

Some Implications of the Proposals for the Diocese of Bradford

1. Proposal The Report proposes a new Richmond and Craven archdeaconry (also known as the Ripon episcopal area) which is quite different from the present Craven archdeaconry. The combination of most of the two present archdeaconries also reduces the number of archdeacon posts by one.

Comment: Some prefer a rural/urban mix in a Diocese - which is true of the new Diocese taken as a whole but not in the episcopal area. Is there an extra advantage of focussed mission in rural areas through this arrangement?

2. Proposal The Report proposes that the new diocesan bishop will carry national responsibilities as well as minister in an area, and the area bishops will concentrate on local mission. The area Bishop of Bradford is expected to engage with Bradford Met. and interfaith issues. Leeds and Huddersfield episcopal areas will not have a Dean

Comment: The report distributes bishops, deans and archdeacons across the 5 episcopal areas in the light of where Cathedrals are and not in the light of a 'mission need'. Even though Leeds is recognised as offering many opportunities for ministry, it does not have a Dean to share the load. Does the suggested diocese wide distribution use the resources of Deans to the best?

3. Proposal The report suggests that the Diocesan Bishop delegates most of his responsibilities in an area to an area bishop.

Comment: This practical suggestion needs more thought. For most people in the diocese, most of the engagement between bishop and people will be through the area bishop. Does this help us in our mission?

4. Proposal Bradford Cathedral continues as a secondary Cathedral.

Comment: This pragmatic suggestion needs theological examination. Legally there is no such thing as a 'secondary Cathedral'.

5. Proposal Diocesan Administration will be based in the Leeds Diocesan Office

Comment: The Report pays little attention to the kind of support the Diocesan Office gives – and does not explore the functions which need 'the personal touch' and are not done well 'remotely'. Which central structures can assist our mission - and how? Would there be regional offices—or area offices?

6. Proposal Wakefield Cathedral will house the seat of the Bishop.

Comment: The reasoning for this is a bit thin (historic centre for West Riding; good travel times to London, light duty episcopal area). No attention is paid to how this suggestion will be received in other dioceses. If there has to be one diocese, then are there not better arguments for a different place as the seat of the Bishop. Where is the local 'natural' centre 'with energy and drive'?

An Introduction to the Diocese Commission Report's Proposal for the Diocese of Bradford

Why are we Reviewing Diocesan Boundaries?

Over the years, centres of population change. The Church of England has always tried to 'be where the people are' - that's the heart of the parish system. With larger groupings of parishes (such as dioceses) the church sets out to serve regional communities. Practically the parish or diocese aims to 'mirror' the geographical distribution of communities, which helps the church make a contribution to civic life. As population centres change, so church arrangements need to change. This Report focuses on three dioceses in Yorkshire and looks at how closely the boundaries fit with the present local authority boundaries and suggests some changes which it hopes will be an improvement.

Most of these changes will impact at diocesan/archdeaconry level, but they will also change how parishes/deaneries are resourced - by whom and where from.

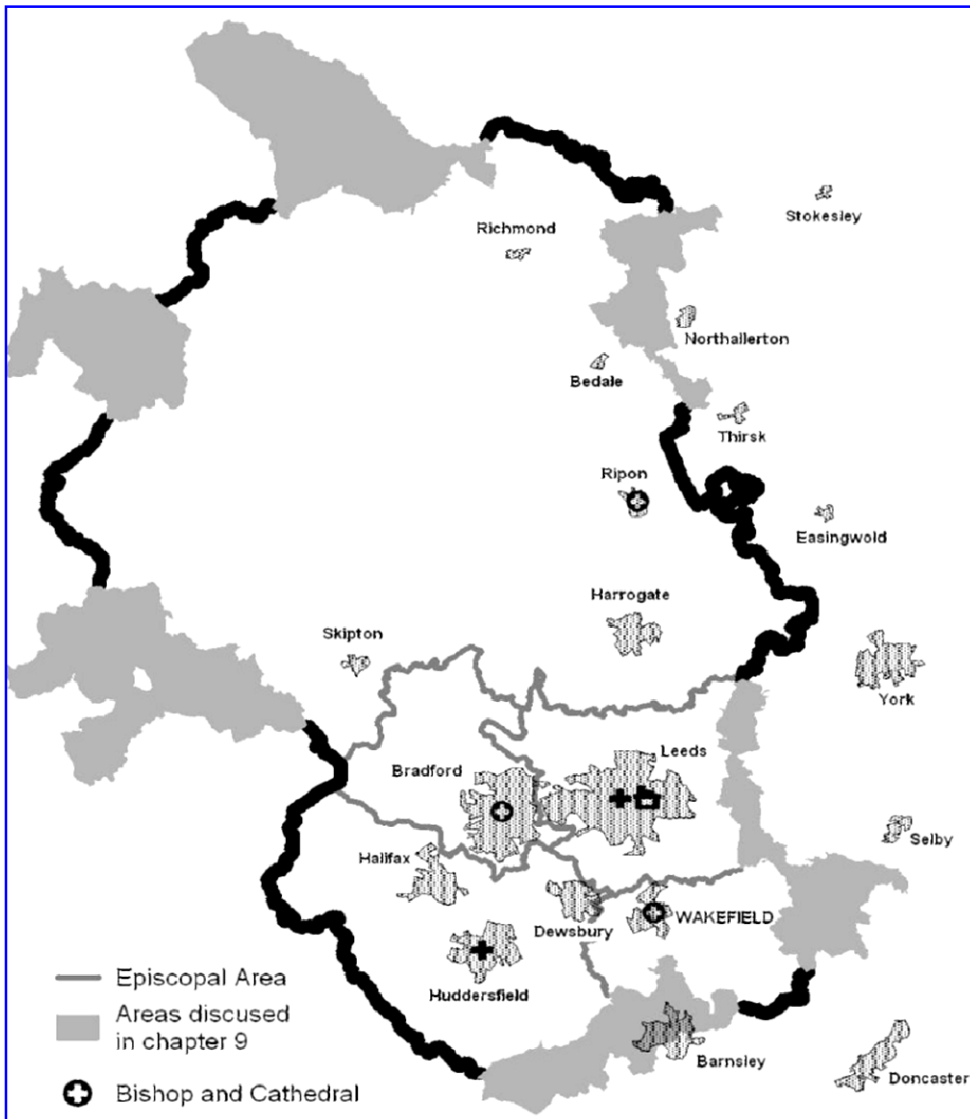
The new Diocese proposed in the Report

A new diocese is created which combines most of the three Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds and Wakefield. Within this large diocese there are 5 new archdeaconries which are also called 'episcopal areas' because they have an area bishop as well as an archdeacon [see map on next page]. This new diocese has one Diocesan Bishop (who also has his own episcopal area) and four area bishops. The main advantages are that (i) these areas 'mirror' present local authority boundaries more closely and (ii) each bishop has a smaller area to cover and so is better able to be involved locally. Some parishes are invited to move to a next door diocese if they are in a neighbouring local authority.

5 Assumptions Guiding the Report

1. Change should be assessed on how it *improves* the mission of the church - principally in the links between diocese/archdeaconry and civic life.
2. Mission happens best when dioceses relate to actual communities with their sense of local identity. In the report this is assumed to be when episcopal areas mirror local authority boundaries (Note - unfortunately no account is taken of when these local boundaries do not reflect local feelings about community identity!).
3. The new diocese should 'make sense' to those outside church circles;
4. The new diocese should be as cost effective as possible, and this is achieved mainly by the elimination of duplication or diocesan structures;
5. The new diocese should be sustainable into the future.

The Diocese Commission Report (and a summary) are available at www.bradford.anglican.org/news/story.php?PageID=11011128b95



Changes to the present Diocese of Bradford

1. Bradford Diocese is divided up between Leeds Metropolitan District, Bradford Metropolitan District and the county of North Yorkshire.
2. The new Bradford episcopal area (which is the new Bradford Archdeaconry) includes Craven parishes in Bradford Met. and loses present Bradford parishes in Leeds Met.
3. Most of Craven Archdeaconry joins with Richmond Archdeaconry to form one large episcopal area and (with local agreement) may lose the Lancashire and Cumbria parishes. Two archdeacon posts are replaced by one post.
4. Bradford Cathedral continues as a secondary Cathedral with its staffing being reviewed, whilst Wakefield becomes the cathedral for the whole Diocese.

Reasons given in support of a single large Diocese

1. Aligning the new episcopal areas as proposed removes the way that archdeaconries/dioceses straddle local authority boundaries. These new areas are expected to improve civic engagement. For example, this makes sense for Leeds which presently is unhelpfully divided between 4 dioceses.
2. The proposal for 5 episcopal areas means that they are smaller than any diocese, and so can improve the area bishop's engagement in the local mission of the church and also retain an intimacy between bishop and people.
3. The new diocese will need one administrative support structure (based in Leeds) and not three, which could achieve savings (no figures available yet).
4. The new diocese needs one Diocesan Bishop who will be based in Wakefield. The arrangement is also less costly than now. (1 Diocesan Bishop + 4 Area Bishops costs less than 3 Diocesan Bishops + 2 Suffragan Bishops).
5. The new larger diocese will share the financial load of all the poorer regions.
6. One diocese needs one diocesan cathedral (at Wakefield) and so the other two are retained as 'secondary' cathedrals - possibly with some staff reductions.
7. One diocese with an enlarged board of ministry, education etc. is considered to be more cost effective than three sets of boards (no figures available yet).
8. The changes in this plan (lose 2 Diocesan bishops and gain 2 assistant bishops, lose 1 archdeacon and 2 Diocesan offices) should save money.

Many of these arguments will be revisited when a financial analysis is available.

What is the status of this Proposal in the Dioceses Commission Report?

The Dioceses Commission would like to see if there is enough support for their proposal to merit them doing more work (including financial analysis) to develop a formal proposal for consideration by Diocesan Synods and General Synod.

All interested parties (anyone who lives in the region) may make a comment. There are also meetings to look at this suggestion - meetings of Bishops, Bishop's staffs, Cathedrals, Bishop's Councils, Deanery Synods and PCCs to study the proposal and spot the difficulties and suggest improvements.

The comments need to be in by May 9th, and then we wait to hear the outcome. The Dioceses Commission may revise the proposal a bit and then send it out for formal consultation. If there are well reasoned objections, then the scheme could be radically changed, or dropped. Now is your chance to help shape the future!

Please email your comments to yorkshire.review@c-of-e.org.uk