

National Association of SACREs

Co-Chairs' Report, May 2025

For the three Co-Chairs of NASACRE this has been an interesting year! The process of registering as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation took much longer than anticipated, and as a result we couldn't hold elections last year, hence the need for co-Chairs. Linda Rudge, Chair since 2020, had been waiting to step down and finally did so in 2024, but stayed on this year as Assistant to the Chair, to lead the Westhill Awards process on our behalf.

Paul has found it a great honour to contribute to this Co-Chair's Report before stepping aside. He was elected on Thursday, 21 May 2015 to the position of Vice Chair of NASACRE, according to the nomination form, "a **6-year** commitment" (the emboldening was on the form!) Now, a mere 10 years later, having served as Vice Chair for a year, Chair for 4 years, Assistant to the Chair for 4 years and as Co-Chair for the last year, he believes it is time to stand aside and let others continue the amazing work of this organisation. He hands Bill the baton as Chair, and Denise - the third of our Triumvirate - becomes Assistant to the Chair, so there's considerable experience taking us forward.

The transformation of the association over the 10 years of Paul's involvement and leadership is plain to see, when one reviews the work of the last year since we met in York.

The Co-Chairs have given advice to SACRE Chairs and advisers by phone or email in some fascinating and often challenging situations, from lack of LA support to membership issues and statutory duties. Fortunately, most SACREs are able to work highly effectively in collaboration with LAs, members, faith groups and schools. However, from requests for support, it is clear that funding and recruitment remain as significant challenges for many SACREs.

We continue to work closely with other RE organisations. Bill met with Chairs of other professional RE groups (e.g. RE Council, NATRE, AREIAC and universities) to discuss developments and resources for RE over the past year, the thorny issues around the use and abuse of social media, the Curriculum and Assessment Review (CaAR), teacher recruitment, and the growing availability of 'schemes of work' and how they impact on local determination and the role of SACREs.

We have worked with the REC in particular, supporting the National Content Standard as a way of defining standards in RE syllabi and curricula, helping to ensure that pupils across England receive the best possible RE. Recently, Paul represented NASACRE at one of the roundtables held by the CaAR, and also at the recent REC AGM, where the speakers were Prof Becky Francis who is leading the CaAR, and Dr Vanessa Ogden who is heading up the 'deep dive' into RE as part of it.

We are very pleased that, once again, we were able to commission Dr David Hampshire, a previous Chair, to analyse the reports that all SACREs must submit annually. His experience and understanding of both SACREs and NASACRE means that his analysis and recommendations have fed into discussions that we regularly hold with DfE officials.

We are part of the steering group with partners across the RE community overseeing another transformative initiative – RE Hubs. The regional *In Conversation* meetings between Hub Leads, NASACRE Exec members and SACRE members are fast becoming a key part of our work. We have been thankful for the work of all Exec members in leading on these, but especially to Claire Clinton, who has the responsibility to co-ordinate the whole programme. These meetings help us to understand the issues SACREs are facing and provide an important opportunity to share with and learn from each other.

Paul, as a trustee of the Inter Faith Network, was devastated by the decisions of then Minister Michael Gove to cease funding the work of the IFN, a move which led to its closure. It is therefore most appropriate that NASACRE, through Bill and especially Denise, played a key and proactive role in the team that planned Inter Faith Week 2024. Denise co-ordinated the SACRE contributions to the report and Bill (in Morris Dancing gear, no less!) attended the launch of the report *Bursting the Bubble* at the House of Commons on May Day 2025.

Perhaps our most significant achievement in the last year is finally being able to declare that we are a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, a status allowing NASACRE to have a proper legal footing and be able to use financial resources in a way that is necessary in the 21st Century. We are particularly grateful to Claire and Saquat for their wisdom and experience to guide us through this process. Four trustees have already been appointed: Bill as Chair, Claire as Vice Chair, Denise as Assistant to the Chair, and Saquat as Treasurer. We were advised to nominate and appoint founder trustees to ensure efficient and smooth transition to our new status. The remainder of the trustees will be elected at the AGM.

NASACRE is very much a team effort. We are privileged to volunteer alongside some tremendous colleagues on the Executive and want to pay tribute to all their energy and enthusiasm. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Paul and Linda, who have steered the “Good Ship NASACRE” (with a nod to John Keast!) wisely and carefully through choppy waters for far more years than they signed up for! However, of the people to whom we are wishing a fond and warm farewell, one stands out head and shoulders above the rest (though some might say he is slight of stature!). It would be remiss to finish without one final vote of thanks to Michael Metcalfe, who still has not until now - as CIO status kicks in - been able to fully hand over the reins of our finances. Michael is the sole remaining original member of the NASACRE Exec from its foundation in 1994.

Paul Smalley
Denise Chaplin
Bill Moore