



REPORT FOR HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIV AND THE DICASTERY FOR BISHOPS



**REPORT ON THE CONSULTATION
WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD
ON THE PROPOSAL TO UNIFY THE
DIOCESES OF LEEDS, MIDDLESBROUGH, AND HALLAM**

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PASTORAL LETTER TO THE DIOCESES OF LEEDS, MIDDLESBROUGH AND HALLAM

23 AUGUST 2026



PASTORAL LETTER TO PARISH COMMUNITIES AND LAY FAITHFUL FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF THE INTER-DIOCESAN CONSULTATION PROCESS DIOCESES OF LEEDS, MIDDLESBROUGH AND HALLAM

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am writing to update you on the progress that has been made since my appointment by His Holiness Pope Leo XIV as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Middlesbrough in December 2025, and as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Hallam in March this year.

In the letters appointing me to those roles, Pope Leo asked me to initiate, among the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam, 'a phase of study and discussion' with a view to their 'possible future union'.

Over the past eight months, an extensive consultation process has been undertaken across our three dioceses, with all encouraged to submit their thoughts online, by letter, or through in-person meetings. It has brought together representatives from all of the one hundred and ninety-three parishes, including lay women and men, deacons and priests, institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, the leaders of schools and school multi-academy trusts, and a range of Catholic organisations and apostolates.

Engagement in the consultation has enlivened a zeal for mission that is evident in the hearts of those who took part. It demonstrates too, the love and appreciation for the rich heritage of the saints and martyrs, and pride in the Catholic patrimony that exists throughout the whole of the historic County of Yorkshire and other areas of the territorial jurisdictions which our dioceses encompass.

The consultation has enabled us to consider the challenges we face in the future; it has also opened before us opportunities to strengthen our participation in the mission entrusted by Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to His Church, and to renew our vigour in responding to the work of evangelisation. The guiding principle which has underpinned our consultation has been not about how diocesan structures might change, but how those structures can better support the Church's mission today and in the future.

The results of this consultation process have now been compiled into a comprehensive report which I hope to complete and send to the Holy Father, through the Apostolic Nuncio and the Dicastery of Bishops in Rome, by the end of August for his and their consideration.

I will also publish the report before mid-October so that all those who have taken part in the consultation process can see just how valuable their generous participation has been. We will be able to examine the key themes which have emerged and use the report to learn how we can enhance and improve our pastoral care and our proclamation of the Gospel in today's world.

Whatever decision might be taken by Pope Leo about a possible future union, the strengthening of our ecclesial communion and the collaborative work which has already begun between our three dioceses will be of mutual benefit to our service of the Church's continuing mission in the future.

The Holy Father has said, *"The mystery of union with Christ lies at the heart of mission."*¹ It is this truth which has been at the heart of my vision for our consultation process, the vision and purpose which Our Lord Himself gave to His Church on the night before His passion and death: *"That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."*² And the mission we must pursue is the one given by Our Lord to His Apostles: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*³

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to our response to the Holy Father's request for this period of study and discussion within the three diocesan communities of our one family in the Catholic faith. Trusting in divine providence and in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we now commend the outcome of this consultation process to the judgement of the Successor of the Apostles.

Please pray for me and for our priests and deacons, that the Lord Jesus Christ will: bless us with His strength to serve you who are the living stones of His Temple; grant us His wisdom to lead you who are His Holy People; and, pour out His love upon us to care for you who are His Beloved brothers and sisters.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help ... Pray for us!

Our holy patron St Wilfrid ... Pray for us!

Holy Martyrs of Yorkshire and Padley ... Pray for us!



✠ Right Reverend Marcus Stock
Bishop of Leeds
Apostolic Administrator of Middlesbrough
Apostolic Administrator of Hallam

Given at Leeds on 13th August 2026, and appointed to be read at celebrations of Mass, and made available to be taken away from the churches and chapels of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam, on the Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Saturday 22nd/Sunday 23rd August 2026.

¹ Message of Pope Leo XIV for the 100th World Day of Mission, 25 January 2026

² John 17:21

³ Matthew 28:18-20

SECTION 1: HOW THE CONSULTATION WAS CONDUCTED

In the preparation for, and the organisation of, the consultation meetings with the People of God across the three dioceses (see Appendix 1), I adopted the same methodology as implemented at the Synods which I attended in Rome in October 2023 and October 2024¹. This methodology, utilising the discernment process of ‘Conversations in the Spirit’ allowed each participant in the consultation meeting to contribute to the prayerful discussion (see Appendix 4)

Participants were invited to reflect on the proposal to unite the three dioceses and to consider the points of convergence (strengths) and divergence (challenges) which emerged from their discussions (see Appendix 7). These points were fed-back by the participants and recorded for my consideration and to assist with the formation of this report.

As well as the meetings with the lay faithful and their parish clergy, consultation took place also with the following groups of people across the three dioceses and at the national level with the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales. The constituent groups were as follows:

- a. Laity
- b. Clergy
- c. Online
- d. Former Nottingham Diocesan Parishes
- e. Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life
- f. College of Consultors
- g. Council of Priests of the Diocese of Leeds
- h. Leeds Diocesan Pastoral Council
- i. Diocesan Trustee Boards
- j. Diocesan Curiae
- k. Senior Leadership of Diocesan Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts
- l. Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales

¹ I was one of 3 Bishops representing the President and Conference of Bishops of England and Wales at the meetings of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

SECTION 2: HISTORICAL AND CURRENT CONTEXT

2.1 Historical Context

Consideration of a proposal to unify, or perhaps more accurately ‘reunify’, the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam has its roots in the historical development of the Catholic Church in Yorkshire. Following the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales in 1850, the Diocese of Beverley was established to serve the whole of the County of Yorkshire (see Appendix 5.1). During this period, Catholic life experienced significant growth, with increasing numbers of clergy, parishes and faithful.

In 1878, the Diocese of Beverley was divided into the Dioceses of Leeds and Middlesbrough to provide more effective pastoral governance and administration. Just over a century later, in 1980, the Diocese of Hallam was created, comprising 55 parishes transferred from the Diocese of Leeds and 16 parishes from the Diocese of Nottingham (see Appendix 5.2). As a result, the three dioceses share a common historical foundation and continue to serve communities across the same broad geographical region (see Appendix 6). The three dioceses share, too, common spiritual patrons: Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St Wilfrid.

In more recent history, the consideration of a possible unification of dioceses emerged following a number of developments within the Church in England and Wales. In his 2018 *Ad Limina* Report, the Right Reverend Terence Drainey, Bishop Emeritus of Middlesbrough, highlighted the challenges facing diocesan structures and encouraged reflection on future models of governance and mission. His recommendations suggested that the Diocese of Middlesbrough should proceed with a discernment regarding unification with another diocese to strengthen pastoral provision in the years ahead.

2.2 Current Context

Today, the three dioceses collectively comprise 193 parishes, supported by 116 diocesan priests in active ministry, 51 missionary and religious priests, and 41 permanent deacons. Together they represent a significant Catholic presence across Yorkshire and the surrounding areas.

2.2.1 Number of Clergy

	Leeds	Middlesbrough	Hallam	Total
Parishes	76	65	52	193
Diocesan Priests in Active Ministry	64	30	22	116
- of whom are under 60 years of age	25	9	9	43
- of whom are 60 – 75 years of age	38	17	10	65
- of whom are over 75 years of age	1	3	3	7
Religious/Missionary/Priests: from other Dioceses (Holding office in Diocese)	13	22	16	51
Retired Priests	47	15	12	74
Permanent Deacons	15	10	16	41

For further detail, see Appendices 2 and 3.

2.2.2 Population and Geographical Statistics

The proposed unification of the Dioceses of Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough would create a single diocese covering approximately 6,024 square miles, serving a total population of 5.97 million people, including 495,818 Catholics (around 8.3% of the total population). The new diocese would encompass a significant geographical area, bringing together three dioceses with similar proportions of Catholic population but differing pastoral and demographic challenges.

Diocese of Hallam

Area of the Diocese: 919m²

Catholic Population: 140,571 (8.3% of total - 1,693,628)

Diocese of Leeds

Area of the Diocese: 2,007 square miles

Catholic Population: 229,453 (8.3% of total - 2,764,498)

Diocese of Middlesbrough

Area of the Diocese: 3,098 square miles

Catholic Population: 125,793 (8.3% of total - 1,515,714)

Unified Diocese

Area of the Diocese: 6,024 square miles

Catholic Population: 495,818 (8.3% of total - 5,973,714)

For further detail, see Appendix 2.

2.2.3 Pastoral Statistics

The Pastoral statistics for the three dioceses (see Appendix 3) show that each have experienced substantial declines between 2000 and 2025. Combined average Mass attendance has fallen from 83,409 to 40,221 (a decrease of approximately 52%), while baptisms have reduced from 4,569 to 2,786 (in England and Wales, the overall birth rate rose from 2000 to a peak in 2010 with immigration as a contributing factor, before dropping steadily to a record low in 2025).

During the same period, the number of incardinated priests holding office has declined from 347 to 128 (a reduction of 63%), yet the number of parishes has decreased from 274 to 193 (a reduction only of 30%), resulting in priests taking on an increasing workload for the care of church premises and the responsibilities associated with this.

These figures illustrate common pastoral trends across all three dioceses, including declining sacramental participation, fewer clergy, and ongoing parish reorganisation. A unified diocese would bring together resources, personnel and expertise to respond more effectively to these challenges while continuing to serve a large and geographically diverse Catholic community across the region.

SECTION 3: LAITY

I arranged for 9 in-person consultation meetings (see Appendix 1) to include every parish from each diocese to take place across the geographical area of the three dioceses.

Invitations to these consultation meetings were extended to parish clergy and to lay members who exercised an active role within their parish and were members of those recognised consultative bodies provided for in the Church's Canon Law, such as Parish Finance Committees and Parish Pastoral Councils. The choice of this membership was to ensure that each representative would be able to contribute to the discussions at the meeting with some knowledge of the practical, pastoral and spiritual strengths and challenges of present in their parish community.

The nine meetings took place as follows:

Diocese of Middlesbrough

Friday, 6th March 2026 – Saint Andrew's Parish, Teesville, Middlesbrough

Thursday, 26th March 2026 – Burn Hall, York

Tuesday, 14th April 2026 – Saint Mary's College, Hull

Diocese of Leeds

Thursday, 19th March 2026 - Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School, Leeds

Friday, 20th March 2026 - All Saints Catholic College, Huddersfield

Thursday, 7th May 2026 - St Bede & St Joseph Catholic College, Bradford

Tuesday, 12th May 2026 - Mount Saint Mary Catholic High School, Leeds

Diocese of Hallam

Friday, 22nd May 2026 – All Saints High School, Sheffield

Thursday, 11th June 2026 – Saint Peter in Chains Parish, Doncaster

There was a total of 80 participant groups with approximately 4 to 6 people within each group across the nine meetings.

The meeting participants were presented with two main questions to discern and five sub-questions to encourage discussion:

Question 1

How could bringing the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

Question 2

What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one bishop have for the clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

The responses received from each of the in-person consultation meetings were collated and reviewed in order to identify the most prominent themes emerging across the three dioceses. The analysis below presents the most frequently identified areas of discussion, arranged in order of prominence. Percentages refer to the proportion of the 80 consultation groups which raised each theme, and should, therefore, be read as indicative of the relative weight given to each matter by participants rather than as a measure of individual opinion.

3.1 Question 1 – Areas of Convergence - Strengths

3.1.1 *Sharing/pooling resources*

The pooling of resources was identified as the most significant potential strength of a reunified diocese, with 80% of the consultation groups referring to this theme. Participants recognised that the combined use of financial resources, clergy, buildings, administrative capacity, professional expertise, facilities and wider diocesan infrastructure could provide a more robust foundation for mission and pastoral provision. This was seen as offering the possibility of reducing unnecessary duplication, strengthening areas of limited capacity, and enabling the Church across the region to respond more effectively to present and future needs.

3.1.2 *Collaboration, unity & shared identity*

A further prominent strength, identified by 50% of the consultation groups, was the prospect of fostering greater collaboration, unity, and a shared diocesan identity. Participants observed that bringing the three dioceses together could encourage a wider sense of belonging, reduce isolation between communities, and support a more coherent approach to pastoral planning. The language used by participants suggested a desire for the Church in the region to act with greater common purpose, while still honouring the particular histories, traditions and pastoral realities of local communities.

3.1.3 *Mission, evangelisation & renewal*

Half of the consultation groups also regarded unification as a possible opportunity for renewed mission, evangelisation and spiritual growth. Participants referred to the potential for fresh energy, renewed confidence and a more outward-looking approach to parish life. In particular, the process was seen by some as a moment to reconsider how the Church serves those on the margins, reaches those who are no longer closely connected to parish life, and supports communities in becoming more intentionally missionary.

3.1.4 *Learning/best practice*

The opportunity to share learning and good practice was raised by 49% of the consultation groups. Participants noted that each diocese possesses particular strengths, experience and established approaches which could be of benefit to the wider region. A unified structure was, therefore, viewed as a possible means of identifying what already works well, encouraging mutual learning between parishes and diocesan departments, and making proven initiatives more widely available.

3.1.5 *New initiatives/change opportunity*

For 46% of the consultation groups, the proposed unification was seen as an opportunity to begin afresh, to innovate and to develop new pastoral and administrative models. Participants recognised that, although structural ...

...change can be demanding, it may also create the conditions for renewal if approached with clarity, prayerfulness and openness. This theme reflected a willingness among some groups to view the process not simply as a reorganisation, but as a potential catalyst for positive and purposeful change.

3.1.6 *Youth, vocations & formation*

Opportunities relating to youth ministry, vocations, formation and future leadership were identified by 30% of the consultation groups. Participants considered that a larger diocesan structure could enable a more coordinated approach to supporting young people, nurturing vocations to priesthood, diaconate, religious life and lay ministry, and developing formation opportunities for those called to leadership and service within the Church.

3.1.7 *Geography, regional access & hubs*

Geographical considerations, regional access and the possible development of hubs were raised by 26% of the consultation groups. While participants recognised the scale of the proposed diocese, some also saw advantages in more intentional regional or deanery-based working. The use of local hubs, strengthened regional networks, and clear points of access was viewed as a possible way of ensuring that pastoral support and diocesan services remain close to the communities they serve.

3.1.8 *Administration, structures & efficiency*

Administrative efficiency and the streamlining of structures were identified by 26% of the consultation groups. Participants considered that a unified diocese could provide opportunities to standardise policies, simplify processes, rationalise duplicated systems and strengthen governance. This was seen as potentially enabling clergy, parishes and diocesan staff to focus more effectively on pastoral and missionary priorities, provided that administrative reform remained proportionate and responsive to local needs.

3.1.9 *Lay involvement/empowerment*

Greater lay involvement and the fuller use of the gifts and charisms of the faithful were raised by 24% of the consultation groups. Participants recognised that any future diocesan model would require the active participation of lay people in parish life, pastoral planning, governance, formation and outreach. This theme reflected a desire for co-responsibility, whereby clergy and laity work together more intentionally in the service of the mission of the Church.

3.1.10 *Resilience/critical mass*

A further 18% of the consultation groups referred to the possibility of greater resilience and critical mass. Participants suggested that a larger diocesan body might be better placed to withstand future pressures, support smaller or more vulnerable communities, and plan sustainably for the long term. This theme was closely connected to concerns about clergy numbers, parish viability and the need to ensure that pastoral provision remains stable in the years ahead.

3.1.11 *Leadership, vision & governance*

Leadership, vision and governance were identified as potential strengths by 16% of the consultation groups. Participants noted that a single diocese unified under one bishop, who would be supported by appropriate structures of delegation and consultation, could provide clearer strategic direction and a stronger public voice for the Catholic Church across the region. This was seen as beneficial only if accompanied by shared decision-making, effective communication and genuine attention to local circumstances.

3.1.12 *Economies of scale/cost efficiencies*

Economies of scale and potential cost efficiencies were identified by 11% of the consultation groups. Participants referred to possible advantages in procurement, contracts, shared services and collective purchasing power. Although this was not among the most frequently raised themes, it was nevertheless recognised as a practical consideration, particularly in relation to the responsible stewardship of diocesan resources.

3.2 Question 1 - Areas of Divergence - Challenges

3.2.1 *Clergy shortages, parishes & closures*

The most frequently identified challenge concerned clergy shortages, parish viability and the future pattern of sacramental and pastoral provision. This theme was raised by 65% of the consultation groups. Participants expressed concern that unification could coincide with, or accelerate, difficult decisions regarding parish mergers, church closures, clergy deployment and access to the sacraments. The responses indicate that any future structure would need to address these matters with pastoral sensitivity, careful planning and clear communication.

3.2.2 *Bishop workload, visibility & delegation*

Concern regarding the workload, visibility and accessibility of the bishop was raised by 59% of the consultation groups. Participants questioned whether a single bishop could remain sufficiently available serve the needs of the clergy, parishes, schools and diocesan communities across such a large area. Many responses, therefore, pointed to the importance of strong delegation, effective episcopal or regional support, and structures which would enable pastoral closeness to be maintained.

3.2.3 *Scale, geography & remoteness*

The scale and geography of a reunified diocese were identified as a challenge by 43% of the consultation groups. Participants referred to the practical implications of distance, travel, meeting logistics, accessibility and the risk that more remote communities could feel disconnected from diocesan life. These concerns suggest the need for a diocesan model which takes geography seriously and avoids assuming that all communities experience access and participation in the same way.

3.2.4 *Loss of local identity/takeover fears*

Fear of losing local diocesan or parish identity was also raised by 43% of the consultation groups. Participants expressed concern that unification might be experienced by some communities as absorption or takeover rather than as a genuine coming together. This theme highlights the importance of honouring the distinctive history, patrimony, devotional life and pastoral character of each diocese and parish community within any future arrangement.

3.2.5 *Administration, structures & process complexity*

Administrative structures and the complexity of implementation were identified by 31% of the consultation groups. Participants noted that aligning systems, policies, processes, employment arrangements, governance structures and diocesan departments would be a significant undertaking. The responses indicate that any movement towards unification would require a clear implementation plan, realistic timescales and careful attention to the practical burdens placed upon clergy, staff and volunteers.

3.2.6 *Change resistance, uncertainty & anxiety*

Resistance to change, uncertainty and anxiety were raised by 29% of the consultation groups. Participants recognised that structural change could generate apprehension, particularly where people are unclear about the purpose, process or possible consequences of the proposal. This theme underlines the need for careful pastoral accompaniment, opportunities for continued dialogue, and communication which is both honest and reassuring.

3.2.7 *Lay involvement, formation & capacity*

The need for lay formation, leadership capacity and co-responsibility was raised by 26% of the consultation groups. Participants acknowledged that a larger diocesan structure would require well-formed lay people able to support parish life, pastoral planning, administration, catechesis and outreach. This was not viewed simply as a practical necessity, but as an expression of the baptismal dignity and mission of the whole People of God.

3.2.8 *Communication, consultation & bringing people along*

Communication, consultation and the need to bring people into the process were raised by 23% of the consultation groups. Participants stressed that transparency, regular updates, clear explanations and meaningful feedback would be essential if confidence in the process were to be maintained. The responses suggest that people wish not only to be informed, but also to understand how their contributions have been received and considered.

3.2.9 *Cultural differences & inconsistent practice*

Cultural differences and inconsistent practice across the three dioceses were raised by 26% of the consultation groups. Participants referred to variations in diocesan culture, parish practice, relationships with local authorities, school structures and established ways of working. These differences were not necessarily regarded as obstacles, but they were seen as matters...

... requiring careful recognition, dialogue and discernment if a unified diocese were to function coherently.

3.2.10 *Centralisation vs subsidiarity/local voice*

Concerns about over-centralisation and the weakening of local voice were raised by 19% of the consultation groups. Participants emphasised the importance of subsidiarity, with decisions being taken as close as possible to the communities affected by them. This theme suggests that any future diocesan structure would need to balance central coordination with genuine local participation and representation.

3.2.11 *Financial, legal & staffing implications*

Financial, legal and staffing implications were identified by 19% of the consultation groups. Participants raised questions regarding debt, property, liabilities, employment arrangements, potential redundancies, donations, legacies and the allocation of resources. These concerns demonstrate the importance of due diligence, transparency and prudent stewardship in any further consideration of unification.

3.2.12 *Mission distraction/will unification solve core problems?*

Finally, 15% of the consultation groups expressed concern that structural reorganisation could distract from the Church's primary mission of evangelisation, pastoral care and the fostering of vocations. Some participants questioned whether a unification would, in itself, address the deeper challenges facing parish life. This theme indicates the need to ensure that any structural proposal remains clearly ordered towards mission and renewal, rather than becoming an administrative end in itself.

3.3 Question 2 - Areas of Convergence - Strengths

3.3.1 *Shared resources, services & support*

The sharing of resources, services and practical support was identified as the most significant positive implication, being raised by 70% of the consultation groups. Participants considered that a unified diocesan structure could allow clergy, finances, buildings, professional expertise, administrative services and pastoral resources to be deployed more effectively across the wider region. This was viewed as a means of strengthening parish life, reducing duplication, supporting areas of particular need and enabling diocesan services to operate with greater consistency and resilience.

3.3.2 *Unity, shared vision & identity*

Greater unity, a shared vision and a stronger sense of diocesan identity were identified by 53% of the consultation groups. Participants recognised that working under the oversight of the bishop of a unified diocese could provide a clearer spiritual and pastoral direction, encouraging the three diocesan communities to act with a greater sense of common purpose. This was seen as having the potential to foster belonging, mutual support and coherence in...

... pastoral planning, while still requiring careful attention to the distinctive traditions and experiences of local communities.

3.3.3 *Mission, evangelisation & spiritual renewal*

Renewed mission, evangelisation and spiritual renewal were raised by 45% of the consultation groups. Participants suggested that the process of unification could provide an opportunity to refocus diocesan and parish life on the Church's missionary calling, encouraging a more outward-looking approach to evangelisation, outreach, adult faith formation and pastoral care. The theme also reflected a desire for any structural change to be clearly rooted in spiritual renewal rather than solely in administrative reorganisation.

3.3.4 *Youth, vocations, schools & future formation*

Positive implications for youth ministry, vocations, schools, families, formation and future leadership were identified by 39% of the consultation groups. Participants considered that a larger diocesan framework could support a more coordinated approach to engaging young people, nurturing vocations and strengthening links between parishes, schools and families. This was also seen as an opportunity to invest more intentionally in formation for clergy, lay leaders and those discerning particular forms of service within the Church.

3.3.5 *Administration, systems & structural efficiency*

Administrative systems and structural efficiency were raised by 38% of the consultation groups. Participants noted that unification could create opportunities to streamline policies, align governance processes, rationalise duplicated systems and strengthen the overall effectiveness of diocesan administration. Such developments were regarded as beneficial where they would support, rather than burden, the pastoral and missionary life of parishes and diocesan communities.

3.3.6 *Best practice, learning & innovation*

The sharing of best practice, learning and innovation was identified by 36% of the consultation groups. Participants recognised that each diocese has developed particular strengths, models of ministry and practical approaches which could be of value to the wider region. A unified diocese was, therefore, viewed as a possible means of encouraging mutual learning, identifying effective practice, promoting innovation and enabling successful initiatives to be adapted more widely.

3.3.7 *Regional hubs, subsidiarity & local representation*

Regional hubs, subsidiarity and local representation were raised by 35% of the consultation groups. Participants considered that, given the geographical scale of a unified diocese, effective local and regional structures would be essential. The use of hubs, deanery-based support, local representatives or satellite provision was seen as a way of maintaining pastoral closeness, supporting participation and ensuring that decision-making remains attentive to local circumstances.

3.3.8 *Communication, transparency & digital infrastructure*

Improved communication, transparency and digital infrastructure were identified by 34% of the consultation groups. Participants emphasised the importance of clear messaging, reliable communication channels, accessible information, effective feedback mechanisms and appropriate digital tools. This theme indicates that confidence in any future diocesan arrangement would depend significantly upon the quality, regularity and openness of communication throughout the process.

3.3.9 *Economies of scale, finance & procurement*

Economies of scale, finance and procurement were raised by 26% of the consultation groups. Participants referred to the potential for more effective purchasing, improved procurement arrangements, shared contracts, property savings and stronger financial resilience. While not the primary focus of the responses, this theme was recognised as an important aspect of responsible stewardship and prudent use of diocesan resources.

3.3.10 *Leadership, governance & support for the diocesan bishop*

Leadership, governance and support for the diocesan bishop were identified by 26% of the consultation groups. Participants suggested that a unified diocese could benefit from clearer strategic leadership and stronger governance structures, provided that sufficient support, delegation and consultation were built into the model. References were made to the possible need for assistant bishops, episcopal vicars, or other forms of regional leadership to help sustain pastoral presence and effective oversight.

3.3.11 *Lay involvement, leadership & synodality*

Lay involvement, leadership and synodality were raised by 25% of the consultation groups. Participants saw potential for a reunified diocese to encourage greater co-responsibility between clergy and laity, making fuller use of the gifts, experience and charisms present among the faithful. This theme included references to Parish Pastoral Councils, Finance Committees, lay co-leadership, consultation and wider participation in the life and mission of the Church.

3.3.12 *Long-term planning & resilience*

Long-term planning and resilience were identified by 18% of the consultation groups. Participants noted that a larger diocesan structure could support more sustainable planning, greater confidence in future provision and stronger responses to demographic, financial and pastoral pressures. This was seen as particularly relevant to ensuring that parishes, schools and diocesan services are equipped to meet future challenges with clarity and stability.

3.4 Question 2 - Areas of Divergence - Challenges

3.4.1 *Parish closures, clergy shortages & sacramental provision*

The most frequently identified negative implication concerned the possible closure or amalgamation of parishes, the continuing shortage of clergy, and the impact this could have upon sacramental and pastoral provision. This theme was raised by 50% of the consultation groups. Participants expressed concern that a larger diocesan structure might lead to changes in parish models, reduced local access to Mass and the sacraments, and alterations to clergy deployment or autonomy. The responses indicate that any future consideration of these matters would require careful pastoral planning, clear communication and a sensitive recognition of the importance of parish communities in the lives of the faithful.

3.4.2 *Scale, geography & logistics*

The increased geographical scale of a reunified diocese was identified as a significant concern by 38% of the consultation groups. Participants referred to the practical difficulties associated with distance, travel, meeting logistics, access to diocesan events and the differing needs of local communities across a large and diverse region. This theme suggests that any future diocesan model would need to make explicit provision for regional accessibility, local support and structures which prevent more distant or rural communities from becoming marginalised.

3.4.3 *Communication, consultation & change management*

Communication, consultation and change management were raised as areas of concern by 36% of the consultation groups. Participants noted the risk that insufficient communication, limited feedback, unclear messaging or inadequate opportunities for engagement could undermine confidence in the process. There was also concern that expectations might be raised without being matched by practical delivery. The responses, therefore, underline the importance of transparent communication, realistic timescales, regular updates and a clear explanation of how the views of the faithful are being received and considered.

3.4.4 *Visibility & pastoral access to the bishop*

The possible remoteness of the bishop and reduced pastoral access were identified as a potential challenge by 34% of the consultation groups. Participants expressed concern that one bishop serving a much larger diocese might be less visible in parishes, schools and local communities, with fewer opportunities for personal contact and pastoral presence. This theme points to the need for strong structures of delegation, regular episcopal presence across the region and clear pastoral mechanisms to maintain closeness between the bishop and the people entrusted to his care.

3.4.5 *Fear of Over-centralisation & loss of local voice*

Concerns regarding over-centralisation and the possible weakening of local voice were raised by 33% of the consultation groups. Participants feared that decision-making in a larger diocese could become too distant from the communities affected by it, resulting in uniform approaches that do not sufficiently reflect local circumstances. Particular reference was made to the importance of subsidiarity and the risk that rural or peripheral areas might be overlooked. The responses indicate that any future model would need to balance diocesan coordination with meaningful local representation and participation.

3.4.6 *Change resistance, uncertainty, fear & trust*

Change resistance, uncertainty, fear and trust were identified as concerns by 29% of the consultation groups. Participants recognised that significant structural change could generate anxiety, particularly where the purpose, process and practical consequences are not yet fully understood. Some responses referred to the possibility of people disengaging, stepping back from parish involvement or losing confidence in diocesan leadership if the process is not handled carefully. This theme highlights the importance of pastoral accompaniment, honest communication and a gradual approach which allows people to understand and participate in the discernment.

3.4.7 *Financial, legal, property & staffing risk*

Financial, legal, property and staffing risks were raised by 29% of the consultation groups. Participants expressed concern about the implications of debt, liabilities, donations, legacies, property ownership, employment arrangements, potential job losses and staffing uncertainty. Questions were also raised about how resources would be allocated and whether investment might be constrained during a period of transition. These responses demonstrate the need for careful due diligence, transparent financial planning and prudent stewardship of diocesan assets and responsibilities.

3.4.8 *Loss of identity/takeover/belonging*

The possible loss of identity, belonging and local distinctiveness was identified by 28% of the consultation groups. Participants expressed concern that unification could be experienced by some as a takeover rather than as a mutual coming together, particularly if the history, culture and pastoral character of each diocese were not sufficiently acknowledged. This theme points to the need to honour existing diocesan and parish identities, protect what is valued locally, and ensure that any new structure fosters belonging rather than displacement.

3.4.9 *Lay capacity, subsidiarity & leadership workload*

Lay capacity, subsidiarity and leadership workload were raised by 25% of the consultation groups. Participants recognised that a larger diocesan structure could place increased demands upon lay leaders, clergy, parish volunteers, and those already carrying significant responsibilities within local communities. Concern was also expressed that insufficient formation could...

... weaken genuine co-responsibility. The responses suggest that any future model would need to invest intentionally in lay formation, support local leadership and ensure that responsibility is shared in a sustainable and realistic manner.

3.4.10 *Administrative complexity, systems & implementation burden*

Administrative complexity, systems alignment and the burden of implementation were identified by 24% of the consultation groups. Participants noted that bringing together different diocesan systems, policies, processes, governance arrangements, and operational practices would be a substantial undertaking. Concerns were also raised about monitoring, evaluation and the potential strain placed upon diocesan staff and parish communities during a period of transition. This theme indicates the need for a carefully phased implementation plan, adequate resourcing and clear accountability throughout the process.

3.4.11 *Schools, safeguarding & education impacts*

Implications for schools and safeguarding were raised by 20% of the consultation groups. Participants referred to the possible effects upon Catholic Multi-Academy Trust arrangements, relationships with education authorities, inspection processes, safeguarding structures and school communities. Given the central role of Catholic education within diocesan life, this theme suggests that any future arrangements would need to protect the Catholic life and mission of schools, maintain robust safeguarding practice and ensure continuity of support for governors, leaders, staff, pupils and families.

3.4.12 *Mission distraction/failure to address core decline*

Finally, 14% of the consultation groups expressed concern that structural reorganisation could distract from the Church's central mission or fail to address the deeper issues facing parish life. Participants questioned whether unification would, in itself, respond to declining Mass attendance, reduced vocations, fewer parishioners and the need for renewed evangelisation. This theme indicates that any structural change would need to be clearly presented as a means of supporting mission and renewal, rather than as an administrative solution detached from the spiritual and pastoral challenges facing the Church.

SECTION 4: CONSULTATION WITH THE CLERGY - SUMMARY

I met with the priests and deacons of the three dioceses at separate meetings in order to gain feedback from the clergy about their hopes and fears about a potential unification of the three dioceses. The meetings took place as follows:

Diocese of Middlesbrough

Tuesday, 3rd February 2026 – Mercure Hotel, York

Diocese of Leeds

Friday, 13th March 2026 – Saint Anne’s Cathedral Hall, Leeds

Diocese of Hallam

Wednesday, 8th April 2026 – Hallam Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Sheffield

See Appendix 9 for the transcripts of the notes taken at the meetings. The following is a summary of the consultation:

4.1 Areas of Convergence - Strengths

Across all three meetings, there was a strong and consistent recognition that the proposed unification process is being undertaken to secure the future mission, pastoral care, and sustainability of the Church in the region. The emphasis was repeatedly placed on mission, evangelisation, and long-term viability, rather than simply managing decline.

A second common theme was the desire to create one diocesan family while preserving the strengths and traditions of the existing dioceses. I consistently stressed that any unification of dioceses would not be a takeover by one diocese of another, but rather an opportunity to draw upon the best practices, resources, and experiences of each diocese.

All the groups of clergy demonstrated a willingness to engage constructively with the proposals. Questions and concerns were generally raised with the intention of ensuring a successful transition rather than opposing unification.

4.2 Areas of Divergence - Challenges

The areas of divergence raised by the clergy were mainly practical rather than objections in principle to unification. Concerns centred on my workload as a bishop, clergy deployment, remuneration, the use of the cathedrals, governance, parish sustainability, property matters, diocesan identity, communication, accessibility of leadership, and the timescale and process for implementation. While each diocese emphasised different local concerns, there was little, if any, evidence of opposition to the proposal for the unification of the three dioceses.

4.3 Key Themes

4.3.1 *Mission and Evangelisation*

A dominant theme throughout all discussions was the importance of maintaining a missionary focus. I repeatedly emphasised that the objective of any unification must be the Church's mission to “make disciples of all nations”,

... and the need to strengthen our work of evangelisation, adult formation, catechesis, and priestly vocations, rather than simply responding to demographic challenges or trying to consolidate resources.

4.3.2 *Sustainability of Clergy and Parish Structures*

The challenges posed by declining numbers of clergy and the sustainability of parish structures featured prominently. Statistical data presented in the Middlesbrough meeting highlighted significant pressures on priest-to-parish ratios, reinforcing the rationale for exploring new diocesan structures.

4.3.4 *Care and Support for Clergy*

Clergy welfare emerged as an important concern. Questions were raised about priestly appointments, retirement arrangements, healthcare, pensions, remuneration, and the impact of larger diocesan structures on older priests. Repeated assurances were given that best practices from each diocese would be adopted and that clergy would be appropriately supported.

4.4.5 *Governance and Practical Implementation*

All three consultation meetings of the clergy explored practical questions surrounding implementation, including timelines, diocesan administration, canonical processes, property considerations, communication structures, cathedrals, parish arrangements, and the possible use of auxiliary bishops or delegated leadership structures.

4.4.6 *Identity and Culture*

There was widespread recognition that bringing the three dioceses together would involve cultural as well as administrative challenges. The Middlesbrough diocesan clergy explicitly discussed the difficulty of integrating dioceses with different identities, while the Leeds diocesan clergy highlighted existing bonds and fraternity between clergy as a positive foundation for future unity.

4.5 Conclusion

The three consultation meetings of the clergy reveal a remarkable degree of agreement among clergy across the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough, and Hallam. While each clergy group raised different practical concerns reflecting their local circumstances, there was broad support for exploring unification and a shared understanding that it should serve the Church's mission, strengthen pastoral provision, promote vocations and evangelisation, and ensure long-term sustainability. The principal challenges identified relate not to the desirability of closer collaboration, but to managing implementation carefully, supporting clergy, preserving local strengths, and building a shared diocesan identity across a larger geographical area.

SECTION 5: ONLINE CONSULTATION - SUMMARY

An online version of the consultation questions was created and circulated across the three dioceses to enable more of the faithful to prayerfully take part in this consultation about the future of their local Church.

A total of 840 responses were received through the online consultation, comprising of 244 respondents from the Diocese of Leeds, 226 respondents from the Diocese of Middlesbrough, 330 respondents from the Diocese of Hallam and 40 respondents who did not provide their parish/diocese information. A total of 192 respondents' questionnaire submissions were deemed outside the scope of the consultation and were, therefore, not included in the analysis.

The respondent sample was broadly balanced by gender, with 49% recorded as female and 51% as male. In terms of age profile, 5% of respondents were aged 16–30, 38% were aged 31–60, and 57% were aged 61 or over. This age distribution is broadly reflective of current demographic trends within the Catholic population of England and Wales.

The responses received from each of the online consultation questionnaires were collated and reviewed in order to identify the most prominent themes emerging across the three dioceses.

The analysis of the online consultation in Appendix 10 presents the most frequently identified areas of discussion, arranged in order of prominence. Percentages are calculated on the basis of the 648 respondents who submitted valid responses within the scope of the consultation and indicate the proportion of respondents who raised each theme. They should, therefore, be understood as an indication of the relative prominence of each matter among participants, rather than as a measure of individual opinion. Further cross-analysis was undertaken by age group and diocese in order to provide a deeper understanding of the views expressed by the lay faithful according to both age profile and home diocese.

The online consultation data shows a clear and consistent pattern across both questions; respondents recognised the potential benefits of unification most strongly in relation to shared resources, greater efficiency, reduced duplication and wider access to expertise.

For Question 1, shared resources and economies of scale emerged as the leading perceived strength overall, while clergy deployment, priest shortages and parish continuity were also prominent themes.

For Question 2, the same practical advantages were again most frequently identified, alongside broader expertise, improved pastoral cover and more consistent communication, governance and strategy. At the same time, the principal concerns were equally consistent: clergy overstretch, priest shortages, parish closures, reduced access to Mass and the sacraments, administrative complexity and the risk of losing local or diocesan identity.

Across the three dioceses, the broad trends were similar, though with some notable differences in emphasis. Middlesbrough Diocese respondents were particularly positive about shared resources and economies of scale, with this theme reaching 58% for

Question 1 and remaining the leading positive implication for Question 2. Leeds Diocese respondents gave strong weight to both practical benefits and concerns, especially clergy workload and parish closures, while Hallam Diocese respondents showed a relatively strong emphasis on parish continuity and the need to protect local access. Concerns about loss of local or diocesan identity were most pronounced in Middlesbrough Diocese in some of the Question 1 data, suggesting a particular sensitivity around heritage, belonging and the experience of being absorbed into a larger structure.

The age analysis also reveals important differences. Younger respondents, particularly those aged 16–30, tended to place greater emphasis on unity, collaboration, wider networks and future-facing opportunities, while also expressing strong concern about parish closures, administrative complexity and the loss of local identity.

Those aged 31–60 were often the most likely to identify shared resources and efficiency as positive outcomes, but they also registered high levels of concern about clergy workload and reduced sacramental access.

Respondents aged 61 and over were more likely to emphasise parish continuity, local stability and the practical need for shared resources, while their concerns centred mainly on clergy shortages, parish closures and administrative integration.

Overall, the data suggests cautious openness to the practical and missionary opportunities of unification, provided that local identity, pastoral access, clear communication and sustainable clergy support are carefully protected.

A detailed analysis of this online consultation can be found in Appendix 10.

SECTION 6: PARISHES FORMERLY IN THE NOTTINGHAM DIOCESE - SUMMARY

In 1980, when the Diocese of Hallam was created, 16 parishes from the Diocese of Nottingham and 55 parishes from the Diocese of Leeds were included to establish the new Diocese. This provided a unique context for further discussion in the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire areas of the Diocese of Hallam. Clergy meetings took place, and submissions were received from the clergy, parish finance committees and pastoral councils. It is important to note that some of the original parishes from the Diocese of Nottingham have now closed or amalgamated with neighbouring parishes.

The parishes that were included in this specific local consultation were:

- i. Parish of the Immaculate Conception, Spinkhill
- ii. Parish of Saint Michael the Archangel, Hathersage
- iii. Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows, Bamford
- iv. Parish of Our Lady, Queen of Peace, Chesterfield (comprising the Church of the Annunciation, Chesterfield and the Church of the Holy Spirit, Dronfield)
- v. Parish of Saint Joseph, Retford
- vi. Parish of Saint Jude (comprising Saint Helen's Church, Oldcotes, Saint Joseph the Worker Church, Worksop and Saint Mary's Church, Worksop)

The following is a summary of the consultation:

6.1 Areas of Convergence - Strengths

6.1.1 *Strong Desire to Remain Together Within Hallam's Existing Parish Family*

The most consistent theme throughout the responses is the desire for the former Nottingham Diocese parishes that transferred to Hallam Diocese in 1980 to remain together as part of the existing Hallam diocesan family within any new unified diocese. Both clergy and parishioners repeatedly emphasised that nearly 50 years of shared diocesan life have created a strong sense of belonging and common identity. The deanery clergy unanimously agreed that they did not wish to be separated from the diocesan family of parishes of which they have been part for the last 46 years.

6.1.2 *Limited Appetite for Reunification with Nottingham Diocese*

Across most submissions, there was little enthusiasm for returning to the Diocese of Nottingham. Many respondents noted that current parishioners have no living memory of the pre-1980 arrangements and, therefore, feel little attachment to Nottingham Diocese. Several submissions highlighted that people's social, cultural and transport links, are now oriented towards Sheffield rather than Nottingham. Those in Worksop reported 90% support for remaining within Hallam Diocese and joining the new diocese, while those in Spinkhill reported no expressed desire to return to Nottingham Diocese.

6.1.3 *Acceptance of the Proposed Unification*

While some concerns were raised, the majority of responses appeared to accept the likelihood of diocesan unification and sought to focus on making it work effectively. Many viewed the unification as an opportunity for stronger leadership, increased resources, improved administration, and enhanced opportunities for evangelisation, youth ministry and outreach.

6.1.4 *Importance of Local Identity*

A common concern was preserving local identity within a much larger diocesan structure. Respondents frequently expressed appreciation for the accessibility and sense of belonging that came from being part of the relatively small Diocese of Hallam. There was strong support for structures such as deaneries, local episcopal leadership, auxiliary bishops or co-cathedrals that would preserve local connections within the new diocese.

6.1.5 *Need for Good Communication and Strong Leadership*

Many respondents stressed that effective communication would be critical if changes were to be successfully implemented. There was also widespread recognition that strong episcopal leadership would be necessary to maintain unity, support clergy, and help parishioners understand and accept future developments.

6.2 Areas of Divergence - Challenges

6.2.1 *Attitudes Towards the Unification Itself*

Although most accepted the proposed unification, there remained some differences in enthusiasm. Some viewed the unification positively as an opportunity for renewal, stronger governance and greater diocesan capacity. Others remained unconvinced and would have preferred Hallam Diocese to continue as an independent diocese. A small minority expressed concern that a larger diocese could become remote, bureaucratic and disconnected from parish life.

6.2.2 *Levels of Confidence in Centralisation*

Responses differed regarding the benefits of centralisation. Some regarded greater centralisation of resources as a positive development that could improve administration and pastoral initiatives. Others worried about over-centralisation, loss of local responsiveness, and the challenges of managing a geographically large and culturally diverse diocese.

6.2.3 *Opinions Within Individual Parishes*

While most parishes expressed overwhelming support for remaining connected to Hallam Diocese's existing structures, some variation existed. Those in Worksop showed very strong support for remaining with Hallam Diocese and joining the new diocese (90%). Those in Chesterfield generally supported the unification but included a small number who preferred a return to Nottingham Diocese. Those in Retford recorded more concerns about both the consultation process and the scale of the proposed diocese, with some parishioners preferring Hallam Diocese to remain independent.

6.3 Key Themes Emerging from the Consultation

6.3.1 Identity and Belonging

The strongest theme was the desire to preserve a sense of identity and belonging. Parishioners consistently expressed attachment to Hallam Diocese, the City of Sheffield, their local deaneries and neighbouring parishes rather than to historical diocesan boundaries. Identity and unity were explicitly identified as the two principal priorities amongst those in the Spinkhill area.

6.3.2 Unity and Continuity

Many respondents stressed that the existing Hallam Diocese parishes should not be fragmented. There was a strong preference for maintaining established relationships built over nearly five decades.

6.3.3 Local Representation Within a Larger Diocese

Respondents recognised that a larger diocese may be unavoidable but wanted structures that would maintain parish participation, support clergy, preserve local voices and ensure accessibility to diocesan leadership.

6.3.4 Concern for Parish Sustainability

A number of practical concerns emerged, particularly regarding future parish life, clergy support, safeguarding, communication and the preservation of churches. Those in Worksop specifically reported concern that no churches should be closed as a consequence of any reorganisation.

6.3.5 Consultation Process

Several respondents felt the consultation would have benefited from greater clarity about the proposed outcome and more detailed information. Some believed the process should have focused more explicitly on how the unification would be implemented rather than whether it should occur.

6.4 Conclusion

The consultation reveals a clear and consistent message from the parishes formerly in the Nottingham Diocese but now within Hallam Diocese. While there is broad acceptance of the proposed unification of the Dioceses of Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough, there is an equally strong desire that the former Nottingham parishes remain part of the Hallam diocesan family and are not transferred back to Nottingham Diocese. The predominant themes are identity, unity and continuity. Parishioners generally see themselves as belonging to Hallam Diocese and, in many cases, to the wider Sheffield area rather than to Nottingham. Although concerns exist regarding centralisation, communication and the potential remoteness of a larger diocese, most respondents appear willing to embrace the new diocesan structure provided local identities, parish relationships and effective pastoral support are preserved. Overall, the consultation suggests significant support for a unified diocese, accompanied by a strong expectation that local communities and the bonds formed over the past 46 years remain intact.

SECTION 7: INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

I held a meeting with the members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life (Religious Communities) present the Diocese of Middlesbrough and invited those across the Diocese of Leeds and Hallam to take part in an online questionnaire.

Diocese of Middlesbrough

Thursday, 9th April 2026 at Thicket Priory, York – twenty-five representatives from ten Religious Communities were in attendance.

Diocese of Leeds and the Diocese of Hallam

An online questionnaire was circulated to the Religious Communities with the Dioceses of Leeds and Hallam.

Three Religious Communities from the Diocese of Leeds, and one Religious Community from the Diocese of Hallam took part in this part of the consultation. The following questions were asked to the Religious Communities:

- i. Can you identify any specific benefits and/or difficulties which the unification of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam might bring to the presence, witness and apostolate of your religious community and to religious communities generally?
- ii. How might the charisms and contribution made by communities of religious life to the work of evangelisation, and to the various aspects of the local Church's mission (i.e., parish pastoral and spiritual life, Catholic education, adult faith formation, retreats, promotion of vocations, etc.), be enhanced within a new unified diocese (comprising the current Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam)?

Again, the Religious were asked to contribute three areas of convergence and three areas of divergence for each question, further reflecting the synodal model used at the Synod on Synodality in Rome.

A copy of the transcript of the notes can be found in Appendix 11. The following is a summary of the consultation:

7.1 Question I - Areas of Convergence - Strengths

Across both the written responses and the consultation meeting, there was broad support for greater collaboration between Religious Communities and the wider Church. Religious Communities saw potential benefits in sharing resources, strengthening evangelisation, promoting vocations, and fostering a stronger sense of unity across the region. There was also a common recognition of the need to make better use of lay ministry and the gifts of the laity in response to declining numbers of priests and religious.

Another recurring theme was the importance of maintaining strong relationships, communication, and consultation. Religious communities wished to remain connected to diocesan leadership and emphasised the need for listening, synodality, and ongoing engagement in any future structures.

7.2 Question I - Areas of Divergence – Challenges

While most contributors recognised opportunities arising from unification, opinions differed on the extent of the benefits. Some saw a larger diocese as providing greater visibility, more opportunities for mission, and stronger collaboration, while others were concerned that local needs and the voices of smaller communities could be lost within a larger structure.

There were also differing views on future ministry models. Some suggested increased reliance on lay pastoral ministers, deacons, and alternative parish leadership structures, while others focused more on supporting priestly vocations and ensuring sacramental provision through clergy.

7.3 Question I - Key Themes

7.3.1 Mission and Evangelisation: Unification could strengthen outreach, missionary activity, and collaboration across Yorkshire.

7.3.2 Vocations and Visibility: Religious communities believe they need greater visibility, especially in schools and among young people, to encourage vocations.

7.3.4 Governance and Communication: Preference for local leadership structures, such as episcopal vicars, rather than excessive centralisation.

7.3.5 Priest Shortage and Ministry Models: Significant concern about declining clergy numbers and the need to explore new models of ministry involving lay people and deacons.

7.3.6 Sacramental Provision: Ensuring continued access to Mass and the sacraments, particularly for religious houses, hospitals, and prisons, was seen as a priority.

7.3.7 Support for Religious Communities: Concerns were raised about safeguarding requirements, administrative burdens, and the risk of smaller communities becoming less visible or less supported.

7.4 Conclusion of Question I

The overall tone was cautiously positive towards diocesan unification, provided that it remains focused on mission rather than administration. Religious communities expressed a desire for greater collaboration, stronger visibility, and new approaches to ministry, while also stressing the importance of local leadership, consultation, and safeguarding the pastoral and sacramental needs of communities across the diocese.

7.5 Question II - Areas of Convergence - Strengths

There was strong agreement that Religious Communities have a significant contribution to make to the mission of the Church and that a unified diocese could provide greater opportunities for collaboration, evangelisation, vocation promotion, retreats, adult faith formation, and outreach. Both the written responses and the consultation meeting highlighted the diverse charisms of religious communities as a valuable resource for the wider Church.

Religious Communities also agreed that they should have a greater voice within diocesan structures and decision-making processes. There was a shared desire for stronger communication, consultation, and representation to ensure that the gifts and experience of religious life are fully utilised.

7.6 Question II - Areas of Divergence - Challenges

While most Religious Communities welcomed the opportunities presented by a larger diocese, some expressed concern that religious communities, particularly women religious and smaller communities, are not always fully understood or valued. A number of Religious Communities suggested that existing diocesan culture can sometimes overlook the contribution of religious communities beyond traditional expectations.

There were also differing perspectives regarding collaboration. Some Religious Communities spoke positively about increased cooperation across diocesan boundaries, while others highlighted a lack of opportunities for collaborative ministry and concerns that the wisdom and prayerful presence of ageing religious are not always recognised.

7.7 Question II - Key Themes

7.7.1 Evangelisation and Mission: Religious communities see significant opportunities to expand evangelisation, retreats, pastoral outreach, and faith formation within a larger diocesan structure.

7.7.2 Recognition of Religious Life: A recurring theme was the need for greater appreciation of the unique witness of consecrated life, including prayer, hospitality, spiritual formation, justice, and peace ministries.

7.7.3 Collaboration and Communion: Contributors emphasised fostering stronger relationships among Religious Communities and greater cooperation with diocesan structures and parishes.

7.7.4 Vocations and Visibility: Greater visibility among young people and wider promotion of religious vocations were seen as important priorities.

7.7.5 Inclusion and Consultation: Many Religious Communities stressed the importance of religious communities being actively involved in planning, governance, and pastoral discernment.

7.7.6 Value of an Ageing Religious Population: Religious Communities highlighted that older religious continue to make an important contribution through prayer, witness, and pastoral presence.

7.8 Conclusion of Question II

The Religious Communities reveal broad support for a unified diocese as a means of strengthening evangelisation, collaboration, and visibility of religious life. However, this support is accompanied by a desire for greater recognition, inclusion, and consultation of religious communities. The overall message is that the success of any future unified diocese will depend on its ability to value the distinct charisms of religious life and integrate them into the Church's mission and leadership.

SECTION 8: COLLEGES OF CONSULTORS

I convened meetings of the College of Consultors in each diocese and invited members to share their views, aspirations, and concerns regarding the proposed unification. An indicative secret vote was subsequently conducted among the voting members of the Colleges of Consultors.

The meeting with the Colleges of Consultors took place as follows:

Diocese of Leeds

Wednesday, 15th July 2026 – Hinsley Hall, Leeds

Diocese of Middlesbrough

Tuesday, 21st July 2026 – Our Lady's Parish, Acomb, York

Diocese of Hallam

Friday, 24th July 2026 – Hallam Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Sheffield

8.1 Diocese of Leeds

The following Resolution was tabled at the meeting of the College of Consultors held on 15th July 2026:

The College of Consultors of the Diocese of Leeds supports the work being undertaken by the Apostolic Administrator, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Middlesbrough, Leeds and Hallam as one diocese. The College of Consultors recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed unified diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Nottingham.

The resolution was passed unanimously by the College of Consultors.

Secret Vote	Vote Count
Yes	10
No	0
Abstain	0
Total Number constituting the College of Consultors: 12	
Total Number of Consultors present at the meeting on 15 th July 2026: 10	

8.2 Diocese of Middlesbrough

The following Resolution was passed at the meeting of the College of Consultors held on 21st July 2026:

The College of Consultors of the Diocese of Middlesbrough supports the work being undertaken by the Apostolic Administrator, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Middlesbrough, Leeds and Hallam as one diocese. The College of Consultors recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed unified diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Nottingham.

The resolution was passed unanimously by the College of Consultors.

Secret Vote	Vote Count
Yes	9
No	0
Abstain	0
Total Number constituting the College of Consultors: 9	
Total Number of Consultors present at the meeting on 21 st July 2026: 9	

8.3 Diocese of Hallam

The following Resolution was passed at the meeting of the College of Consultors held on 24th July 2026:

The College of Consultors of the Diocese of Hallam supports the work being undertaken by the Apostolic Administrator, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Middlesbrough, Leeds and Hallam as one diocese. The College of Consultors recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed unified diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Nottingham.

The resolution was passed unanimously by the College of Consultors.

Secret Vote	Vote Count
Yes	7
No	0
Abstain	0
Total Number constituting the College of Consultors: 7	
Total Number of Consultors present at the meeting on 24 th July 2026: 7	

Further documentation relating to this consultation can be found in Appendix 8.3.

SECTION 9: COUNCIL OF PRIESTS

Canon 501 §2 of the Code of Canon Law states that, “When the see is vacant (*sede vacante*), the Council of Priests lapses, and its functions are fulfilled by the college of consultors.”

For this reason, the only Council of Priests constituted to be consulted was that of the Diocese of Leeds. I invited the Council of Priests in the Diocese of Leeds to attend a consultation meeting and provide their views, aspirations, and concerns regarding the proposed unification. The meeting of the Council of Priests took place on Tuesday, 21st July at Hinsley Hall, Leeds.

The following Resolution was tabled at the meeting of the Council of Priests held on 21st July 2026:

The Council of Priests of the Diocese of Leeds supports the work being undertaken by the Bishop of Leeds, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam as one diocese. The Council of Priests recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed unified diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Nottingham.

The resolution was passed unanimously by the Council of Priests.

Secret Vote	Vote Count
Yes	13
No	0
Abstain	0
Total Number constituting the Council of Priests: 14	
Total Number of Consultors present at the meeting on 21 st July 2026: 13	

Further documentation relating to this consultation can be found in Appendix 8.4.

SECTION 10: DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

Canon 513, §2 of the Code of Canon Law states that, “When the see is vacant (*sede vacante*), the pastoral council lapses.” For this reason, the only Diocesan Pastoral Council constituted to be consulted was that of the Diocese of Leeds. I convened a meeting of the Leeds Diocesan Pastoral Council, and I asked the members of the Council to share their views, aspirations, and concerns regarding the proposed unification.

The meeting with the Leeds Diocesan Pastoral Council took place on Wednesday, 29th July 2026, at Hinsley Hall, Leeds, and the following resolution was passed:

The Members of the Pastoral Council of the Diocese of Leeds support the work being undertaken by the Bishop of Leeds, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam as one diocese. The Pastoral Council recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed unified diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Nottingham.

The resolution was passed unanimously by the Leeds Diocesan Pastoral Council.

Secret Vote	Vote Count
Yes	11
No	0
Abstain	0
Total Number constituting the Leeds Diocesan Pastoral Council: 17	
Total Number of members present at the meeting on 29 th July 2026: 11	

Further documentation relating to this consultation can be found in Appendix 8.5.

SECTION 11: DIOCESAN TRUSTEE BOARDS

I met with the Boards of Trustees of each of the three dioceses and invited the members of the Boards to share their views, aspirations, and concerns regarding the proposed unification. Consultation with the Trustee Boards took place at the following meetings:

Diocese of Leeds

Wednesday, 20th May 2026 – Hinsley Hall, Leeds

Tuesday, 30th June 2026 - Hinsley Hall, Leeds

Diocese of Hallam

Wednesday, 10th June 2026 - Hallam Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Sheffield

Wednesday, 29th July 2026 - Hallam Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Sheffield

Diocese of Middlesbrough

Wednesday, 24th June 2026 - Diocesan Curial Office, Middlesbrough

Tuesday, 14th July 2026 - Diocesan Curial Office, Middlesbrough

An indicative vote was subsequently conducted among the voting members of the Trustee Boards, and the following notes and resolutions were passed:

The Trustees noted:

- A. Consultation has taken place with parish clergy, parish representatives, the College of Consultors and other stakeholders in the Catholic Dioceses of Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough regarding the possible unification of the three dioceses.*
- B. The Trustees recognise that any decision to proceed with such a unification must be made only after the completion of appropriate legal, financial, property, operational, governance and regulatory due diligence and after consideration of the implications for the charity, its beneficiaries, employees, clergy, parishes and other stakeholders.*
- C. The Trustees have considered their duties under charity law, including their duty to act only in the best interests of the charity and its beneficiaries, to act prudently, and to ensure that any proposed unification advances, or is consistent with, the charity's purposes.*

RESOLUTION

After consideration of the information currently available, the Trustees:

- 1. Agree in principle to the proposal for the unification of the Catholic Dioceses of Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough.*
- 2. Confirm that this agreement in principle is expressly subject to the satisfactory completion of comprehensive due diligence.*
- 3. Require that the Trustees receive and consider appropriate professional advice.*
- 4. Note that any final decision to proceed shall be subject to obtaining all necessary civil, regulatory and canonical approvals.*

5. *Authorise the Unification Project Group and its advisers to continue discussions and develop detailed proposals.*
6. *Confirm that this resolution does not constitute approval of any final transaction documentation and does not create a legally binding commitment to proceed.*
7. *Confirm that any final decision shall be reserved to the Trustees and shall require a further specific resolution.*

Further documentation relating to this consultation can be found in Appendix 8.2.

SECTION 12: DIOCESAN CURIAE

I met with the members of the Curia in each diocese and invited them to share their views, aspirations, and concerns regarding the task requested by the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, about the potential unification of the three dioceses and I gave an outline of the process that would need to be undertaken.

The following consultation meetings were held with each Diocesan Curia:

Diocese of Leeds

Thursday, 5th February 2026 – Hinsley Hall, Leeds

Middlesbrough Diocese

Friday, 20th February 2026 – Diocesan Curial Office, Middlesbrough

Diocese of Hallam

Wednesday, 15th April 2026 – Hallam Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Sheffield

The three consultation meetings with the diocesan Curiae reveal a broadly positive and pragmatic approach towards the potential future unification of the Dioceses of Middlesbrough, Hallam and Leeds. A recurring theme was the desire to strengthen collaboration through the sharing of resources, expertise, personnel and administrative functions, while maintaining a strong missionary focus and supporting local parish life.

I consistently emphasised that the process is consultative rather than predetermined, with any final decision resting with the Holy Father. Participants were reassured that existing diocesan structures would continue to function normally throughout the consultation period, with staff, clergy and departments encouraged to remain focused on their current responsibilities.

Several positive opportunities emerged from the discussions. These included greater cooperation between diocesan curiae, improved efficiency through the rationalisation of resources, strengthened communication across diocesan boundaries, and the possibility of developing shared services such as educational support and tribunal functions.

I highlighted the importance of broad consultation, including the use of online platforms and engagement with young people, while also promoting a culture of unity and shared purpose. Staff received assurances regarding job security, with no anticipated redundancies and any future workforce adjustments expected to be managed through natural turnover rather than compulsory measures.

Alongside these opportunities, a number of concerns and challenges were identified. The process is recognised as complex and potentially lengthy, with complex due diligence responsibilities, and with significant legal, canonical and governance considerations still requiring exploration.

Questions were raised about diocesan identity, governance arrangements, schools, parish boundaries, differing departmental practices, and the practical implications of any future unification. There was a clear recognition that effective communication will be critical to maintaining confidence and avoiding uncertainty among curial staff, clergy and

parishioners. The need to preserve local responsiveness while achieving any regional efficiencies also emerged as an important consideration.

Overall, the meetings reflected cautious optimism, with strong support for consultation, transparency and collaboration, balanced by an awareness of the legal, organisational and pastoral challenges that would accompany any future structural changes.

SECTION 13: SENIOR LEADERSHIP OF DIOCESAN MULTI-ACADEMY TRUSTS

I asked the Chief Executive Officers and the Trustee Boards of each Catholic Multi-Academy Trust across the three dioceses to prayerfully discern the following questions and submit a report from each Trust. The following two questions were considered:

Question 1: How might the Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts within a new unified diocese (comprising the current Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam) collaborate with a Diocesan Education Service to create an integrated strategy for enhancing the Catholic life and mission of our schools, securing governance and leadership formation, and building capacity for continuous improvement in all aspects of school life?

Question 2: Would there be opportunities for our Catholic Multi Academy Trusts to collaborate with and support the curial departments (principally finance and property) in the provision of hub/regional services across the large geographical area of a new unified diocese?

The following Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts were asked to consult on the above-mentioned questions:

Diocese of Middlesbrough

- i. Nicholas Postgate Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
- ii. Saint Cuthbert Catholic Multi-Academy Trust

Diocese of Leeds

- iii. Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
- iv. Blessed Christopher Wharton Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
- v. Bishop Wheeler Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
- vi. Bishop Konstant Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
- vii. Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Multi-Academy Trust

Diocese of Hallam

- viii. Saint Clare Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
- ix. Saint Francis Catholic Multi-Academy Trust

Reports were received from 3 Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts in the Diocese of Leeds, 2 Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts in the Diocese of Middlesbrough, and 1 Catholic Multi-Academy Trust in the Diocese of Hallam.

13.1 Question 1 - Areas of Convergence - Strengths

13.1.1 Shared Catholic Mission and Identity

Almost all Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts (CMATs) stress the importance of creating a common vision for Catholic education that strengthens Catholic life, mission and formation across all schools. There is broad agreement that a unified diocesan strategy should provide clear direction while respecting local contexts and preserving the distinctive character of individual schools, Trusts and communities.

13.1.2 Partnership Rather Than Centralisation

A recurring theme is that Trusts should be recognised as strategic partners rather than simply delivery agents. Trusts consistently argue that they already possess significant expertise and capacity which should be harnessed, not duplicated, by the Diocesan Education Service. Several Trusts caution against creating unnecessary additional layers of bureaucracy.

13.1.3 Leadership and Governance Formation

There is widespread agreement that leadership development, succession planning and governance formation should be major priorities. Trusts support:

- Common formation programmes for governors, directors and school leaders.
- Improved recruitment and development of governors.
- Leadership pipelines to identify and nurture future Catholic leaders.
- Consistent induction and professional development across the diocese.

Many see governance not merely as an administrative responsibility but as a ministry of service to the Church's educational mission.

13.1.4 Collaboration and Sharing of Expertise

All Trusts highlight the opportunities presented by a larger diocesan structure to facilitate:

- School-to-school support.
- Cross-Trust collaboration.
- Shared professional development.
- Networks for leaders and governors.
- Sharing best practice in school improvement, Catholic life and leadership.

There is strong support for using existing expertise across Trusts more systematically for the benefit of all schools.

13.1.5 Continuous Improvement

Trusts consistently link Catholic mission with educational excellence. They advocate evidence-based school improvement, stronger collaboration between Trusts, and the sharing of successful practices. Many believe a unified diocese could create a more effective and resilient school improvement system.

13.2 Question 1 - Areas of Divergence - Challenges

13.2.1 Extent of Structural Change

While all support greater collaboration, opinions differ regarding organisational reform.

- Some Trusts emphasise stability and caution, arguing that existing Trust structures should be allowed to develop before major reorganisation is undertaken.
- Others are more ambitious, proposing extensive cross-diocesan systems, leadership deployment, succession planning frameworks and coordinated structures operating across the entire region.

13.2.2 Growth Versus Consolidation

Some Trusts focus primarily on managing current challenges and improving existing provision. Others advocate a stronger emphasis on growth, including:

- Expanding Catholic school places.
- Increasing early years provision.
- Developing SEND provision.
- Strengthening recruitment and retention of pupils.

This reflects a more outward-looking and expansionary vision.

13.2.3 Innovation and Technology

One Trust places significant emphasis on technology and Artificial Intelligence, proposing a diocesan strategy for digital transformation rooted in Catholic principles and human flourishing.

13.2.4 Role of Schools in Wider Church Mission

Some Trusts extend beyond education itself and highlight the potential role of schools in:

- Youth ministry.
- Confirmation preparation.
- Catechist formation.
- Parish engagement.

Others remain more focused on governance, leadership and school performance.

13.3 Emerging Common Themes

Across all Trusts, several overarching themes emerge:

- a. A desire for a unified Catholic educational vision.
- b. Recognition of CMATs as key strategic partners.
- c. The need to avoid unnecessary duplication and bureaucracy.
- d. Investment in leadership, governance and succession planning.
- e. Greater collaboration and sharing of expertise across diocesan boundaries.
- f. Commitment to sustaining and strengthening Catholic identity while improving educational outcomes.
- g. The importance of building relationships, trust and shared purpose before implementing significant structural changes.

13.4 Overall Conclusion of Question 1

The Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts reveal strong support for closer collaboration within a unified diocese, with broad consensus that the greatest opportunities lie in creating a shared Catholic vision, developing future leaders, strengthening governance, and making better use of collective expertise. While Trusts differ on the pace and extent of structural reform, there is a clear preference for partnership, subsidiarity and practical collaboration over centralisation, with a shared commitment to ensuring that Catholic education remains mission-focused, sustainable and effective in serving future generations.

13.5 Question 2 - Areas of Convergence - Strengths

13.5.1 Strong Support for Shared Services

Most Trusts believe the unification would create opportunities to develop shared services across a larger diocesan footprint. Common areas identified include:

- Finance and payroll.
- Estates and property management.
- Procurement.
- Compliance and risk management.
- Health and safety.
- Human resources.
- IT and data systems.

There is broad agreement that combining expertise and resources could improve efficiency, increase resilience, reduce duplication and generate economies of scale.

13.5.2 Maximising Resources for Mission

A recurring theme is that any efficiencies achieved should allow a greater proportion of resources to be directed towards frontline mission activities, including:

- Teaching and learning.
- Catholic formation.
- Chaplaincy.
- School improvement.
- SEND and inclusion provision.

Trusts consistently view operational collaboration as a means of strengthening the Church's educational mission rather than simply reducing costs.

13.5.3 Avoiding Duplication

Most Trusts stress the importance of simplifying structures and avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy. Existing expertise within Trusts and diocesan services is seen as a valuable asset that should be coordinated rather than replicated.

13.5.4 Regional or Hub-Based Models

Several Trusts favour a network of regional hubs rather than a highly centralised diocesan model. Given the large geographical area of a unified diocese, local delivery combined with strategic coordination is viewed as the most effective approach.

13.5.5 Partnership and Subsidiarity

There is strong support for a model based on partnership between Trusts, parishes and diocesan departments. Many Trusts emphasise principles of subsidiarity, local accountability and co-responsibility, ensuring decisions are taken at the most appropriate level.

13.6 Question 2 - Areas of Divergence - Challenges

13.6.1 Level of Integration

While most Trusts favour closer collaboration, they differ on how extensive this should be.

- Some advocate a cautious, phased approach through shared services and collaborative working.
- Others propose a much more ambitious model involving extensive operational integration, centralised support functions and region-wide service delivery mechanisms.

13.6.2 Appetite for Centralisation

A significant point of divergence concerns centralisation.

- Several Trusts favour regional hubs and locally responsive services.
- One Trust strongly promotes a large-scale central service model delivering finance, estates, technology, compliance and operational support across the whole diocese.
- Another Trust raises concerns about any arrangement that could blur organisational boundaries or compromise trust resources.

13.6.3 Financial and Governance Risks

A minority view expresses caution regarding conflicts of interest and the use of Academy Trust funding. This Trust argues that any collaboration must clearly demonstrate that Trusts are not subsidising diocesan services or diverting resources away from schools.

13.6.4 Scope of Collaboration

Most Trusts focus on finance, property and operational services. However, some broaden the discussion to include:

- Sustainability and care for creation.
- Technology and AI.
- Risk management.
- Regional SEND provision.

- Capital investment strategies.
- Data and business intelligence systems.

13.7 Overall Conclusion of Question 2

The Trusts demonstrate broad support for increased collaboration between Catholic Multi Academy Trusts and diocesan curial departments within a unified diocese. There is substantial consensus that shared services in finance, estates, property and other operational areas could deliver efficiencies, improve resilience and strengthen stewardship of resources. While views differ on the degree of centralisation and the pace of change, most Trusts favour partnership-based models that balance economies of scale with local accountability. A key concern throughout is ensuring that any new arrangements remain mission-focused, financially sustainable and clearly beneficial to Catholic education and the wider work of the Church.

SECTION 14: CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

At a Plenary Meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales on Tuesday, 9th June 2026, I presented the task requested by the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, about the potential unification of the three dioceses and I gave an outline of the process that would need to be undertaken.

The following resolution was tabled at the Plenary Meeting:

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales support the work being undertaken by the Bishop of Leeds, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam as one Diocese. The Bishops' Conference recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed unified diocese and neighbouring dioceses.

The 28 voting members of the Conference taking part in the meeting voted unanimously in support of the unification of the Diocese of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam.

SECTION 15: CONCLUSION TO THE CONSULTATION

The consultation responses present a clear and broadly consistent picture across the many groups consulted.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales expressed unanimous support for the work being undertaken at the request of the Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops.

The priests and deacons of the three dioceses engaged positively and constructively with the discussions about the possibility of a unified diocese being established by the Holy Father. They recognised the potential of a unified diocese to strengthen the mission, pastoral care and long-term sustainability of the local Church in this region, while at the same time raising important questions which would need to be considered concerning clergy welfare, governance, parish structures, episcopal workload, communication and diocesan identity.

The consultation meetings with the lay faithful and their local clergy revealed both the strengths and the challenges that they believed would need to be considered in a unified diocese. Participants frequently saw strengths in the opportunities for shared resources, stronger collaboration, renewed evangelisation, youth ministry, vocations and the sharing of good practice. But they also expressed concern about how fewer clergy are bearing an increasing workload and responsibilities, anxiety about the possible need for parish amalgamations and the closure of churches, worry about the geographical size of a unified diocese, and fears over-centralisation and the potential loss of local identity.

The online consultation with the People of God echoed many of the same themes, with respondents identifying potential benefits in the more effective use of resources, wider networks, more flexible clergy deployment, stronger adult faith formation, improved diocesan support and greater consistency across parishes, schools and services. At the same time, the online responses also reflected real anxiety about priest workload, a reduced access to the celebration of Mass and the sacraments resulting from a declining number of clergy, the possible loss of local parish identity, administrative complexity and the risk that a structural change at a diocesan level might not, of itself, address the deeper challenges facing parish life.

The parishes which, forty-six years ago, were formerly within the Diocese of Nottingham brought a particularly valuable perspective. Shaped by previous experience, those who remembered the previous change of diocesan boundaries were conscious that local history and identity play an important part of people's lives. Their contribution underlined the need for pastoral sensitivity, careful communication and a genuine respect for communities whose ecclesial identity has already been shaped by past structural change.

The members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life who take part in the consultation recognised that a unified diocese could provide new opportunities for the sharing of charisms, apostolates, retreats, formation, vocations promotion, education and missionary witness, provided that consecrated religious life is properly integrated into the vision for the diocese.

The Colleges of Consultors, the Council of Priests in the Diocese of Leeds and the Leeds Diocesan Pastoral Council considered the proposal in the light of canonical responsibilities, priestly life and ministry, pastoral planning and the mission of the Church. They emphasised the need for clear governance, subsidiarity, accountability and appropriate support for the diocesan bishop.

The diocesan Trustee Boards (Finance Councils) and members of the three diocesan curiae approached the consultation with particular attention to governance, finance, property, employment, safeguarding, administration, communication and the need to carefully plan and manage change; their responses point to the need for rigorous due diligence, realistic timescales, collaboration, involvement in the decision-making procedures and a carefully phased process of unification.

The senior leadership of the Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts identified significant possibilities for greater collaboration in Catholic education, including an integrated strategy for Catholic life and mission, governance, leadership formation, school improvement and shared regional services, while recognising that education would need to remain central to the purpose and structure of any unified diocese.

Viewed as a whole, the consultation reveals a shared recognition that the Church across Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam is living in a very changed pastoral and social setting to the period of time when the Diocese of Beverley was first separated into the Dioceses of Leeds and Middlesbrough in 1878, and when the Diocese of Hallam was created in 1980. However, despite the changes that have taken place over the years, the faith, generosity and commitment which is present in our parishes, schools, religious communities and diocesan services remains strong and vibrant.

Unification will need to preserve what is best in each diocese, honour local histories and identities, build trust through good communication, invest in clergy and lay formation, draw more fully upon the gifts of religious communities, strengthen Catholic education, and ensure that governance, finance, safeguarding and administration are effective in supporting and fostering the pastoral life of the Church.

Most importantly though, unification of the three dioceses must be rooted in our faith and hope in, and love of, Christ; it must be strengthened by our unity and communion in Christ, sustained by our participation in the sacraments and in our life of prayer; and always be dedicated to the work of evangelisation. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the vision and mission which he has given to us, must be at the centre of every aspect of this endeavour.

In conclusion, the consultation has gathered a remarkable consensus among the clergy and lay faithful that the unification or 'reunification' of the three dioceses as one diocese could offer a significant opportunity to strengthen the life, mission and witness, and the charitable outreach of the Church across the region.

SECTION 16: VOTUM

The local or particular Church (the diocese)¹ is the pastoral territory of a bishop's ministry. Through the mediation of the communities which constitute a diocese, a bishop learns about the local church for whom he is the chief shepherd, and for which he exercises his ministry of service by governing, teaching, and sanctifying.

Through the bishop the needs, insights, and traditions of the local church are united with those of the universal church, and it is through the bishop that the people of the diocese are united in ecclesial communion with the Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, the Bishop of Rome and Supreme Pastor of the Universal Church

The consultation which I have undertaken at the request of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV has enabled me as Bishop of the Diocese of Leeds, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Middlesbrough and Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Hallam, to conduct a period of study, discussion and discernment with a view to the possible future union of these local Churches.

Having carefully considered the spiritual, pastoral, canonical, and ecclesiological needs of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough, and Hallam, and having listened attentively to the clergy, religious, lay faithful, and the consultative bodies constituted under Canon Law within the ecclesiastical circumscriptions of those three local Churches, it is my opinion that the unification of the three dioceses would help to strengthen the mission of the local Church, support the work of evangelisation more strategically, and provide greater opportunities to fulfil our responsibility to reach out to the poor and disadvantaged within our region.

I submit this *votum* for the consideration of the Holy Father and the Dicastery for Bishops.

Given at Leeds on the Twenty-fifth Day of August in the Year of Our Lord 2026

+ *Marcus Stock*

Right Reverend Marcus Stock
Bishop of Leeds



¹ Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§832 to 835

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

COPIES OF THE MESSAGES TO THE CLERGY, RELIGIOUS AND LAY FAITHFUL IN THE DIOCESES OF LEEDS MIDDLESBROUGH AND HALLAM SENT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CONSULTATION



TO PARISH CLERGY IN THE DIOCESES OF LEEDS AND MIDDLESBROUGH

25th February 2026

Dear Reverend Fathers and Deacons,

As you will know from the Message I sent out on 22nd December 2025, His Holiness Pope Leo XIV has asked me to initiate, among the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the Dioceses of Middlesbrough and Leeds, a phase of study and discussion about how our two dioceses might work together collaboratively with a view to their possible union in the future.

It is important that we begin this phase of discussion as soon as possible so that the phase of study is undertaken with the involvement of all our parish communities. My first priority is to meet with the clergy of our dioceses. The next priority is to meet as far as practically possible with representatives from each parish community.

Between October 2021 and the end of January 2022, both our dioceses engaged in the worldwide synodal consultation process that took place throughout the Catholic Church. This process involved listening carefully, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to the hopes and aspirations of all the members of the Church at a local level so that we might discern: how to grow together more closely as one body in the communion of the Church; how to foster greater participation by all the baptised in the life of the Church; and, how this might assist us to become more effective in living out the Church's mission. The fruits of this process were gathered in a report that formed part of the discussion by the participants in the 2023 and 2024 Sessions of the Synod of Bishops in Rome.

We can use the key findings gleaned from that synodal process to inform the discussions in our consultation and to focus our attention on how our two dioceses might journey together in the future as one diocesan family and thereby become more effective in our missionary enterprise and the work of evangelisation in the ever-changing world around us.

To this end, I have planned an initial series of consultation meetings to focus on the key areas that we will need to take into consideration for this collaboration and any future union. A list of the meetings is attached.

The consultation meetings will bring together representatives from each parish comprising: the clergy (priests and deacons) currently appointed to serve the parish; the Chair of the Parish Pastoral Councilⁱ (or their delegate from the Parish Pastoral Council); and the Chair of the Parish Finance Committeeⁱⁱ (or their delegate from the Parish Finance Committee). When a parish does not have a Parish Pastoral Council or similar group, then two members of the Parish Finance Committee should represent the parish. As a result of their involvement in such parish structures, these parishioners should already have a broad understanding of the strengths and challenges within their parish regarding its pastoral activities and the resources which sustain them.

When, in hopefully rare instances, no members of the Parish Pastoral Council (or its local equivalent) or the Parish Finance Committee are free to attend the scheduled consultation meetings, then I ask the parish clergy to invite two other parishioners who are or have been active in helping sustain the pastoral or administrative life of the parish to accompany them to the meeting they will be attending.

For the meetings in the Diocese of Leeds, I would kindly ask you to attend the designated consultation meeting at the place and date arranged as specified on the schedule. This will help us with the practical organisation and facilitation of the meeting and ensure we do not exceed the capacity of the venue.

I know that some of these consultation meetings are scheduled with relatively short notice, but I hope that you will do all you can to ensure that the parishes over which you exercise pastoral care are represented at the meetings.

Clergy in the Middlesbrough Diocese have already been asked to let Callum Walker, my secretary in Middlesbrough, know which meeting they will be attending.

I would be grateful if clergy in the Leeds Diocese could let me know if they and their two parish representatives are able to attend their scheduled consultation meeting prior to the date of the meeting. For this purpose please email Anne Cooke, my secretary in Leeds: bishop.secretary@dioceseofleeds.org.uk. Thank you.

Please keep the subject of this consultation in your prayers and ask Almighty God that He will grant us all the wisdom and guidance of His Holy Spirit as we journey together on this exploration of the future for our two dioceses.

With the assurance of my daily prayers for you, I remain,

Yours fraternally in the Lord



✠ Marcus

Bishop of Leeds

Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Middlesbrough

ⁱ As it is not mandated by local law in the Diocese of Leeds, nor in the Diocese of Middlesbrough, that parishes should have a Parish Pastoral Council, some parishes have a group of parishioners who meet and provide support with pastoral activities in their parish but are not formally constituted or called a 'Parish Pastoral Council'. In such a context, a member from this group should be invited to attend the consultation meeting.

ⁱⁱ All parishes are required by Canon Law to have a formally constituted Finance Committee. The committee must consist of the parish priest and at least two other members, preferably with expertise or experience in finance, banking, or accountancy.

PARISH CLERGY & PARISH LAY REPRESENTATIVES' CONSULTATION MEETINGS

CONSULTATION MEETINGS FOR PARISH CLERGY AND PARISH REPRESENTATIVES TO EXPLORE WITH BISHOP MARCUS HOW OUR TWO DIOCESES OF LEEDS AND MIDDLESBROUGH MIGHT JOURNEY TOGETHER IN THE FUTURE AS ONE DIOCESAN FAMILY AND THEREBY BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE IN OUR MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE AND OUR WORK OF EVANGELISATION

Refreshments (tea/coffee/water) will be available from 6:00pm. The consultation meetings will start at 6:30pm and will conclude no later than 8:45pm.

1. FRIDAY 6TH MARCH – MIDDLESBROUGH DIOCESE

St Andrew's Parish, 1 Bondfield Road, Teesville, MIDDLESBROUGH, TS6 9BA

2. THURSDAY 19TH MARCH – LEEDS DIOCESE

Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School, Tongue Lane, LEEDS, LS6 4QE

Participants from parishes in the Harrogate (25) and Leeds North (24) Deaneries; + from the following parishes: Our Lady & All Saints, Otley; St John Fisher & St Thomas More, Burley-in-Wharfedale; Sacred Heart of Jesus, Ilkley; Our Lady & English Martyrs, Addingham, in the Keighley & the Dales Deanery (10); + from the following parishes: St Edward, Clifford; St Joseph, Tadcaster in the Selby Deanery (5). **(Total: 64)**

3. FRIDAY 20TH MARCH – LEEDS DIOCESE

All Saints Catholic College, Bradley Barr, HUDDERSFIELD, HD2 2JT

Participants from parishes in the Kirklees (29), and Halifax (25) Deaneries; + from the following parishes: St Peter & St Paul, Wakefield; St Austin & English Martyrs, Wakefield; and, St Ignatius, Ossett, in the Pontefract & Wakefield Deanery (13). **(Total: 67)**

4. THURSDAY 26TH MARCH – MIDDLESBROUGH DIOCESE

Burn Hall Hotel, Tollerton Road, YORK, YO61 1JB

5. TUESDAY 14TH APRIL – MIDDLESBROUGH DIOCESE

St Mary's College, Cranbrook Avenue, HULL, HU6 7TN

6. THURSDAY 7TH MAY – LEEDS DIOCESE

Ss Bede & Joseph Catholic College Ignis Site, Cunliffe Rd, BRADFORD, BD8 7AP

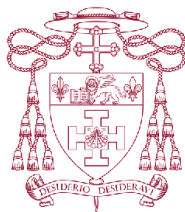
Participants from parishes in the Bradford Deanery (38) + from the following parishes: Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Silsden; Our Lady of Victories & St Anne, Keighley; Our Lady & St Joseph, Keighley & Howarth; Our Lady & St Boniface, Settle; St Joseph, Barnoldswick; St Stephen, Skipton; St Peter & St Paul, Yeadon, from the Keighley & the Dales Deanery (22). **(Total: 60)**

7. TUESDAY 12TH MAY – LEEDS DIOCESE

Mount St Mary Catholic High School, Ellerby Road, LEEDS, LS9 8LA

Participants from parishes in the Leeds East (19) and Leeds Southwest (18) Deaneries; + from the following parishes: St Joseph, Sherburn-in-Elmet; St Mary, Carlton and Selby; Sacred Heart, Goole and Howden in the Selby Deanery (8); + from the following parishes: St John the Baptist, Normanton; St Joseph, Castleford; St Joseph, Pontefract; Sacred Heart & St Joseph, Hemsworth, in the Pontefract & Wakefield Deanery (13). **(Total: 58)**

The numbers above in red indicate the estimated numbers of both clergy and lay representatives at the Leeds Diocesan Consultation Meetings



THE BISHOP OF LEEDS
The Right Reverend Marcus Stock

Bishop's House, 13 North Grange Road, Leeds, LS6 2BR
www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk

To all Clergy and Religious in the Diocese of Leeds

11th March 2026

Dear Reverend Fathers, Deacons, Religious Sisters and Brothers

Re: Online Consultation on the future of the Dioceses of Leeds & Middlesbrough

As well as the consultation meetings taking place across our two Dioceses, there is also an opportunity for other clergy, religious and members of the lay faithful throughout our Dioceses to contribute to this consultation, either individually or as a parish group, by completing the online questionnaire.

I encourage the members of the faithful within each of the Dioceses to devote time and prayerful reflection upon these questions before offering a response, so that the Holy Spirit may guide us through this important process of consultation and discernment. To assist in this, prayer resources and a presentation have been made available on the diocesan website to help ensure that this period of reflection is fruitful.

I would be most grateful if you would share with your parishioners, and the members of your religious communities, this opportunity to take part in the consultation through appropriate parish channels, such as parish websites, social media platforms, and parish newsletters.

I kindly ask that responses be submitted through the online questionnaire no later than Friday, 22nd May 2026.

Synopsis for Parish Newsletters:

Consultation on the future of the Dioceses of Leeds & Middlesbrough

As part of the consultation currently taking place across our two Dioceses, there is an opportunity for all clergy, religious and members of the lay faithful to contribute by completing an online questionnaire, either individually or as a parish group. Prayerful reflection should be given to the questions so that the Holy Spirit may guide this process of discernment. Prayer resources and a presentation are available on the diocesan website to support this process. Responses should be submitted no later than Friday, 22nd May 2026. For more information and to complete the questionnaire, please visit: <https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/leeds-middlesbrough-consultation-2026/>

Thank you for the time and prayer you can offer to this important task which has been entrusted to us by His Holiness Pope Leo XIV.

With every blessing and the assurance of my prayers, I remain,

Yours in the Lord Jesus Christ,

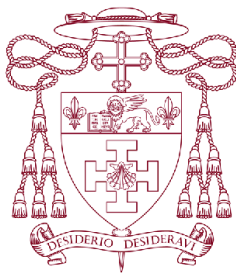
+ Marcus

✠ Marcus

Bishop of Leeds

Apostolic Administrator, Diocese of Middlesbrough

Tel: +44 113 230 4533 Email: bishop@dioceseofleeds.org.uk
Leeds Diocesan Trust - Registered Charity No. 249404



DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

The Right Reverend Marcus Stock
Apostolic Administrator

Curial Office
50a The Avenue
Linthorpe
Middlesbrough
TS5 6QT

www.middlesbrough-diocese.org.uk

To all Clergy and Religious in the Diocese of Middlesbrough

11th March 2026

Dear Reverend Fathers, Deacons, Religious Sisters and Brothers

Re: Online Consultation on the future of the Dioceses of Middlesbrough & Leeds

As well as the consultation meetings taking place across our two Dioceses, there is also an opportunity for other clergy, religious and members of the lay faithful throughout our Dioceses to contribute to this consultation, either individually or as a parish group, by completing the online questionnaire.

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Consultation on the future of the Dioceses of Middlesbrough & Leeds

As part of the consultation currently taking place across our two Dioceses, there is an opportunity for all clergy, religious and members of the lay faithful to contribute by completing an online questionnaire, either individually or as a parish group. Prayerful reflection should be given to the questions so that the Holy Spirit may guide this process of discernment. Prayer resources and a presentation are available on the diocesan website to support this process. Responses should be submitted no later than Friday, 22nd May 2026. For more information and to complete the questionnaire, please visit: <https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/leeds-middlesbrough-consultation-2026/>

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Yours in the Lord Jesus Christ,

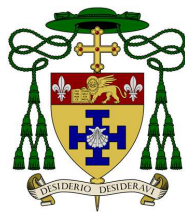
+ *Marcus*

✠ Marcus

**Apostolic Administrator
Diocese of Middlesbrough**

Tel: + 44 1642 850505 Email: bishop@rcdmidd.org.uk

The Middlesbrough Diocesan Trust (Charity No. 233748) Diocese of Middlesbrough Trustee (Company No. 03482285)



TO PARISH CLERGY IN THE DIOCESE OF HALLAM

27th March 2026

Dear Reverend Fathers and Deacons,

As you will know from the Message I sent out on 20th March 2026, His Holiness Pope Leo XIV has asked me to initiate, among the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the Dioceses of Hallam, Middlesbrough and Leeds, a phase of study and discussion about how our three dioceses might work together collaboratively with a view to their possible union in the future.

It is important that we begin this phase of discussion as soon as possible so that the phase of study is undertaken with the involvement of all our parish communities. After meeting with the clergy of the diocese, my next priority is to meet as far as practically possible with representatives from each parish community.

Between October 2021 and the end of January 2022, both our three dioceses engaged in the worldwide synodal consultation process that took place throughout the Catholic Church. This process involved listening carefully, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to the hopes and aspirations of all the members of the Church at a local level so that we might discern: how to grow together more closely as one body in the communion of the Church; how to foster greater participation by all the baptised in the life of the Church; and, how this might assist us to become more effective in living out the Church's mission. The fruits of this process were gathered in a report that formed part of the discussion by the participants in the 2023 and 2024 Sessions of the Synod of Bishops in Rome.

We can use the key findings gleaned from that synodal process to inform the discussions in our consultation and to focus our attention on how our three dioceses might journey together in the future as one diocesan family and thereby become more effective in our missionary enterprise and the work of evangelisation in the ever-changing world around us. To this end, I have planned a series of consultation meetings to focus on the key areas that we will need to take into consideration for this collaboration and any future union.

The consultation meetings will bring together representatives from each parish comprising: the clergy (priests and deacons) currently appointed to serve the parish; the Chair of the Parish Pastoral Councilⁱ (or their delegate from the Parish Pastoral Council); and the Chair of the Parish Finance Committeeⁱⁱ (or their delegate from the Parish Finance Committee). When a parish does not have a Parish Pastoral Council or similar group, then two members of the Parish Finance Committee should represent the parish. As a result of their involvement in such parish structures, these parishioners should already have a broad understanding of the strengths and challenges within their parish regarding its pastoral activities and the resources which sustain them.

When, in hopefully rare instances, no members of the Parish Pastoral Council (or its local equivalent) or the Parish Finance Committee are free to attend the scheduled consultation meetings, then I ask the parish clergy to invite two other parishioners who are or have been active in helping sustain the pastoral or administrative life of the parish to accompany them to the meeting they will be attending.

Consultation meetings in the Dioceses of Leeds and Middlesbrough are already underway. The following meetings will take place in the Diocese of Hallam.

1. FRIDAY 22ND MAY FOR HALLAM WEST

All Saints High School, Granville Rd, Sheffield S2 2RJ

2. THURSDAY 11TH JUNE FOR HALLAM EAST

St Peter-in-Chains Parish Hall, Chequer Road, Doncaster, DN1 2AA

The consultation meetings will start at 6:30pm and will conclude no later than 8:45pm. Refreshments (tea/coffee/water) will be available from 6:00pm.

I would kindly ask you to attend the designated consultation meeting at the place and date arranged as specified on the schedule attached. This will help us with the practical organisation and facilitation of the meeting and ensure we do not exceed the capacity of the venue.

I hope that you will do all you can to ensure that the parishes over which you exercise pastoral care are represented at the meetings. I would be grateful if you could let me know if you and your two parish representatives are able to attend their scheduled consultation meeting by noon on Friday 1st May. For this purpose, please email Anne Cooke, my secretary in Leeds: bishop.secretary@dioceseofleeds.org.uk or email Catalina Cacia: tribunal@hallam-diocese.com. Thank you.

Please keep the subject of this consultation in your prayers and ask Almighty God that He will grant us all the wisdom and guidance of His Holy Spirit as we journey together on this exploration of the future for our three dioceses.

With the assurance of my daily prayers for you, I remain,

Yours fraternally in the Lord



✠ Marcus Stock

Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Hallam

ⁱ As it is not mandated by local law, that parishes should have a Parish Pastoral Council, some parishes have a group of parishioners who meet and provide support with pastoral activities in their parish but are not formally constituted or called a 'Parish Pastoral Council'. In such a context, a member from this group should be invited to attend the consultation meeting.

ⁱⁱ All parishes are required by Canon Law to have a formally constituted Finance Committee. The committee must consist of the parish priest and at least two other members, preferably with expertise or experience in finance, banking, or accountancy.

CONSULTATION MEETINGS

FOR CLERGY AND PARISH REPRESENTATIVES TO DISCUSS WITH BISHOP MARCUS HOW OUR THREE DIOCESES OF LEEDS, MIDDLESBROUGH and HALLAM MIGHT JOURNEY TOGETHER IN THE FUTURE AS ONE DIOCESAN FAMILY AND THEREBY BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE IN OUR MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE AND THE WORK OF EVANGELISATION

The consultation meetings will start at 6:30pm (with refreshments from 6:00pm if these can be provided) and the meetings will conclude no later than 8:30pm.

1. Friday 22nd May – Hallam West

All Saints High School, Granville Rd, Sheffield S2 2RJ

(77)

Participants from the parishes in the Rotherham (19) and Sheffield Deaneries (47); + the parishes in the county of Derbyshire (11).

2. Thursday 11th June – Hallam East

St Peter-in-chains, Chequer Rd, Doncaster, DN1 2AA

(60)

Participants from the parishes in the Barnsley (15) and Doncaster Deaneries (37); + the parishes in the county of Nottinghamshire (6) and the parish of St Mary Magdalene, Maltby.

The numbers in red indicate the numbers of both clergy and lay representatives

APPENDIX 2.1

POPULATION & SQUARE MILEAGE OF THE THREE DIOCESES

(Data obtained from the UK Office for National Statistics for 2024)

DIOCESE OF LEEDS		
Local Authority Districts	Population	Miles ²
Leeds	845,189	213
Bradford	563,605	142
Kirklees	447,847	158
Wakefield	367,666	131
Calderdale	210,929	140
North Yorkshire Districts: Harrogate (164,105) 505 sqm, Craven (57,090) 454 sqm & Selby (92,401) 232 sqm	313,596	1,191
Lancashire: Barnoldswick (10,913) 9 miles ² , Earby (4,383) 3 miles ² & Slaidburn (370) 20 sqm	15,666	32
Total:	2,764,498	2,007 miles²
229,453 Catholics (8.3% of Total)		

DIOCESE OF HALLAM		
Local Authority Districts	Population	Miles ²
Sheffield	582,493	142
Doncaster	319,765	219
Rotherham	276,595	110
Barnsley	251,770	127
Bassetlaw	124,937	245
Chesterfield	106,045	26
Northeast Derbyshire: Bamford (1,115), Clowne (7,755), Dronfield (21,261), Eckington (11,855), Hathersage (1,433), and Staveley (18,247)	61,666	50
Total:	1,693,628	919 miles²
140,571 Catholics (8.3% of Total)		

DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH		
Local Authority Districts	Population	Miles ²
North Yorkshire (less Harrogate, Craven & Selby Districts)	321,674	1,912
Kingston upon Hull	275,401	28
York	209,301	105
Stockton on Tees: Ingleby Barwick (23,698) 2.5 miles ² , Thornaby (24,741) 4 miles ² , Yarm (9,500) 2 miles ²	57,939	9
Middlesbrough	156,161	21
Redcar and Cleveland	139,228	95
East Riding	355,884	928
Total:	1,515,588	3,098 miles²
125,793 Catholics (8.3% of Total)		

UNIFIED DIOCESE		
Total:	5,973,714	6,024 miles²
495,818 Catholics (8.3% of Total)		

APPENDIX 2.2

DIOCESAN STATISTICAL COMPARISON TABLE

(Data Based on Appointments/Retirements from 31 August 2026)

	LEEDS	MIDDLESBROUGH	HALLAM	TOTAL
Catholic Population:	229,453	125,793	140,571	495,818
Area of Diocese:	2,007 miles ²	3,098 miles ²	919 miles ²	6,024 miles²
	5,198 km ²	8,024 km ²	2,380 km ²	15,602 km²
Number of Parishes:	76	65	52	193
Number of Churches:	109	84	61	254
Diocesan Priests: (Working within Diocese)	59	29	22	110
Diocesan Priests: (Working outside Diocese)	5	1	0	6
Total N° of Diocesan Priests in full-time office:	64	30	23	116
- of whom are under 60 years of age	25	9	8	43
- of whom are between 60 – 75 years of age	38	17	9	65
- of whom are over 75 years of age	1	3	6	7
Religious/Missionary/Priests: from other Dioceses (Holding office in Diocese)	13	22	16	51
Total N° of Priests holding a Diocesan office:	77	52	38	167
Non-Diocesan Priests: (Working exclusively in Language Chaplaincy or <i>Sui Iuris</i> Church Parishes)	4	1	6	11
Religious Priests: (Not exercising Diocesan Parochial Ministry)	6	37 (Ampleforth)	2	45
Diocesan Retired Priests:	47	15	15	76
Total N° of Priests:	134	105	60	299
Permanent Deacons: (Holding office in Diocese)	15	10	16	41
Retired Permanent Deacons:	8	8	16	32
Seminarians (Sept. 2026):	3	1	0	4
Primary Schools:	78	45	39 (+3 Joint Schools)	165
Secondary Schools:	11	8	6 (+1 Joint Schools)	26
Sixth Form College:	1			1
Catholic Special Schools:	1			1
Catholic Universities:	1			1

APPENDIX 3.1

PASTORAL STATISTICS OF THE DIOCESE OF LEEDS – YEARS 2000 TO 2025								
Year	Average N° attending Sunday Mass weekly	N° of Baptisms	N° of Receptions into Full Communion	Total N° of Priests Incardinated in Diocese	N° of Priests Incardinated in Diocese Holding Office	N° of Priests Incardinated in Diocese Retired from Office	N° of Parishes	N° of Churches Chapels served by Diocesan Priests
2000	42,226	2,374	174	220	196	24	124	145
2001	40,842	2,224	161	214	181	33	124	145
2002	38,734	2,430	163	212	180	32	124	145
2003	38,726	2,378	136	210	177	33	122	144
2004	37,638	2,332	109	202	164	38	122	144
2005	37,240	2,387	173	194	157	36	122	144
2006	35,519	2,538	179	190	155	35	118	140
2007	35,655	2,628	134	186	148	36	104	130
2008	35,579	2,832	146	182	141	37	99	123
2009	34,392	2,749	188	181	132	46	97	116
2010	32,902	2,548	164	176	133	43	88	114
2011	31,918	2,870	135	174	133	41	86	114
2012	31,722	2,880	135	168	126	42	85	113
2013	31,007	2,776	158	166	116	48	85	113
2014	29,840	2,702	137	162	116	48	84	113
2015	29,184	2,591	98	160	111	48	84	113
2016	27,648	2,300	85	158	109	48	83	112
2017	26,078	2,214	114	156	97	59	82	112
2018	25,768	2,000	112	151	97	58	81	111
2019	24,736	1,782	86	144	87	60	81	111
2020 ¹	7,721	711	55	138	84	54	81	111
2021 ²	14,206	1,483	59	133	85	49	81	111
2022	18,392	1,651	72	128	83	47	81	111
2023	19,796	1,536	72	128	80	45	80	110
2024	19,922	1,451	95	119	74	43	77	109
2025	19,993	1,348	120	117	70	45	76	109

¹ The figures for 2020 reflect the restrictions imposed on attendance by the COVID 19 Pandemic.

² The figures for 2021 reflect the restrictions imposed on attendance by the COVID 19 Pandemic.

APPENDIX 3.2

PASTORAL STATISTICS OF THE DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH – YEARS 2000 TO 2025								
Year	Average N° attending Sunday Mass weekly	N° of Baptisms	N° of Receptions into Full Communion	Total N° of Priests Incardinated in Diocese	N° of Priests Incardinated in Diocese Holding Office	N° of Priests Incardinated in Diocese Retired from Office	N° of Parishes	N° of Churches Chapels served by Diocesan Priests
2000	22,264	1,224	117	97	83	14	87	92
2001	21,596	1,152	116	96	82	14	87	92
2002	20,378	1,123	71	92	75	17	86	92
2003	20,305	1,153	72	92	71	21	82	92
2004	19,632	1,132	87	90	70	20	81	90
2005	18,724	1,009	66	89	70	19	78	88
2006	18,450	1,031	86	88	68	20	78	88
2007	18,071	1,222	60	82	66	16	77	88
2008	18,157	1,168	79	81	65	16	76	88
2009	17,160	1,188	77	78	62	16	75	87
2010	16,473	1,150	85	77	62	15	75	87
2011	15,344	1,174	102	72	57	15	75	87
2012	16,380	1,174	90	72	55	17	74	86
2013	15,658	1,142	72	70	54	16	74	86
2014	14,178	1,041	69	70	53	17	72	85
2015	14,416	1,104	60	66	50	16	71	85
2016	13,779	1,060	75	65	50	15	70	85
2017	12,332	986	75	65	50	15	70	85
2018	13,115	986	73	60	47	13	70	84
2019	12,199	925	47	61	47	14	70	84
2020 ¹	4,250	315	31	62	48	14	70	84
2021 ²	6,611	708	38	60	47	13	69	84
2022	7,862	893	46	53	44	9	69	84
2023	7,803	766	54	52	41	11	68	84
2024	9,026	648	49	51	33	18	65	84
2025	11,055	794	76	50	32	19	65	84

¹ The figures for 2020 reflect the restrictions imposed on attendance by the COVID 19 Pandemic.

² The figures for 2021 reflect the restrictions imposed on attendance by the COVID 19 Pandemic.

APPENDIX 3.3

PASTORAL STATISTICS OF THE DIOCESE OF HALLAM – YEARS 2000 TO 2025								
Year	Average N° attending Sunday Mass weekly	N° of Baptisms	N° of Receptions into Full Communion	Total N° of Priests Incardinated in Diocese	N° of Priests Incardinated in Diocese Holding Office	N° of Priests Incardinated in Diocese Retired from Office	N° of Parishes	N° of Churches Chapels served by Diocesan Priests
2000	18,919	971	129	68	68	8	63	78
2001	17,648	890	159	68	68	8	63	78
2002	17,189	933	145	58	58	11	63	75
2003	16,160	951	117	55	55	15	63	75
2004	15,402	817	146	55	55	16	63	75
2005	15,235	890	116	52	52	13	63	75
2006	15,560	939	111	51	51	14	63	74
2007	14,899	950	97	52	52	13	63	74
2008	14,438	848	104	50	50	14	62	74
2009	14,140	947	93	50	50	15	62	74
2010	13,882	950	127	48	48	15	62	73
2011	13,404	931	95	47	47	14	62	73
2012	13,176	958	103	43	43	15	62	72
2013	12,800	893	91	43	43	15	62	71
2014	12,529	920	89	42	42	15	62	71
2015	12,281	879	68	48	30	18	62	71
2016	12,001	1025	62	48	27	21	62	71
2017	11,307	846	77	51	27	24	57	67
2018	11,119	928	67	47	26	21	57	65
2019	10,403	833	39	49	28	21	56	64
2020 ¹	3,633	271	43	49	25	24	53	62
2021 ²	6,066	555	34	48	25	23	52	61
2022	7,636	644	34	48	26	22	52	61
2023	8,801	679	57	42	26	16	52	61
2024	9,106	672	62	38	26	12	52	61
2025	9,173	644	84	38	26	12	52	61

¹ The figures for 2020 reflect the restrictions imposed on attendance by the COVID 19 Pandemic.

² The figures for 2021 reflect the restrictions imposed on attendance by the COVID 19 Pandemic.

APPENDIX 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE FORMAT OF THE CONSULTATION MEETINGS

In-person Consultation Meeting with the Lay Faithful - Structure and Format

The format will use cabaret-style seating, with tables of eight to ten participants.

The evening will begin at 18:00hrs, with refreshments, and the formal session will commence at 18:30hrs. The timetable is as follows:

1. A welcome from Bishop Marcus (5 minutes).
2. An opening prayer led by Nicola Sweetman/Jessica Wilkinson (15 minutes, including a period of silence).
3. A presentation by Bishop Marcus outlining the story to date, the historical and current context, our mission and the consultation process (15 minutes).
4. Mgr Gerard Robinson will talk about the consultation and introduce the question at the meetings (5 minutes).
5. Discussion of Question 1 (30 minutes), followed by feedback (20 minutes).
6. Discussion of Question 2 (30 minutes), followed by feedback (20 minutes).
7. Closing prayer and concluding remarks.

The meetings are scheduled to conclude by 20:45hrs.

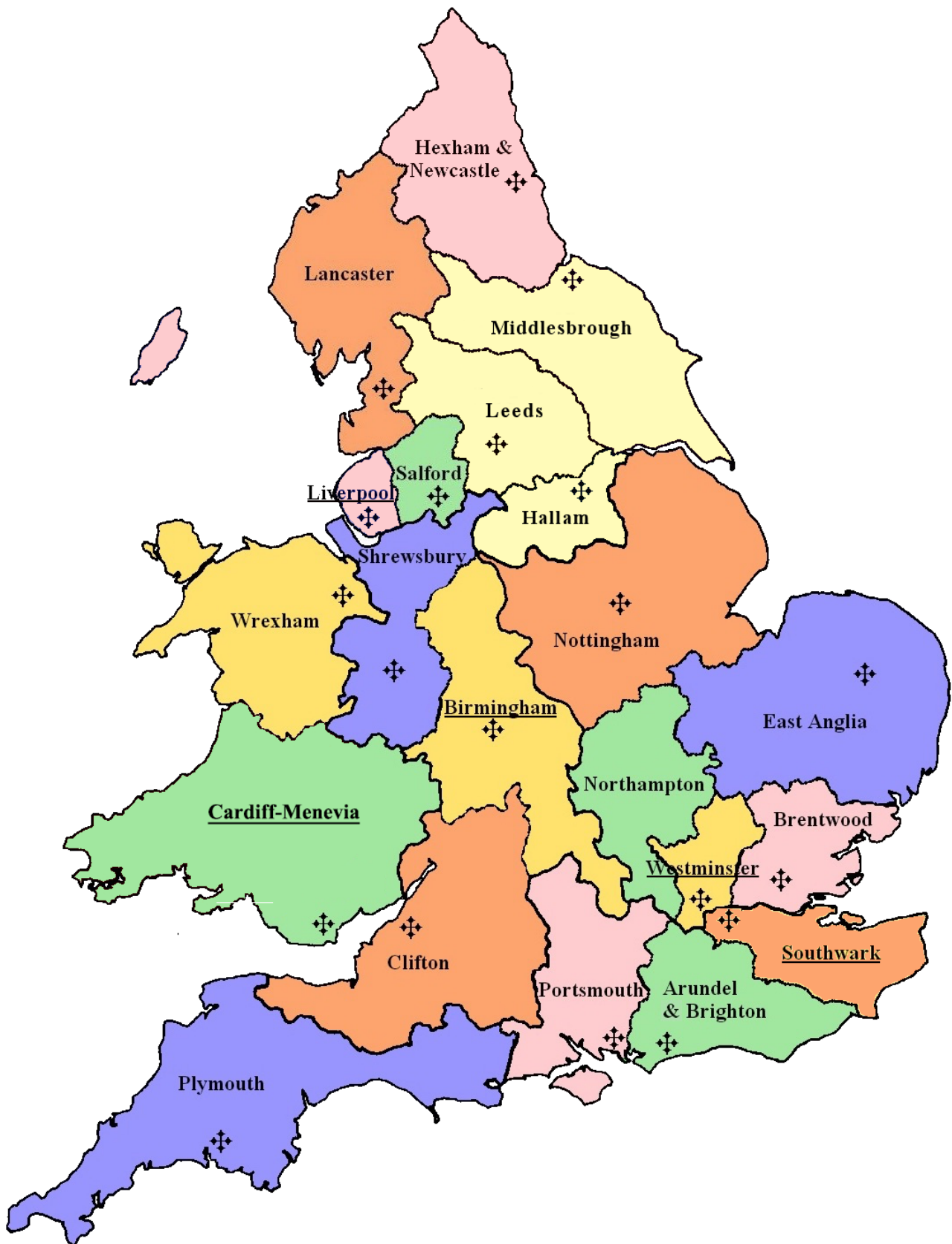
APPENDIX 5.1

OUTLINE MAP OF THE DIOCESES OF ENGLAND AND WALES (1851)



APPENDIX 5.2

OUTLINE MAP OF THE DIOCESES OF ENGLAND AND WALES (2026)



APPENDIX 6

OUTLINE MAP OF THE DIOCESES OF LEEDS MIDDLESBROUGH AND HALLAM

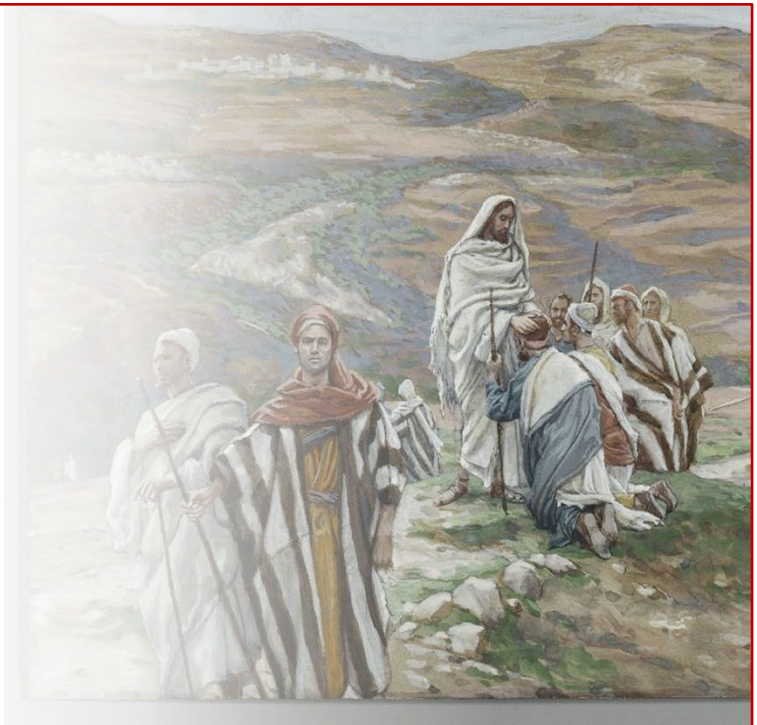


APPENDIX 7

COPY OF THE PRESENTATION GIVEN AT THE PARISH CONSULTATION MEETINGS

**“Go and make
disciples of all
nations”** Matthew 28:19

**Dioceses of Leeds,
Middlesbrough
and Hallam**



Slide 1

Our Time Together

Welcome from
Bishop Marcus

Prayer

Historical
Context

The Story to
Date

Our Mission
& Vision

Consultation

Closing
Message from
Bishop Marcus

Closing Prayer
& Blessing

Slide 2

Welcome Message from Bishop Marcus



Slide 3

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon the people of the
Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam.

Where there is uncertainty, give trust.

Where there is fear, give hope.

Where there are differences, give charity and mutual
understanding.

Teach us to listen deeply,
to speak with wisdom and humility,
and to seek not our own will, but your will for your
Church.

May any steps we take be rooted in prayer,
guided by your Spirit,
and directed always toward the building up of your
Body
and the proclamation of your Gospel.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Slide 4

Prayer of Intercessions

We pray for greater communion in the Church.

That through our conversations, and through our relationship with You and with one another, we may be united and strengthened as the Body of Christ. May our dialogue be guided by Your Spirit, and may any divisions or misunderstandings be transformed into understanding, respect, and love.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for continued participation in the life of the Church.

That each of us may be willing to offer the gifts You have entrusted to us — our time, talents, and hearts — in service to You, our local communities, and the wider world. Inspire us to act with humility, generosity, and joy, so that our service bears witness to Your love.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the mission of the Church.

That, united in Christ, we may always keep in mind our common call to build up Your kingdom. Guide our work and our decisions, so that all we do may proclaim Your truth, nurture justice, and bring Your peace.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our meeting.

That the Spirit may enlighten our minds, soften our hearts, and lead our discussions so that our deliberations may bear lasting fruit for the life of the Church.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We ask the intercession of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, as we pray:

Hail Mary...

Slide 5

Historical Context

Diocese of Beverley (1850–1878)

- Established in 1850 following the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales, the Diocese of Beverley encompassed the whole of Yorkshire.
- Catholic life flourished, with growing numbers of Clergy, parishes, and faithful.
- In 1878, the Diocese of Beverley was divided into the Dioceses of Leeds and Middlesbrough.
- In 1980, the Diocese of Hallam was created with 55 parishes ceded from the Diocese of Leeds and 16 parishes from the Diocese of Nottingham.



Slide 6

The Story to Date

The Recommendations of Bishop Draine's *Ad Limina* Report of 2018

Announcements of Bishop Marcus as the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Middlesbrough and as the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Hallam

Meeting with the Prefect of the Congregation of the Dicastery of Bishops in Rome

The Task at Hand

Consultation

Slide 7

Parishes and Clergy

	Leeds	Middlesbrough	Hallam	Total
Parishes	76	65	52	193
Churches	109	84	61	254
Diocesan Priests in active ministry	64	30	22	116
- Of whom are under 60	25	9	9	43
- Of whom are 60 - 75	38	17	10	65
- Of whom are over 75	1	3	3	7
Missionary Priests/Religious Priests/ Priests other Dioceses	13	22	16	51
Retired Priests	47	15	12	74
Permanent Deacons	15	10	16	41

Slide 8

Our Mission & Vision

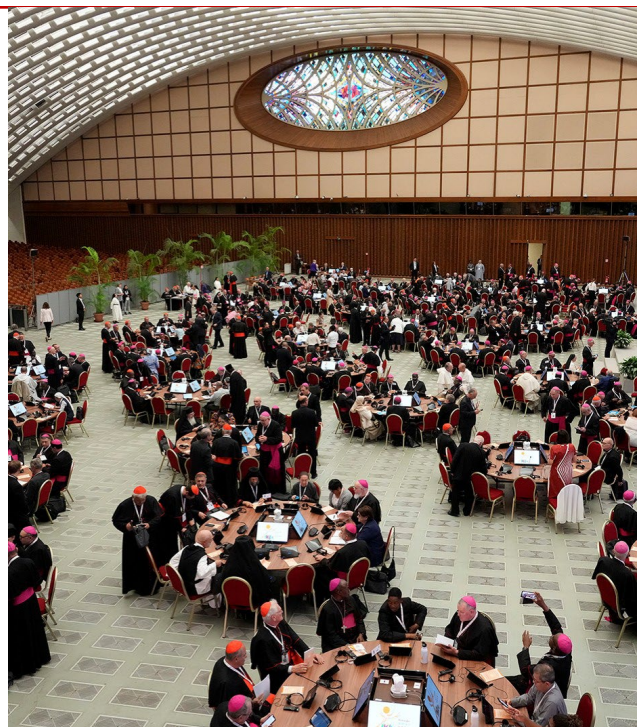
- Our 'Mission' is very simple; it has been given to us by Jesus Christ.
"Go and make disciples of all nations"
Matthew 28:19
- Our 'Vision' too has been given to us by Jesus Christ.
"That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." John 17:21 (*Ut Unum Sint*).



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What is Consultation?

In the Catholic Church, the art of consultation in uniting two or more dioceses under one Bishop is a pastoral and canonical process rooted in communion, discernment, and shared responsibility. It involves listening carefully to Clergy, Religious, and Lay Faithful from the three Dioceses to understand their histories, cultures, pastoral needs, and concerns. In this Synodal process, through prayerful dialogue, transparency, and respect for subsidiarity, the Bishop and Church leaders seek to foster trust and unity while honouring each Diocese's identity. The goal of consultation is not merely administrative efficiency, but a Spirit-led discernment that promotes the good of souls, strengthens ecclesial communion, and enables the local Church to move forward together under one shepherd.



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Our Consultation Process

- Nine consultation meetings with clergy and lay representatives from parishes have been arranged across the three Dioceses (3 in Middlesbrough, 4 in Leeds and 2 in Hallam).
- If, after consultation, we are to move forward towards amalgamation, this process will take some years to complete.
- Bishop Marcus is also specifically required to make key decisions in consultation with:
 - The Clergy and Parish Representatives
 - Members of the Diocesan Curia
 - The College of Consultors
 - The Diocesan Trustee Boards
 - The Council of Priests in Leeds Diocese
 - Religious Communities
 - Multi-Academy Trust Boards
 - Wider online consultation with the People of God
- The feedback from these consultation gatherings is crucial to that process.
- A report will be sent to Rome so the Holy Father can decide what to do next.

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Question 1 – Mission and Pastoral Vision

How could bringing the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one Bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

Questions for Thought:

- Will the amalgamation of the three Dioceses affect the identity and heritage of my Parish?
- Will amalgamation create opportunities for evangelisation, youth ministry, vocations and outreach to the poor?

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Question 2 – Communion and Participation

What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one Bishop have for the Clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

Questions for Thought:

- How might decision-making and communication change?
- How could resources (financial, administrative, safeguarding and education) be shared more effectively?
- What aspects might need careful planning to avoid over-centralisation?

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Closing Prayer and Blessing

O God,
who have gathered us to listen, reflect, and discern together,
we give You thanks for the gifts shared among us this day.

As we bring this consultation gathering to its close,
send forth Your Holy Spirit upon the work begun,
that what has been spoken and heard
may bear fruit in wisdom, unity, and peace.

Entrusting our way forward to the care of Mary,
Our Lady of Perpetual Succour,
and the intercession of Saint Wilfrid,
keep us faithful to Your will
and generous in service to Your Church.

Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, *pray for us*
Saint Wilfrid, *pray for us*



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APPENDIX 8.1

SUMMARIES OF THE CONSULTATION MEETINGS WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM EVERY PARISH WITHIN THE THREE DIOCESES, COMPRISING CLERGY AND LAY FAITHFUL (DELEGATES OF PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEES AND PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS)

CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES

Held at 6:15 pm on 6 March 2026 at Saint Andrew's Parish Hall, Teesville, Middlesbrough

Question 1: How could bringing the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

Group Feedback: Strengths of the Unification

The group identified several strengths associated with the proposed unification.

Community structure benefits were highlighted, including the opportunity to develop smaller regional communities/hubs within the larger diocesan structure. The concept of a “community of communities” was noted as a way to preserve local identity while fostering cohesion across the wider diocese.

Resources and knowledge sharing were also considered key advantages. Participants suggested that best practices could be shared across dioceses, enabling learning from different approaches to common challenges. Larger-scale initiatives, particularly in youth programmes or vocation-focused, could be more effectively implemented within a broader diocesan framework.

Strategic advantages were recognised. A single, unified leadership approach could be established, strengthening regional voice and identity. Parishes would be less isolated due to the wider network, and the unified structure would be better positioned to carry out the Church's mission.

Group Feedback: Challenges and Concerns

Several challenges and concerns were raised regarding the unification.

Identity preservation was a prominent issue. Participants noted the risk that people might feel a loss of diocesan identity. Cultural differences between the Leeds and Middlesbrough regions were acknowledged, and the need to maintain the dignity of all areas was emphasised.

Operational integration was another area of concern. There was a possibility that counterpart roles could conflict due to differing working methods. Potential job losses or redundancies arising from previous amalgamations were noted, as well as the risk of losing valuable expertise and experience. An increased burden on individual parish priests was also highlighted.

Process management was discussed, with emphasis on ensuring that all of the faithful and parishes are brought along in the change. Participants cautioned that the unification process could become a distraction from the mission of evangelisation. The time and patience required for cultural integration were also stressed.

Consultation Process and Communication

The consultation process to date was noted to have a limited scope, involving primarily clergy and parish council/finance committee representatives. An online consultation is planned to allow broader input, and the clergy are encouraged to facilitate similar discussions within their own parishes.

Concerns were raised about the demographics of consultation participants. For example, attendance was predominantly male despite female-majority parishes. It was emphasised that clerical language should be avoided in order not to alienate parishioners.

The group noted that consultation should focus on unification-specific questions, rather than general concerns about parish futures. Managing expectations effectively was considered crucial to avoid dissatisfaction.

There is a need to identify and address potential “curveballs” at an early stage. Should approval be granted from Rome, planning for employment and fiduciary integration has already begun. Participants emphasised the importance of maintaining focus on the mission, ensuring that the unification process itself does not become the primary goal.

Question 2: What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one bishop have for the clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

Positive Implications Identified

Several positive implications of the proposed changes were identified.

Spiritual benefits of sharing traditions were noted, including the possibility of cross-diocesan celebrations of Saints’ Feast days, as well as opportunities for shared pilgrimages. It was also observed that certain sites in the Middlesbrough Diocese, such as Pilgrimage locations, may have potential counterparts in other dioceses that could foster shared devotional activity.

At the parish level, it was suggested that day-to-day operations would likely remain largely unchanged.

Youth engagement opportunities were also highlighted. A wider diocesan structure could enable the development of peer networks across a broader geographical area, particularly in relation to vocational discernment. An example referenced was the *Corporate 12 initiative*, a consultation group for secondary-school-aged young people that meets seven times per year.

Concerns and Challenges Raised

A number of concerns and challenges were raised during the discussion.

Financial implications, particularly in relation to the sharing of historical debt, were a significant concern. Some participants expressed unease about the possibility of one diocese bearing responsibility for the historic debts of another. It was noted that the Diocese of Leeds previously carried a net debt of £14 million, which was cleared within three and a half years under the current bishop.

Distance and decision-making were also discussed. There was concern that episcopal decisions might feel more distant from local parishes in a larger diocesan structure. Participants also noted the potential difficulty for a bishop in fully understanding the diverse demographic and pastoral needs across multiple areas.

Concerns were additionally expressed regarding the spiritual impact of such changes. Some participants described a potential sense of becoming “spiritual orphans” and raised concerns about the loss of a diocesan family identity.

Bishop’s Response and Proposed Solutions

In response to the concerns raised, the bishop outlined several potential approaches.

Regarding structural arrangements, it was noted that Rome had indicated the possibility of appointing one or two auxiliary bishops. Alternatively, area episcopal vicars could be appointed to provide local oversight and advice. In this context, the principle of subsidiarity was emphasised, with the intention that decisions should be taken at the most local level possible.

In terms of financial management, the bishop referenced his experience of addressing the £14 million debt in the Diocese of Leeds. He noted that restricted funds could be used to ensure that monies intended for a particular diocese remained dedicated to that diocese. A collaborative approach to addressing financial challenges was also emphasised.

The bishop also spoke about his leadership approach, quoting the principle that “plans are useless; planning is everything”. He explained that this reflects a commitment to continual strategic adjustment rather than rigid adherence to fixed plans. Ultimately, he stressed that trust in the Lord must remain the foundation of all planning and decision-making.

Implementation Considerations

Several considerations regarding implementation were discussed.

Participants emphasised the need for clear vision and communication from leadership, noting that there can often be a gap between strategic vision and practical implementation. The importance of ensuring that people are brought along with the process was highlighted. It was noted that this vision should be embraced from the grassroots level by the faithful.

It was suggested that parishes might consider pooling resources in certain areas in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

Potential opportunities for Caritas collaboration were also identified. It was noted that the Diocese of Leeds has *Catholic Care*, an organisation with more than 160 years of history providing substantial services, while Middlesbrough operates a *Caritas* umbrella organisation. There may, therefore, be opportunities for collaboration in areas such as safeguarding, as well as health and safety support.

Finally, it was suggested that the experience of international priests, particularly those who have served in flourishing dioceses abroad, could be utilised as a valuable resource in shaping future development.

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CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES

Held at 6:15 pm on 19 March 2026 at Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School, Leeds

Question 1: How could bringing the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

Group Feedback: Strengths of the Unification

The group noted that there is a strong possibility of sharing resources, which would enable rationalisation, the exchange of best practice, and mutual learning between parishes. It was suggested that the unification could reinvigorate existing activities across the diocese. A key benefit identified was the fostering of vocations, as knowing that more people are engaged in similar discernment may encourage others to come forward. The group also recognised that the Church is growing, and that this development could support that growth.

It was further observed that there is a shared historical heritage which can provide a strong foundation for unity. The unification offers the opportunity to adopt a broader model of shared ministry, as well as to share talents, resources, professional expertise, and the extensive experience of parishioners. In addition, it was felt that the process could provide a clear focus for a positive and constructive approach to future development and may serve as a useful blueprint for future unifications.

The group highlighted that the unification creates opportunities for greater collaboration between clergy and laity, particularly in the areas of administration and evangelisation. It was also noted that certain services, such as youth formation, could be centralised for greater efficiency and impact. The value of Catholic families was emphasised, with a suggestion that this could encourage a return to the strength and centrality of family life within the Church. Finally, it was agreed that the unification would enable the laity to take on greater responsibility, thereby easing the burden on priests.

Group Feedback: Challenges and Concerns

The group expressed concern that the bishop may become spread too thinly across a larger diocese. It was also noted that support from the diocese for individual parishes may become more remote; however, this could present opportunities for additional paid roles. The group cautioned that, if not managed carefully, the unification process risks becoming a distraction from the Church's core mission.

It was suggested that, at parish level, a diocesan unification may have limited direct impact. The group also acknowledged that there is a natural resistance to change, as people tend to prefer familiar structures and practices.

Ongoing concerns were expressed regarding priestly vocations, particularly in relation to creating sufficient space and support for formation. The group emphasised that there remains a need to inspire a larger number of lay people to come forward to serve the Church in various ministries. Finally, it was noted that differences in existing practices, such as sacramental preparation, may present challenges to unification.

Question 2: What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one bishop have for the clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

Positive Implications Identified

The group identified that the unification could provide greater resources, particularly in supporting the ongoing formation of both clergy and laity. It was suggested that there would be opportunities to modernise IT systems and processes, thereby improving efficiency and effectiveness. The establishment of a single central Curia team was seen as a way to reduce duplication of roles and responsibilities.

Decision-making was recognised as a potential double-edged sword, requiring a careful balance between subsidiarity at a local level and the risk of over-centralisation. The group noted that there may be benefits in collective purchasing and the outsourcing of certain services. In addition, the unification presents an opportunity for a systematic review of existing processes.

It was felt that these changes could contribute to better formation in the faith for all members of the Church. The development of regional hubs was seen as a way to improve communication and decision-making. The group also highlighted the potential to better serve fringe communities, fostering a more unified Church.

There was a strong sense that the unification could encourage greater fraternity and spiritual reinvigoration, offering an opportunity to begin anew. The introduction of Episcopal Vicars was viewed positively, as it could allow priests to focus more on their local communities. The group also noted that a stronger corporate identity could help foster a greater sense of belonging.

Finally, it was suggested that the unification may create opportunities to move towards a deanery model rather than a strictly parish-based model of organisation.

Concerns and Challenges Raised

The group raised concerns about differences in local authority structures and educational systems across the dioceses. Questions were also raised about whether anticipated efficiency and cost savings might be offset by uncertainty affecting Curia staff and other employees.

There were practical concerns regarding how the bishop would effectively serve a larger diocese, particularly in relation to responsibilities such as confirmations and pastoral visitations. At parish level, it was unclear how parishioners would perceive the changes, and whether they would be engaged or concerned by them.

The group questioned whether the unification might risk the disintegration of existing parishes. Concerns were also expressed about potential job losses and wider uncertainty. Communication was highlighted as an existing challenge, with fears that this could be exacerbated across a larger geographical area.

A specific concern was raised about the Diocese of Middlesbrough potentially feeling disenfranchised, with a perception that it might be overshadowed or “rescued” by another diocese. The group also cautioned that expected economies of scale might not materialise to the extent hoped.

It was noted that, if the Episcopal Vicar model were implemented, there is a risk that it could become overly clerical in nature. The importance of clear, focused, and relevant communication was emphasised throughout the discussion.

The group stressed the need not to lose sight of the Church’s Mission and Vision, emphasising that the purpose of restructuring is to reinvigorate these, not to undermine them. It was agreed that any restructuring must be carried out with great care, preserving what is already working well. In particular, any move towards centralisation must be appropriate and proportionate.

Other Questions Raised

The group raised questions regarding the location of the Cathedral within the newly unified diocese. There were also queries about how the Cathedral Chapter would function under the new structure.

CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES

Held at 6:15 pm on 20 March 2026 at All Saints Catholic College, Huddersfield

Question 1: How could bringing the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

Group Feedback: Strengths of the Unification

The unification would create a bigger community, providing strength in numbers and bringing people together more closely as one family.

There would be opportunities to share resources, including retreat facilities such as Ampleforth Abbey.

The unification would also enable the Church to embrace the current trend of increasing numbers of people joining, creating more opportunities for larger events and gatherings.

Participants highlighted the value of shared learning and best practice, allowing parishes to build on their existing strengths.

A unified structure would provide a stronger and more visible witness to the Gospel of Christ.

The unification would also encourage the sharing of gifts and talents across the wider community.

It was noted that there would be an opportunity to learn from the lessons and experiences of the past.

Greater cooperation could strengthen the position of Catholics in the area through improved sharing of information and ideas.

Sharing mission initiatives and best practices, particularly in youth ministry, was seen as a significant benefit.

The ability to share priests across parishes was also identified as an advantage, particularly given the limited number of clergy.

Group Feedback: Challenges and Concerns

Concerns were raised about the increased workload for the bishop and the need to maintain effective pastoral visibility across the enlarged area. There was further concern about the additional pressure that unification could place on the bishop.

Questions were also raised regarding the former Nottingham Diocese parishes and whether there may be a desire to return to the Diocese of Nottingham, given their historical connection.

Participants asked how church buildings and properties would be managed under the unified structure.

The logistical and legal work required to achieve unification was recognised as a major challenge.

Geographical distance between parishes was also identified as a concern.

Communication was recognised as likely to be a significant challenge. There were concerns about how information and activities across parishes would be effectively shared, with a need identified for improved technology and additional volunteers.

Finally, participants noted the challenge of falling numbers and the difficulty of encouraging greater participation in evangelisation.

Question 2: What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one bishop have for the clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

Positive Implications Identified

Participants highlighted the importance of subsidiarity being exercised in a meaningful and practical way.

It was noted that young people are essential to shaping the future direction and life of the Church.

There was seen to be potential for greater outreach and evangelisation, provided this was not overly centralised.

From a spiritual and pastoral perspective, a more even distribution of priests could ensure that clergy are deployed where they are most needed.

Concerns were raised about the amount of time priests currently spend managing properties rather than caring for the people entrusted to them. Participants suggested that an Academy Trust-style model, in which property management is overseen by others, could provide an opportunity for priests to focus more fully on pastoral ministry.

Shared learning was identified as an important benefit, alongside an opportunity to redesign and improve communications at all levels.

The importance of local pastoral planning was emphasised.

Participants noted that the development of stronger organisational and pastoral models would be key to success.

Uniformity and consistency of treatment across parishes and communities were also seen as positive outcomes.

The unification was viewed as an opportunity to become more outward-looking and less parochial in outlook.

Decision-making processes, including those relating to parish amalgamations, were discussed as an important consideration.

There were identified opportunities for greater sharing of services across parishes and communities.

From a financial perspective, maintaining fewer properties could release resources and allow more funding to be directed towards pastoral projects and ministry.

Concerns and Challenges Raised

Concerns were expressed that communications during the process may not always be sufficiently informative or clear.

The potential costs associated with unification were also raised as a concern.

Participants discussed the possibility of an embargo on parish finances and property during the unification process.

It was suggested that making no changes at all could itself prove to be the wrong decision.

There were concerns about the temptation to over-centralise structures and decision-making.

Participants emphasised the need for the continued development and formation of the laity.

The importance of keeping communication channels open throughout the process and beyond was strongly highlighted.

Finally, participants asked where any central services would ultimately be located.

CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES
Held at 6:20 pm on 26 March 2026 at Burn Hall Hotel, York

Question 1: How could bringing the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

The consultation meeting highlighted several perceived strengths associated with the proposed diocesan unification. Participants noted that the unification could offer an opportunity for renewal and allow for the development of fresh pastoral and administrative approaches.

It was suggested that a unified structure could facilitate greater learning opportunities between dioceses. At present, parishes within York do not consistently share examples of best practice with one another, and a larger diocesan framework could enable wider collaboration and access to a broader pool of resources.

The consultation process itself was also viewed positively, particularly in terms of transparency. Participants appreciated the opportunity for open consultation rather than decisions being made solely through closed internal processes.

Enhanced potential for youth ministry was also identified as a possible benefit. A larger geographical area with combined resources could strengthen youth initiatives. The idea of apprenticeships for young people was highlighted. Reference was made to the Leeds programme known as “The Twelve”, which has operated since 2017 for young people aged 14–18. This initiative focuses on leadership formation for young people, peer engagement within schools and parishes, and the involvement of young people as consulters for the pastoral strategy of the diocese.

Geographical considerations were also discussed. It was observed that some areas, such as Malton and Pickering, have easier access to Leeds than to Middlesbrough, which may present practical advantages under a unified structure.

Participants also highlighted the potential for greater collaboration between clergy and laity, as well as increased integration between rural and urban communities. Examples of this could be the distribution of clergy.

Another potential positive is that on the parish level, unification would be relatively unnoticed.

Finally, the importance of aligning diocesan structures with the Church’s missionary focus was emphasised. It was noted that statistical evidence suggests that the current model may not be sustainable in the long term. Greater priority may therefore need to be given to evangelisation and the promotion of vocations, in keeping with the Church’s core mission of bringing people to know Jesus Christ. It was noted that a possible unification would be a greater sign of the Body of Christ.

Administrative and Pastoral Challenges

Alongside the potential strengths, a number of administrative and pastoral concerns were raised.

One concern related to episcopal capacity. Participants questioned whether a single bishop would be able to effectively manage a significantly larger geographical territory, particularly given the increased distances between communities and the practical demands associated with parish visits, confirmations, and pastoral oversight.

Connectivity and communication were also discussed. It was noted that the current distances within the Diocese of Middlesbrough already present challenges, and these could increase under a unified structure. Concerns were also raised regarding the potential impact on curial staff roles and the coordination of safeguarding responsibilities.

Some participants observed that parishioners may display a degree of territorial attachment to their local parish and may resist attending Mass or parish activities in neighbouring communities.

It was, therefore, suggested that pastoral messaging should emphasise the centrality of the Mass itself rather than attachment to a particular location.

Administrative pressures were also highlighted. A unification could require significant work to align Academy Trusts, integrate information technology systems and email accounts, and harmonise diocesan policies. Participants expressed concern that such processes might divert energy away from missionary activity.

The differing contexts of rural and urban communities were also mentioned, with some expressing concern that rural parishes might feel marginalised or overlooked within a larger diocesan structure.

Concerns were also expressed about apathy among some parishioners. It was observed that many individuals are not particularly aware of the identity or boundaries of their current diocese, and this lack of engagement could potentially increase if dioceses are unified.

The financial implications of a unification remain uncertain. At present, it is unclear whether a unified structure would improve or worsen the financial position of the dioceses involved.

Finally, the consultation noted gaps in training and confidence among lay parishioners. Some individuals hesitate to take on leadership or ministry roles because they feel insufficiently prepared. It was observed that the Methodist Church has historically invested more extensively in lay training. Participants suggested that many parishes possess dormant gifts and talents that could be developed through improved formation and support.

One participant asked the question: are we willing to take the risk on where the Holy Spirit is leading us?

Bishop Marcus' Response to Concerns

In response to the issues raised, Bishop Marcus addressed several of the concerns.

With regard to curial management, he emphasised that no job losses should be presumed as a result of the unification process. Instead of concentrating diocesan services in a single location, it may be possible to operate through regional service hubs. This approach is already used successfully within certain Multi-Academy Trust structures and other dioceses.

Concerning episcopal oversight, Bishop Marcus suggested that additional structures could be considered if necessary. These might include the appointment of one or two auxiliary bishops or the designation of episcopal vicars responsible for particular local areas. Such roles could operate on fixed terms of five to ten years, providing flexibility through delegated authority rather than permanent structural appointments.

Bishop Marcus also highlighted opportunities for learning from mission territories. He referenced the development of specially trained catechists, a ministry recently emphasised by Pope Francis. He noted that vocations often emerge naturally from communities of prayer rather than solely from institutional structures.

With regard to the timeline, Bishop Marcus stressed that there is no artificial deadline for the process. The process will therefore be allowed to proceed at an appropriate pace.

Question 2: What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one bishop have for the clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

Participants in the consultation identified the need to maintain several important balances when considering the potential diocesan unification.

Firstly, it was noted that the unification could create an opportunity for synodality to flourish; however, there was also concern that it might threaten local decision-making if authority becomes too centralised.

Secondly, participants recognised the potential benefits of resource sharing and economies of scale within a larger diocesan structure. At the same time, concerns were expressed that this could result in heavier workloads for leadership and the possibility of job losses.

Thirdly, there was discussion about the need to strengthen local parish communities while avoiding excessive centralisation designed primarily for administrative control.

A broader concern was also raised about the risk of conflating administrative reorganisation with the deeper challenges facing the Church's mission. It was suggested that expanding the scope of episcopal oversight—for example, a bishop overseeing 194 parishes rather than the current 69—may not in itself address the underlying issues relating to vocations and evangelisation.

Participants also observed that existing communication systems appear outdated and are not always oriented towards missionary engagement.

Another positive that was highlighted was greater unity among the People of God in our region.

In addition, it was noted that many parish structures still largely follow the Tridentine model of organisation, which some participants felt may no longer correspond effectively to the realities of contemporary parish life.

Financial Reality and Practical Concerns

The financial situation of the dioceses was also discussed.

Participants noted that all three dioceses are currently facing significant financial pressures.

The bishop stated that the Diocese of Leeds had a debt of approximately £14 million when he began his ministry there. This debt was resolved within approximately three and a half years; however, in doing so significantly reduced diocesan reserves.

Middlesbrough Diocese was described as being in a comparatively stronger and more carefully managed financial position, while Hallam Diocese is believed to be in a more difficult financial situation.

Participants also discussed the possibility of increasing the number of paid lay leadership roles within parish structures. It was suggested that relying solely on volunteers may not be sustainable in the long term. Employing lay staff could help alleviate administrative pressures and allow priests to devote more time to pastoral and sacramental ministry rather than addressing practical maintenance issues such as building repairs.

Solutions and Learning from Other Dioceses

Several possible approaches and sources of learning were identified during the discussion.

It was noted that the global synodal process has repeatedly identified adult faith formation as an urgent pastoral priority.

It was also suggested that different operational models may be required rather than simply continuing with existing structures on a larger scale.

A pilot initiative is currently being explored in the Calderdale and Halifax area. This programme is testing a model in which a paid local employee serves across several parishes in order to support pastoral and administrative work.

Participants also highlighted the value of learning from other dioceses that have undergone unification, in order to identify both best practices and potential pitfalls.

Outstanding Questions

Several questions remain unresolved at this stage of the consultation. These include the future status of Middlesbrough Cathedral and the potential name of any new diocese that might be created.

CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES
Held at 6:20 pm on 14 April 2026 at Saint Mary's College, Hull

Question 1: How could bringing the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

Strengths of a Potential Diocesan Unification

It was noted that a number of strengths could arise from a potential unification of the three dioceses.

In terms of identity, there is a strong shared Yorkshire character, rooted in a common geographical, historical and cultural background across the three dioceses. Leeds Cathedral was identified as being centrally located, approximately one hour from Hull, in contrast to the significantly longer journey of around two hours to Middlesbrough Cathedral by car. This centralisation would make participation easier, particularly for students and those without access to private transport.

The unification would also present enhanced opportunities for collaboration. The Oratory of Joseph is already attracting clergy from multiple dioceses, demonstrating the potential for shared initiatives. There would be the opportunity for the shared use of facilities such as Ampleforth Abbey across the three dioceses, alongside the benefits of economies of scale in resource sharing.

From an organisational perspective, a unification could support the development of a unified regional vision. It would also foster increased cultural diversity, allow greater flexibility in the placement of clergy, and provide expanded opportunities for lay participation. Furthermore, it could enable renewed engagement at parish level.

Key Challenges Identified

A number of significant challenges were also acknowledged.

At an administrative level, concern was expressed regarding the burden that would fall upon a single diocesan bishop, who would be responsible for overseeing the equivalent of three dioceses. This would likely result in less frequent parish visitations.

Communication across a much larger geographical area would also present difficulties.

At parish level, there is a risk of further parish amalgamations or closures due to the shortage of priests. It was noted that combining communities could lead to a reduction in lay involvement and a perceived loss of subsidiarity, local autonomy and effective communication.

Concerns were also raised regarding identity and acceptance.

Differences between northern and southern areas may give rise to resistance, alongside potential disagreements over the location of a diocesan centre. Wider cultural differences across the enlarged geography, together with a natural reluctance to change within long-established communities, were also highlighted.

The Bishop's Vision for a Future Structure

The bishop's vision for a future diocesan structure was outlined as being rooted in a flexible and missionary model.

Greater responsibility would be entrusted to trained lay catechists to lead local communities. It was further noted that appropriate financial remuneration would be necessary for lay leaders entrusted with responsibility for local communities. It was emphasised that the Catholic presence should be sustained not solely through the celebration of Mass, but also through prayer, the Rosary and Eucharistic adoration.

In terms of leadership, while the appointment of auxiliary bishops remains a possibility, the bishop expressed a preference for the use of episcopal vicars. Appointments of five to ten years were suggested, rather than lifetime roles, in order to ensure flexibility.

A strong emphasis was placed on adult faith formation. Feedback from universal synodal consultations indicates a clear desire for greater formation among the laity. This would involve equipping lay people to bear witness to the faith within their communities and moving beyond a purely voluntary model towards sustained and structured commitment.

Communication Strategy

It was noted that the Director of Communications is already in the process of developing a strategy applicable across the three dioceses. Enhanced communication will be required irrespective of whether a unification proceeds. The focus should remain on ensuring the effectiveness of the Church's mission across existing diocesan boundaries.

Question 2: What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one bishop have for the clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

Challenges of a Potential Diocesan Unification

The meeting considered a number of challenges associated with a potential diocesan unification.

Communication across a significantly wider geographical area was identified as a primary concern. In this context, the need for appropriate delegation by the diocesan bishop was discussed. While the possibility of appointing auxiliary bishops was raised, the group expressed a preference for alternative models of delegated episcopal presence.

Concerns were also expressed regarding priestly autonomy. It was acknowledged that a unified structure would likely require increased collaboration between priests, with a corresponding reduction in individual autonomy.

Geographical remoteness was highlighted as a further issue. It was noted that the outer areas of a larger diocese could become extremely remote, with some existing areas already experiencing significant isolation. In this regard, the location of central administration was considered critical in ensuring reasonable accessibility.

The potential risks of service centralisation were also discussed. There was concern that local voices might not be adequately heard within a larger structure, and that local initiatives could be deprioritised.

A number of operational challenges were identified. These included the possibility of redundancies within curial services and the complexity of standardising structures and procedures across a large and diverse geographical area, which would require considerable time, energy and resources. Concerns were also raised about preserving the individuality and cultural identity of parishes.

Benefits of a Potential Diocesan Unification

The meeting also recognised several potential benefits.

A unification would provide opportunities for the sharing of knowledge and good practice across the three dioceses, enabling the Church to learn from successful approaches and reduce duplication through a more centralised organisation. This could enhance areas such as adult faith formation, First Holy Communion preparation, and models of engagement with schools.

It was noted that a reduced number of priests would necessitate increased lay involvement, thereby creating opportunities for greater lay engagement and formation. This, in turn, could foster stronger fraternity and collaboration among the clergy.

Further advantages included increased purchasing power and improved efficiency in procurement, as well as greater structural flexibility.

The potential spiritual benefits were also acknowledged. It was suggested that the generosity required for collaboration could bear spiritual fruit, and that a prayerful response to these changes could lead to increased holiness within the diocesan community.

The Bishop's Response to Identified Concerns

In response to the concerns raised, the bishop outlined his approach.

With regard to potential redundancies, it was emphasised that any changes would be managed gradually, primarily through natural attrition such as retirements or changes in role, rather than through abrupt measures. The process would not be driven by a corporate cost-cutting mentality but by pastoral considerations.

The bishop also described a model of local service delivery currently being explored. This includes the development of property and administrative functions at a multi-deanery level, with services organised through regional hubs rather than a single centralised structure. This approach aims to preserve local knowledge and maintain effective working relationships at a local level.

Overall, the bishop stressed that the approach would be mission-focused rather than driven purely by considerations of efficiency or cost.

Infrastructure and Accessibility

The importance of selecting an appropriate central location was emphasised. It was suggested that Leeds may offer greater accessibility than Middlesbrough, particularly in light of existing infrastructure and transport links. Ensuring ease of access for the greatest number of people was identified as a key consideration.

Lay Leadership Model

The meeting also considered the development of a lay leadership model within parish structures.

The concept of professional parish administration was discussed, including an example from Kansas City, USA, where a Religious Sister serves as parish administrator while the Priest focuses on sacramental ministry. Such an approach could reduce the administrative and financial burden on the clergy, allowing for more effective pastoral care and evangelisation.

It was further noted that increasing difficulties in recruiting volunteers may necessitate the creation of paid roles to ensure the sustainability of parish life and administration.

CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES

Held at 6:15 pm on 7 May 2026 at Saint Bede & Saint Joseph Catholic College, Bradford

Question 1: How could bringing the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

Group Feedback: Strengths of the Unification

Participants identified that the amalgamation would provide access to a wider range of resources, experience, and expertise.

A larger diocesan structure could allow for more centralised activities aimed at promoting vocations, drawing from a much bigger pool of people.

The unification would also enable the pooling of talents, skills, and strengths across the wider community.

It was suggested that a larger structure could have a greater overall impact and allow for the rationalisation of existing structures and processes.

Participants also noted that unification could encourage a return to the historical culture of greater involvement of the laity in the life and mission of the Church.

A larger unified structure was seen as offering a broader talent pool for recruitment and leadership opportunities.

It was observed that many individual parishes already tend to operate independently as parish communities rather than with a strong diocesan identity, and, therefore, there may be relatively little noticeable change or impact at the parish level.

Economies of scale were also identified as a potential benefit, particularly through the possibility of creating a single central administrative function.

Group Feedback: Challenges and Concerns

Some participants questioned whether the Church's shared mission is not already present prior to any unification.

Concerns were raised regarding staffing levels, the number of clergy, and the number of existing parishes. Recruitment was identified as a major challenge, alongside the need to engage young people more effectively and foster vocations.

There was concern about the pressures associated with one bishop leading such a large jurisdiction, and participants emphasised that the bishop would require a strong supporting team.

Participants discussed the challenge of persuading people to adopt a more positive attitude towards change and the need to overcome fear and resistance. The manner in which change is communicated was considered particularly important.

Travelling across a much larger geographical area was also identified as a concern.

Participants recognised that many people may struggle to let go of their emotional attachment to their local church or parish community.

Potential job losses were raised as a further concern.

There were concerns that unification could create significant disparities and make diocesan-level coordination more difficult.

Finally, participants noted the need to adapt diocesan activities to make them more practical and appropriate within a larger structure, including the possibility of combining initiatives such as the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Question 2: What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one bishop have for the clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

Positive Implications Identified

Participants identified the potential for greater practical standardisation of policies across the unified structure.

There was support for the devolution of decision-making and a review of existing authority structures, enabling lay people to become more actively involved in decision-making processes.

The unification was also seen as an opportunity to share best practices, knowledge, and expertise more effectively. This was also seen as something that could encourage and foster more vocations.

Centralisation of services such as IT, artificial intelligence, and live streaming was identified as a potential benefit.

The sharing of resources, including retreat centres and other facilities, was viewed positively.

The creation of teams or delegated structures to share responsibilities was considered an important advantage.

Participants felt that unification could provide an opportunity to improve communication and make it clearer and more effective.

Finally, having one bishop was viewed by some as offering greater uniformity and efficiency in decision-making.

Concerns and Challenges Raised

Concerns were raised about the increased physical distance between the bishop and individual parishes, as well as the resulting pressures placed upon the bishop. Some participants also expressed concern about the perceived remoteness of the bishop from local communities.

Participants noted that unification would require a very significant amount of upfront work and effort, without necessarily having clear or guaranteed benefits.

It was also observed that clergy within the Diocese of Middlesbrough and the Diocese of Hallam are still adapting to the leadership and working practices of their new bishop.

Logistical challenges associated with unification were identified as a major concern.

Participants suggested that ecumenical relationships and cooperation could become more challenging across a much larger and more diverse geographical area.

There were concerns that reduced contact between the bishop and priests could weaken personal rapport and relationships within the clergy.

Inspecting and supporting schools across a larger area was also seen as likely to become more difficult.

Some participants expressed concern about the potential reduction in the number of church buildings and parish communities.

Finally, concerns were raised regarding the shortage of clergy available to serve increasingly ageing Catholic populations.

CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES

Held at 6:15 pm on 12 May 2026 at Mount Saint Mary Catholic High School, Leeds

Question 1: How could bringing the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

Group Feedback: Strengths of the Unification

The unification would allow for the sharing of resources, including retreat centres, investment in youth ministry, and the development of a youth strategy aimed at encouraging vocations.

There would be opportunities to bring in people with fresh perspectives, particularly through increased lay leadership supported by appropriate training. This could help to energise the Church by enabling more people to take on new ministries.

Priests would have greater opportunities to work according to their individual strengths and gifts. Rather than functioning solely as liturgical machines, they would have the opportunity to renew their sense of vocation and the reasons why they became priests. A larger diocesan structure would also enable priests to be shared across a wider area, encouraging the sharing of gifts and talents.

The unification could help to restore and celebrate the historical identity and legacy of Yorkshire, including the heritage of the Yorkshire saints and martyrs and the veneration associated with them.

A clearer and more unified vision could create economies of scale, particularly in relation to schools and financial administration.

As parish identity is often very strong, the unification could encourage parishioners to look beyond their own parish boundaries and foster stronger parish-to-parish links, while still respecting individual parish identities.

The establishment of regional hubs could provide further opportunities for lay formation and development.

The prospect of breaking down existing barriers and boundaries was viewed as an exciting and positive concept.

Group Feedback: Challenges and Concerns

There are currently no retreat centres across the three dioceses apart from Ampleforth Abbey, which may present challenges for shared diocesan activity and formation.

There were concerns that parishes may lose their individual identity, alongside difficulties in encouraging greater lay involvement in ministry.

The cultural integration of missionary priests may present challenges, although it was acknowledged that this also brings valuable diversity.

There is a danger that a “one size fits all” approach or vision could become dominant.

Concerns were raised regarding the balance between strong parish identity and a broader diocesan identity.

There is a perceived risk of excessive centralisation within a larger diocesan structure.

Some participants expressed concern that the bishop could become more distant from the people.

Communication across a larger diocese may become more difficult.

Parishes located on the geographical edges of a larger diocese may face significantly longer travel times to attend central events.

Questions were raised about how the proposed regional hubs would differ from the current structure of multiple dioceses.

There were also questions regarding where the geographical centre of the new diocese would be located.

The issue of selecting a new diocesan name was identified as a further consideration.

Concerns were expressed about the infrastructure required and the challenge of finding sufficient personnel to administer the different areas of the Curia.

There is also the possibility of division, as local communities can differ greatly from one another.

Questions were raised about what parish life and structures may look like in ten years' time.

Question 2: What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one bishop have for the clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

Positive Implications Identified

The unification could enable dioceses to make better use of the expertise available within Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), particularly in relation to health and safety and safeguarding. It could also strengthen partnerships between schools and parishes.

Greater centralisation may allow parishes to focus more fully on mission and pastoral activity rather than administrative bureaucracy.

The process provides an opportunity to address the challenges of shrinking congregations and declining financial contributions.

Economies of scale may allow for a reduction in diocesan staffing costs and greater efficiency in administration.

Participants highlighted the importance of seeking new and creative ways of communicating effectively across a larger diocesan structure.

The unification could provide a sense of renewal and refreshment for the dioceses, alongside opportunities for greater unity and collaboration.

There was enthusiasm about the potential scale of diocesan events and pilgrimages, such as a larger diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes.

The unification may also create wider opportunities for faith formation and catechesis.

Larger venues, including football stadiums and similar facilities, could potentially be utilised for major diocesan events and celebrations.

The increased use of social media was seen as an opportunity to expand outreach and engagement.

It was emphasised that the Lord's mission should remain central throughout the entire process.

An enhanced online presence for the bishop, including blogs, talks, and digital communication, could help to ensure that the bishop remains visible, accessible, and connected with the people.

Questions were raised regarding how Catholic Care services would be implemented and coordinated across the three dioceses.

Concerns and Challenges Raised

Concerns were expressed regarding the financial costs associated with unification and rebranding.

There were worries that parishes may have less direct contact with the bishop, including fewer parish visitations. Concerns were also raised about the workload, health, and well-being of the bishop, and the importance of ensuring appropriate support.

Questions were asked about whether dioceses with stronger financial resources may see those resources dispersed more widely across the unified structure.

The possibility of parish closures was a significant concern, and participants stressed that early and transparent communication would be essential.

There were concerns about a smaller pool of priests having responsibility for larger geographical areas.

Questions were raised regarding the practicalities of bringing large numbers of people together across a significantly larger diocese and how this would be managed effectively.

The need for episcopal vicars with responsibility for particular areas, such as youth ministry and education, was identified.

Travel distances to diocesan events may become a barrier for some people.

Questions were raised regarding the location of the Cathedral within a new diocesan structure.

Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that some areas or communities are not neglected or left behind.

Concerns were expressed regarding the geographical implications for priestly fraternity and support among the clergy.

Effective communication remains a significant challenge, and there was agreement on the need to identify new and more effective methods of communication.

CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES

Held at 6:15 pm on 22 May 2026 at All Saints High School, Sheffield

Question 1: How could bringing the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

Group Feedback: Strengths of the Unification

Participants highlighted the benefits of pooling resources, including policies, tools, templates and other shared materials. There was strong support for sharing good practice across a wider area and for making greater use of a larger pool of talent, expertise and resources.

The unification was seen as an opportunity to empower the laity by encouraging greater responsibility and participation in the life and mission of the Church, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. It was also noted that a larger diocesan structure could support the wider delivery of successful programmes, such as the *Called and Gifted* programme.

Members welcomed the potential for increased collaboration and flexibility across a larger geographical area, enabling parishes and diocesan teams to work more effectively together. This could allow resources to be focused more on mission and evangelisation rather than administration and maintenance, with particular emphasis placed on strengthening youth ministry and outreach to families.

The unification was also viewed as an opportunity to improve inclusion, particularly for people with limited English, and to consider how evangelisation efforts could be delivered more effectively and consistently. Participants further noted the potential for more professional administration and faster, clearer communication.

Group Feedback: Challenges and Concerns

A key concern was the potential loss of local identity, particularly for the Diocese of Hallam, which was recognised as having a distinct geographical and cultural character. Participants were concerned that smaller communities could be overlooked and that decisions made at a more central level might not fully reflect local circumstances. Questions were also raised about the future of existing diocesan institutions, including St Marie's Cathedral.

Many participants expressed concern about the practical implications of a larger geographical area. Increased travel distances could make it more difficult for parishioners and clergy to attend diocesan events, and access to the bishop could become more limited if one bishop were to serve an area previously served by three.

There were concerns about the emotional impact of change, including the strong attachment many people feel towards their parish and diocese. Participants emphasised the need for sensitivity throughout the process and highlighted the risk that fragmentation could affect the well-being of both priests and parishioners.

Questions were raised about how a larger pool of expertise could be effectively utilised in practice and whether the logistical challenges of a larger structure might outweigh some of the potential benefits.

Participants also noted that amalgamating dioceses would not increase the number of priests available and expressed concern about the long-term sustainability of ministry, particularly given

the lack of seminarians currently in formation. The challenges associated with serving a very large population were also highlighted.

Question 2: What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one bishop have for the clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

Positive Implications Identified

Participants welcomed the potential benefits of pooling resources, knowledge and expertise across a larger diocesan structure. It was felt that this would provide access to a wider network of like-minded people, greater support and more opportunities for collaboration.

The availability of a larger pool of talent was seen as a positive development, creating opportunities for individuals to contribute their skills and gifts for defined periods of service rather than relying on a small number of people to sustain responsibilities over many years.

Members also valued the opportunity to experience more fully the dynamism of belonging to the wider Church. The unification was viewed as a chance to review existing strengths and weaknesses, think creatively about the future, and develop structures that are fit for purpose. Participants felt that such a process could encourage a broader vision and enable the Church to aspire to greater possibilities.

It was also noted that the effectiveness of a diocese depends significantly on its leadership, and participants expressed encouragement regarding the way in which Bishop Marcus is conducting the consultation process.

Concerns and Challenges Raised

Participants expressed concern that greater centralisation could lead to increased hierarchy, reduced local autonomy and slower decision-making. There were worries that local voices might have less influence, resulting in reduced transparency and fewer opportunities for local decision-making.

Questions were raised about the impact of any restructuring of diocesan roles, particularly with regard to the well-being of those affected by potential changes.

Communication was identified as a significant concern, with participants questioning whether communication across a larger diocese might become less effective.

Some participants highlighted the risk of perceived unfairness between different areas, particularly if resources or opportunities were seen to be distributed unevenly. It was noted that Hallam can sometimes feel disadvantaged in comparison with Leeds in other areas of public life, and there was concern that similar perceptions could emerge within a unified diocese.

There was also discussion about the language used to describe the process. Some participants expressed a preference for the term “co-production” rather than “consultation”, feeling that consultation can imply that decisions have already been made, whereas co-production suggests that people are actively working together to shape the outcome.

Finally, participants were concerned that parishioners would have less contact with the bishop in a larger diocesan structure and emphasised the importance of maintaining a visible and accessible episcopal presence.

CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES

Held at 6:25 pm on 11 June 2026 at St Peter in Chains Parish, Doncaster

Question 1: How could bringing the dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

Group Feedback: Strengths of the Unification

Participants agreed that unification would enable the pooling of material, human, and financial resources across the three dioceses. It was noted that greater collaboration would facilitate the sharing of best practice and mutual learning, thereby supporting the Church's mission more effectively.

The unification of administrative functions was seen as an opportunity to release both clergy and lay people from certain administrative responsibilities, allowing them to devote more time to ministry and pastoral work. Participants also highlighted the potential benefits of stronger and more unified pastoral leadership under Bishop Marcus.

In relation to youth ministry, it was recognised that a larger diocesan structure could provide opportunities to bring young people together from across a wider geographical area. It was further suggested that a larger diocesan framework may help prevent parish closures and provide greater support to smaller and more vulnerable parish communities.

Participants also identified the potential for deeper communion between communities and increased opportunities for shared spiritual development and formation.

Group Feedback: Challenges and Concerns

Communication emerged as the most frequently raised concern. Participants emphasised the need for clear communication structures, effective delegation, and greater awareness at parish level throughout any unification process.

Concerns were expressed that increased centralisation could result in local communities feeling more remote from diocesan leadership or becoming disenfranchised. Participants also noted the risk of parish identity being diminished within a larger diocesan structure.

Questions were raised regarding the accessibility of the bishop in a diocese of approximately 200 parishes, with some participants from smaller parishes expressing concern that they could become "a smaller fish in a larger sea".

Safeguarding provision was identified as another area for consideration. It was noted that safeguarding support in Hallam is currently provided on a part-time basis, and participants questioned whether a larger diocese could facilitate the provision of full-time safeguarding resources.

Participants also warned against change fatigue, emphasising that unification should be viewed as the beginning of an ongoing process of renewal rather than a single event. Reference was made to the challenges of collaboration at parish level, with one example given of three parishes served by the same Priest taking seven years to establish effective collaborative working.

Bishop Marcus's Response

Bishop Marcus acknowledged the geographical scale of the proposed diocese, noting that it would become the largest Diocese in England and Wales. However, he observed that travel times between key locations remained manageable, citing journey times of approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes between Leeds and Middlesbrough, and approximately 48 minutes between Leeds and Sheffield. He also noted that residents of Hull are geographically closer to Leeds than to Middlesbrough.

In relation to diocesan services, Bishop Marcus outlined a hub-based model rather than full centralisation. He explained that regional hubs, supported by hot-desking arrangements and Catholic Multi-Academy Trust facilities, could provide localised support for property, finance, and safeguarding services. He noted that this approach would help avoid situations in which more remote parishes receive less attention.

Bishop Marcus advised that a communications strategy was already being developed by his communications office. He also identified significant opportunities for youth ministry through the sharing of resources and expertise across the proposed diocesan structure.

With regard to staffing, Bishop Marcus stated that any transition would be managed gradually and would seek to make best use of the gifts, experience, and skills of existing personnel, rather than relying on abrupt reductions in staffing.

Question 2: What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one bishop have for the clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

Positive Implications Identified

Participants identified a number of potential benefits arising from greater collaboration between parishes across the proposed diocesan structure. There was broad support for a greater unity of purpose and direction, particularly in relation to areas such as finance and safeguarding, where centralised systems could promote consistency and best practice.

It was noted that a larger diocesan structure could provide access to a greater pool of clergy, enabling priests to be deployed according to their gifts and areas of expertise. Participants also recognised the opportunity for lay people to assume a greater role in the liturgical, sacramental, and missionary life of the Church, particularly in the context of the declining number of priests.

The possibility of developing a common strategy for mission, evangelisation, and formation across the three dioceses, as well as within parishes and schools, was welcomed. Participants also highlighted potential economies of scale, particularly in relation to property management and energy costs.

The sharing of facilities and the joint celebration of local feasts, such as Corpus Christi, were identified as opportunities to strengthen relationships between parish communities. Participants further observed that the rich spiritual heritage of the proposed diocesan area—including places and figures such as York Minster, St Margaret Clitherow, and St Wilfrid—could be more readily shared and celebrated.

Delegation to Episcopal Vicars was viewed by some participants as a means of increasing the visibility and presence of episcopal leadership within schools and parishes. The idea of parish twinning was also suggested, whereby parishes from different parts of the diocese could be paired to share experiences, foster mutual support, and strengthen diocesan cohesion.

Concerns and Challenges Raised

Participants expressed concern that a larger diocesan structure could become overly bureaucratic and develop an excessively organisational or administrative mindset.

The potential impact on clergy was also discussed. Participants questioned whether priests might have less time available for parish ministry if responsibilities were spread across a larger diocese. Related concerns were expressed regarding the workload of parish priests, particularly if the appointment of Episcopal Vicars were not carefully structured to reduce, rather than increase, existing burdens.

The possible loss of local identity was another recurring theme. Participants recognised the strong emotional and spiritual attachment that many people have to their existing diocesan

identities and expressed concern that changes could adversely affect morale and a sense of belonging.

Questions were raised regarding the principle of subsidiarity and whether certain forms of centralisation might be perceived as being in tension with that principle. Participants also discussed the visibility of the bishop, particularly among young people, and asked how frequently episcopal leadership would be present within schools.

It was acknowledged that resistance to change exists among both clergy and laity and would need to be addressed sensitively throughout any transition process. Some participants noted that parishes within the Diocese of Hallam have a clear understanding of the support currently offered by their diocese, whereas the offer that would be available through the Diocese of Leeds is not yet fully understood.

Regarding Episcopal Vicars, participants cautioned against the possibility of individuals imposing their own interpretations on diocesan priorities and stressed the importance of maintaining unity of purpose and direction.

Finally, participants highlighted the need for the Diocese to engage effectively with rapid societal and technological change, including developments in artificial intelligence, challenges facing schools, the needs of young people, and growing concerns regarding mental health.

Bishop Marcus's Vision and Response

Bishop Marcus emphasised that his vision was not one of increased centralisation but rather the distribution of resources and support outward to strengthen local mission and evangelisation.

He described the fundamental purpose of the parish as forming and equipping its members to become evangelisers, nourished by the Word of God and the sacraments before being sent out in mission. In this context, he stated that “the parish exists to train each of its members to be a living page of the Gospel.”

Bishop Marcus observed that most people become Catholic through witnessing the example and witness of Catholics rather than through intellectual argument or reading alone. He, therefore, highlighted the importance of fostering vibrant parish communities capable of giving credible witness to the faith.

He also outlined a potential shift away from relying exclusively on volunteers towards the development of appropriately formed and remunerated lay leaders. Such individuals would be employed in clearly defined roles, receive ongoing formation, be supported by clergy, and be accountable for their ministry.

Bishop Marcus noted that Catholic schools remain an underutilised resource and suggested that they could serve more effectively as gathering spaces for local communities. He also referred to the model of small Christian communities, often found in missionary contexts, as an example of structures that sustain parish life and help foster vocations.

In relation to communications, Bishop Marcus stressed that any strategy must be comprehensive and make effective use of all available channels, including social media, rather than relying solely on diocesan websites or local newspapers.

He identified the role of the Dean as an important element of local leadership and suggested that this role may merit renewed emphasis.

Bishop Marcus reiterated his commitment to avoiding a heavily centralised or top-heavy diocesan structure.

APPENDIX 8.2

RESOLUTIONS OF THE CONSULTATION MEETINGS WITH THE THREE DIOCESAN FINANCE COUNCILS (DIOCESAN BOARDS OF TRUSTEES)



Resolution passed at a Meeting of the Board of Trustees (Finance Council) of the Catholic Diocese of Leeds on 30 June 2026 in relation to the potential Unification of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam.

The Trustees noted:

- A. Consultation has taken place with parish clergy, parish representatives, the College of Consultors and other stakeholders in the Catholic Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam regarding the possible unification of the three dioceses.
- B. The Trustees recognise that any decision to proceed with such a unification must be made only after the completion of appropriate legal, financial, property, operational, governance and regulatory due diligence and after consideration of the implications for the charity, its beneficiaries, employees, clergy, parishes and other stakeholders.
- C. The Trustees have considered their duties under charity law, including their duty to act only in the best interests of the charity and its beneficiaries, to act prudently, and to ensure that any proposed unification advances, or is consistent with, the charity's purposes.

RESOLUTION

After consideration of the information currently available, the Trustees:

1. Agree in principle to the proposal for the unification of the Catholic Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam.
2. Confirm that this agreement in principle is expressly subject to the satisfactory completion of comprehensive due diligence.
3. Require that the Trustees receive and consider appropriate professional advice.
4. Note that any final decision to proceed shall be subject to obtaining all necessary civil, regulatory and canonical approvals.
5. Authorise the Unification Project Group and its advisers to continue discussions and develop detailed proposals.
6. Confirm that this resolution does not constitute approval of any final transaction documentation and does not create a legally binding commitment to proceed.
7. Confirm that any final decision shall be reserved to the Trustees and shall require a further specific resolution.

PASSED

The resolution was passed unanimously by the Board of Trustees

Signed as a true record of the resolution of the Trustees

+ Marcus Stock
Chair: _____

Name: Rt Rev Marcus Stock

Date: 30 June 2026



Resolution passed at a Meeting of the Board of Trustees (Finance Council) of the Catholic Diocese of Middlesbrough on 14 July 2026 in relation to the potential Unification of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam.

The Trustees noted:

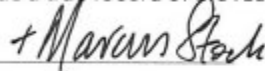
- A. Consultation has taken place with parish clergy, parish representatives, the College of Consultors and other stakeholders in the Catholic Dioceses of Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough regarding the possible unification of the three dioceses.
- B. The Trustees recognise that any decision to proceed with such a unification must be made only after the completion of appropriate legal, financial, property, operational, governance and regulatory due diligence and after consideration of the implications for the charity, its beneficiaries, employees, clergy, parishes and other stakeholders.
- C. The Trustees have considered their duties under charity law, including their duty to act only in the best interests of the charity and its beneficiaries, to act prudently, and to ensure that any proposed unification advances, or is consistent with, the charity's purposes.

RESOLUTION

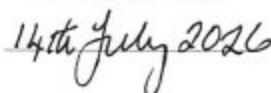
After consideration of the information currently available, the Trustees:

- 1. Agree in principle to the proposal for the unification of the Catholic Dioceses of Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough.
- 2. Confirm that this agreement in principle is expressly subject to the satisfactory completion of comprehensive due diligence.
- 3. Require that the Trustees receive and consider appropriate professional advice.
- 4. Note that any final decision to proceed shall be subject to obtaining all necessary civil, regulatory and canonical approvals.
- 5. Authorise the Unification Project Group and its advisers to continue discussions and develop detailed proposals.
- 6. Confirm that this resolution does not constitute approval of any final transaction documentation and does not create a legally binding commitment to proceed.
- 7. Confirm that any final decision shall be reserved to the Trustees and shall require a further specific resolution.

Signed as a true record of the resolution of the Trustees

Chair: 

Name: Rt Rev Marcus Stock

Date: 



Resolution passed at a Meeting of the Board of Trustees (Finance Council) of the Catholic Diocese of Hallam on 29 July 2026 in relation to the potential Unification of the Dioceses of Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough.

The Trustees noted:

- A. Consultation has taken place with parish clergy, parish representatives, the College of Consultors and other stakeholders in the Catholic Dioceses of Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough regarding the possible unification of the three dioceses.
- B. The Trustees recognise that any decision to proceed with such a unification must be made only after the completion of appropriate legal, financial, property, operational, governance and regulatory due diligence and after consideration of the implications for the charity, its beneficiaries, employees, clergy, parishes and other stakeholders.
- C. The Trustees have considered their duties under charity law, including their duty to act only in the best interests of the charity and its beneficiaries, to act prudently, and to ensure that any proposed unification advances, or is consistent with, the charity's purposes.

RESOLUTION

After consideration of the information currently available, the Trustees:

1. Agree in principle to the proposal for the unification of the Catholic Dioceses of Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough.
2. Confirm that this agreement in principle is expressly subject to the satisfactory completion of comprehensive due diligence.
3. Require that the Trustees receive and consider appropriate professional advice.
4. Note that any final decision to proceed shall be subject to obtaining all necessary civil, regulatory and canonical approvals.
5. Authorise the Unification Project Group and its advisers to continue discussions and develop detailed proposals.
6. Confirm that this resolution does not constitute approval of any final transaction documentation and does not create a legally binding commitment to proceed.
7. Confirm that any final decision shall be reserved to the Trustees and shall require a further specific resolution.

PASSED

The resolution was passed unanimously by the Board of Trustees

Signed as a true record of the resolution of the Trustees

+ *Marcus Stock*
Chair: _____

Name: Rt Rev Marcus Stock

Date: 29 July 2026

APPENDIX 8.3

RESOLUTIONS OF THE CONSULTATION MEETINGS WITH COLLEGE OF CONSULTORS IN EACH OF THE THREE DIOCESES



Resolution passed at a Meeting of the College of Consultors of the Diocese of Leeds on Wednesday 15 July 2026 in relation to the potential Unification of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam.

RESOLUTION

The College of Consultors of the Diocese of Leeds supports the work being undertaken by the Bishop of Leeds, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam as one Diocese. The College of Consultors recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed united diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Nottingham.

PASSED

The resolution was passed unanimously by the College of Consultors

YES	10
NO	0
ABSTAIN	0

Total Number of Priests constituting the College of Consultors: 12

Total Number of Consultors present at the meeting on Wednesday 15 July 2026: 10



Resolution passed at a Meeting of the College of Consultors of the Diocese of Middlesbrough on Tuesday 21 July 2026 in relation to the potential Unification of the Dioceses of Middlesbrough, Leeds and Hallam.

RESOLUTION

The College of Consultors of the Diocese of Middlesbrough supports the work being undertaken by the Apostolic Administrator, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Middlesbrough, Leeds and Hallam as one Diocese. The College of Consultors recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed united diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Nottingham.

PASSED

The resolution was passed unanimously.

YES	9
NO	0
ABSTAIN	0

Total Number of Priests constituting the College of Consultors: 9

Total Number of Consultors present at the meeting on Tuesday 21 July 2026: 9



ST MARY'S R C CATHEDRAL

SAINT FRANCIS' & SAINT CLARE'S OF ASSISI

ALSO SERVING THE SHRINE OF MOUNT GRACE, OSMOTHERLEY

Cathedral Dean: Very Rev Canon Paul Farrer

Cathedral House, Dalby Way

Coulby Newham, Middlesbrough TS8 0TW

Tel: (01642) 597750 Email: parish@middlesbroughrccathedral.org Website: www.middlesbroughrccathedral.org



St Mary's Cathedral
MIDDLESBROUGH

28 July 2026

My Lord,

RE: THE MIDDLESBROUGH DIOCESAN COLLEGE OF CONSULTORS' MEETING OF 21/7/2026

At the above meeting, as Apostolic Administrator, you tabled the following resolution for consideration:

The College of Consultors of the Diocese of Middlesbrough supports the work being undertaken by the Apostolic Administrator, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Middlesbrough, Leeds and Hallam as one Diocese. The College of Consultors recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed united diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Nottingham.

The College was both quorate and complete. I am happy to formally record that the vote was unanimous in support of the resolution.

The College was also unanimous in expressing gratitude for the diligent care and meticulous consideration which underscore the manner in which you have undertaken the task assigned to you by the Holy See. We continue to hold you in our prayers and assure you of our support as this difficult task unfolds.

Consultors are: Very Rev Canon David Grant (Provost), Rt Rev Mgr Canon Gerard Robinson, Rt Rev Mgr Canon David Hogan, Very Rev Canons Michael Loughlin, John Loughlin, Alan Sheridan, Edmond Gubbins, John Lumley and Paul Farrer.

Yours,

Canon Paul Farrer, Secretary to the Chapter

cc. Mgr Robinson



Resolution passed at a Meeting of the College of Consultors of the Diocese of Hallam on Friday 24 July 2026 in relation to the potential Unification of the Dioceses of Hallam, Middlesbrough and Leeds.

RESOLUTION

The College of Consultors of the Diocese of Hallam supports the work being undertaken by the Apostolic Administrator, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Hallam, Middlesbrough and Leeds as one Diocese. The College of Consultors recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed united diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Nottingham.

PASSED

The resolution was passed unanimously by the College of Consultors

YES	7
NO	0
ABSTAIN	0

Total Number of Priests constituting the College of Consultors: 7

Total Number of Consultors present at the meeting on Friday 24 July 2026: 7

APPENDIX 8.4

RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF PRIESTS OF THE DIOCESE OF LEEDS



Resolution passed at a Meeting of the Council of Priests of the Diocese of Leeds on Tuesday 21 July 2026 in relation to the potential Unification of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam.

RESOLUTION

The Council of Priests of the Diocese of Leeds supports the work being undertaken by the Bishop of Leeds, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam as one Diocese. The Council of Priests recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed united diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Nottingham.

PASSED

The resolution was passed unanimously by the Council of Priests

YES	13
NO	0
ABSTAIN	0

Total Number of Priests constituting the Council of Priests: 14

Total Number of members present at the meeting on Tuesday 21 July 2026: 13

APPENDIX 8.5

RESOLUTION OF THE DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL OF THE DIOCESE OF LEEDS



Resolution passed at a Meeting of the Pastoral Council of the Diocese of Leeds on Wednesday 29 July 2026 in relation to the potential Unification of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam.

RESOLUTION

The Members of the Pastoral Council of the Diocese of Leeds supports the work being undertaken by the Bishop of Leeds, at the behest of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Dicastery for Bishops, to unite the existing Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam as one Diocese. The Pastoral Council recognises that the unification of the three dioceses may require some re-adjustment of the canonical boundaries between the proposed united diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Nottingham.

PASSED

The resolution was passed unanimously by the Diocesan Pastoral Council

YES	11
NO	0
ABSTAIN	0

Total Number of Members constituting the Leeds Diocesan Pastoral Council: 17

Total Number of Members present at the meeting on Wednesday 29 July 2026: 11

APPENDIX 9

NOTES TAKEN AT THE CONSULTATION MEETINGS WITH THE PRIESTS AND DEACONS IN THE THREE DIOCESES

Notes from the meeting of Rt Rev Marcus Stock, with priests and deacons of the Diocese of Middlesbrough held on 3 February 2026 at the Mercure York Fairfield Manor Hotel, York

Bishop Marcus opened the meeting with a prayer.

Bishop Marcus started the meeting by informing the clergy of the progress to date. The key points were:

- Bishop Marcus appointed as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Middlesbrough.
- Bishop Marcus met with both the Prefect and the Secretary of the Dicastery of Bishops to gain clarity.
- Pope Leo's strategic decision to explore the possible unification of the Diocese of Middlesbrough with the Diocese of Leeds rather than appoint a new bishop.
- Three-stage process:
 1. First: Apostolic Administrator status (temporary, reversible)
 2. Second: If the consultation process indicates agreement with the proposal for the two dioceses to work as one, then the Holy Father may decide to appoint Bishop Marcus as the Bishop of Middlesbrough and unite the two dioceses initially '*in persona Episcopi*' (possibly as soon as 9-12 months if approved by the Holy See).
 3. Third: Complete canonical unification (probably 18 months-2 years minimum) and all the concomitant changes needed to unite the dioceses under one charitable legal structure.
- The decision to explore this possibility may have originated from the 2018 *Ad Limina* report, which suggested that unification with another diocese might be considered.
- Bishop Marcus wished to clarify that this is in no way a Leeds takeover of Middlesbrough. The collaboration will actively look at the strengths of both dioceses and work strategically and collaboratively together.
- To build sustainability and secure future sacramental and pastoral provision, the canonical structure of parishes needs to embrace the flexibility which is found in the Church's model within "mission" communities.

Bishop Marcus – Vision and Mission

- "As a Church, we are members of one body: a corpus, not a corporation. We are a family, not a firm. As members of Christ's Church, we do not need to fashion our own vision and mission, nor determine our own set of values. Our vision, mission, and values are not something we subjectively or collectively decide and constitute for ourselves; they are given to us personally by Our Lord
- Vision: In his priestly prayer in St John's Gospel, Christ reveals his encompassing vision for his Church. He prays to his Father: "I do not ask for these [disciples] only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." "*Ut unum sint*" (that they may be one)
- Mission: The mission of the Church was given explicitly by Christ to his apostles before His ascension: "Go, make disciples of all nations."
- Values: These are given by Christ Himself in the Beatitudes.

Consultation Process & Timeline

- Monsignor Robinson, VG, will be leading the consultation with Bishop Marcus across both dioceses.
- Focused consultation meetings comprising parishioners who are currently:
 1. Chair of parish pastoral council (or a delegate member from the parish pastoral council)
 2. Chair of the parish finance committee (or a delegate member from the finance committee)

Where a parish does not have a parish pastoral council, two members from the parish finance committee may represent the parish.

(2 lay faithful from each parish, maximum)
- Timeline: The consultation meetings will take place between March and May 2026, and the report for submission to the Dicastery for Bishops will be completed by late summer.
- The plan, if approved by the Holy Father, would be to complete unification by the end of 2028 (150th anniversary of diocesan separation).
- Online surveys for broader input and consultation, but structured meetings will stay focused.

The meeting then opened up for questions from the clergy. The key points were:

- Priest appointment policy across both dioceses: personal meetings will take place with the bishop, and an assurance that no appointments outside of the territory of the original diocese of incardination will take place without agreement.
- Retirement policies: Adoption of the best practices from both dioceses.
- The bishop will delegate faculties to priests for the 2026 Confirmations in the Middlesbrough Diocese. In Leeds Diocese, the 'Order for the Conferral of Confirmation without Mass' is used.
- Property decisions: This is currently limited. As Apostolic Administrator, it is not possible for Bishop Marcus to consent to the alienation of Church property or assets. This would change if he were to be appointed also as Bishop of Middlesbrough, uniting the two dioceses *in persona Episcopi*.
- Evangelisation: Focus on adult formation and catechesis across the diocese. He has appointed an EV for Education to help in this regard in schools and university chaplaincies. He sees parishes as missionary centres sending people out as "living pages of the Gospel".
- Pastoral Strategy Team: This was not set up due to Covid.
- The challenges of integrating two dioceses with very different cultures were discussed. It is recognized that developing a "one diocesan family identity" would take time.
- *Ad Limina* 2018: the summary will be made available to the priests.
- Ordinations and ministries are being organised.
- Direct access: bishop's mobile number to be distributed.

The clergy thanked Bishop Marcus for his generous "yes" and offered their support for the task ahead.

**Notes from the meeting of Rt Rev Marcus Stock,
with priests and deacons of the Diocese of Leeds,
held on Friday 13 March 2026, at Cathedral Hall, Leeds**

In response to the request of our Holy Father Pope Leo XIV that Bishop Marcus should begin a period of consultation on the future of the Dioceses of Leeds and Middlesbrough, all clergy of the Diocese of Leeds, and other priests who are currently engaged in ministry in the Diocese of Leeds, were invited to a consultation meeting regarding the proposed unification of the Dioceses of Leeds and Middlesbrough. The meeting was held in Cathedral Hall at Leeds Cathedral on Friday 13th March, 2:30pm with a large number of priests and deacons attending.

It should be noted that, when this meeting took place, only the Dioceses of Leeds and Middlesbrough were being discussed. Bishop Marcus was only appointed as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Hallam one week later, on 20th March 2026. However, all the points raised are equally pertinent with the Diocese of Hallam being included in considerations, and there were many opportunities for further points to be raised by clergy and others after the Holy Father requested that the Diocese of Hallam be included in the consultation.

The meeting began with a prayer, after which Bishop Marcus explained how the request for this period of consultation had come about. He went on present some pertinent history of the two dioceses as well as relevant pastoral statistics. After his presentation, there was an opportunity for those present to ask questions, raises concerns, seek clarifications and express their points of view.

The period of discussion which followed was very positive and gentle in its tone. Those assembled were overwhelmingly positive about the idea of unification between the two dioceses. The most common concern raised was about the wellbeing of the bishop with an increased workload. It was pointed out that many of the priests and deacons of the two dioceses studied together and that there is already a great deal of fraternity between the clergy of the two dioceses.

Questions included the name of the potential unified diocese and the status of the cathedrals, how the curia would be arranged to cover a much wider area and the possibility of auxiliary bishops. In the context of the Diocese of Leeds currently undertaking a restructuring of the Catholic Multi Academy Trusts, a question was asked about how this may relate to the trusts in existence in the Diocese of Middlesbrough.

It was pointed out that some priests, especially those who are a little older, may be worried about the possibility of being appointed to an area which they do not know and which is far away from their support network of families. There was also a question of how the remuneration of the clergy in a reunified diocese would work. Although not linked to the process of unification of dioceses, it was observed that some of the faithful may draw a link between the unification of the dioceses and the potential closure and amalgamation of parishes and churches.

All of the questions and observations were raised with a view to making any eventual unification of the dioceses as successful as possible rather than as objections. The gathered clergy were universally enthusiastic about the prospect of a unification.

**Notes from the meeting of Rt Rev Marcus Stock,
with priests and deacons of the Diocese of Hallam,
held on Wednesday, 8 April 2026, at Hallam Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Sheffield**

The bishop began the meeting with prayer and then addressed the thirty-seven priests and deacons present about the request made by the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, concerning the possibility and desirability of the unification of the Diocese of Hallam with the Diocese of Leeds.

As, since early December 2025, the Diocese of Middlesbrough was also considering the question of unification with the Diocese of Leeds, and was under the same Apostolic Administration of Bishop Marcus, the bishop outlined the history behind the Holy Father's thinking and the process of widespread consultation that was already underway and, in which, the Diocese of Hallam would now take part.

The bishop spoke for approximately twenty minutes and concluded with the observation that communication was very important and that the matter was not predetermined. He then invited questions from those present.

The following questions were asked:

- **How long might the process take?**

Should the decision to go ahead be taken, the bishop estimated that the process for the completion of both the Canonical and Civil requirements, with all the concomitant fiduciary, legal and charitable necessities, might reasonably be expected to take 18 months to two years.

- **The Diocese of Middlesbrough aside, will we draw on the experience from other dioceses (perhaps from overseas) who have undertaken similar processes?**

The bishop said yes, the experience of other dioceses will be drawn upon, and it should be recognized that our experience is far from unique. The bishop cited the example of some small Italian dioceses and that the Episcopal Conference of Scotland had just recently been asked to consider a somewhat different but nonetheless similar process nationally.

- **Will we emphasise Vocations to the Priesthood?**

Absolutely! The bishop cited his experience following his previous year's pastoral letter for Good Shepherd Sunday in which he stressed the need for priestly vocations in the diocese. A fruit of his call has been that 35 men under forty years of age have come forward and, while inevitably all will surely not proceed to ordination, work has already begun to foster their sense of vocation and to create greater future opportunities for more men to respond to the Lord's call.

In speaking to the clergy the bishop also briefly pointed out that should the unification go ahead then we should look at the best practice across the dioceses for clergy remuneration, healthcare and pension provision. The bishop would seek to lift up those areas that might be considered lacking rather than be looking to pare down.

- **Will Evangelisation be a priority also? What are your thoughts?**

Very much so. Our 'Mission' is very simple, said the bishop; it has been given to us by the Lord, "Go and make disciples of all nations," (Matthew 28:19). We are not seeking to manage decline but to be a missionary Church. Indeed, we should seek to recapture the spirit of zeal and adaptability that so marked the return of the Church to public life in England during the nineteenth century.

- **What form of *Ad Clerum* would you consider?**

For the time being each diocese will continue to have its own *Ad clerum* though inevitably there will be greater opportunities to share information across the three dioceses. The bishop is in the habit of writing an *Ad clerum* once a month.

- **Will the former parishes of the Diocese of Nottingham remain with the rest of what is currently the Diocese of Hallam or return to their previous jurisdiction?**

The Holy Father has asked for the unification of the dioceses to be considered. It will, of course, be necessary to study this question separately and, should Leeds and Hallam merge, then that would be the appropriate time to consider the question in collaboration with the Diocese of Nottingham.

- **What is needed in the Diocese regarding episcopal (or delegated) visitation?**

The bishop does undertake visitations to parishes and other institutions, but he does so in conjunction with his *Vicars Forane*. For the time being, if there are any significant events, such as Jubilees, etc., where you would seek his presence then please let him know as soon as possible. Likewise, if there are any issues that are of urgent or particular need then the bishop asked that people first approach one of the Vicars General.

- **Will your clergy be able to contact you privately and directly?**

Yes. The bishop was happy to share his private phone number and his personal email address, but he did ask that people be mindful that they should be considered for use for matters extraordinary rather than ordinary.

APPENDIX 10

NOTES TAKEN AT THE CONSULTATION WITH THE MEMBERS OF INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE IN THE THREE DIOCESES

CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES

**With the Religious Communities of the Diocese of Middlesbrough
Held at 12:00 pm on 9 April 2026 at Thicket Priory, York**

Diocesan Unification Consultation

Bishop Marcus opened the meeting by explaining the Holy Father's decision to explore and discern prayerfully the possibility of the three Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam to amalgamate in order to improve the effectiveness of the Church's mission. The primary goal of this restructuring is to enhance mission delivery rather than to achieve cost savings.

The need for regional services, alongside some centralised functions, was highlighted as an important consideration.

Religious communities identified several key challenges. Concerns were raised regarding the provision of the sacraments, which are currently dependent on the availability of retired priests. There is a risk that some religious houses may lose access to weekly Mass. The bishop stated that sacramental provision for religious houses, hospitals and prisons remains a priority. Questions were also raised about property ownership, particularly in relation to diocesan-owned facilities. In addition, safeguarding regulations were described as overwhelming for smaller communities.

In terms of governance structures, there was a preference for episcopal vicars rather than a fully centralised model of oversight. It was suggested that area episcopal vicars could also serve as liaisons for religious communities. The need for advisory councils for religious communities was identified, as well as the importance of maintaining direct communication channels with the diocesan bishop.

Religious Community Contributions and Visibility

It was recognised that religious communities make a distinctive contribution through the teaching of prayer and spiritual formation. For example, the Benedictines initially and now the Congregation of Jesus run Saint Bede's Pastoral Centre, York, which has operated as a centre for prayer training since 1986. Different charisms, such as Benedictine and Carmelite traditions, offer a variety of approaches to prayer. The quality of community prayer was noted to attract parishioners from surrounding parishes.

However, it was acknowledged that greater visibility is needed, particularly in relation to promoting vocations. Many communities remain unknown to the wider Church. There is a need to improve access to secondary schools and sixth forms in order to provide vocation presentations. The idea of roadshow-style presentations to showcase opportunities in religious life was discussed. It was also noted that adult formation programmes are being developed in collaboration with all three dioceses.

Questions were raised regarding how religious communities can contribute to diocesan governance structures and parishes.

Staffing Solutions and Future Models

The ongoing shortage of priests was acknowledged as a significant reality. It was reported that two new seminarians have recently been accepted for the Diocese of Leeds, and that over 40 young men, aged between 18 and 38, have expressed serious interest in discerning a vocation to the Sacred Priesthood. The importance of missionary priests was also highlighted.

A number of alternative models of ministry were discussed. These included the use of paid lay pastoral assistants within parishes, as well as a model from the Netherlands involving married deacons living in presbyteries. Reference was also made to a model used in Northern Canada, where retired couples manage parishes and receive a salary. The limitations of relying solely on volunteers were acknowledged, particularly given the extent to which many individuals are already overcommitted.

APPENDIX 11

SUMMARY OF THE FEEDBACK FROM THE ONLINE CONSULTATION

The following is a summary of the online consultation:

Question 1: How could bringing the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam under one Bishop strengthen or challenge our shared mission and pastoral care across the region?

Responses to Question 1: Overall Analysis - Strengths		
<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Theme Descriptions</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Shared resources Economies of scale	Respondents saw this as a way to make better use of diocesan resources, reduce duplication and strengthen support across the region.	51%
Local parish continuity Minimal impact	This theme reflects the hope that parish life would continue with little disruption and that local worshipping communities would remain stable.	44%
Clergy deployment Priest shortage	Respondents viewed unification as a possible means of deploying priests more flexibly and responding more effectively to clergy shortages.	42%
Unity Collaboration Wider networks	This theme points to greater cooperation between parishes, deaneries and diocesan services through wider networks and shared purpose.	41%
Vocations Formation Lay ministry	Respondents identified opportunities to strengthen vocations, formation and lay ministry through a more coordinated diocesan approach.	30%
Youth ministry Schools Education	This theme reflects the potential to support young people, schools and education services more consistently across a larger diocese.	26%
Regional identity Heritage	Respondents saw value in recognising the shared regional story of the three dioceses while preserving their particular heritage.	22%
Evangelisation Mission Outreach	This theme captures hopes that unification could renew missionary energy, outreach and evangelisation across the region.	22%
Communication Consistency Governance	Respondents hoped that a unified diocese could bring clearer communication, more consistent governance and better coordination.	11%
Digital Modernisation Innovation	This theme reflects interest in modernising systems, improving digital access and adopting new ways of working.	7%

Responses to Question 1: Overall Analysis - Challenges		
<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Theme Descriptions</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Clergy workload Priest shortage	Respondents feared that a larger diocese could increase pressure on priests and make existing clergy shortages more difficult to manage.	53%
Parish closures Reduced Mass access	This theme reflects concern that parish closures or amalgamations could reduce local access to Mass and sacramental life.	51%
Administrative complexity Practical integration	Respondents highlighted the practical difficulty of aligning diocesan systems, policies, staffing and governance structures.	38%
Loss of local and diocesan identity	This theme reflects anxiety that distinctive diocesan histories, parish identities and local traditions could be weakened or overlooked.	35%
Distance Geography Rural remoteness	Respondents were concerned that distance, travel and geography could make some rural or peripheral communities feel more isolated.	22%
Community fragmentation Morale	This theme reflects concern that uncertainty or poorly managed change could damage parish morale and weaken community cohesion.	20%
Mission Evangelisation Weakened	Respondents feared that structural change could distract from evangelisation and fail to address deeper challenges facing parish life.	19%
Centralisation Representation Governance	This theme expresses concern that decisions could become more centralised and less responsive to local pastoral realities.	17%
Financial cost Asset concerns	Respondents raised concerns about how money, property, debts, assets and financial responsibilities would be managed in a unified diocese.	15%
Poor communication Transition confusion	Respondents feared that unclear communication, limited consultation or uncertainty during transition could undermine trust in the process.	11%

Responses to Question 1: Analysis by Diocese - Strengths		
<i>Diocese</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>% of respondents from each Diocese</i>
Hallam	Shared resources/economies of scale	49%
Hallam	Local parish continuity/minimal impact	47%
Hallam	Clergy deployment/priest shortage	42%
Hallam	Unity/collaboration/wider networks	42%
Leeds	Local parish continuity/minimal impact	47%
Leeds	Shared resources/economies of scale	51%
Leeds	Unity/collaboration/wider networks	46%
Leeds	Clergy deployment/priest shortage	45%
Leeds	Vocations/formation/lay ministry	37%
Middlesbrough	Shared resources/economies of scale	58%
Middlesbrough	Clergy deployment/priest shortage	41%
Middlesbrough	Local parish continuity/minimal impact	38%
Middlesbrough	Unity/collaboration/wider networks	36%

Responses to Question 1: Analysis by Diocese - Challenges		
<i>Diocese</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>% of respondents from each Diocese</i>
Hallam	Parish closures/reduced Mass access	54%
Hallam	Clergy workload/priest shortage	52%
Hallam	Administrative complexity / practical integration	38%
Hallam	Loss of local/diocesan identity	32%
Leeds	Clergy workload/priest shortage	57%
Leeds	Parish closures/reduced Mass access	52%
Leeds	Administrative complexity / practical integration	42%
Leeds	Loss of local/diocesan identity	34%
Middlesbrough	Clergy workload/priest shortage	49%
Middlesbrough	Parish closures/reduced Mass access	47%
Middlesbrough	Loss of local/diocesan identity	43%
Middlesbrough	Administrative complexity / practical integration	33%

Responses to Question 1: Analysis by Age - Strengths		
<i>Age Bracket</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>% of respondents from each age bracket</i>
16 - 30	Unity/collaboration/wider networks	57%
16 - 30	Clergy deployment/priest shortage	46%
16 - 30	Shared resources/economies of scale	46%
16 - 30	Local parish continuity / minimal impact	43%
16 - 30	Vocations/formation/lay ministry	39%
31 - 60	Shared resources/economies of scale	56%
31 - 60	Unity/collaboration / wider networks	45%
31 - 60	Local parish continuity / minimal impact	42%
31 - 60	Clergy deployment/priest shortage	44%
31 - 60	Vocations/formation/lay ministry	29%
61+	Shared resources/economies of scale	48%
61+	Local parish continuity/minimal impact	46%
61+	Clergy deployment/priest shortage	41%
61+	Unity/collaboration / wider networks	37%

Responses to Question 1: Analysis by Age - Challenges		
<i>Age Bracket</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>% of respondents from each age bracket</i>
16 - 30	Parish closures/reduced Mass access	61%
16 - 30	Administrative complexity/practical integration	50%
16 - 30	Loss of local/diocesan identity	50%
16 - 30	Clergy workload/priest shortage	43%
16 - 30	Community fragmentation/morale	32%
31 - 60	Clergy workload/priest shortage	58%
31 - 60	Parish closures/reduced Mass access	54%
31 - 60	Loss of local/diocesan identity	46%
31 - 60	Administrative complexity/practical integration	41%
61+	Clergy workload/priest shortage	50%
61+	Parish closures/reduced Mass access	48%
61+	Administrative complexity/practical integration	35%
61+	Loss of local/diocesan identity	27%

Responses to Question 1: Analysis by Age Bracket and Diocese - Strengths		
<i>Diocese × Age bracket</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>% of respondents from each age bracket and Diocese</i>
Hallam 16 - 30	Unity/collaboration /wider networks	64%
Hallam 31 - 60	Shared resources/economies of scale	53%
Hallam 61+	Local parish continuity/minimal impact	52%
Leeds 16 - 30	Unity/collaboration/wider networks	55%
Leeds 31 - 60	Shared resources/economies of scale	59%
Leeds 61+	Local parish continuity/minimal impact	46%
Middlesbrough 16 - 30	Clergy deployment/priest shortage	67%
Middlesbrough 31 - 60	Shared resources/economies of scale	61%
Middlesbrough 61+	Shared resources/economies of scale	54%

Responses to Question 1: Analysis by Age Bracket and Diocese - Challenges		
<i>Diocese × Age bracket</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>% of respondents from each age bracket and Diocese</i>
Hallam 16 - 30	Administrative complexity/practical integration	64%
Hallam 31 - 60	Parish closures/reduced Mass access	58%
Hallam 61+	Clergy workload/priest shortage	49%
Leeds 16 - 30	Parish closures/reduced Mass access	73%
Leeds 31 - 60	Clergy workload/priest shortage	68%
Leeds 61+	Clergy workload/priest shortage	51%
Middlesbrough 16 - 30	Parish closures/reduced Mass access	50%
Middlesbrough 31 - 60	Loss of local/diocesan identity	52%
Middlesbrough 61+	Clergy workload/priest shortage	50%

Question 2: What practical, spiritual and structural implications would working under one bishop have for the clergy, parishes, schools, and diocesan services?

Responses to Question 2: Overall Analysis - Strengths		
<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Theme Descriptions</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Shared resources/ efficiency/ reduced duplication	Respondents saw this as a way to make better use of clergy, finances, staff, buildings and diocesan services while avoiding unnecessary duplication.	49%
Broader expertise/ ministries/	This theme reflects the hope that the unified diocese would give parishes and communities wider access to specialist knowledge, ministries and proven good practice.	34%
Best practice	Respondents considered that a larger diocesan structure could allow priests to be deployed more flexibly and pastoral cover to be planned more effectively.	32%
Improved clergy deployment/ pastoral cover	This theme points to the possibility of clearer communication, more consistent governance and a shared strategy across parishes, schools and diocesan services.	30%
Consistent communication/ governance/strategy	Respondents hoped that local parish life would remain stable and, where possible, be strengthened through better support and more sustainable provision.	29%

Local parish life maintained or improved	This theme reflects the desire for the three diocesan communities to work together with a stronger sense of common purpose and shared mission.	27%
Wider collaboration/unity/shared vision	Respondents saw opportunities for a more coordinated approach to supporting young people, Catholic schools, families and future formation.	22%
Youth/schools/families strengthened	This theme captures the view that unification could encourage better use of digital tools, modern systems and new ways of working.	11%
Digital/innovation/modernisation	Respondents identified the potential for renewed missionary energy, wider outreach and a more outward-looking diocesan approach.	9%
Stronger mission/evangelisation/outreach	This theme reflects the hope that a larger diocese would be better able to plan for the future and withstand financial, pastoral and demographic pressures.	7%

Responses to Question 2: Overall Analysis - Challenges		
<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Theme Descriptions</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	Respondents feared that a larger diocese could increase pressure on priests who are already stretched and worsen the impact of clergy shortages.	37%
Parish closures/loss of Mass and sacraments	This theme reflects concern that unification could lead to parish closures or reduced local access to Mass, confession and other sacraments.	33%
Administrative complexity/integration risk	Respondents highlighted the risk that aligning diocesan systems, policies, staffing and governance could be complex and burdensome.	29%
Centralisation/remoteness of decision-making	This theme expresses concern that decisions could become more distant from local communities and less responsive to local pastoral realities.	22%
Distance/geography/rural isolation	Respondents were concerned that distance, travel and geography could make some rural or peripheral communities feel more isolated.	20%
Loss of local/diocesan identity	This theme reflects anxiety that distinctive diocesan histories, parish identities and local traditions could be weakened or overlooked.	20%
Financial/asset stripping concern	Respondents raised concerns about how money, property, debts, assets and financial responsibilities would be managed in a unified diocese.	18%
Community fragmentation/morale damage	This theme reflects concern that uncertainty or poorly managed change could damage parish morale and weaken community cohesion.	15%
Poor communication/uncertainty/mistrust	Respondents feared that unclear communication, limited consultation or uncertainty during transition could undermine trust in the process.	15%
Weakened mission/evangelisation	This theme captures concern that structural change could distract from evangelisation and fail to address deeper challenges facing parish life.	14%

Responses to Question 2: Analysis by Diocese - Strengths		
<i>Diocese</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>% of respondents from each Diocese</i>
Hallam	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	46%
Hallam	Broader expertise/ministries/best practice	34%
Hallam	Local parish life maintained or improved	34%
Hallam	Improved clergy deployment/pastoral cover	34%
Hallam	Consistent communication/governance/ strategy	32%
Leeds	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	51%
Leeds	Broader expertise/ministries/best practice	35%
Leeds	Improved clergy deployment/pastoral cover	34%
Leeds	Consistent communication/governance/ strategy	33%
Leeds	Wider collaboration/unity/shared vision	30%
Middlesbrough	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	49%
Middlesbrough	Broader expertise/ministries/best practice	31%
Middlesbrough	Improved clergy deployment/pastoral cover	26%
Middlesbrough	Local parish life maintained or improved	24%

Responses to Question 2: Analysis by Diocese - Challenges		
<i>Diocese</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>% of respondents from each Diocese</i>
Hallam	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	36%
Hallam	Parish closures/loss of Mass and sacraments	34%
Hallam	Administrative complexity/integration risk	28%
Hallam	Centralisation/remoteness of decision-making	23%
Leeds	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	40%
Leeds	Parish closures/loss of Mass and sacraments	37%
Leeds	Administrative complexity/integration risk	30%
Leeds	Financial/asset stripping concern	25%
Middlesbrough	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	39%
Middlesbrough	Administrative complexity/integration risk	30%
Middlesbrough	Parish closures/loss of Mass and sacraments	30%
Middlesbrough	Distance/geography/rural isolation	24%

Responses to Question 2: Analysis by Age - Strengths		
<i>Age Bracket</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>% of respondents from each age bracket</i>
16 - 30	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	46%
16 - 30	Broader expertise/ministries/best practice	36%
16 - 30	Improved clergy deployment/pastoral cover	32%
16 - 30	Youth/schools/families strengthened	32%
16 - 30	Wider collaboration/unity/shared vision	25%
31 - 60	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	54%
31 - 60	Broader expertise/ministries/best practice	36%
31 - 60	Improved clergy deployment/pastoral cover	34%
31 - 60	Local parish life maintained or improved	30%
31 - 60	Wider collaboration/unity/shared vision	29%
61+	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	45%
61+	Broader expertise/ministries/best practice	31%
61+	Consistent communication/governance/strategy	31%
61+	Improved clergy deployment/pastoral cover	30%

Responses to Question 2: Analysis by Age - Challenges		
<i>Age Bracket</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>% of respondents from each age bracket</i>
16 - 30	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	50%
16 - 30	Parish closures/loss of Mass and sacraments	43%
16 - 30	Administrative complexity/integration risk	39%
16 - 30	Financial/asset stripping concern	32%
16 - 30	Weakened mission/evangelisation	25%
31 - 60	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	42%
31 - 60	Parish closures/loss of Mass and sacraments	36%
31 - 60	Administrative complexity/integration risk	31%
31 - 60	Loss of local/diocesan identity	24%
61+	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	33%
61+	Parish closures/loss of Mass and sacraments	31%
61+	Administrative complexity/integration risk	27%
61+	Centralisation/remoteness of decision-making	22%

Responses to Question 2: Analysis by Age Bracket and Diocese - Strengths		
<i>Diocese × Age Bracket</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>% of respondents from each age bracket and Diocese</i>
Hallam 16 - 30	Improved clergy deployment/pastoral cover	46%
Hallam 31 - 60	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	54%
Hallam 61+	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	41%
Leeds 16 - 30	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	55%
Leeds 31 - 60	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	53%
Leeds 61+	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	49%
Middlesbrough 16 - 30	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	50%
Middlesbrough 31 - 60	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	55%
Middlesbrough 61+	Shared resources/efficiency/reduced duplication	46%

Responses to Question 2: Analysis by Age Bracket and Diocese - Challenges		
<i>Diocese × Age Bracket</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>% of respondents from each age bracket and Diocese</i>
Hallam 16 - 30	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	55%
Hallam 31 - 60	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	37%
Hallam 61+	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	33%
Leeds 16 - 30	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	64%
Leeds 31 - 60	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	48%
Leeds 61+	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	30%
Middlesbrough 16 - 30	Administrative complexity/integration risk	17%
Middlesbrough 31 - 60	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	45%
Middlesbrough 61+	Clergy overstretch/priest shortage worsened	37%

