



NWBA Transition Proposals

Frequently Asked Questions

Through the extensive consultation around our proposals for transition, a number of questions have emerged that express recurring themes and concerns. We have sought to capture these and offer some response, which we hope will be of interest and assistance to our churches and their members. This document will not explain our Transition Vision, and we would refer people to the “Networking for Mission” publication, that seeks to outline this. This document is not likely to make sense if read separately to that.

Are we just managing decline?

We recognise that we may have given this impression, particularly in some of the early roadshows. We apologise for this – our intent was more to demonstrate that some aspects of how we have been doing things has been quite inefficient. In particular, having a small team of largely full-time staff means a great deal of time is spent travelling – we hope to reduce this by having more staff, spread across NWBA, working part-time but not needing to travel as far to support churches. We are also seeking to make better use of technology – e.g. skype, Sharepoint etc. to help work more efficiently. One key aspect of the transition role has been to develop our I.T. provision. We do not see this as managing decline, but making better use of the resources we have, to enable growth.

Is there a danger that NWBA could become less “cohesive”?

There is no question that the team will need to work differently, and invest time in working and sharing together. However, we sense that this question was asked more in relation to churches being part of NWBA. We hope that by having more team members, many of whom will also be part of local networks because of other roles, more people will become engaged. We would also make the point that in reality, the degree to which a church feels “included” in NWBA, depends more on whether or not local leaders encourage participation than anything the NWBA team can do. We suggest that this is something EVERYONE needs to invest in, and no amount of effort or re-organisation on the part of the team can have as much impact as a minister or local leader encouraging a church to remain involved in our wider Baptist community.

How will we know who to relate to?

One thing we heard, was a concern that a large number of team members could become confusing for local churches. In response to this, we have developed the vision to form three much more distinct teams, with a “core team” holding that work together. We believe that this more defined structure can address these concerns. A fuller explanation of this is included in the “Networking for Mission” publication.

How many more staff will NWBA employ?

Although there will be many more people, in actual staff terms, NWBA will only be employing around 0.8 of an extra person, if everything is implemented as planned. The staffing complement at the beginning of the Transition initiative was 3.8 fte – The current proposals are for around 4.6 fte.

This includes the Pioneer Networker, which was an appointment made in partnership with BUGB, YBA, and NBA during the transition process, mostly funded by BUGB. The proposed staffing level is more in line with what was recommended/intended when NWBA was launched in 2002.

How will this be funded?

The funding for future roles will come from a variety of sources. NWBA receives some direct income for staff services provided to other bodies, which we expect to continue, and some of the new initiatives have attracted some external grant funding. In addition, changes to how Home Mission funding is provided and distributed gives Associations greater flexibility in how resources are allocated. The proposed staffing structure allows us to partner with churches that might otherwise require Home Mission funding in order to provide ministry. This means that we are able to use our overall resources far more efficiently – a church that might have previously required (say) a £6000 Home Mission grant in order to receive stipendiary ministry, is now able to partner with NWBA, still receive ministry, but also be a base for a team member, who previously would have had to be fully funded in addition. Already around 0.5 fte of our staffing resource has already been financed on this basis. We also have significant reserves and would expect to continue operating at a modest deficit, though this is likely to be less than what has been the average for the last decade.

What are the actual changes being made?

There are very few formal changes being proposed. In reality NWBA has operated dynamically since its inception and has regularly reviewed its activities and use of resources. This has included two structured reviews “Moving on” and “In Transition”. The shift to a larger, more flexible team has happened naturally and reflects similar trends in other Associations around the UK. Some of this has also been in response to operational and structural changes within BUGB.

The only formal changes being proposed within NWBA are around the composition of council. We believe that an elected council/trustee board better suits our current realities, without losing wider representation, which will be achieved through a larger team that is more embedded in local networks and structures. It is important though that Forum and AGM take their role seriously, and going forward, we will seek to place a stronger emphasis on the significance of this gathering.