

Thank-you for your email of 30th March, and its attached documents. As requested, we have made it available to all staff at Castlerigg Manor and it has been the subject of much discussion. Your email says you would welcome our comments on *the Bishops' Response* and we are pleased to offer them. We were surprised, however, to find that you did not wait even five minutes for our reply before widely publicising *the Bishops' Response*.

Comments of the Castlerigg Manor Staff on *The Bishops' Response*

Thanks

We would also like to express our thanks to the review team for the care they took in compiling their report on the work of the Youth Service, including that of Castlerigg Manor.

The Report

We do not find the extracts from the report now widely released with *the Bishops' Response* do justice to the stated purpose of the report 'to accurately reflect and honour the contributions of all participants.'

Far from being an 'executive summary' the document is merely an introduction and summary of recommendations. It contains no assessment of the current performance of the Centre against the criteria set out in the review document or even a cursory summary of the evidence presented to the review team. The only indication of the current state of Castlerigg Manor is the suggestion that the report would be difficult reading and Castlerigg is not currently a 'beacon of good practice' or 'a guiding light for the Diocese of Lancaster.' These uncontextualised comments constitute a slur on current staff at Castlerigg Manor that is not addressed in *the Bishops' Response*.

The evidence from visiting school staff evaluation forms and the high rate of rebooking from schools suggests widespread appreciation of the quality of the courses currently provided. Evidence of the reactions of young people to the courses offered can be found on our website and indicate how much they value the experience and the extent to which it has deepened their faith and knowledge of God. The suggestion of *the Bishops' Response* is that changes need to be made to the experience offered to provide one that is more faith-filled. No evidence has been offered to support this allegation.

Once again, we would like to urge the publication of a fuller version of the report if it is to be cited as the basis of the reorganisation that the bishops propose.

The Recent Meeting

Far from allaying any anxieties, the recent meeting between the Castlerigg staff, Bishop Patrick, Mgr. Mulvany and Fr. Billing, has only served to raise further concerns about the planning that has gone into this process. The discrepancies between assurances given at that meeting and *the Bishops' Response* are a further cause for concern. We welcome the commitment to support staff, but we and they would like to know what is being offered.

The Bishops' Decisions

We turn our attention now to the decisions that the Bishops have made in the light of *The Report*:

1. It is difficult to understand point one, since the report has not been published.
2. We welcome commitments to develop the Youth Service Management Group to ensure the youth service meets the needs of the young people of the diocese and draws upon experience and expertise in making decisions. The voice of young people should be heard on this body, along with representatives of the schools and parishes the youth service seeks to serve. Advantage should be taken of the many experienced and qualified youth workers to be found among the ranks of clergy and laity alike in the diocese.
3. The separate nature of the outreach and residential provisions are a recent development and we welcome a return to a more unified approach. However we have grave reservations about the practicality of basing an outreach team so far from the major centres of population in the diocese.
We are pleased that work will include the aspects listed. They are very much at the heart of the current provision at Castlerigg Manor.
4. Youth Ministry at Castlerigg Manor is underpinned by a Catholic character and ethos. The inclusion of the stipulation that all activities clearly relate to the 'language of faith, relationship with God and mission in and of the Church', in an agenda for change suggests dissatisfaction with the current practice. The implications of this for non-prayer activities, such as hill walking, discos and team building exercises, are unclear.
5. With regard to the *Director of Catholic Youth Services* appointment, we note several discrepancies between the plan outlined in the application pack and that in *the Bishops' Response*. Most notably the time line with regard to the formation of an outreach team and the presence of a seconded support.
This design of the job of *Director of Catholic Youth Services*, with which Castlerigg Manor was not involved, is a cause for concern. More specifically the lack of theological education even as a desirable quality and the unprofessional nature of the relationship with the Bishop. Currently we have two priests full time and one priest part time working in the diocesan youth service. It is not clear whether the Chaplain proposed will be full or part time as Chaplain to the youth service. Either way this a significant reduction in the commitment of clergy to this important work.
6. We welcome the major capital investment envisaged. However, we take issue with the assertion that the Chapel is 'almost inaccessible', as it is situated barely ten metres from the games room and often used by young people during breaks. In recent days, it has proved adequate for the celebration of Mass with fifty-seven year eleven pupils, six school staff and five members of the Castlerigg team. The Bishops will be aware that major alterations to cherished places of worship should be undertaken with sensitivity.
We welcome the Bishop's commitment to a phased programme of building works to minimise disruption to the work of the Centre.
7. We welcome the reiteration of the promise made to the staff at the meeting of the 25th March that there will be no redundancies but find the statement that 'any changes to individuals' roles' at odds with the commitment to current staff made at that meeting that terms and conditions of their employment would not be changed.
The go-ahead to recruit staff for intake in summer 2009 given in the wake of that meeting has been compromised by the attempt to change the nature of the posts offered contained in the 'explanation' that 'new trainee youth tutor contracts to be issued in September 2009 will be for 12 months duration only'. Design of these training posts is based on a two-year commitment and has been offered to candidates on that basis. A one-year post does not allow for the same training opportunity and constitutes a different offer than we have been led to believe, and have led candidates to believe, is available.
8. The intention that 'Youth Tutors will work interchangeably within the new structure' is incompatible with the promises made at the meeting. Recruitment for both trainee Youth Tutors and volunteers has been made with the residential setting only in view. The suggestion that the Programme Coordinator/Team Leader post be revised into that of a Retreat Leader betrays a lack of understanding that retreat leadership is currently undertaken

by second year Youth Tutors and the Programme Coordinator/Team Leader is a job of considerably greater seniority.

9. The intention that the new *Director of Catholic Youth Services* will oversee the diocesan youth service as soon as possible raises questions about the positions of the current Director and Chaplain in the period running up to 1st September.
10. Contrary to the assertion in *the Bishops' Response*, Castlerigg Manor does not run 'Courses in Informal Education'. We do, however, use the methods of Informal Education, among other techniques, in the delivery of youth work to our clients. It is of concern to us that conversation will not be used in the work of the 'new Castlerigg Manor.' It is further of concern that the content of Retreats on offer will be designed by someone whose job description does not include reference to theological education, whilst the current provision has been shaped by generations of theologically educated and professional youth work qualified staff in collaboration with school staff. Nothing is said in *the Bishops' Response* or the elements of the report that have been released about the work the new Castlerigg will do with those who accompany young people on their residential experiences. Currently school staff that accompany groups to Castlerigg Manor are involved in the experience and often profoundly affected themselves.
11. In the meeting of Wednesday, 25th March it was stated that the new *Director of Catholic Youth Services* would devise his/her own structure.
12. We applaud the vision of outreach work outlined in *the Bishops' Response*, as far more comprehensive than that mooted in the meeting on Wednesday, 25th March. Concern is expressed over the levels of staffing required to fulfil such an ambitious programme of outreach in the first year given the commitment in point 14 to honour existing bookings. Again, we note that Keswick is a far from ideal location from which to do outreach work in the Diocese of Lancaster.
At the Fit For Mission? Youth Review sharing day at Brettargh Holt on 27th September 2008, some of us had the pleasure of meeting numerous people active in youth ministry in the diocese. One of the messages that came across most clearly was their need for encouragement, support and training. These needs are not addressed in either *the Bishops' Response* or the elements of the report published but we hope that responding to these will form a part of the agenda of the outreach provision.
13. The lack of a business plan to underpin any review of the booking system could be exceedingly costly to the diocese. Whilst Castlerigg Manor expects this year to make a modest profit, on its turnover of over £400,000, it has in the last decade been subsidised with hundreds of thousands of pounds.
14. It should be applauded that the proposed future programme of Castlerigg Manor should be such that will encourage parishes and schools to use it. In this regard we endorse the views of Bishop Patrick in his letter of 16th September 2008 inviting priests to the gatherings at Brettargh Holt as part of the Fit For Mission? Youth Review:

'We desperately need a youth strategy that is supported by every parish and school in the Diocese – a simple nod in this direction is not adequate. It must be a strategy that embraces fully every parish and school in the Diocese and shaped by our own young people.'

Our current clients will welcome the commitment that bookings already made will be duly honoured but seek assurances that the nature of the experience provided will be in the tradition that they expect. It is not clear how this is compatible with the new Retreat programmes referred to as being gradually introduced in section 10, or as being developed from September 2009 in the Proposed Time Line included in appointment pack for the post of *Director of Catholic Youth Services*.

Further clarification is sought with regard to whether future bookings can be accepted by the current management in the run up to 1st September.

15. The need for flexibility and variety in the work provided has long been recognised at Castlerigg Manor and we are pleased that the Youth Service will continue to be responsive to the needs of its users.
16. We welcome the call to publicise what is going on in the Youth Service and encourage schools and parishes to use Castlerigg Manor.

Future Staffing

The model proposed in the organigram does not envisage the trainee Youth Tutor positions. Over the years the Church locally and nationally has benefited from the faith deepened, skills learned and confidence gained by those who have completed their two-year appointment. The profile of those attracted to volunteer posts is inevitably different from those attracted to even the modestly paid positions of Youth Tutor. At a time when graduates often leave University with significant personal debt, they are far less likely to be attracted to volunteer posts. The advantage to Castlerigg Manor of the two-year paid position is that second year Youth Tutors do the job of leading retreats, developing course materials and, using the skills gained in their first year, play an important role in training the new staff. The increased cost of these paid positions over volunteers is largely offset by the ability of the institution to provide courses after a very short period of induction. (Other centres who run on mainly volunteer staff generally have longer training times before they are able to welcome their first group.)

We would also welcome a clearer statement of what the volunteers will get out of their time with the Service. Currently the volunteers at Castlerigg Manor are given lighter duties and more time off than the Youth Tutors, who play a key role in ensuring their welfare. We would like to hear more of how the youth service intends to avoid the dangers of exploitation of a largely volunteer work force.

The Next Steps

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this process that your invitation to comment provides. We are pleased to note the commitments in *the Bishops' Response* to future genuine and joint consultation, and look forward to their further response addressing the issues we raise.

Rev Peter Stanton (Director)

Rev Peter Sharrock (Chaplain)

Miss Caroline Cole (Team Leader / Programme Co-ordinator)