

DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO PROVINCE 12 PROVINCIAL COUNCIL FOLLOWING THE 17/18 JULY 2025 MEETING OF THE GBNC

GENERAL

The Great Britain National Council (GBNC) was due to meet on 17 May 2025, but decided instead to meet face-to-face at the Parish Hall of the Church of Corpus Christi in Wokingham, Berkshire. As there was no budget to pay for this meeting the Directors and Officers all agreed to meet at their own expense including an overnight hotel stay.

This was effectively the first meeting of the new Council, with many new Directors and a complete re-alignment of the GBNC workgroups.

Members of Province 12 may be interested to know that, for my last year on the Council, I have relinquished my responsibilities for the Marketing activity of GBNC and am now a member of the Strategy Work Group, (SWG).

MEMBERSHIP & MARKETING WORK GROUP

The aim of combining the activities of the old Membership and Marketing work groups is to bring focus and effort to the vital necessity of recruiting of new members. Membership continues to decline, essentially because our members have given up recruiting. Many of our members still tend to feel we have a Membership problem. We don't. We have a recruiting problem – and that issue can only be resolved by the members themselves taking action to personally recruit many more new, young, members.

The Director of Province 6, Dave Prescott remains the chair of the M&MWG.

The role of GBNC in this matter is not to recruit new members and do our members jobs for them, but to try to make their life easier by setting the national recruiting environment such that approaches made by our members to strangers do not fall on 'deaf ears'. But GBNC cannot recruit new members. **Only members can recruit new members and only Circles can admit new members.**

Meeting with the Chair of the M&MWG. The Chair of the M&MWG wishes to arrange a meeting with the PMO and all Circle MOs in Province 12 so that he can address them and seek their help in recruiting new members. **The PMO is asked to arrange for this meeting in the early Autumn.**

Provincial Development Implementation Plan. The first and prime role of the Provincial Council is to: – “seek to further the development of the Association by increasing the number of Circles within the Province and the number of Members enrolled in each Circle to develop and spready Catenianism in their Provincial area” *Regulation 12.a.*

Thus, it is this **Provincial Council which is responsible** to lead action to expand the practice of Catenianism throughout Province 12, by recruiting new members and, in particular, by developing new Circles/Groups of members. The last such Circle we created was Monmouth & Wyedean.

The Council need to author a Provincial Development Implementation Plan, and then to act to put that plan into action. Can I stress that this must figure large on the agenda of the Council and that Council starts to take this issue seriously. Where is our plan? What is being done? Who is doing it? When is it going to be done by. The Council is accountable to the members of Province 12 for the delivery of this issue.

The Provincial President has been in touch with the National President who wants to come to a meeting of the Council in the Autumn. The Provincial Development Plan will be one issue that he will be looking to see addressed by the Council at that meeting. The National President and his wife Anna have also expressed a wish to join us at our Provincial Weekend in February 2026, and I believe that they also intend to come on Swindon Circle's trip to Aras in the Spring of 2026.

Provincial Careers and Development Officer. In our geriatric Province we seem to have forgotten the need for a Provincial Careers and Development Officer, yet this particular issue is a major "selling point" of our Association to younger potential members – and a part of our commitment to the CMA. We need to appoint a PECO as soon as possible, and he needs to get in touch with the National CEO as soon as possible. The availability of this service is one of the attractions to being a Catenian.

Marketing - Use of Social Media. The Province needs to adopt to the use of social media so that it can communicate effectively with the younger recruiting base that it should be trying to reach. As a first step the Council might lead the way by having a Council WhatsApp group to encourage informal communication between Council members, but in reality, we need to start posting provincial events over FaceBook and/or Instagram or BlueSky etc. We could also have a useful sub-group on our LinkedIn site? Surely, we must have someone in the Province, or a son/daughter or grandchild, who could help with this? This is no longer a "nice to have" issue but an absolute necessity and the Council should act to set this up.

Poster Campaign. Circles are reminded to make sure that our monthly poster are up at the back of every Catholic Church or mass centre within their areas. The poster can be downloaded from the CDS website and printed on your home computer.

Marketing – Internal Communications. The Editor reports that the Annual Report for 2024/5 is currently in the hands of the designers and on course to be published at the end of September 2025.

STRATEGY WORK GROUP

The Strategy Work Group (SWG) has now met three times under the Chairmanship of the Director of Province 14, Paul Whitfield. Ongoing work is looking at three areas:

Governance in GBNC

The Structure of GBNC. Do we need so many Provinces with such a reduced membership?

Sorting out the mess and imbalances of the current Rules and Regulations. Are they fit for a more democratic 21st century.

I will report more on these issues as and when they start to form into firm ideas and concepts. It remains the GBNC's position that National Council not only are permitted, but actually have the absolute right to adjust the Rules and Regulations to suit their national characteristics. That view is strongly opposed by Central Council.

Vote on Rule Change. I have recently written to all members on this issue and asking them to take an interest in the debate, watch the arguments being expressed on the video of Conference, and prepare themselves by discussing it and comparing views with other Catenians. Above all, I urge that, when it comes to the vote, every single member exercises his right and duty to express an opinion. That's 263 votes in Province 12 that must all count.

FINANCE WORK GROUP

I have passed the relevant papers to the Provincial Treasurer.

The Chair of the Finance Work Group is the Director of Province 2, Mike Evans, also a joint member of Penybont Circle.

We have appointed a new GBNC Treasurer – details to follow.

There is no more money. In FY 24/25 our GBNC budget was £69,000, but for FY 2025/6 that has been reduced to £59,000. So, anything that is not in the budget cannot be afforded.

Capitation. We remain concerned about capitation. At the current rate, even with this year's increase of £5 we are predicting a shortfall of about £30,000 in FY 27/28. The FWG are convinced that we must ask the members to accept that annual capitation needs to be adjusted to reflect annual inflation so that we do not have to return to the membership to vote on every single increase. The current thinking is that the annual increase should be linked to the UK RPI or CPI $\pm$ 1%. The FWG is working on this and will put a proposal to the membership for approval this year.

FAITH & YOUTH WORK GROUP

FLAME 27 The Council has approved the donation of £10,000 per year of your money to the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation (CYMFed) to support the costs of producing the annual FLAME convention – the next Convention in 2027. This retains our position as the major sponsor of FLAME. We recognise that this substantial donation is unlikely to generate a single recruit to our Association, but feel that it is nevertheless the right thing to do, bearing in mind our commitment to the development of Catholic youth.

Vocations Initiative. The Catenians remain the sole Catholic organisation to support the CBCEW Vocations Initiative. It is now time for the annual appeal, and members will once again be asked to donate a minimum of £2.00 per member, (members can always donate more if they wish), towards our support for this initiative. It is important to note that this remains a purely **voluntary** donation, and no member is to be compelled to contribute. I understand that the practice is that this donation is collected by Circles and forwarded to the Provincial Treasurer who consolidates the Provincial donations for onward transmission in bulk to the Association Treasurer. Please do not forget our members in our Provincial Virtual Circle. As we have 263 members in Province 12, (as at 30 June 2025) I would hope that we can reach a Provincial total of at least £526.

CATENIAN SUPPORT SERVICES (CSS) AND ADMINISTRATION

Updating the Portal. As the GB Association we have 222 Circles in our national area, and yet only 178 would appear to have nominated Secretaries on the Association database. I congratulate Newport Circle, who, along with the Provincial officers are all nominated on the database, but no other Circle in province 12 has updated and added their Circle Officers for this year. I have written separately to all Circle Secretaries, but I would ask all Provincial Councillors to make certain that their Circle updates the database with their Circle Officers for 2025/6.

Position of CSS. As our Central Support Services (CSS) report to the Association Secretary they are no longer a part of GBNC and there will therefore no longer be SCC reports to GBNC

CONFERENCE AND NATIONAL GATHERING 2026

The GBNC AGM and National Conference and gathering will take place at Cheshford Grange Hotel, Kennilworth on 22/23 May 2026. The following Monday 24th May is a Bank Holiday so it may be worth making it a long weekend stay?

NATIONAL PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION FINALS 2025

The National Public Speaking Competition final will take place in Manchester on 7th September 2025 and **all are welcome** but it is necessary to book. There will be 15 candidates competing for the National Trophy. The outline timetable will be:

1230	Light buffet lunch
1330	Competition starts
1700	End

THE 'WE BELIEVE' FESTIVAL

The GB Association will be strongly represented by Province 6 at the "We Believe Festival, The Archdiocese of Birmingham's response to the Year of Hope, and which takes place at St Mary's Seminary, Oscott next weekend. Full details can be found on our blog on the new website – see below.

Featured story



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The Great Britain Catenian Association is a partner and sponsor of the We Believe Festival, which will take place in...

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Stop Press!! WeBelieve Festival 2025

The Great Britain Catenian Association is a



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RMJH

21 July 2025