

You Are Living Stones

Response from Long Eaton Parish

April 2013

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Structure of this response

This response is structured in accordance with the questions for discussion circulated to parishes at the time of the Pastoral letter inviting responses to the proposals of the bishop and his council.

Each question is restated, and this is followed by a commentary which was circulated in the parish for people to consider prior to the open parish meeting. Then comes the responses from the meeting, followed by responses submitted online by parishioners who could not attend the meeting. Then a final section for each question reports the responses submitted by paper questionnaire by parishioners who could not attend the meeting and do not have access to the internet.

No correction of spelling or punctuation has been made to responses submitted online.

Preamble

Commentary

The proposal that most intimately affects our parishes in the scheme put forward by the bishop and his Council is this: “**Link St Francis of Assisi, Long Eaton with St Hugh, Borrowash**”

At Bishop Malcolm's presentation to priests, the question was asked, “What does 'link' mean? Does it mean, 'Prepare to share a priest?’” The answer was, “Yes.” In a further written clarification, Fr Andrew Cole, the bishop's secretary wrote, “For the avoidance of doubt 'link' means share a parish priest.”

St Francis has a capacity of 160 seats with kneelers for the congregation, with a further 23 seats without kneelers (e.g. for deacons, servers, any concelebrating priests, organist and choir). In the last official count, in October, the average attendance over the two Masses was 207. On Sunday 3rd March, 32 children took part in the children's liturgy of the word during Sunday morning Mass.

St Hugh has a capacity of 140 seats. In the last official count, in October, the average Sunday Mass attendance was 120. 15 children take part in the children's liturgy of the word.

Question 1

The question

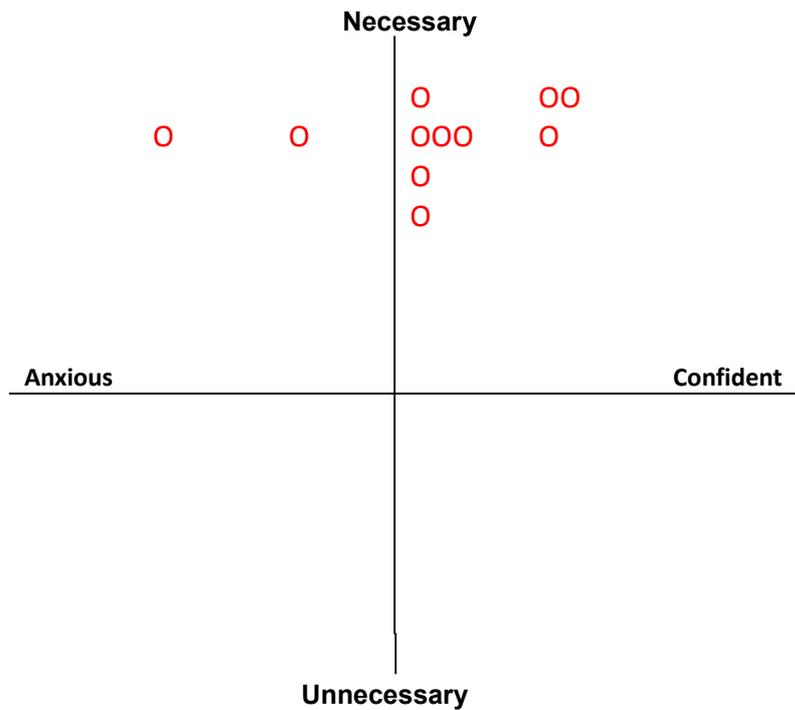
What do you think of the proposed links between parishes, etc., in general?

Commentary

Is the general idea of linking parishes to avoid or delay closing churches one we support? Do we have any other reflections on the proposals?

Responses from meeting

Participants were asked to place stickers on a grid to indicate both how necessary or unnecessary they consider the proposed links, and how anxious or confident they feel about the proposals in general. This chart indicates where those stickers were placed.



Participants were asked to name their alternatives to the proposals in general. One proposal was submitted: “Make links via schools and the parishes they serve.”

Online responses

The linking of parishes is necessary. An alternative is to have Mass Centres, and for people to go to the one which is most convenient to them. For example, Long Eaton is modeled geographically round three main roads – Derby Road, Nottingham Road and Tamworth Road.

Buses running along Tamworth Road travel (1) to Sandiacre and Ilkestone and (2) to Beeston and Nottingham. No buses travelling along Tamworth Road go to Borrowwash. It would be sensible, therefore, for people living along this road to go to Sandiacre or Beeston in the absence of Masses in Long Eaton.

Buses on Sundays to Beeston travelling from The Green run roughly every 20 minutes until 10.40 am, then every 10 minutes until 6.10 pm when they revert to every 20 minutes: To Borrowwash they run every hour until 10.13 am and then every half-hour 4.59 pm when they revert to hourly.

It is with great sadness I read the Bishops proposals to link parishes. No doubt we will do all we can to adapt to the changes once they have been decided and no doubt it is a good thing to get parishioners more involved in the running of their church. However it seems to me that it is only a matter of time before we are looking to close churches and to further link those that remain. I have arrived at this view from looking at the age profile of the priests in service. We have known that the lack of vocations has been a problem for years and yet the Church seems either unable or unwilling to do anything about it. We have a situation today where married priests from the Anglican community can now be Catholic priest and yet young men considering the priesthood are not allowed to marry. Surely this is inconsistent and must be proving a barrier to future vocations. With a new Pope maybe the time is right to allow priests to marry and have families. Unless we do I can see no alternative to the continuing decline in the number of priests and parishes.

clearly there is a problem but i feel the proposals indicate that very little thought has gone into which parishes to pair by the author of the proposal. the idea of linking long eaton with borrowwash

is a clear indication of this. the distances and available transport would place a great deal of hardship on the parisheners of both parishes. Surely Stapleford which is close to the parish would be a better proposal for long eaton

i can see the need to link Parishes due to the increasing age of our current priests and the apparent lack of younger priests. However I feel that more thought needs to go into which Parishes are linked – more local knowledge is needed (not just our situation but throughout the diocese), as already mentioned above. Hopefully the consultations with all Parishes will provide that.

I am somewhat anxious about linking St Francis with Borrowash for reasons given in Question 1. If the Masses in Long Eaton continue to be one on Saturday evening and one on Sunday, it will not make any difference to Long Eaton (depending on the time of the Mass on Sunday) but that seems a little unrealistic. It might be better to close St Francis and let the parishioners adopt a church either in Beeston or Sandiacre as their regular church. I would add that we have only been living in Long Eaton for 13 years and I know there are people who have lived here all their lives who would not want to contemplate such a thing.

the simple answer is not a lot. i think the bishop is dodging his his responsibilities by attempting to push this problem to the parishes before looking for solutions inside his own responsibilities. we need more priests and that is what he should be looking at not closing parishes

I am concerned that we may be creating situations throughout the diocese where many parishioners will not find it easy to get to Mass due to lack of transport, no direct bus service, Mass at times which conflict with work commitments. I also feel that although it will be a good opportunity to create a greater community feeling, it may well do the opposite – people may lose contact with their local parish community.

Questionnaire responses

The proposals are necessary

1 response

The proposals are somewhat necessary

2 responses

I feel somewhat confident about the proposals

2 responses

I feel anxious about the proposals

1 response

Question 2

The question

Do you think that the proposed link is reasonable? If so, why? If not, why not? Please feel free to suggest reasoned amendments (e.g., this proposal won't work because...).

Commentary

Is it practical, if one priest is to celebrate Holy Mass in both parishes? The Mass times at present are like this:

- Saturday St Francis 6pm Holy Mass
- Sunday St Hugh 9.30am Holy Mass with children's liturgy, and St Francis 10.30am Holy Mass with children's liturgy

A common theme when priests who've taken on a second parish are asked to reflect on their experience is the advice: "Never have less than two hours between the start of two Masses." Their experience is that less than this means that they can have no time to linger and chat to people after the first Mass, and they can find themselves unable to arrive in time for their spiritual preparation before the second Mass. This is unsatisfactory for parishioners who don't get to talk to their priest, and if it persists as a long term arrangement (versus a temporary emergency), the anxiety of knowing that he has the next Mass to get to can do serious damage to a priest's devotion. He can find that this habitual anxiety means he no longer looks forward with serenity and joy to a celebration of Holy Mass; and in some cases, after years of coping, it can even lead to priests celebrating Holy Mass in a joyless, hurried, careless fashion, giving the congregation the impression that Holy Mass for their priest is a chore, celebrated (if that's the word) as if he's got something better to do.

Each of the parishes has had the experience of losing a Mass in recent years; Long Eaton, their 8.30am Mass, and Borrowash, their 11am Mass and their Sunday evening Mass. Of those losses, the ending of the Borrowash evening Mass was the most recent (the other two Masses ended more than three years ago). Does this history mean that Long Eaton should in charity be more willing to give up a Mass, or change their Mass time, than Borrowash?

There are two special groups whose needs we might want to keep in mind. People who rely on public transport, and children who attend the children's liturgy. Sometimes only one parent is Catholic, and the other parent looks forward to their spouse and child returning from Mass so they can spend the rest of the day together – a children's liturgy too late in the morning could cause tensions in some households. Some of these parents might judge that for the sake of family harmony, and to have more time for family activities, they would have to choose the earlier Mass wherever it is celebrated.

Here's some possibilities for Sundays.

- St Hugh's 9.00am Holy Mass with children's liturgy
St Francis 11.00am Holy Mass with children's liturgy

This shares out the pain of moving Mass time, as each congregation has a half hour adjustment. If many of the parents of the 32 children from St Francis children's liturgy choose to move to an earlier St Hugh's Mass instead, that might be overwhelming (not just for the children's liturgy, but also because there are only twenty spare seats in Borrowash on a Sunday). So the two times could be swapped.

- St Francis 9.00am Holy Mass with children's liturgy
St Hugh's 11.00am Holy Mass with children's liturgy

Might 9.00am be too early? In that case, keeping a 9.30am Mass at St Hugh's would look like this:

- St Hugh's 9.30am Holy Mass with children's liturgy
St Francis 11.30am Holy Mass with children's liturgy

The danger of overwhelming St Hugh's with children and parents from St Francis still exists in that plan, though, but it does have the advantage of keeping a time that those who have lost their Sunday evening Mass at St Hugh's are still getting used to. We could, though, keep that time, and, as before, swap the churches so that the earlier Mass is at St Francis, the larger church.

- St Francis 9.30am Holy Mass with children's liturgy
St Hugh's 11.30am Holy Mass with children's liturgy

Is 11.30am too late, and would a quarter of an hour make any difference? So instead of 9.30 and 11.30, Holy Mass is celebrated at 9.15 and 11.15?

Are any of these options workable? Are there other options for the Sunday Masses (keeping in mind the needs of parents and children, and of those who rely on public transport)? Which option

do we prefer, and why?

For the Vigil Mass on Saturday night, three options have been identified.

- Cancel it. Fewer than fifty people attend some weeks, and there are Saturday night Masses in Beeston and Derby available to people for whom any move to Sunday morning would cause intolerable hardship. Although there is not presently enough room in St Francis on Sunday morning for the people from Saturday night, there could be space if some Sunday worshippers from St Francis decide to worship at St Hugh when the Sunday Mass times change.
- Keep it as it is: Saturday 6pm in St Francis.
- Share it: celebrate the Saturday Vigil Mass at St Francis on (say) the first and third (and any fifth) Saturdays, and at St Hugh's on the second and fourth. If St Hugh's Sunday Mass does change time, gaining a Vigil Mass twice a month might soften the blow. Would it be confusing to have the Vigil Mass in one parish some weeks, and another, the others?

Are there other options for the Saturday Vigil Mass? Which option do we prefer, and why?

What about Holy Mass on weekdays? Can we find ways, for example, to see that people who rely on public transport are not disadvantaged?

Are there other topics to consider in answering the bishop's question as to whether "the proposed link is reasonable?" Are there any "reasoned amendments" we'd want to suggest to the bishop?

Responses from meeting

In response to "Do we think the proposed link is reasonable?" nine people indicated yes, and three indicated no.

Participants were asked to use a sticker to indicate the degree to which they think the proposal can be made to work, and to give reasons for their opinion. The results appear in the table that follows.

	<p>Can we make it work?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="807 1137 1034 1308">Yes</td> <td data-bbox="1034 1137 1442 1308"> * * * *** * </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="807 1308 1034 1491">No</td> <td data-bbox="1034 1308 1442 1491">*</td> </tr> </table>	Yes	* * * *** *	No	*
Yes	* * * *** *				
No	*				
<p>Yes because</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • It's as good a link as any alternative • Often used by members of the parish now • Changing work patterns, trends etc. • It's a neighbouring parish • Yes due to reducing numbers of priests • Geography and numbers. • Geographically possible e.g. bus routes • Necessity is the mother of invention 	<p>No because</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think Borrowash looks more towards Derby • Geographically a step too far 				

Participants were invited to consider which Sunday Mass times might work best, and where the first Mass on Sunday should be, and what should be done about the Vigil Mass; to consider whether to change as soon as the proposals is confirmed, or wait until it becomes necessary; and to answer in terms of "What I want" and "What I think is best."

Sunday Mass at 9am and 11am

6 that's what I want and 3 that's what I think it is best.

Sunday Mass at 9.15am and 11.15am

2 that's what I want and 6 that's what I think it is best.

Sunday Mass at 9.30am and 11.30am

4 that's what I want and 2 that's what I think it is best.

Other proposals for Sunday Mass times

No proposals.

First at Borrowwash and second at Long Eaton

Responses: 5 that's what I want and 5 that's what I think it is best.

First at Long Eaton and second at Borrowwash

Responses: 5 that's what I want and 3 that's what I think it is best.

Cancel Saturday Vigil Mass

0 that's what I want and 0 that's what I think it is best.

Keep Saturday Vigil Mass at St Francis

9 that's what I want and 4 that's what I think it is best.

Share Saturday Vigil Mass (e.g. Borrowwash 1st and third Sundays, other Sundays at Long Eaton)

1 that's what I want and 7 that's what I think it is best.

Other proposal: Make it a Sunday, Just have it at Borrowwash.

Change Mass times now if the link proceeds

8 that's what I want and 10 that's what I think it is best.

Change Mass times only when we have to if the link proceeds

2 that's what I want and 1 that's what I think it is best.

Online responses

totally unreasonable. the distance between the parishes is to great and the lack of transport facilities would mean the majority of people could not easily move between parishes

It is an unreasonable proposalThe proposed link between Long eaton and Borrowwash is not a natural one. Borrowwash is already linked with St Albans Chaddesden; these two parishes feed into the same primary school. Why break a link which appears to be working. The transport problems between various parts of both parishes does not help either. The size of both churches means that no 'big' events could take place in a single church e.g. confirmation

If Long Eaton is to have two Masses and Borrowwash only one, I think it is reasonable for Borrowwash to choose which Mass they would like best. I agree entirely with the concept of leaving at least two hours between masses.

st francis should retain the saturday 6pm mass and then mass at 9,30am sunday and then an 11am mass at borrowwash

I agree with the principle of leaving two hours between Masses. I would like St Francis to retain the 6pm Saturday Mass. My preference for Sunday masses would be 9am & 11am both with Children's liturgy. Is 9am too early for young families? A time later than a 11am start would I think be too late finishing as I have noticed that Mass on a Sunday morning at St Francis is about 1 hour and 15 minutes long.

We tend to go to Saturday night Mass. If there is to be two Masses in Long Eaton, again I would say this should be chosen by Borrowash. If we are to have one Mass on a Sunday and none on Saturday, I would prefer an early Mass so as to be home early enough to cook for any family or friends who may be coming to lunch. More likely – we would go to Beeston on a Saturday night.

I am not sure. I usually attend the Saturday night mass.

I think that the idea of sharing it is not practical, as it would mess the routine of people in both parishes. On the other hand if the two parishes shared a Sunday Bulletin presumably that would remind people where this Mass was each week. Again, it would probably to develop a routine of going to Beeston.

I believe it would be important to stick to one church, once you have decided, in order to maintain community.

The idea of sharing means that you have to have very good notice boards and newsletters to keep parishoners and especially visitors informed. This is what happens in France. Personally I would like to keep it at St Francis at 6pm, I know there is an evening mass at Beeston but 5.30pm is I think too early.

Agree with Fr Martin's comment here ["If we find a pattern of weekend Mass times that will work, should we adopt it as soon as possible, instead of waiting for the bishop to move one or both of our priests? This would give, for a time at least, Canon Ka Fai and Fr Martin the ability to cover for each other for holidays and (God forbid) sickness."]. We must do all we can to help our priest not to run round like a demented chicken!

I agree with Father Martin's suggestion. ["If we find a pattern of weekend Mass times," etc.]

Questionnaire responses

The proposal is reasonable

2 responses

Whilst accepting that a link is necessary, I would suggest that Borrowash is not the ideal link geographically it is not the closest to Long Eaton – maybe Beeston.

Sunday Mass at 9am & 11am

3 that's what I want and 2 that's what I think is best

Sunday Mass at 9.15am and 11.15am

1 that's what I think is best

First Mass at Borrowash

1 that's what I want and 2 that's what I think is best

First Mass at Long Eaton

2 that's what I want (one annotated: mainly due to high numbers of children)

Cancel Saturday Vigil Mass

2 that's what I want

Share Saturday Vigil Mass

1 that's what I want and 3 that's what I think is best

Change Mass times now

1 that's what I want and 1 that's what I think is best

Change Mass times when we have to

2 that's what I want and 2 that's what I think is best

Question 3

The question

In what ways can your parish and its parishioners change in order to better fulfil the Church's mission of preaching, worship and service?

Commentary

Can those who run the children's liturgy in both parishes continue to serve at revised times?

Can people with cars take care of those who would otherwise face a long journey by bus to get to Holy Mass?

Can parishioners take care of setting things up for Holy Mass, and putting them away afterwards, so that their shared priest can arrive and leave in fitting serenity of mind, confident that everything is taken care of?

If we find a pattern of weekend Mass times that will work, should we adopt it as soon as possible, instead of waiting for the bishop to move one or both of our priests? This would give, for a time at least, Canon Ka Fai and Fr Martin the ability to cover for each other for holidays and (God forbid) sickness.

What about the broader issue of service? How can our parish better be a visible and active sign of God's love for the world and the local community?

Responses from meeting

Participants were invited to write their responses and bring them forward to share. Those responses were as follows:

- More use of the Laity. I.e. Delegation of work.
- Additional Training for the Laity like Lay Readers in C of E Church.
- Relax some 'rules' that restrict the Laity
- More outward looking
- Car sharing
- Doesn't always have to be Mass.
- Admin Staff/Volunteers.
- Parishioners will need to take more responsibility for its Parish. Church warden model of C of E, Verger model of C of E.
- Setting up for Mass and putting away.
- Cars could rendezvous at the 'alternate' venue to take people to other Parish.
- Training – Formation Education.
- Parishioners be more educated as to their delegated responsibilities.

- Need to engage with more people to stimulate ideas/activities.
- Car share between Long Eaton and Borrowash.

Online responses

With regard to children's liturgy, I cannot see that this should become a problem. If I have missed something here, would it be possible for children at the Catholic Schools to have their religious education at school? – perhaps after school if a study period cannot be made available?

Asking people who have cars to take people who don't have them to provide transport every week is a big ask. By and large people who have cars have children and most of them are finding it difficult to find the money to pay the expenses of running a car. I think it would be better to tailor the Mass times to coincide with the buses.

With regard to weekday Masses, it would be helpful if local priests could co-ordinate their times. For example, Long Eaton is on bus routes to Beeston, Sandiacre and Borrowash: Borrowash is on bus routes to Chaddesden and Long Eaton. Weekday Masses in these parishes could perhaps be co-ordinated. Complicated, of course – apply to any head teacher for advice!

I think the proposed link would mean a lot of changes. Transport could be a major issue. Setting up for Holy Mass would be the easiest to facilitate. Holy mass on weekdays – would there be a possibility of Liturgies of Holy Communion in the parish where mass is not being said to overcome the transport issues (there are less people available to offer lifts during the week)

Questionnaire responses

Parishioners should be prepared to share lifts. Maybe have a list of people who are available, with contact numbers. A joint planning group for children's liturgy, made up of leaders from both parishes. Parishioners should be prepared to step up to the mark and suggest/plan times of Masses.

Question 4

The question

What would your parish do to support other parishes if they lost a resident priest?

Commentary

We don't know if Canon Ka Fai would be moved, or Fr Martin would be moved, or if they would both be moved and a new priest come in to care for both parishes. If one of the priests is to stay, should he be allowed, if he wishes, to continue living in his present house, so the stresses of taking on the service of a second parish aren't added to by the stresses of moving house?

What ways can we think of in our parish of supporting the other one if it's their parish that loses their resident priest? And the other local parishes who lose their resident priest?

Responses from meeting

Participants were invited to write their responses and bring them forward to share. Those responses were as follows:

- Share resources and skills experiences.
- Move before we're pushed.
- Share good practice with other parishes.
- Invite them to Parish Events. Social and celebrations of Faith.

- Share good practice.
- Make them welcome!
- Be generous not competitive.
- Link the groups within each Parish.
- Eucharist Service if not available.
- Share 'Authorised persons' with any Parish.
- Ask them to help on the allotment!
- Discuss and visit parishes already sharing a priest to find out how it can work.
- Share social event – meet.

Online responses

There were no online responses to this question.

Questionnaire responses

There should be a house for the priest and he should not be expected to move. However maybe where the house is large, perhaps a share for 2 priests might work.

Question 5

The question

In what practical ways can the parishes of your deanery work together?

Commentary

A priest caring for both parishes cannot attend simultaneous meetings in both deaneries. Should Borrowwash parish join Nottingham West Deanery? Should Long Eaton parish join Derby Deanery? Is there another parish that would work better than Long Eaton in sharing a priest with Borrowwash? Is there another parish that would work better than Borrowwash in sharing a priest with Long Eaton? What ways can we think of for parishes in our deanery to work together?

Responses from meeting

Participants were invited to write their responses and bring them forward to share. Those responses were as follows:

- Borrowwash would be better linked to a Derby parish – Closer geographically.
- Borrowwash could be linked to Chaddesdon parish
- The Long Eaton School is linked with Beeston therefore; a link with Beeston Parish would be better. (See alternative proposal in Question 1)
- Have a Sunday evening mass within the deanery
- Is Deanery well formed? Borrowwash and Long Eaton are not in the same Deanery.
- Batman will need a Robin!

Borrowwash should join the Nottingham West Deanery

5 indications, with 4 reasons:

- Borrowwash is smaller so should join Nottingham West
- Makes more practical sense for Borrowwash to join the same deanery as their larger link church
- Population distribution
- English Martyrs school serves Long Eaton and Beeston parishes so they should be in the same deanery

Long Eaton should join the Derby Deanery

No indications

No preference about deaneries

One indication

Online responses

As Long Eaton is in Derbyshire, it would make sense for it to join Derby Deanery. Personally I think that Long Eaton would do much better to join with Beeston parish. Cannot comment on the best option for Borrowwash.

In an earlier question I mentioned about parish centres, and it seems to me that Beeston could be one such centre. If my understanding is correct, Beeston has a number of parishes that it could link up with. A small number of priests could live in the same house to supply these parishes, and, perhaps have someone in to cook a meal each day and maybe do some cleaning and/or some secretarial work. Priests would have more time to spend with parishioners if a secretary or a volunteer(s) were available to fill in forms for such things as marriage or baptism documents.

I think that Borrowwash would be better staying in the Derby Deanery and linking with one of the Derby parishes. It is already linked with St Albans – why change it? Not sure which parish to link St Francis with. Stapleford? Beeston? Although not ideal for all parts of Long Eaton Parish I think Beeston has the better transport links for those without transport. As Beeston is already linked with Wollaton it would need a lot of careful thought (3 parishes with 1 priest!)

Think I have made all the comments I feel able to make for the Bishop, except in terms of Catholics being a bit less inward looking generally. I think there is much we could learn from the other churches about reaching out to the community at large – except geographically St Francis of Assisi in Long Eaton does not lend itself to such activities.

I would like to tell the Bishop that I think he has a mammoth task here and our prayers are with him.

I'm not sure that the proposed link is a natural one. However geographically we are not easily placed for a natural link. Whatever the Bishop proposes we will have to make work as the alternative could be closure of churches, which would present even more difficulties. What has happened in other dioceses – we can't be the only one facing this problem?

Questionnaire responses

1 Borrowwash to come into Nottingham West Deanery

I believe that St Francis Parish needs to retain Father Martin as our Parish Priest. He is a great manager. Father Martin has brought the church together as a community, gets involved in all church activities, and gives everyone a sense of belonging.

It would seem to me that Beeston is a much better link deanery wise (Long Eaton+Nottingham, Borrowwash+Derby). For Borrowwash a better link would be St Albans.

It is refreshing to see the proposals in this way. It is a step forward for the Catholic Church to ask for lay people's comments. I hope our views are listened to and not just ignored.

Credits

Report collated by Fr Martin Sylvester, who expresses his thanks to those volunteers who typed up the responses from the open meeting, and those who prepared the paper questionnaire, and to all who took part in this consultation.

Revision history

1. First version published 16th April, 2013.
2. This revised version, incorporating a questionnaire that had been overlooked, published 19th April, 2013