

Diocesan peer review report

Diocese	Lincoln
Date of peer review meeting	28 th June 2017
Date of peer review report	30 th June 2017
Date of diocesan response to report	
Diocesan representatives	The Rt. Revd Christopher Lowson – Bishop of Lincoln The Rt. Revd David Court – Bishop of Grimsby The Rt. Revd Nicholas Chamberlain – Bishop of Grantham The Ven. Mark Steadman – Archdeacon of Stow and Lindsey Chris Clark – Vice Chair of the Board of Finance Angela Sibson – Diocesan Secretary The Revd David Dadswell – Bishop’s Strategy Adviser Jackie Waters-Dewhurst – Director of Education Trevor Bush – Former Chair of DBF
Peer review panel members	Keith Robinson (Chair) The Revd Barry Hill The Revd David Primrose (Supported by Andrew Hawkings – SDU representative)
Is the self-evaluation attached?	Yes

Diocesan self-evaluation

- I. The peer review panel wishes to highlight the following diocesan strengths as being of particular importance:
- a) The panel recognised and affirmed the effort and progress made under the leadership of +Christopher over the past 5 years in the turnaround of the diocese from where it had been and the difficulties it faced. Most of the recommendations of the 2012 Central Services Review have been implemented.
 - b) It was clear that the senior staff team are all committed to the direction of travel and have good working relations with each other.
 - c) There was a strong sense of shared leadership, mutual accountability and a listening culture within the senior team.
 - d) A culture of praying together, shared vulnerability and prayerful discernment has been embedded within the workings of the senior team.
 - e) The panel were keen to highlight the effort invested by Bishops and Archdeacons in the clergy MDR process.
 - f) It was recognised that the diocese clearly felt that schools played a key role in the mission and ministry in the diocese.
 - g) The panel were impressed by the number and quality of recently recruited clergy.
 - h) The panel were pleased to see a reported growth in the number of ‘home grown’ stipendiary ordinands.

- i) The plant at St Swithin's Lincoln has been a clear success story, growing to around 250 members in less than two years. The diocese mentioned the opportunity for St Swithin's to plant into a different part of the diocese in due course, which was an exciting development.
- j) The panel were encouraged to learn of emerging relationships with partner dioceses abroad based on a shared concern for climate change.

2. The peer review panel's comments on the diocese's self-assessment are as follows:

The discussion at the meeting broadly confirmed the areas of strength and concern set out in the diocesan team's self-assessment, which the panel found to be a very helpful introduction to the diocese and its challenges. The areas that the diocese was particularly keen to explore were clearly outlined to the panel, which meant attention could be focused on how the peer review meeting could be of most help to the diocese. The diocesan synod was also consulted in advance of the peer review meeting that gave an additional perspective to the diocese's strengths and weaknesses.

The panel was encouraged by the discussion at the meeting and was also able to gain a better understanding of the journey the diocese had been on over the past few years and the key issues it has overcome.

Peer review panel's conclusions

3. We offer the following suggestions which the diocese may wish to consider in terms of changes, improvements, and/or in-depth exploration:

- As mentioned previously, progress in addressing and changing the culture within the senior team over the past few years has been impressive. This had been facilitated by almost all key members of diocesan staff being replaced since +Christopher's arrival. The panel are keen to encourage the new team to maintain momentum and to continue to work hard to see this change in culture flow and be manifest at a local level in parishes.
- Recognising the significance of the proposed Learning Communities as tools to implement the new strategy the panel felt it would be of value for +Christopher and other senior staff to take an active lead thereby emphasising the importance. The diocese may want to consider using external facilitators to help develop and deliver the Learning Communities programme, doing so in a manner which augments rather than replaces the participation of senior staff.
- It was noted that an appraisal process for diocesan office staff is pending. The panel recognised the importance and sensitivity attached to its introduction.
- The panel commend the good examples of community engagement that were shared at the meeting, but it was felt that some additional contemporary thinking would help better equip the diocese to respond to social issues around greater Lincolnshire.
- There was a shared feeling that the diocese needed to reclaim its rich legacy of 'all member ministry'. There was little evidence that the diocese was providing resources for supporting lay 'Monday to Saturday' ministry or work place ministry.

Lay ministry in the diocese seemed to be largely focused around Sundays and Authorised Lay Ministers (ALMs).

- There seemed to be a lack of clearly prioritised outcomes, analysis and impact measurement regarding assessing whether diocesan initiatives were having the desired impact. Some work is required to analyse the potential impact of future activity to help inform decision making around priority setting. Once the diocese is clear in what it is aiming to achieve, a measurement and evaluation process can be put in place to track progress and to help determine whether the outcomes hoped for have been achieved. Whilst there was a good articulation of the need to measure transformation and not just crude attendance measurements, important though they are, more work needs to be done on what the key measurements and proxies of such transformation are.
- It was acknowledged that the diocesan website needs to be refreshed. There is greater scope for the diocese to improve its general communications and to recognise the benefits which an excellent communication strategy will bring to the wider engagement of the church with society. There is a recognition that the diocese's vision and strategy needs to be communicated in a concise, clear and consistent manner regularly, which will help reiterate the key messages to local stakeholders in parishes.
- The diocese sees a good volume of people go through its Mission Shaped Ministry (MSM) course (run ecumenically) but it seems few fresh expressions of church are forming on the back of this. Some work is required to coach and mentor those that have been on an MSM course and some analysis is required to get a handle on the fresh expressions that exist and how good examples can be affirmed and communicated to inspire others to 'give it a go'.
- The diocese has a comparatively very large asset base, and it is right to use some of that to stimulate the growth in clergy numbers in particular. However the diocese should look to move away from an operating deficit in the next few years and start to set budgets for the medium term rather than a one year horizon. The panel were pleased to hear the diocese's aspiration for parish share receipts to cover 100% of local ministry costs in the future. The panel wondered if more could be done by the DBF in connecting financial management and discipleship and, in doing so, model the very best of that to parishes who often face the same challenges and opportunities albeit on a much smaller scale.
- The giving per head of population in the diocese is one of the lowest in the country and more should be done to help clergy feel confident to teach about stewardship and generous giving.
- The panel were encouraged by the senior team's vision to see more historic church buildings released for greater community use to support the mission and ministry of the church and to ensure their future sustainability. The panel hope that DAC members will be supportive of this imaginative vision actively encouraging local congregations and communities to work together to enable church buildings to be living assets contributing to the wellbeing of all.
- The Diocese of Lincoln has a particular mix of contexts regarding its geography and social make up. The panel recognised similarities between the challenges this diocese faces (e.g. isolation, agricultural basis, coastal strip, south/north divide) and those which other dioceses are experiencing. The panel encourages the diocese to be proactive in sharing advice and lessons learnt with other dioceses.

4. We note that the diocese's position in relation to Strategic Development Funding is as follows:

The panel noted that the diocese has not yet made an application for Strategic Development Funding (SDF). The panel are keen to suggest that once the diocese has formulated a strategic plan and programme of activity that would make a 'step change' in the mission and growth of the diocese an SDF application will be welcome.

There was also a mention of Lincoln's historic asset base and whether that would be taken into consideration in the SDF process. It was pointed out that other dioceses with large historic assets had been successful in applying for SDF grants where their plans were likely to have a significant impact on growing the Church and where the diocese also made a significant financial contribution to the proposed activity. It was suggested the Diocese consider the areas where a step change is particularly needed and then move on to how such a change can be supported rather than start with what there might be money for.

5. We recommend that the next full peer review meeting takes place in around two years' time in line with the normal cycle.

That said, there was an offer for the peer review panel or the Chair of the panel to help facilitate a focussed discussion later this year to help the diocese prioritise its activities.

Key areas of learning for the wider Church

6. The peer review panel recommends that the following features of the diocese's work are captured and shared more widely in the Church:

- The diocese has an excellent church buildings department who are proactive in helping churches develop and maintain their facilities for mission. An analytical approach has been adopted in the department that categorises and maps the dioceses church buildings by distinctive characteristics (condition and heritage, for example). The two key roles are a Church Development Officer and a Historic Churches Support Officer.
- There are some good examples in the diocese (specifically in Boston and Spalding) of social cohesion projects that are looking to improve relationships and the community integration of migrant workers from Eastern Europe.
- Contrary to what some suggest, many good quality clergy can be recruited to dioceses outside the South East.

Actions for the peer reviewer panel and the central support team

7. As agreed at the meeting, the peer review panel will look to provide 'signposts' to people and/or further information in the following areas:

- David Primrose to provide materials/information to Lincoln on social responsibility.

- Andrew Hawkings to provide a copy of the learning presentation to the diocesan team.
- Andrew Hawkings to provide a summary of the Diocese of Salisbury's programme to develop ordinands who are equipped to serve in their (heavily rural) context.

Diocesan Response¹

8. In response to the peer review panel's findings we plan to:

¹ The diocese is invited to provide a response to the peer reviewer's report and this ideally should be sent to the Strategy & Development Unit within a month of receipt of the peer review team's report; the Unit will then forward the response onto the peer review panel.