

Diaconal Appointments - Response of the Connexional Grants Committee (MC/13/81) regarding Partnership Funding with Districts and Circuits

Basic Information

Contact Name and Details	Dr Ian Harrison, Chair, Connexional Grants Committee (CGC) ian.b.harrison@btinternet.com
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolution	5/1. The Council receives the report and accepts the advice of the Connexional Grants Committee to decline the proposal for partnership funding with Districts and Circuits for diaconal appointments.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	The Report is the CGC's response to the Council's request that it should consider the possibility of providing partnership funding with Districts and Circuits for diaconal, presbyteral, and lay appointments. It deals with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the current approach to funding appointments in partnership with Districts and Circuits whether it is feasible for CGC to adjust the current criteria without deviating from the aims of Standing Order 213B and the associated previous directives of the Council.
Main Points	Under the previous "rule of thirds" considerably more funding was available connexionally than is now the case. When the CGC was established in 2008 Districts were given additional funding from the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF) to support work of an inherently local nature. In April 2010 the Methodist Council endorsed the interpretation of Connexional Significance adopted by the CGC. These criteria emphasise the greater than local impact that a grant application needs to demonstrate in order to receive funding. These CGC grants will therefore not subsidise circuit appointments. But virtually all CGC grants support work by presbyters, deacons or lay people so the assumption that CGC does not award grants to fund stipends or salaries is not accurate. Districts have a good deal of uncommitted resource in their Advance Funds and these should be used to support the work for which the funds are intended.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Report to the Methodist Council in October 2013, MC/13/81 Standing Order 213B (3) states " <i>Apart from grants for chaplaincy work or property projects and from the World Mission Fund, grants shall be available only for work of connexional significance</i> ".
Consultations	Connexional Grants Committee, Mission in Britain Subcommittee, the Head of Support Services (Nick Moore)

Summary of Impact

Financial	Improved use of funds for mission in Britain
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1. The issue raised in the Chairs' Paper to Council (MC/13/81)

- 1.1 At its meeting in October, the Council asked the Connexional Grants Committee (CGC) to consider the possibility of providing partnership funding with Districts and Circuits for diaconal, presbyteral, and lay appointments, and to make a report to the January meeting of the Council. The Chairs' paper stated that in the past many diaconal appointments have been made possible through a connexional grant, often in partnership with District and Circuit funding packages. The paper stated that the move to 'connexional significance' has meant that diaconal posts are difficult to sustain after the 5 years period. It claimed that as a consequence some appointments have been discontinued and significant work lost. The Council was asked to consider whether the CGC might be asked to consider partnership funding with Districts and Circuits for diaconal appointments.
- 1.2 In its consideration of the paper, the Council noted the concern expressed by the Head of Support Services (Nick Moore) regarding the CGC's lack of freedom to reinterpret the phrase 'connexional significance' that is enshrined in SO213B. Standing Order 213B (3) states "*Apart from grants for chaplaincy work or property projects and from the World Mission Fund, grants shall be available only for work of connexional significance*". SO213B (2) also requires the CGC to "*establish a clear published application process and set criteria*" – it is these criteria that define connexional significance (Annex 1). In summary these criteria emphasise the greater than local impact that a grant application needs to demonstrate in order to receive funding.

The Response of the CGC

- 2.1 The CGC was established in 2008 to enable work of an innovative, risky and short term nature to be supported – up to 100% if necessary. At the same time Districts were given additional funding (through an increased percentage contribution to DAFs) from the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF) to support work of an inherently local nature.
- 2.2 Since that time, the funding available to the CGC for Mission in Britain (MiB) has declined significantly due to other calls on the CPF – eg Pension Reserve Fund, Venture FX, Fresh Expressions, the Learning Network etc. From having been about £3.5M/yr in 2008 the MiB budget is now less than £1M/yr. Concurrently, the Conference has decided that the CGC should support Chaplaincy and Methodist Heritage projects, which together take about 45% of the available budget and are ongoing demands. Although it successfully brought an end to the former 'rule of thirds' the hoped-for ideal of connexional funds being the sole Methodist support for projects has not been realised in a number of cases because there is not the resource to do this.
- 2.3 There is an implicit assumption in the Chairs' paper that the CGC does not award grants to fund stipends or salaries. In practice virtually every CGC grant supports one or more Methodist presbyter/s, deacon/s or lay employee/s – without them, the work would not be done. However, one of the key features of "connexional significance" is that CGC grants will not subsidise circuit appointments; many of which may previously have been diaconal.

3. Is it desirable or feasible to adjust the current criteria as suggested within the terms of the SO and the associated previous directives of the Council?

3.1 Since 2008 the Methodist Council has endorsed the interpretation of connexional significance adopted by the CGC. The criteria emphasise the greater than local impact that a grant application needs to demonstrate in order to receive funding. We believe that this is the best use of scarce connexional funds which can work “across boundaries” – of various types – to achieve larger visions than the purely local. At the moment there is simply not the resource available at connexional level to support purely local activity.

3.2 We offer three examples of how the current criteria support ministerial and lay appointments:

- Criterion B1 enables work to be funded that involves, or has the potential to involve, several Districts. So a connexional grant was awarded to the London District which enabled the Revd William Davis to be stationed to the New River Circuit where he undertakes work in the Circuit on a part time basis and is funded by the Connexion to spend half of his time ministering to the expatriate Ghanaian community across several Districts.
- Criterion B2 allows for work to be funded that takes place in one location: so the Revd Irfan John (Wales Synod) is mission focussed, targeting an aspect of society outside church culture (refugees and asylum seekers, and the Urdu speaking community in South Wales).
- Criterion B2 also enables work to be funded that is considered strategically important by the Methodist Church; is impossible or overwhelmingly difficult to do elsewhere; and places an unreasonable financial burden on the District/ Circuit in which it is placed. For example a grant awarded to the Birmingham District in 2010-11 funded the stipend of Deacon Kerry Smith in order to enable her to coordinate the Adavu Project which rescues women who have been “trafficked” and forced into prostitution. As a result of this grant the project is having significant benefits beyond the Birmingham District in terms of training and awareness; raising resources; improving the links between different partner agencies; and the modelling of a collaborative way of working at community, district and connexional level.

4. The CGC view - providing partnership funding with Districts and Circuits

4.1 In receiving the “Team Focus Report” the Conference of 2007 established the grant-making framework within which the CGC operates. This states that *“connexional grants will not normally be used as a mechanism for adding small levels of “top-up” funding to district or circuit work.”* However, the same report states that *“In such situations where CGC considers multiple funding is appropriate, the connexional grant component shall contribute at least 50% of the total funds for the work.”*

4.2 The CGC is therefore already able to provide partnership funding of between 50% and 100% of the total project cost with Districts and Circuits for ministerial or lay appointments - but only where the appointments involve work of connexional significance.

4.3 It is for the Conference to decide whether or not it wishes to retain the “connexional significance” criterion: but Districts should be under no illusions that if it is removed there is no greater quantum of funding available than at present so it is unlikely that there would be noticeable change in the numbers of people engaged in projects.

5. Other considerations

5.1 Financial accounting

Under Charity Commission rules the whole of the grant for a given project must be accounted for in the year of the grant award. So, for example, a grant of £50k/yr for 5 years awarded in 2013 is regarded as £250k from the 2013 budget. Given that the current MiB budget is around £600k/yr (after the Heritage subvention) that would allow precisely 2 diaconal appointments to be made in any one year and little else.

5.2 Stationing

There is a clear and well established practice in stationing matching that requires the body with responsibility for an appointment to give an assurance that funding is available for the period of an initial invitation. For example: a District needs to have received confirmation of the 5-year funding commitment before the appointment can enter the matching process. This means that the CGC must commit the entire cost of the project in the year's accounts in which it decides to award the grant: so for a Deacon to be stationed for five years from 2016, the CGC needs to have awarded the grant and committed the money at its meeting in 2014. This requires Districts to plan in advance to an extent that they may be unaware of, and which will be a challenge given the nature of district decision-making processes – and, of course, ties up connexional resource.

5.3 Nature of projects

It is quite clear that the very limited resource available to the CGC can fund only a small number of appointments. Our approach has been to make these appointments “project-based”.

Within these projects it is entirely up to applicants to determine the human resource mix involved: presbyteral, diaconal or lay. Furthermore, although the CGC does not have permission to ignore the concept of connexional significance the opportunities represented by the CGC criteria are considerable.

6. Alternative ways forward

6.1 In its consideration of the issue raised by the Chairs in MC/13/81, the CGC has been able also to review the state of districts' Advance Funds, as it is also responsible for exercising this function on behalf of the Connexion. In doing so it has noted considerable sums of uncommitted funds in the some of the District Advance Funds. The total value of uncommitted funds in the District Advance Funds in the 2012-2013 year totalled £2,612,765 (Annex 2).

6.2 In view of this uncommitted funding, the CGC would ask that the Council challenge Circuits and Districts to 'think bigger' and to create projects that work across traditional boundaries. An additional aspect of this challenge may be the reframing of the current apparent surplus of deacons as a connexional resource and an opportunity to support deacons to be shared over a wider geographical area than single circuits. Doing things differently in relation to funding local appointments would enable more appointments to be made and at the same time can be supported without contravening Standing Order 213B and associated previous resolutions of the Council.

*****RESOLUTION**

5/1. The Council receives the report and accepts the advice of the Connexional Grants Committee to decline the proposal for partnership funding with Districts and Circuits for diaconal appointments.

Annex 1. The Connexional Significance Criteria

A. The organisation applying must (*all of the below*):

1. Agree to abide by Connexional Equal Opportunities, Safeguarding and other relevant policies.
2. Be best able to carry out the proposed project.
3. Have the capacity to carry out this project successfully.

B. The work that you are applying to fund must (*at least one of the below*):

1. Be work that involves, or has the potential to involve, several Districts. The involvement could be at church or Circuit level but must cross District boundaries.

Or

2. Be work that will only take place in one location but fulfils at least one of the following:

- a. The project's outcomes will benefit the wider Connexion.
- b. The work is mission focussed and targets an aspect of society outside church culture where the applicant's specific geographic or demographic situation offers the potential to achieve a very high impact.
- c. Is an ecumenical partnership which has the potential to achieve a very high impact for the wider Connexion.
- d. The level of risk is high but the possible level of benefit is commensurately high.
- e. Is considered strategically important by the Methodist Church, is impossible or overwhelmingly difficult to do elsewhere, and places an unreasonable financial burden on the District/ Circuit in which it is placed.

C. The project must (*all of the below*):

1. Be firmly in line with the Priorities of the Methodist Church
2. Be best funded and monitored through CGC processes.
3. Be work for which there is a clearly identified need.
4. Have clearly identified outcomes which address this need.
5. Be well-planned, budgeted and have a very high chance of achieving these outcomes.
6. Be time-limited or have a plan for attracting alternative sources of funding within 5 years.

Annex 2. Uncommitted District Advance Funds in 2011-12 and 2012-13

District	Name	2012/13 Uncommitted (balance less commitments)	2011/12 Uncommitted (balance less commitments)
1	Synod Cymru		
2	Wales Synod	£245,902.12	£316,688.22
5	Birmingham	£121,748.00	£144,515.00
6	Bolton and Rochdale	£50,755.52	£70,193.81
7	Bristol	£176,733.35	£121,728.92
9	Cumbria	£59,261.00	£77,598.00
10	Channel Islands	£2,237.64	£22,803.77
11	Chester and Stoke	£6,425.00	£14,172.00
12	Cornwall		£226,015.29
13	Darlington	£65,061.00	£59,011.00
14	East Anglia	(£22,497.00)	£44,768.00
15	Isle of Man		(£21,728.00)
16	Leeds	£60,559.35	£842.71
17	Lincoln and Grimsby	£40,671.00	£2,738.00
18	Liverpool	£15,614.00	£2,162.00
19	Manch. and Stockport	£140,399.00	£130,079.00
20	Newcastle	£4,654.00	£6,925.00
21	Lancashire	£29,565.00	£34,922.00
22	Nottingham and Derby	£13,876.77	£7,741.13
23	Northampton	£261,559.62	£244,259.30
24	Plymouth and Exeter	£4,669.00	£5,829.00
25	Sheffield		£58,725.00
26	Southampton	£116,495.35	£74,178.00
27	West Yorkshire	£84,050.00	£211,928.00
28	Wolv. and Shrewsbury	£29,271.71	£84,314.05
29	York and Hull	£54,329.25	£18,258.00
31	Scotland	£60,041.03	£105,279.22
32	Shetland		£33,263.46
34	Beds, Essex & Herts	£171,597.00	£317,029.96
35	London		£76,041.00
36	South East	£247,578.20	£122,484.43
Totals		£2,040,556.91	£2,612,765.27