

Responses to Consultation on Diocesan Structures **Diocese of Galloway May 2026**

The consultation document was sent to parish priests and responses came from parishes, deaneries and a clergy assembly.

Convergences

For most people, the primary contact they have with the church is through the parish and so for many the important question is how their own parish would be affected by any change.

Equally, the role of the parish priest (and other clergy and religious) is seen as primary. This is also reflected in a concern for clergy and their workload. In Galloway, almost every priest is PP of at least two parishes so a decision about structures should put less, not more, strain on priests.

From the clergy, there is a clear warmth towards the People of God and a recognition that many of them are already engaged in the mission of the Church, especially in their parishes.

People had little difficulty listing examples of mission in their parishes, found it more difficult in terms of the diocese and harder still with regard to the Church nationally.

As regards diocesan identity, contact with the Bishop is perhaps the best example.

The consensus among most was to keep Galloway diocese as it is (with the caveats found below) with a recognition of the history of the diocese and its considerable geographical size. It also includes a large rural area with some sizeable towns and there is concern as to how its identity would change if merged with a large urban diocese.

Sharing of resources was almost universally seen as a good thing.

Divergences

While a majority were in favour of retaining Galloway as it is, some voices felt that change was inevitable.

There were different opinions on the sense of diocese. Some had a feeling of closeness; others did not relate to it at all and felt it as a distant thing.

The question of married priests and female priests and deacons was raised by some.

On the direct question of whether the structure of 8 dioceses supports ministry there were opinions on all sides (yes, no, don't know).

Some specific proposals were made: seven dioceses; four entirely new dioceses to replace the eight; three diocese (north, east, west).

Areas Needing More Study or Discernment

This is probably the most important outcome and reflects a lot of questions that people were asking. For many, they did not feel equipped to give an informed response.

What is a diocese? What is it for? How does it fit into the Church's mission?

For that matter, what is the Church's mission in Scotland? What do we mean by mission in real terms? There was a strong feeling of the need for a well-articulated vision.

If we do not have a well-articulated vision of Church, if we do not understand the nature and purpose of a diocese, how can we be expected to answer fundamental questions regarding structures in the Church in Scotland?

Why are we looking at these changes at all?

- Is it just a question of administration?
- Is it a financial question?
- Is it centred on a particular vision?
- Is the primary driver a pastoral reason?
- Does it reflect an inward or outward looking Church?

What models of Church best preserve local identity and a strong pastoral identity?

What is the problem we are trying to solve? Are we rationalising to save resources or redeploying them to do mission?

There was a lot of uncertainty expressed and the request for more information and data about dioceses.

On the final set of specific questions, while the one about sharing resources received mostly positive answers, for the rest there was a strong sense of "don't know".