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## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO PROVINCE 12 COUNCIL**

**7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2025**

### **GENERAL**

The GBNC met face-to-face at Leamington Spa on 7/8 November 2025. This was, in effect, and saving all disasters and emergencies, my last face-to-face meeting of GBNC as your Director. This report covers that meeting and a bit of extra information.

### **THE ASSOCIATION VOTE ON WHETHER TO CHANGE THE RULE WORDING FROM "LAYMEN" TO "LAITY"**

The vote is progressing slowly. At the time of writing, nationally, 74% of Circles are yet to register their members' votes. They have until the end of the month to do so. I do not know which of our Provincial Circles have or have not yet voted but I assume that the Provincial Secretary is 'keeping his eye' on it.

When we call a vote of the members of GBNC we expect to get a return from only about 30% of the members. That literally means that 70% just can't be bothered what happens in or to their Association.

As our GB Association is now 5,209 members strong that means that in a traditional vote we should expect about 1,563 returns. In fact, so far, some 1,600 votes have been received so we are already exceeding the usual response.

I encourage all our 261 Province 12 members to ensure that their vote is recorded. **Time to vote is running out.**

On 8<sup>th</sup> November 2028 I wrote to all Circle Secretaries to remind them to get their Circle vote in by the end of the month.

Finally, GBNC is planning an emergency, single-issue, meeting by ZOOM on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2025 to discuss and agree the Council's response to the result of the Association vote. It is clear that, whichever way the vote goes, will cause great upset to some of our members, and we all need to do our best to "take the heat out of the argument" and ensure that no member takes precipitous, hasty action if the result is not to his immediate liking.

### **MEMBERSHIP AND MARKETING**

I sent copies of all the papers issued by the MMWG to the PMO on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

#### **Membership**

The steady decline of our GB Association membership continues.

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Period Summary	Current Members	New Members	Deceased Members	Forfeit Members	Resigned Members
30/09/2021	6476	36	98	8	79
30/09/2022	6103	55	101	12	146
30/09/2023	5797	81	94	22	149
30/09/2024	5477	89	102	24	146
30/09/2025	5209	100	85	18	117

Just on the total numbers alone we have suffered a net loss of 1,267 members in the GB Association since 2021, but we can at least see a pleasing increase in the number of new members this year. But before we get too confident it's worth remembering that before the pandemic members were bringing in about 350 new members per year so we still have some way to go.

The figures for Province 12 are just as depressing: we were at 388 members in 2021 and now sit at 261 members. A net loss to the Province – despite all of our efforts to recruit new members - of 121, or 31% of our Provincial membership over the 5 year period.

Nationally, the average age of a member is now 70/71 but in Province 12 it remains stubbornly high at 73. This points to the fact that other Provinces are having some success at recruiting younger, working-age (25-65) Catholics. Is there something we can learn from them? Have we asked? Are we even trying?

**What are we doing to recruit new, younger, working-age Catholics?** This is the specific role and *raison d'être* of the Provincial Council. Regulation 12.a. states that the first and most important 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 spread Catenianism in their Provincial area.”

Everything else that the Provincial Council does is a distraction from its principal role, purpose and reason for existence. **What are we doing about this?** What is our development plan? Where and how and where can we form new Circles and who is doing anything about it?

**WhatsApp Group.** The PMO has been directed to set up a WhatsApp Group within the Province to link him with his CMOs in a chat forum. The intention is that these individual Groups will then be linked to form a national PMO/CMO chat forum.

**Use of RMIS.** There seems to be some concern that some PMO/CMOs nationally are not making regular use of RMIS system. I'm sure that our PMO and all our CMOs are well-conversant and using the system.

**Resignations.** There seems to be some concern that Circles/Provinces are just accepting Resignations too easily and are not working hard to prevent members leaving for silly reasons like a fit of pique or because of ill-health etc. Everyone who wishes to resign should be interviewed by the Circle President and membership officer. Everything should be done to make sure that people do not resign. Ill-health or financial matters should never be a reason for resignation.

## Marketing

**What are we doing to start to use social media as our prime internal and external communication channel in Province 12?** The people we want to recruit, who can help us avert our membership crisis, are working-age Catholics – aged 25-55. To reach them we have to communicate with them and they communicate almost exclusively on social media and hand-held devices. **We must get a Provincial social media channel up and running** and have every Circle with its own channel affiliated to the Provincial channel. I realise this will not be easy **but we must make this happen.**

**Social Media.** Our social media marketing campaigns are the way by which we get our message out to younger, working age (25-65), Catholics, who may not be regular attenders at Holy Mass, and who may not receive our marketing message because they are not in our social circle and probably don't even know of our existence. On the 8<sup>th</sup> November I wrote to all Circle Presidents to ask for their help to ensure that every single member plays his part by using social media and liking and sharing our Catenian posts. This will help us to help you to get our message out to those with whom you never normally come in contact.

**Poster Campaign.** The monthly Poster campaign continues and copies of all posters are sent in electronic format to the PMO every month. Please make sure you get a copy to each Circle and that they are put up at the rear of all Mass Centres in the Province. Are we doing this? Is anyone making the effort?

**Special Material.** Although the WG does not have the money to print much special purpose material they are happy to provide a free "design service" for any special posters/brochures/ leaflets that we may want. We only have to ask.

## Careers and Employment

The excellent booklet produced by Andrew Neal, our National Careers and Employment Officer, is available to download online or in printed form direct from Andrew himself. I have asked him to forward me 20 printed copies and will pass a printed copy to every Circle.

## STRATEGY

The Strategy WG has been wrestling with what it can do redress the unfairness of the settlement on the GB Association at reorganisation and to act upon the recommendations of the Lillywhite report. To that end the Chair produced a discussion paper with some of the questions we wanted answered and led a workshop-style discussion to get overall opinions around the table of what was needed to remedy the situation.

Given the guidance of that discussion the WG will now work on coming back to the Council in February with a planned way ahead.

The National President and chair of the WG are planning a meeting with Louis Lillywhite in the near future.

## FINANCE

The principal issue that was discussed was the need to devise a mechanism to allow GBNC to increase capitation on an annual basis to reflect UK inflation without having to resort to a vote of the whole Association. After some discussion it was approved that capitation would

be held at the current rate for 2026, but that thereafter that it should annually be increased by a percentage up to a percentage equivalent to the year's CPI (Consumer Price Index) to reflect the inflationary pressures in the economy – with an upper limit rate cap of 10%.

CPI was chosen as a better indication of the effect of inflationary pressures than RPI. The main difference between RPI and CPI is that CPI is the UK's official measure of inflation, used for international comparison and government targets, while RPI is an older measure with technical flaws that is still used for some specific purposes, like rail fares and student loans. CPI is generally lower than RPI because it excludes certain housing costs like mortgage interest payments and council tax, which are included in the RPI. For information the rate of CPI for 2025 is 3.8%.

One assumes that this will now need to be put to the membership in a vote, but it should stop us having to come back to the membership for every change in the capitation rate due to inflationary pressures in the future.

### **FAITH, YOUTH & PILGRIMAGES**

The work of the F&YWG continues.

Their principal work is to support CYMFed and the FLAME Convention, the next one of which will be held in 2026.

The national membership supports the CBCEW Vocations Initiative through their annual voluntary £2.00 per capita donation – indeed we are the ONLY Catholic organisation, (including CBCEW itself!), to offer the Vocations Initiative financial support.

Some limited financial support is provided for the Catenian Rosary Group but the majority of their work, providing Rosaries for prisoners and for worthwhile causes overseas, is done at their own, personal, expense.

We are still trying hard at the invitation of Bishop Richard Moth to develop a relationship with PACT, The Prison Advice and Care Trust (<https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/>) but are unable to provide them with any funding stream at present. Circles and Provinces are encouraged to support their local PACT committees and support organisations as they feel able.

Our relationship with Radio Maria continues to develop, and we encourage all Catenians to listen to its broadcasts and offer them such support as we are able. See <https://radiomariaengland.uk/how-to-listen-to-us/> They are always desperate for an interview or for some news so make sure you use their service and have a local digital hotspot around Bristol. Could be a good way to get our Provincial message out?

We still need to appoint a **National Charity Officer** and anyone who is interested in volunteering should speak to me in the first instance.

## **Pilgrimage 2026**

Following on from last year's successful Pilgrimage to the Holy Island in the steps of Saint Cuthbert it is proposed to hold a walking pilgrimage in 2026 on the Islands of Iona and Mull, walking in the steps of Saint Columba who first brought Christianity to Scotland in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Details are at a very early stage of planning at present and no specific date has yet been selected. The Pilgrimage will likely be over 8 days and because of the availability of accommodation on Iona is likely to take place in April or May 2026.

Full details will be provided just as soon as they are known.



## **Clergy Publicity**

There is still a degree of lack of understanding amongst our clergy about just what it is that the Catenians are and do. This is exacerbated by the fact that many of our parishes are now run by Priests from Africa or South Asia who have never met Catenians and are not aware us.

It was suggested that we could do worse that offer to speak/present about our Association at routine Deanery meetings. It was suggested that these are regular meetings and that the organisers are always on the lookout for content and would probably welcome offers of a presentation.

Getting our clergy onside will help our recruiting efforts and we should make the effort.

## **CATENIAN SUPPORT SERVICES (CSS) AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **IT and Directory**

There are some missing provincial/circle secretaries on the database and I would ask all secretaries to check all the Circle and Provincial details are correct.

### **GB National Secretary elect**

The National Secretary will be writing to all secretaries soon with an advertisement for his replacement. His term of office expires at the AGM in 2027 and he needs someone to shadow him for a year before taking over. Volunteers watch out for the advertisement.

### **National Conference**

Planning as already started for Conference 2026. This may be the last conference held at Cheshford Grange as the local liaison committee (LLC) only agreed to help with 3 conferences. Other venues are being explored but we would need to put into place a LLC.

As well all know, Swindon is the centre-of-gravity of the UK economy with excellent road/rail and air communications. I would hope that we might be able to volunteer Swindon as a potential location if we can find a suitable venue. I have spoken with the Swindon President to ask him how the Circle feels about it?

If any other Circle would like to offer a potential venue then I am very keen to hear about it.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING OF GBNC**

The next scheduled formal meeting of the GBNC will be by ZOOM on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

RMJH

10/11/25