Diocese of Newcastle
Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee (DMPC)
2025 Annual Report

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 2024 pending the outcome of the national review of the Measure and also taking account of the Diocesan Governance Review.

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.

5. 2025 was the first year of the 2025-2028 triennium of the current DMPC.

6. Membership in 2025 was as follows:

Members:

Chair, appointed by the Bishop	The Revd Canon Louise Taylor-Kenyon
(ex-officio) Archdeacon of Lindisfarne	The Ven Dr Catherine Sourbut-Groves
(ex-officio) Archdeacon of Northumberland	The Ven Rachel Wood
(elected) Clergy Member	The Revd Canon Dr Hannah Cleugh
(elected) Clergy Member	The Revd Debbie Loughran
(elected) Lay Member	Aidan Evans
(elected) Lay Member	Carol Griffiths
(elected) Lay Member	Susan Ramshaw
(elected) Lay Member	Alice Wilkinson

Officers in attendance were:

Registrar's Clerk	Janet Forrest
DMPC Secretary	Philip Ambrose
Diocesan Director of Mission & Ministry	The Revd Canon Dr Ric Whaite

Meetings

7. Six meetings were held in 2025:
   - January, incorporating visit to Morpeth deanery.
   - March, in person at Church House and online.
   - May, in person at Church House and online.
   - July, incorporating visit to Bellingham deanery.
   - September, an extended meeting at Shepherds Dene.
   - November, in person at Church House and online.

   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 2025. 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. Pastoral Orders can usually be approved by the Bishop, although some require the approval of the Church Commissioners. Pastoral Schemes require the approval of the Church Commissioners. Also, Crown consent is required for any Schemes or Orders where the Crown is patron of any of the benefices affected.

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 2025:

Deanery	**Benefice**
Bamburgh & Glendale	Doddington, Ilderton, Kirknewton & Wooler
Corbridge	Bywell and Mickley
Hexham	Allendale and Whitfield
Morpeth	Kirkwhelpington with Kirkharle and Kirkheaton and Cambo
Morpeth	Seaton Hirst
Newcastle East	Walker

14. The following suspensions of presentation **expired** in 2025 and were not extended:

Deanery	**Benefice**
Tynemouth	Shiremoor

15. The following suspensions of presentation were **put in place or extended** in 2025:

Deanery	**Benefice**
Bamburgh & Glendale	Chatton with Chillingham, Eglingham and South Charlton and Ingram
Bedlington	Killingworth
Newcastle East	Byker St Michael with St Lawrence
Tynemouth	Wallsend St Peter & St Luke

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.

17. The 2025 annual review of suspensions of presentation was considered at the DMPC meeting on 20th November 2025 and the DMPC made a recommendation for each of the 29 individual benefices where suspension was in place. The DMPC's recommendations have either been progressed or are in progress during 2026 and actions to put DMPC recommendations in place will mean that suspensions of presentation will be in place in 28 of the diocese's 114 benefices. The outcome of the review and a summary of progress on its recommendations was reported to the Bishop on 7th January 2026.

Pastoral Schemes and Pastoral Orders

18. Arrangements for pastoral care such as creating new 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 changing existing links (known as pluralities) between benefices and other 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 on proposals that were considered by DMPC during 2025.

21. Six new pastoral schemes came into being in 2025 and eight pastoral orders came into being (seven in 2025 and one in 2026).

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 2025.

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 new triennium, the DMPC sought to:

- be better informed about what was happening across the diocese,
- To support the work of Deanery Plans 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. Regular attendance by the Director of Ministry and Mission at DMPC meetings has helped 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 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. The Archdeacon's reports together with progress reporting on deanery development planning has helped the DMPC gain a more holistic understanding of the Diocese; shared learning about individual deaneries is embedded in regular DMPC agendas.

28. 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.

29. In 2025 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, a Deanery Secretary, and members of deanery development groups.

30. 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. 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, although there was little opportunity for engagement at an early stage in the development of the process. During 2025 Deanery Plans were shared regularly with the DMPC and it is hoped that going forward the DMPC will be able to offer informal support to Deaneries as their plans continue to evolve.

31. The DMPC has continued to make itself more visible, transparent and approachable in all its work, whether written or face to face.

32. 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. In the past the DMPC has become aware of the importance of clarity and the pitfalls of not following due process. The appointment of a new Secretary and the streamlining of processes, and the development of an induction pack and set of standing information have made a significant contribution to the efficiency of DMPC meetings in 2025, and to a greater understanding of its role.

Conclusion

33. The first year of the triennium has been one of consolidation, building on the progress made in 2022-2025. 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.

ANNEX A

Pastoral Schemes – Summary of progress

Details	Progress
BELLINGHAM Deanery Pastoral reorganisation to unite 3 existing benefices into a new united benefice called Lower North Tyne: The 3 existing benefices are: • Chollerton with Birtley and Thockrington. • St Oswald in Lee with St Mary Bingfield. • Humshaugh with Simonburn and Wark.	Scheme came into effect on 01/02/25.
BELLINGHAM Deanery Benefice of North Tyne & Redesdale. Pastoral reorganisation to dissolve the Team Ministry and appoint a first incumbent to the benefice.	Consultation with interested parties completed 20/03/26. Next stage is to publish Scheme for statutory consultation.
CORBRIDGE Deanery Pastoral reorganisation to unite the following 2 benefices into a new benefice called Heddon on the Wall, Matfen with Ryal and Stamfordham: • Heddon on the Wall. • Stamfordham with Matfen.	Scheme came into effect on 01/04/25.
HEXHAM Deanery Pastoral reorganisation to unite the following 3 benefices into a new united benefice called Haydon Bridge, Warden with Newbrough and St John Lee: • Haydon Bridge. • St John Lee. • Warden with Newbrough.	Scheme came into effect on 01/03/25.
MORPETH Deanery Pastoral reorganisation to split the benefice of Bothal and Pegswood with Longhirst such that: • Bothal and Pegswood joins the Benefice of Ashington to become a new benefice called Ashington, Bothal and Pegswood. • Longhirst becomes a new benefice called Saint John, Longhirst	Scheme published for statutory consultation on 28/04/26 and deadline for responses is 15/06/26.
NEWCASTLE CENTRAL Deanery Pastoral reorganisation to unite the following 2 benefices into a new benefice called Fawdon and Kenton: • Fawdon. • The Ascension, Kenton.	Scheme came into effect on 01/04/25.
NEWCASTLE WEST Deanery Pastoral reorganisation to unite the following 2 benefices into a new benefice called Denton and Sugley: • The Holy Spirit, Denton. • The Holy Saviour, Sugley.	Scheme came into effect on 01/04/25.

Details	Progress
TYNEMOUTH Deanery Pastoral reorganisation to unite the following 2 benefices into a new benefice called Balkwell and Percy Main: • Balkwell. • Tynemouth St John.	Scheme came into effect on 01/03/25.

Pastoral Orders – Summary of progress

Details	Progress
ALNWICK Deanery Hold in plurality the following 3 benefices: • Felton. • Longframlington with Brinkburn. • Whittingham and Edlingham with Bolton Chapel.	Plurality came into effect on 01/05/25.
ALNWICK Deanery Hold in plurality the following 3 benefices: • Embleton with Rennington and Rock. • Lesbury with Alnmouth. • Longhoughton with Howick.	Plurality came into effect on 01/05/25.
BEDLINGTON Deanery & Tynemouth Deanery Parish boundary change such that the boundary of Killingworth St John (Bedlington Deanery) expands to include part of the parish area of Earsdon and Backworth (Tynemouth Deanery) and part of the area of Shiremoor (Tynemouth Deanery); and the boundary of Shiremoor is altered to include part of the parish area of Killingworth St John.	Boundary change came into effect on 01/04/26.
CORBRIDGE Deanery Terminate the holding in plurality of the following 2 benefices: • Blanchland with Hunstanworth and Edmundbyers and Muggleswick. • Slaley, Healey and Whittonstall.	Plurality terminated on 01/03/25.
MORPETH Deanery Hold in plurality the following 4 benefices: • Bolam with Whalton and Hartburn with Meldon. • Longhorsley. • Mitford and Hebron. • Netherwitton.	Plurality came into effect on 01/05/25.
MORPETH Deanery Hold in plurality the following 2 benefices: • Morpeth. • Stannington.	Plurality came into effect on 01/02/25.
MORPETH Deanery Hold in plurality the following 3 benefices: • Cresswell and Lynemouth. • Widdrington. • Ulgham.	Plurality came into effect on 01/04/25.
NEWCASTLE CENTRAL Deanery Parish boundary change such that the boundary of Gosforth All Saints expands to include part of the parish area of Gosforth St Hugh.	Boundary change came into effect on 01/09/25.