

Newcastle Diocesan Synod Suffragan See of Berwick

Note by the Assistant Bishop

Motion:

That this Synod support the proposal to fill the Suffragan See of Berwick.

Background:

Newcastle Diocese has had the services of a full-time Assistant bishop for 35 years. Until recently it had not seemed propitious to petition for a formal Suffragan See. The long-drawn out process did not have an assurance of success. The principal change in the last 5 years has been the devolving of the allocation and distribution of a block grant for Bishops' ministry to the Diocesan Bishop. Recent legislative changes have also increased the likelihood of a petition being favourably received by the Dioceses' Commission. The Bishop of Newcastle indicated her clear support of the proposal to petition for the revival of the Suffragan See of Berwick at a Bishop's Council discussion on 14th November 2015. The See of Berwick was last filled in 1572 when the Diocese of Durham had jurisdiction over the area which is now the Diocese of Newcastle.

The Dioceses' Commission have been consulted both informally and formally over the last 18 months. Advice from the Diocesan Registrar and the Provincial Registrar has also been sought and been forthcoming.

The main differences and common themes of the two approaches to episcopal appointment are set out below:

	Assistant Bishop	Suffragan Bishop
Appointed by	The Diocesan Bishop after informal advice by others and consent of the Church Commissioners	The Crown following a careful process of consultation in the Diocese and a name put forward by the Diocesan Bishop
Available Candidates	Only those already in episcopal orders	Any suitable person in Holy Orders who has reached the age of 30 years
Formal legal status and delegated powers	Covered by Canon C20 but cannot deputise for the Diocesan Bishop at General Synod or the House of Bishops	Covered by Canon C20 and is able to deputise for the Diocesan Bishop

Costs	Stipend and expenses from Church Commissioners. Housing provided by Diocese	As Assistant Bishop
Pastoral and Liturgical roles	Full episcopal role	As Assistant Bishop
Clergy and other appointment roles in the Diocese	Full episcopal role	As Assistant Bishop

Benefits of the change

- A Suffragan Bishop can be sought to fulfil a clear role description which will compliment other senior staff members and this appointment will strengthen the strategic capacity of the Diocese.
- Assurance that the Diocese is episcopally represented in national forums when the Diocesan Bishop is unable to be present.
- Affirms the Diocese and the whole of its geography, especially including Northumberland into the names of its senior appointments.
- Ending the uncertainty that a suitable candidate can be found to fulfil the role of the second bishop.

The Process:

If the Diocesan Synod is minded to support the motion, the Bishop of Newcastle will, with support from Bishop's Council, submit a formal request to the Dioceses' Commission to revive the See and proceed with the appointments process at the retirement of the present Assistant Bishop.