

Agenda Item 8

NASACRE 30th Annual Conference 2023

Report to Lincolnshire SACRE

Celebrating Thirty Years, held at Fishmongers' Hall, London Bridge.

This year celebrates the thirtieth year of NASACREs existence, and the Fishmongers Hall was a grand space in which to mark the special occasion, in spite of the rigorous security measures in place at our entry point! This was also the first in-person conference since lockdown, and a good occasion to meet up with key players in the RE world.

Most of the 151 SACREs were represented, with probably 200 people in attendance. Good opportunities were provided for groups to discuss questions about the future of SACREs, and a lovely lunch was provided in the middle of the day.

Linda Rudge, Chairperson of NASACRE had come down with Covid, so the proceedings were led by Paul Smalley, former Chair of NASACRE.

Kathryn Wright, CEO of Culham St Gabriel's Trust gave the first keynote address, outlining her own SACRE journey, followed by what she considered to be key achievements and tasks for the future. She ended by describing RE as a 'treasured pearl' (30th anniversary symbol), which needs to be put on display!

NASACREs patron, Rt Hon Charles Clarke was the second keynote speaker, and he provided a critical assessment of the past 'anarchic period' of British politics before summarising strengths and weaknesses of SACREs since the 1988 ERA. His key message was that a 'manifesto for SACREs' was needed and that more needs to be done to promote and advertise their many achievements.

After a very enjoyable lunch break, the Westhill Award winners were announced: Doncaster, for a storytelling project, and Bexley, for a series of children's workshops on understanding diversity.

David Hampshire (former Chair of NASACRE) then gave a detailed statistical outline of research he has carried out on the work of SACREs, based on responses from 69 SACREs. Key messages were that SACREs need to establish good relations with their LA, but also to hold LAs to account for responding to SACRE advice. The results suggest that where such relations are strong, SACREs are able to be effective. Another message: although 92% of SACREs offer training, only 32% actually monitor the effectiveness of this. Finally, the

DfE needs to respond to the fact that 53 SACREs have failed to file any reports in the past three years! The most startling statistic however, was that one SACRE identified that it had 23 vacancies!

Groups discussed and responded to David's report, and then Michael Metcalf, a founding member of NASACRE, provided a summary and reflections on the first thirty years of the organisation, with its many ups and downs.

Following Michael's talk we were all invited to participate in a fun-based multiple choice answer quiz based on factual details about the legal and historical elements of SACREs.

We then moved into the formal business of the NASACRE Annual Business Meeting, confirming a new constitution (essentially affirming developments that were already in place), and confirming David Levine (Salford SACRE) as the new Vice Chairman of NASACRE, being the majority vote winner from the written polling that had taken place at lunchtime.

Paul Smalley again thanked all of the speakers and organisers, and offered especial thanks to the many volunteers, both present and absent, who give time and commitment to the care and support of RE across the country.

Overall, the event was a memorable and enjoyable occasion, and it was great to meet many people for the first time and others whom I had not seen for several years.

Mark Plater 26/05/2023

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