

Following receipt of the Draft Pool MA Review document, the MA distributed the document to all MAC members and reserves, SMT members and Churchwardens, inviting wider distribution within local churches and comments from anybody who wished to contribute to the consultation. 22 written responses were received, and 25 people engaged in two zoom consultation meetings of the MAC. The MAL & MA Administrator collated and summarized the responses. After a wide-ranging discussion the MA Exec drafted a proposed response, and after further discussion at 3rd zoom MAC meeting this proposal was passed with a minor amendment relating to the impact of Covid on timescales.

The agreed response of Pool MAC to the draft MA Review document is as follows:

“Pool Mission Area recognises the importance of reviewing our situation and are very grateful for the effort invested in producing the MA Review document as a first stage of that process. We are committed to using the report, along with the demographic information on the diocesan website about the communities we serve, to develop our strategy for mission and the long term future of the Church in Wales’ ministry in this area.

In considering the detail of the report we recognised that we need to do some further work on our own vision and strategy for the Mission Area before we would be in a position to decide on the appropriateness of closing any of our existing buildings. We also recognized that the current pandemic makes it very difficult for our churches to fully respond to the challenges they face, as well as adding a huge amount of uncertainty to the future of all our churches – what will be the long term impact of the pandemic on their attendance and their financial wellbeing?

Although Fron was the only church recommended for closure, the report recognizes that at least half of our churches are vulnerable (the term is used in the comments on Criggion, Forden, Fron, Llandyssil, Pantyffridd, Penrhos, it obviously applies to Belan, and also to Buttington because of its precarious financial situation). The pandemic will affect all our churches, and may well make others equally vulnerable, and we think that we will be better able to make strategic decisions about our resources when that impact is clearer.

For these reasons we propose delaying making decisions about our buildings for two years. This will enable us to clarify our vision and strategy and to ascertain the longer-term impact of the pandemic. It will also give all of our churches a chance to respond to the suggestions and measurable goals that the report and our subsequent Mission Action Planning present to them. This in turn will give us a clearer picture of their ability to minister effectively to the communities they serve and therefore their viability. We believe that the Fron Church should have the same opportunity to do this as our other churches.

The two-year timescale we have agreed assumes that the limitations on church life imposed by the covid pandemic will significantly ease during the first nine months of that time. If this is not the case the timescale may need to be adjusted. This will be reviewed in October 2021.”

(Pool Mission Area Conference, 29th October 2020)