



REFLECTIONS on the 2011 AGM

We always ask you for feedback at an AGM, and in 2010 you asked us to publicise what you had said; we're doing the same here. Of the one hundred participants, sixty-three people left comments this year, not all of them in response to every area. In analysing your feedback, it is always easy to see the brick-bats more clearly than the plaudits, which is why we take heart from the percentages on the right of the table on page 2 overleaf. As you will see, most of the responses were positive but there were also some criticisms which we take seriously.

There is no doubt that you appreciated greatly the opportunity to hear from young people (not as many as we had hoped this year because of SATs and exam pressures) and we have already decided to make such a contribution a regular feature of future AGMs. Undoubtedly in 2011 Clare Dempsey was the star and we are hoping to involve her with NASACRE in some way in the future.



We noted all your suggestions in the boxes beneath the table too. Some of you said

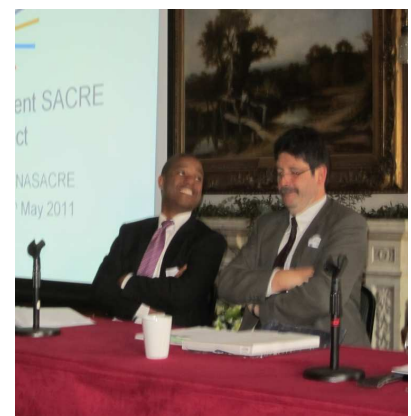
NASACRE should focus in the future on dialogue between SACREs, teachers & students; engaging with governors and head teacher associations; working with the REC & leading collaboratively, sharing good practice to give SACREs ideas to move forward. We should continue to fight for RE in every aspect, working together with the whole RE community to overcome current problems in RE, identifying the role of SACREs in the present climate and raising their profile. We should highlight problems like the use of unqualified teachers and we should explore the use of new media and social networks (a big step for some of us!). RE and spirituality versus political correctness was another area of work identified by one person. Many responses highlighted the importance of capturing the involvement of young people in influencing ministers about the experience of RE and someone suggested taking Clare Dempsey to meet Mr Gove! (She has already written to him!) What an advocate for RE!



Evaluative statements:	Strongly agree	agree	Not sure	disagree	Strongly disagree	% good +
1. Communication about the AGM was fine;	28	27	6			87
2. Booking procedures for the AGM were efficient;	34	22	4	1		73
3. Documentation was informative;	31	22	5	2		94
4. The venue has been appropriate and the food good;	44	14	3	1	1	92
5. The keynote address was stimulating;	29	25	6	2	1	85
6. The business was conducted efficiently;	39	22				97
7. I enjoyed hearing from pupils;	51	11				98
8. It was good to hear from the Chair designate of the REC;	36	23	4			94
9. Time was well used;	34	26	3			95
10. There was a good balance of activity;	19	33	9	1		85
11. I have had the chance to put my point of view;	21	24	16	1		71
12. I am better informed now about national developments;	17	33	8	1		79
13. I have a clear idea of the priorities for NASACRE, on behalf of SACREs;	12	39	5	4		81
14. I know what I shall do as a follow up to today;	16	35	8	2		81
15. I have the documentation I need to inform my SACRE colleagues about today;	15	28	11	5		68
16. I find the NASACRE AGM is a useful opportunity to network;	25	33	3	1		92
17. The AGM is a valuable opportunity to keep up to date with NASACRE activity;	33	26	3			94
18. I am happy with the work the NASACRE executive does on behalf of SACREs.	31	25	5			89
19. What we have done today will help me in my work with my SACRE.	29	31	3			95

Collectively, you look to NASACRE for ideas & support, guidance and high quality materials to support development and training. Some people said how useful the CD was proving. You want us to promote RE as a curriculum area; put pressure on politicians and get SACRE funding ring-fenced by Government. You look to NASACRE for representation, as a voice nationally for SACREs, and a source of information for you on the big issues, particularly on legal aspects of the work; you want clarity on free schools and academies. You want to be kept abreast of what is going on and be encouraged to look beyond your own local areas...and you want to be challenged!

You value the website but want us to use it to give guidance on developing an agreed syllabus and there was a request for a log identifying when local authorities are reviewing their agreed syllabuses so that you can network. Undoubtedly, the work of syllabus review focuses many minds. At a practical level you would appreciate more help with agenda items for SACRE meetings.



Your suggestions for a future AGM keynote speaker were wide and varied. They included religious leaders, for example the Chief Rabbi and the Archbishop of York; politicians, namely Baroness Warsi; David Cameron and Michael Gove ('to explain himself' was the reason given!); Matthew Thompson, Director of Liverpool Community Spirit and Dr Edward Kesler at the Woolf Institute; someone who could prompt people into changing behaviour, helping to get school leaders to value RE and accept what it was trying to achieve, perhaps an enthusiastic Headteacher. The actress Zoë Wannamaker was another suggestion.



A valid concern was that, although speakers in recent years had been challenging, their knowledge of RE in schools had been limited; an outside perspective of the world was important but the present and important focus area was RE. Many of you wanted someone who would inform SACRE members about effective and engaging RE to help the key focus of SACRE members, so a number of RE names were suggested, such as Denise Cush, Lat Blaylock, Bob Jackson, Mark Chater, Viv Baumfield and John Keast. Above all, most people appreciated the excellent presentation from Clare Dempsey and wanted more like her. We are working on it!

Your suggestions for improving the AGM were numerous, many to do with the venue and especially food. The Council House in Birmingham went down well as a venue. It is well linked to public transport and also good value. It is always a challenge to offer a quality experience at an economical rate. Some of you want us to keep the venue in central England, others want London every year, proving that you can't please all the people all the time.

Food was an issue, although there were some very complimentary comments about this year's menu. It is a regret that hugely increasing costs prevent us from offering a kosher meal but we do our best to be inclusive in other respects by limiting choice to vegetarian options so that most people can share together, although it was unfortunate the fish was not labelled as had been requested. We were instructed in the feedback that a person who eats fish but not meat is a pescatarian not a vegetarian! In any case, we are asked to mention on the documentation that lunch is included and it was suggested a comfort break in the long morning session would be helpful;

On the shape of the day, the big issue was undoubtedly the need to give more time and opportunity for group discussion rather than Q&A with guests. You want to be able to share ideas in structured discussions, with a wide range of SACRE members. Ideas from the AGM should go to the NASACRE executive to be acted on and the whole day should be tuned to SACRE outcomes. We have to get the timing right, avoiding SATs' week which prevents some people from attending. (Although the date for 2012 is already booked)

Some of you requested the speaker's PowerPoint notes to be available on the day, although this depends rather on the speaker, and you want a summary of the proceedings to go on the website immediately after the AGM...and this depends on the secretary!

Happily, in answer to the question about what had to be done to improve the AGM, some people thought nothing! You said it was pacy, informative and well focused and the format's fine. Thank you!



Additional comments emphasised how much you appreciated the involvement of the young people and many of you felt we had achieved a good mix of young person and adult input. You suggested we designate an area of the website to youth SACRE news and open up networking opportunities and we are on to that.

There were some comments about lack of documentation generally and of specific omissions. We are unable now, because of cost, to provide packs of meeting papers on the day, as we used to, so we have to

rely on you either to bring documents electronically or to print off what you need. We are careful to send all the reports beforehand so that you are able to come prepared to the business meeting, to avoid the need to print papers at all. We will add a note to that effect in the papers for next year's AGM.

You pointed out we always introduce our speakers diligently but failed this year to introduce ourselves properly, for which we apologise; we will do better next time. It was unfortunate that the two new committee members were unable to attend and therefore could not introduce themselves personally, but we take the point.

The young people had things to say as well. They suggested we should concentrate on staying afloat! They would like a branch of NASACRE for youth SACREs and they want students' views on the website to be more inclusive because '*We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children*'. They said they were proud to be part of SACRE and really enjoyed being there every term; they think SACRE does excellent work especially with awareness-raising and having a strong voice. And they were very enamoured by NASACRE too. 'Thank you for having us today; it was extremely interesting.' 'The food was very delicious, thank you!'

And some of you oldies were appreciative and complimentary too: 'Well done, Birmingham!' 'Better this year'; 'Well worthwhile day...Thank you!' 'Thank you for a very interesting, enjoyable day...lots of matters to think about and inspiration to be pro-active in ensuring success of SACRE.' 'Thank you for all you do'; 'Thank you for your continued hard work on our behalf and for the organisation of such a good AGM.'

You're welcome! It's a pleasure! Hope to see you again next year.

Julie Grove
Secretary