

Connexional Liaison Officer post for Scotland Review

Basic Information

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	For decision
Draft Resolution	62/1. The Council receives the report. 62/2. The Council appoints the working party as set out in paragraph 40 of the report.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	A report from the working group to the Council following the consultation relating to the ending of the Connexional Liaison Officer for Scotland post; in light of Notice of Motion 110.
Main Points	In responding to Notice of Motion 110 this paper will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Explore the consultation responses in the following four areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Ecumenical engagement ii) Inter Faith engagement iii) Mission at home and abroad iv) Engagement in Scottish civil and society matters B. Establish a future way of working
Consultations	The Council Review of the Connexional Liaison Officer for Scotland (CLOfS) post Working Group consulted with various groups including the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church of Scotland, the Scotland and Shetland District Policy Committees, the URC in Scotland and the Scotland District Ecumenical Stakeholder Group.

Summary of Impact

Financial	The CLOfS post and related expenses were removed from the Connexional budget representing a reduction in the budget of c£60k
Personnel	All processes relating to the post holder were carried out and completed by October 2013

Connexional Liaison Officer post for Scotland Review

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to report to the Council following the consultation relating to the ending of the Connexional Liaison Officer for Scotland (CLOfS) post; in light of Notice of Motion 110 (2013).

Notice of Motion 110 – The Methodist Church in Scotland

2. The Conference directs the Methodist Council:
 - (i) To consult with an appropriate range of stakeholders in order to reassess the work which has been undertaken by the Connexional Liaison Officer for Scotland (CLOfS), especially with the ecumenical partners (notably in active consultation through the EMU Partnership between the Scottish Episcopal, Methodist and United Reformed Churches);
 - (ii) To determine which tasks of the CLOfS role are of continuing significance and importance; and
 - (iii) To bring proposals to the Conference of 2014 as to how such tasks can be undertaken and resourced to make possible the effective future representation of Methodist in and from Scotland.

Setting the Context

3. Following the ending of the CLOfS post, work was carried out to ensure all that the role had undertaken was clearly recorded and understood. Meetings were held involving the incoming Chair of the Scotland District and the Connexional Secretary with the post holder to ensure a smooth transition. The post holder was instrumental in ensuring that the work was clearly detailed and all involved note their gratitude for his diligence in this work.
4. With the tasks clearly detailed it was then possible for consultations to be held within the Scotland District and for a working group to be established to consult with partners. The work within the Scotland District has been the main contributing factor for the strides made in ensuring progress is made. Under the leadership of the new Chair of the District and the Policy Committee, the majority of the work became the responsibility of newly formed groups in the life of the District at the same time as consultations were carried out.
5. The working group met twice, once by telephone and once following the January meeting of the Methodist Council and was able to hear from the partners who had responded and make some recommendations for the future. The working group was well served by having expertise from Wales as a devolved nation and also from Shetland.
6. One early discovery by the working group was that the terminology that is used when referring to Scotland is often misunderstood and so a note is offered here to aid the reader:
‘Scotland and Shetland’ refers to the political geographical regions of Scotland which includes the Shetland Islands
‘Methodism in Scotland’ refers to the connexional presence in both Districts of Scotland and Shetland.

'The Methodist Church in Scotland' is the Scotland District of the Methodist Church and the Methodist Shetland District¹

'Scotland District' refers to the Scotland District of the Methodist Church

'Shetland District' refers to the Shetland District of the Methodist Church

7. Although these may seem straightforward it is important to note that the post in question was created to serve the Methodist Church in Scotland and the Shetland District whilst in reality most of the time was focussed on the Scotland District and serving ecumenical committees and groups.
8. The working group also felt it critical to acknowledge that in light of the upcoming referendum in Scotland that the nature and understanding of Methodism in Scotland may have to be re-examined once the results of the Independence Referendum is known.

A. Exploration of the consultation responses

9. The working group devised a list of partners to be consulted and the way in which the consultation was to be conducted. By utilising the material provided by the CLOfS, the overall tasks undertaken were broken down into four identifiable areas: ecumenical, interfaith, mission and civil engagement. These four areas can be found in the task list and job description of the CLOfS and so provided a useful framework. Various partners including the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church of Scotland, the Scotland and Shetland District Policy Committees, the URC in Scotland and the Scotland District Ecumenical Stakeholder Group were asked for their reflections on the decision to end the post of Connexional Liaison Officer (Scotland) after over 10 years of connexional support.

10. The consultation asked:

"Given the nature of Methodism in Scotland as a small but active denomination, what would you say should be the priorities for ourselves in relation to:

- (i) Ecumenical engagement;
- (ii) Interfaith engagement;
- (iii) Mission at home and abroad;
- (iv) Engagement in Scottish civil and society matters?"

The following provides a summary of the responses received -

(i) Ecumenical engagement

11. The consultation affirmed that there was a shared ecumenical administrative workload relating to the work of the EMU Partnership Scottish Episcopal Church, Methodists in Scotland and the United Reformed Churches in Scotland Group. The loss of the CLOfS has meant that the ecumenical work load has been redistributed through the partnership with much of it falling on the ecumenical post in the Scottish Episcopal Church. It was clear that this process has been difficult for partners and the working group noted its concern that the decisions of the Methodist Conference and Methodist Council had meant increased work for others.
12. The creation of a new Scotland District Ecumenical Stakeholder Group with the Scotland District has already started to address issues relating to ecumenism in the District and was

¹ SO 427(1) says that the Scotland District may also be known as the Methodist Church in Scotland

planning to take on the areas of work they felt most able to take forward. It should be noted however that the engagements from this group is often with partner bodies who cover the whole of the nation of Scotland and so the lines are often blurred as to whether the Scotland District are speaking as a District or as the representative of Methodism in the whole of Scotland and Shetland.

13. It was noted that ecumenical engagement in the Shetland District was very different from that in the Scotland District given the higher proportion of Methodists in Shetland. It was felt that the wider Connexion could learn more from Shetland than it does presently.

(ii) Inter Faith engagement

14. Responses from the consultation indicated that inter faith engagement took place mostly at a local level. It was noted, however, that the CLOfS did attend various committee meetings; such as the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths, which the Scottish Episcopal Church had very much valued.

(iii) Mission at home and abroad

15. All parties who responded indicated the importance of mission at the heart of everything with which Methodism is involved, with some very strong links already in place around the world.
For some within Methodism in Scotland there was a lack of knowledge regarding where to get resources and who to contact with mission queries.

(iv) Engagement in Scottish civil and society matters

16. As already noted earlier, the existence of the upcoming Referendum was highlighted as an event which would change the political landscape of Scotland and Shetland whatever the result and that a return to these issues would be required, once the outcome is known.
17. The working group is very grateful to all those who responded to the consultation and for the insights they shared.

B. Establish a future way of working

18. Having heard from the respondents the working group was able, in conjunction with representatives from both Districts, to note that the following were some of the ways that had either already started, or should start, to be the ways of working without the post in place.

General

19. The working group was constantly led back to the question that had prompted the work of the 'One Connexion: Many Nations and Jurisdictions' working group in 2008 namely "What does it mean to be a connexional Church in a number of nations and jurisdictions?". In returning to the Council report of April 2010, the One Connexion, Many Nations working group thought that there were still some issues that require attention.
20. Further work needs to be undertaken to ensure that our Church, in all the various nations and jurisdictions, feels that it has access to the relevant parts of the Connexional Team and that the work produced by the Team does not focus on England as a dominant way of being.

That being said, there were to be no illusions about the capacity of the Team to work everywhere and so use needs to be made of this partnership model.

21. The working group also noted that with Connexional Team staff now based in both Wales and Scotland, through the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN); it was hoped that this would provide a more 'local' Team presence.
22. It was thought that a meeting of the Scotland and Shetland District representatives to the Council with the Connexional Secretary at some point in each year would be beneficial and would build on the relationships that already exist.
23. The question of Methodist representation at meetings within Scotland also needs to be examined. The consultation revealed that the CLOfS attended a multitude of meetings. The working group would like Methodism in Scotland to use this as an opportunity for the District Chairs in Scotland and Shetland to share the load when attending meetings in Scotland, where a representative from Methodism in Scotland is required. It is the working group's aspiration and affirmation that the Chairs should act connexionally; for example, when attending the General Assembly of Scotland. The opening up of a variety of representative meetings to members of Methodism in Scotland was also to be encouraged.
24. However, the working group also noted that the relationship of the Methodist Church with the Church of Scotland (as the national Church) was one that was significant and had borne much fruit in recent years. It was thought that a formal meeting of the President and the Vice-President of the Conference with the Moderator of the General Assembly either on an annual or regularly occurring pattern would continue to strengthen the existing relationship.
25. The consultation has highlighted that some people are unsure about who to contact concerning matters relating to Methodism in Scotland. The working group would like to ensure that partners are aware that the key contacts are understood to be both Scotland and Shetland based as well as throughout the wider Connexion.
26. Within the two Districts the key people to contact remain the District Chairs, the Synod Secretaries and others intimated through websites and newsletters.
27. Within the Connexional Team those representing the Connexion on matters relating to Ecumenism, Public Issues, Mission (both at home and abroad) as well as the Connexional Secretary are all available as contacts for relevant work.
28. The working group also encouraged the Districts to engage with the DMLN in relation to all matters of learning and development as the most appropriate way either through locally based staff or working with specialist staff based elsewhere.
29. In relation to the four areas looked at through the consultation, the working group proposes the following as the way ahead:
 - (i) **Ecumenical engagement**
30. The creation of the Scotland District Ecumenical Stakeholder Group within the Scotland District is to be celebrated and encouraged. That group has already made contact with other partners in Scotland and is planning work for the future. The Connexional Ecumenical Officer is available for support or input as and when it is required.

The terms of reference for the Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission specify that one of the five Methodist members will be from Scotland and a nomination will be made to the Council in consultation with the ecumenical group.

The Methodist Conference, on the nomination of the Methodist Council, appoints two representatives to the Members' Meeting of ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland); one of them has been the CLOfS and a new name is being brought for nomination by the Council.

(ii) Inter Faith engagement

31. As work moves forward on the strengthening of Inter Faith Networks throughout the Connexion both Districts are encouraged to take part where it is thought appropriate. At the recent Inter Faith Day at Methodist Church House, the input of a representative from Shetland was highly appreciated and the cost of attending such days must not be a barrier.
32. Both Districts are to be encouraged to engage with the Methodist URC Inter Faith Relations Reference Group where possible.

(iii) One Mission

33. The working group encouraged both the Districts to engage with the emerging 'One Mission' thinking and to utilise resources provided through the Connexional Team.

(iv) Engagement in Scottish civil and society matters

34. The creation of the 'Church and Society' group in the Scotland District represents a new way for Methodism to engage. Through this group it is hoped that the Church will continue to be a presence in important civil and society matters. Partnership working is key to making this happen and there are a number of relationships that should be nurtured by this group and the wider Connexion. These include the EMU Partnership, the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office, the Church of Scotland, Church and Society Council, and others interested in working with Methodism on the ground.
35. The working group noted the importance of ensuring that views from Shetland are sought when Methodism in Scotland is responding on civil and society matters and so hopes that communication between the Districts on such matters can be enhanced through virtual communications such as email groups and internet calls, telephone conference calls and exchanging printed communication produced by the Districts. It is hoped that the Church and Society group within the Scotland District would welcome members from Shetland engaging in this way.

Conclusion

36. The working group is therefore of the opinion that all the aspects of the role of the former CLOfS have been examined and where appropriate have been taken on either by Methodists in Scotland and Shetland, by connexional representatives in Scotland and Shetland particularly the Chairs of the Districts, by the relevant members of the Connexional Team or through partnership working with others in Scotland.
37. Given that this work is now being undertaken it is not thought that any additional resources are required from the Central Services Budget other than the amount already included for

payment of membership to various bodies and resourcing provided through existing Connexional Team staff.

38. The working group commends those involved in the Districts for engaging so positively and for taking on important work, having recognised the constraints that exist on connexional budgets.
39. Having noted the issues around terminology and the likelihood of work needing to be carried out following the Referendum, the working group felt the Council should be aware that it may be necessary to re-examine the role of Methodism in Scotland, how it operates across two Districts and if SO 427 offers enough clarity on how Methodism in Scotland operates.
40. Given that the Referendum is scheduled to take place post-Conference but before the next Council meeting it is suggested that a small working group is formed to bring to the Council the wide range of issues that may need to be examined following the Referendum. This group should draw on representatives of Methodism in Scotland, Governance Support and the Connexional Secretary.

Members of the working group:

The Revd Jeremy Dare	(Chair of the Shetland District)
The Revd Dr David P Easton	(Chair of the Scotland District)
The Revd Gareth J Powell	(Assistant Secretary of the Conference)
Mr Doug A Swanney	(Connexional Secretary)

*****RESOLUTIONS:**

62/1. The Council receives the report.

62/2 The Council appoints as members of the working group set out in paragraph 40;

The Revd Jeremy Dare	(Chair of the Shetland District)
The Revd Dr David P Easton	(Chair of the Scotland District)
The Revd Gareth J Powell	(Assistant Secretary of the Conference)
Mr Doug A Swanney	(Connexional Secretary)