**Apologia...a rejoinder**

While welcoming Robert Morgan to the role of Vice Chair, his short defence of the locally agreed syllabus (LAS) procedure (SACRE Briefing 22) merits, in my view, a modest rejoinder.

Three points:

1. While Dr Morgan may be right in asserting that local democracy is not "anachronistic", the membership rules for SACREs most certainly are. They date back more than 30 years and take no recognition of contemporary data - principally, that some 53% of the population now describe themselves as having "no faith". This figure rises to over 70% in young people.\* While some enlightened SACREs have found routes to non-faith representation, there is no right to representation from more than half the community. To disenfranchise the majority is, at the very least, an eccentric approach to democracy. The membership of SACREs and ASCs are, as Dr Morgan points out, indeed separate in law, but very seldom in fact.

2. The "production" of a LAS is now approaching a legal fiction. Few LAs have anything like the necessary resources to fund such a production and, instead, buy an off-the-shelf publication from a very small number of suppliers and then "customise" the document with an introduction and an appendix or two. This practice is not universal, but it appears to be quite common. Very few would accept that this is the spirit (nor indeed the intention) of the legislation. The practice clearly undermines the concept of “local determination” and would not (presumably) have the support of those who think that local determination is desirable.

3. Finally, it is, I suggest, a touch fanciful to attribute the lack of a national curriculum in RE to governmental commitment to local democracy. When I asked, some years' ago, a senior civil servant in the Dept. for Education why they did not tackle the project his answer was succinct: "A junior minister has two to three years to make his/her mark in the Department. No one is going to spend that time on religious warfare...look what happened with the History syllabus". While it might be uncomfortable to think that policy direction might be influenced by the personal ambitions of (numerous) politicians it would be a very naive person who refused to recognise the fact. I doubt that Dr Morgan is one.

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(North Yorkshire SACRE but writing in a personal capacity)

https://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/images/cleardot.gif\* British Social Attitudes Survey 34th Report, July 2017 <http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39196/bsa34_full-report_fin.pdf>