

Paper P1

Name of Wessex Synod

Wessex Synod

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins moderator@urcwessex.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Resolution 52 General Assembly changes the name of the Wessex Synod to the Wessex and Islands Synod, with effect from 1 January 2027.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	A change of name of the Wessex Synod to Wessex and Islands Synod.
Main points	<p>This proposal asks the General Assembly to change the name of the Wessex Synod to the Wessex and Islands Synod. The change is intended to be modest and descriptive only: it would not alter boundaries, structures, finance, or legal arrangements, but would adopt a name that more clearly reflects the full geography and communities already within the Synod's life, including its island contexts.</p> <p>The proposal is rooted in the Christian understanding that naming matters, because names express recognition, belonging, and relationship. The new name would therefore make explicit something already true in practice: that mainland and island communities together share in the one common life of the Synod.</p>
Previous relevant documents	n/a
Consultation has taken place with...	n/a

Summary of impact

Financial	n/a
External (eg ecumenical)	The proposed change will align better with our ecumenical partners, notably the Church of Scotland and the Methodist Church.

1. The proposal

- 1.1 The names and boundaries of synods are determined by the General Assembly. The Wessex Synod therefore asks the General Assembly to approve a change of name from Wessex Synod to Wessex and Islands Synod.
- 1.2 This proposed change is intentionally modest. It would:
- make no alteration to Synod boundaries;
 - require no constitutional, financial, or organisational restructuring;
 - leave existing legal entities, charitable registrations, trust arrangements, website domains, and other operational structures unchanged unless and until any later changes were judged helpful.
- 1.3 The proposal seeks only to adopt a name that more clearly reflects the geography and communities already within the Synod's life and care. The Synod includes not only mainland areas of southern England commonly associated with Wessex, but also island contexts, including the Channel Islands, the Isle of Wight, Portsea Island, and Hayling Island, together with churches and communities shaped by coastal and island realities.
- 1.4 The proposed new name is intended to be descriptive, inclusive, and transparent. It does not imply any change in status between different parts of the Synod, nor any new constitutional distinction within it. It simply makes explicit in the Synod's public identity something that is already true in practice: that its common life embraces both mainland and island contexts.
- 1.5 The proposal arose from reflection on whether the Synod's present name fully represents the breadth of the area it serves. The conclusion reached was that Wessex and Islands is a simple and intelligible way of naming the Synod more fully, while remaining continuous with its present identity.

2. The rationale

- 2.1 In Christian tradition, names matter. They are not merely administrative labels, but expressions of recognition, relationship, and truthfulness. To name something well is to pay proper attention to what it is.
- 2.2 This proposal therefore arises from a simple ecclesial question: how should the Synod describe itself in a way that most faithfully reflects the communities that belong within it? The issue is not one of structure, but of self-understanding and recognition.
- 2.3 The present name, Wessex Synod, works well for much of the Synod's mainland geography and heritage. This proposal does not diminish that inheritance. It asks only whether the name can now speak more clearly about the whole Synod, rather than the greater part of it.
- 2.4 When some parts of a church's life are named explicitly and others remain implicit, there is a risk that the unnamed can seem secondary, even where no such distinction is intended. The purpose of this proposal is not to suggest any past neglect, but to make visible a fuller picture of the Synod as it already is.

- 2.5 The proposed name expresses a theology of belonging. It signals that island communities are not peripheral to the Synod's identity, but integral to it, and that geographical separation does not lessen ecclesial fellowship, mutual responsibility, or shared vocation.
- 2.6 This is consonant with the New Testament image of the Church as the Body of Christ, in which different members, contexts, and gifts belong together in mutual dependence. A Synod name that explicitly joins Wessex and Islands offers a modest but tangible expression of that conviction.
- 2.7 The proposed name also assists clarity in public, ecumenical, and civic contexts. It gives a more transparent account of the Synod's scope and may therefore support clearer understanding in partnership and communication.
- 2.8 The proposal is therefore a small change, but not a trivial one. It neither alters structures nor creates new ones. Rather, it invites the General Assembly to authorise a name that more faithfully reflects the Synod's geography, relationships, and common life.
- 2.9 The Wessex Synod accordingly asks the General Assembly to approve the change of name to Wessex and Islands Synod as an act of recognition: a way of naming the Synod that honours the full breadth of the body entrusted to its care.