

NASACRE 2023 conference report – Mark Harrington

NASACRE met for the first time in person since the COVID-19 pandemic on Wednesday 24th May 2023 at Fishmongers Hall, London. This was their 30th Pearl celebration hence the unusual choice of venue.

Unfortunately, the chair had caught Covid so was unable to host the conference.

There were three keynote speakers during the day, a short celebration of 30 years and then the business meeting. Between each keynote, each table had a discussion and the opportunity to record their discussions on paper. These are to be collated by NASACRE and shared later in the year. It was a shame that these discussions were not then shared around the room to see if there were common themes during the day emerging.

Keynote 1: Dr Kathryn Wright Culham St Gabriels CEO

Kathryn expounded upon the four aims of NASACRE.

- Strengthening the voices represented and their ability to be heard
- Supporting those working in schools
- Representing the entire community
- Celebrating an education in RE and Worldviews.

There is a stronger sense of RE developing in the public space and the need for it to be at the fore more in national discussions.

The next 30 years will be challenging but those same four aims will enable SACRES to embrace the challenges and opportunities as they occur.

- The Bloom Review – [Does Government Do God?](#) has highlighted the challenges although with some controversy.
- How we work with MATS is key to the future – does your SACRE have a MAT link person?
- Community relations are still central to our role.
- Collaboration with others is even more essential to keep our voices heard.
- The Religions and Worldviews approach is gaining momentum with some of the syllabus working groups producing materials.
- We need to hold being intellectually humble and understand our positionality as individual SACRE members.
- Exploring personal lived experiences are key to the new approach, and taking them seriously.
- Teacher recruitment is in crisis and this is seen acutely in RE. This is mainly due to RE training not being fit for purpose and places being unfilled despite recent campaigns.
- How do we advocate for freedom of religion or belief for all?

Keynote 2: Rt Hon. Charles Clarke (Patron NASACRE)

Charles shared a SWOT analysis of SACRES.

Strengths:

- Building a force of community cohesion – SACRES hold a unique place
- Valuing children's and young people's voices are the priority
- A physical manifestation of diverse Britain.
- Moral high ground – compared to much of what is happening around us.

Weaknesses:

- Finances

- Marginalised role in LA
- Variable capacity to take actions

SACREs need to maximise their strength and minimise their weaknesses.

What is the manifesto for your SACRE? Seize the opportunity to make your voice heard as general elections approach.

Voting for Vice Chair took place.

The **Westhill Award Winners** were announced as Doncaster diversity days and Bexley storytelling projects.

RE-Hubs.UK is now live for regional hubs.

Keynote 3: David Hampshire – analysis of SACRE reports (audio recording available - his slides were badly designed and couldn't be read anyway!)

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/e64EJFwD8r4puc-rdPj-qE3fBSUj7YiHOUsitSdniAYdh_c1OEhY-WFxAlf0cGg.D41T4PT-bxosGJn Passcode: iD3#8A#C

- 69 reports out of 151 were received in time.
- Hybrid meetings have increased attendance at SACRES
- LA relationship varies enormously
- LA is responsible for recruiting members – do they take this role seriously?
- What role is there for Group D members to actively support RE and SACRE across the LA?
- **Are we reporting to or advising the LA?**
- What do we advise as an advisory body?
- What difference does that advice make? (Evaluate your impact)
- Hold the LA to account for RE and CW
- No real monitoring of CW and RE withdrawal across schools (could add to the questionnaire)
- Workforce monitoring doesn't check standards – a lot poorly delivered is worse than a little well delivered.
- Only 27% of respondents monitor CW (Yet this was the only keynote to mention CW)
- How is your training monitored and evaluated?

30-year celebration

There was a quiz and a short presentation by one of the founding members about how NASACRE had formed and the work it has been involved in for the past thirty years.

There will be a SACRE funding report webinar from NASACRE later in June.

AGM

- Announced that David Levian was voted as Vice Chair.
- Adoption of new constitution
- Aim to recruit an Exec Officer to deal with more of the day-to-day running under the Exec committee.
- Nothing added to the meeting other than adoption of minutes.

A series of webinars are planned to showcase recent Westhill Award winners in early June for all who attended the conference.