parochial Church Councils.
12. Mission has also become a key driver for the DMPC when reviewing suspensions of presentation and potential changes in pastoral arrangements to meet sustainable and affordable ministry.
13. The following suspensions of presentation were **lifted** in 2023:

Deanery	Benefice
Corbridge	Riding Mill
Morpeth	Ashington
Newcastle Central	Christ the King
Norham	Branxton
Norham	Cornhill with Carham
Tynemouth	Balkwell
Tynemouth	Tynemouth St John

14. The following suspensions of presentation **expired** in 2023 and were not extended:

Deanery	Benefice
Corbridge	Heddon on the Wall
Norham	Ford & Etal
Norham	Lowick & Kyoel with Ancroft

15. The following suspensions of presentation were **put in place or extended** in 2023:

Deanery	Benefice
Bamburgh & Glendale	Doddington, Ilderton, Kirknewton and Wooler
Bedlington	Delaval
Bedlington	Seghill
Bedlington	Weetslade
Bellingham	St Oswald in Lee with Bingfield

Morpeth	Cresswell & Lynemouth
Deanery	Benefice
Newcastle West	Denton
Newcastle West	Newbiggin Hall
Newcastle West	Sugley
Newcastle West	Whorlton

Annual Review of Suspensions of Presentation

16. The DMPC has a duty to carry out an annual review of all suspensions of presentation in place. The review provides an opportunity to clarify why suspensions of presentation are in place, whether pastoral reorganisation is in prospect and whether a suspension of presentation should continue. At the end of 2023, suspensions of presentation were in place in 53 of the diocese's 122 benefices'.
17. The 2023 annual review of suspensions of presentation was done in November 2023. This was considered at the DMPC meeting on 18th January 2024 and the DMPC endorsed the recommendations for individual benefices. The DMPC's recommendations have either been progressed or are in progress during 2024. The outcome of the review and a summary of progress on its recommendations was reported to the Bishop on 2nd July 2024.

Pastoral Schemes and Pastoral Orders

18. Arrangements for pastoral care such as creating new benefices and changing existing links (known as pluralities) between benefices are given legal effect by Pastoral Schemes made by the Church Commissioners on the recommendation of the Bishop. A Pastoral Order (or a Bishop's Pastoral Order) is able to deal with more minor changes such as boundary modifications to better reflect current and developing patterns of local life. These are approved by the Bishop.
19. The role of the DMPC is in advising the Bishop and in ensuring that the consultation and other procedures are followed so that the proposed arrangements are understood and 'owned' locally and all who might be affected have an opportunity to express their views.
20. ANNEX A summaries progress made to date with DMPC recommendations made at meetings held during 2023.
21. No new pastoral schemes came into being in 2023.

Bishop's Mission Orders

22. A Bishop's Mission Order (BMO) provides a mechanism for the Bishop to put in place arrangements for new and often innovative initiatives across a wider area than a single benefice. A BMO can be definite or indefinite in length with the Bishop able to terminate earlier or extend to the originally stipulated period of the BMO.
23. The DMPC's role, as a formal consultee, includes advising the Bishop on the proposals, including the governance arrangements.
24. No BMOs were considered in 2023.

Joint Parochial Church Councils

25. Although formal responsibility for agreeing proposals for Joint Parochial Church Councils (JPCCs) is with the Bishop's Council and the DMPC has no formal locus, a new interest in JPCCs emerged as the result of provisions within the 2020 Church Representation Rules. In 2021 the DMPC supported the first parishes, Mitford and Hebron, to establish a JPCC under the new provisions. The DMPC provides support to parishes wishing to explore the advantages of the new provisions.

The developing role of the DMPC

26. For this current triennium, the DMPC sought to:

- be better informed about what was happening across the diocese,
- to increase its understanding of the framework provided by the 2011 Measure and the tools available,
- simplify language and strengthen accountability and transparency.

Putting mission at the centre of all that the DMPC does has become a recurring theme and has helped address these aims. Occasional attendance by officers of the Mission and Ministry team at future meetings would help to keep members informed of new initiatives and the outcomes from any projects.

27. Archdeacon's reports have provided regular and invaluable updates about what is happening on the ground and the implications for missional growth. These do much to help the DMPC understand 'the local' including the collaboration already underway or being explored between parishes, new and developing ways of working, and potential changes in pastoral arrangements, some of which need formal procedures involving the DMPC. Overall the Archdeacon's reporting helps the DMPC towards a more holistic understanding of places.

28. Archdeacons continue to play an important role in enabling members to have a more holistic understanding of deaneries both through their Archdeacon reporting and their progress reporting on deanery development planning. This helps members towards a more detailed understanding of the factors at play and the interactions and collaborations between parishes. This shared learning about individual deaneries is embedded in regular DMPC agendas.

29. Enabling and equipping members has helped the DMPC to engage more effectively on a wider range of issues and to respond with greater care and understanding. Learning and exploring together and valuing the experience and perspectives of all members (and those who are touched by the committee's work) strengthens inclusivity and ownership as well as the robustness of decisions and transferability of expertise. To help to increase members' confidence, the DMPC introduced 1:1 induction training for new members in response to the suggestion made in its 2021 Annual Report.

30. In 2023 the DMPC continued to strengthen its connections with the 12 deaneries. The membership represents a diverse geography providing a broad perspective of both urban and rural contexts. The elected members include those holding deanery officer

responsibilities, including an Area Dean, a Deanery Lay Chair and members of deanery development groups.

31. To provide a further dimension to the DMPC's work and decision making there remains scope for collaborating more closely with deaneries. The DMPC's engagement with deaneries, particularly with the roll out of the Deanery Planning Toolkit has remained work in progress. Whilst the Deanery Planning process is intended as a key driver of change in the diocese, and the DMPC has been kept informed about what is underway, there was little opportunity for engagement at an early stage in the development of the process or sharing of its progress other than in very general terms.
32. The DMPC has continued to make itself more visible, transparent and approachable in all its work, whether written or face to face.
33. By becoming more knowledgeable about the Measure and the importance of the procedural details for its various processes the DMPC is striving to be more accountable to the Bishop and to the parishes and benefices involved. Increasingly the DMPC is starting to understand the importance of clarity and the pitfalls of not following due process. This has resulted in increased challenge (as for example with suspensions of presentation) as the DMPC reaches towards new understandings, not least about the implications of its work.

Conclusion

34. In this second year of the triennium the DMPC is able to point to progress in a number of areas. Encouraging is the fact that the cycle of meetings is now stabilised with a mix of Zoom Video Conferencing and in-person meetings. With a new DMPC Secretary in post from April 2024 the DMPC strives for its work to be straight forward and systematic as it seeks to serve and support mission and ministry across the Diocese of Newcastle.

Pastoral Schemes & Pastoral Orders – Summary of progress on DMPC recommendations

DMPC Meeting 16/01/23

Details and Benefices Affected	DMPC Recommendation	Progress
Scheme known as Parishes by the Wall West Benefice of Haydon Bridge and Beltingham with Henshaw AND Benefice of Haltwhistle and Greenhead Scheme to dissolve the above 2 benefices and create 2 new benefices: Haydon Bridge AND Haltwhistle and Greenhead and Beltingham with Henshaw DEANERY: HEXHAM	Bishop be requested to approve a Draft Scheme for publication by the Church Commissioners for statutory consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Scheme published on 01/05/24 • No representations received • Church Commissioners made the Scheme on 01/07/24 • Scheme comes into force on 01/08/24

DMPC Meeting 25/05/23

Details and Benefices Affected	DMPC Recommendation	Progress
Request from PCC of Blanchland with Hunstanworth to explore potential closure of Hunstanworth St James Church DEANERY: CORBRIDGE	Progress a consultation with interested parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation commenced 17/01/24 • PCC requested to withdraw their original church closure request as they have established plans aiming to maintain the future viability of the church • DMPC at its meeting on 20/03/24 determined it is content for the request to be withdrawn

Details and Benefices Affected	DMPC Recommendation	Progress
<p>Scheme to create a united benefice known as Lower North Tyne comprising of the benefices of:</p> <p>Chollerton with Birtley and Thockrington AND of St Oswald in Lee with St Mary Bingfield AND Humshaugh with Simonburn and Wark</p> <p>DEANERY: BELLINGHAM</p>	<p>Discussions take place about future patronage arrangements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation letter sent to patron on 12/10/23 • Response received from patron confirming contentment with proposed arrangements
<p>Scheme to dissolve the team ministry for the benefice of North Tyne & Redesdale</p> <p>DEANERY: BELLINGHAM</p>	<p>To progress with:</p> <p>Step 1 – lift the suspension of presentation</p> <p>Step 2 – appoint the Priest in Charge as Team Rector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request to Bishop on 20/06/24 to lift suspension • Suspension termination notice signed by Bishop on 24/06/24 • Bishop proposal to appoint Priest in Charge as Team Rector sent to PCCs and Priest in Charge on 28/06/24