Strategic Objectives of the Church of Scotland Councils 2009
and prospects for their devolution to Presbyteries

Ministries Council

1 Priority Areas  To work directly in support of Scotland’s poorest parishes, offering resources and building communities of hope; and enabling the wider Church to live up to the Gospel imperative give priority to the poor.

In order to maintain a national focus, this work needs to be managed at national level. Close cooperation takes place with those Presbyteries in which Priority Area parishes are situated. There is little scope for more devolved work in this area, whatever the size and shape of Presbyteries.

2 Vocation & Training  To develop and implement patterns of assessment and training for the recognized ministries of the Church; and oversee the transfer of ministers from other denominations into the Church of Scotland.

Some work is already devolved to Presb level. There is a need to maintain national standards where there is local administration. Training processes may be enhanced by more local engagement, but there need to be to national criteria to enable movement of those in ministries. More devolution will only be possible to a greatly reduced and well-resourced number of Presbyteries.

3 Support & Development  Offer pastoral support to those engaged in the ministries of the Church and develop pastoral networks across the Presbyteries of the Church.

A much greater amount of this work needs to be done at Presb level, but this is impractical with the number of Presbyteries at present. The burden placed on a very small number of full-time, 121 based staff makes anything more than ‘fire fighting’ virtually impossible. More devolution will only be possible to a greatly reduced and well-resourced number of Presbyteries.

4 Support & Development  Promote and resource lifelong learning opportunities for those engaged in the ministries of the Church, including developing patterns of appraisal and study leave.

Study leave policy is a national issue, but the administration and deliver could be more effective locally. Conferencing might be more relevantly under-taken in Presbyteries (with some national input). Accompanied Review process could be perfectly well done locally with a sensible number of Presbyteries. More devolution will only be possible to a greatly reduced and well-resourced number of Presbyteries.

5 Planning & Deployment  Work together with Presbyteries to plan for the best use and deployment of the resources for ministries, always taking account of financial viability.

Presbytery Planning is clearly the work of Presbyteries and needs to be undertaken efficiently at that level. Strategic planning needs to take into account not only numbers of people but also financing of work and creative forward planning. This is not possible in many of the smaller Presbyteries (and inefficient in some larger ones). More devolution only possible to a greatly reduced and well-resourced number of Presbyteries.

6 Planning & Deployment  Develop new patterns for ministries, allowing these to emerge in ecumenical partnership across Scotland.

Organisation of Local ecumenical work is best suited to the Presb, but is often difficult because of lack of resources in the variable size of the current shape of things. This is true also of the need for emerging forms of ministries.

7 Planning & Deployment  Ensure best practice in the employment of staff, offering developmental training to both employees and those responsible for line management.

National standards are essential for maintaining best practice in the care of employees. Much of the administration could be done effectively more locally. Training of managers could easily be done locally in a more streamlined Presb structure. More devolution only possible to a greatly reduced and well-resourced number of Presbyteries.
Council for Mission & Discipleship

1 To develop policy for, model, promote, resource and encourage engagement with children and young people at local level and through national events (eg National Youth Assembly, National Children’s Assembly).

   Policy matters should be dealt with at ‘centre’ but use of toolkits and resources entirely at disposal of local congregations/individuals within policy frameworks. Some online delivery and some events/encounter experiences and (in particular) training could be devolved to new regional structure

2 To provide ideas, resources, and encouragement for the motivation of members and adherents in the Church of Scotland to grow in faith through reflective learning and discussion and through practical service at home and abroad.

   Many of these programmes can be delivered online and toolkits used by local and regional trainers in new structure

3 To release the talents of the ordinary members who make up the Body of Christ so that they can fulfil their role in the mission of the Church and in particular to develop leaders within the local church who can work alongside or in the absence of clergy.

   Programmes created nationally but delivered online and at local and regional level through new structure

4 To encourage and equip congregations to be an outgoing ‘church without walls’.

   Would be enhanced by a regional structure through which this process could be facilitated rather than being planned ‘at a distance’

5 To develop resources that inspire confidence and practical action and the sharing of good news and theological insight to enable local churches to reach out more effectively into their communities and to enable a better experience of worship and life in the congregation.

   The resources and some of the training/encounter experiences/models could be created at the ‘centre’ but then given away as toolkits for individuals in congregations or through a new regional structure.

6 To work with the Ministries Council in developing thinking and practice about Emerging Church.

   This area could be better facilitated through a regional networking system

World Mission Council

1 To give life to the Church of Scotland’s understanding that it is part of Jesus Christ’s Universal Church committed to the advance of the Kingdom of God throughout the world

   Agents working at regional level could contribute to awareness-raising. Still need for central function to coordinate international relationships and work.

2 To discern priorities and form policies to guide the Church of Scotland’s ongoing worldwide participation in God’s transforming mission, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ

   Regional agency could be a channel for perspectives to be shared. Still need for central priority-setting and policy-forming body.

3 To develop and maintain mutually enriching relationships with the Church of Scotland’s partner churches overseas through consultation in the two-way sharing of human and material resources

   Regional agency could energize and resource interaction with partner churches overseas. Need for central body to employ staff and coordinate consultation and action.

4 To equip and encourage Church of Scotland members at local, Presbytery and national levels to become engaged in the life of the world church

   Regional agency could do much to foster twinning initiatives and support for projects. Need for central coordination and for interaction at General Assembly level.

5 To help the people of Scotland to appreciate the worldwide nature of the Christian faith

   Channels of connection between church and community developed at regional level could be invaluable in this. Major campaigns likely to require national level involvement.
6 To work with partner churches on new initiatives in evangelism.

Twinning arrangements can have evangelistic impact in Scotland as well as overseas so there is scope for this dynamic to find regional expression. Certain core programmes would need to be managed centrally.

7 To work for justice, peace, and reconciliation in situations of conflict or threat.

Regional agency could play a key role in consciousness-raising. Major programmes, particularly those in Israel and Palestine, require central management.

8 To resource partner churches, to set people free from the oppression of poverty.

Regional agency could play an important role in mobilizing church members to be engaged with this dimension of Christian witness. Central management would be needed for making appointments and grants.

**Church & Society Council**

1 Be engaged with and listened to in the Public Square and engage with political and civic society, business and the 3rd sector through a communication strategy using traditional and new media

These can in theory be done at a presbytery level. The up side would be great involvement of a wider range of people in "being the churches voice. The down side would be limitations in capacity and that voice being even more diffuse than it already is

2 Support and empower the church locally and nationally to engage with the social, political and ethical issues of Christian living in the 21st century, through the provision of accessible resources for discussion and reflection.

All of this resourcing could be done at Presbytery level. The danger would be a great deal of wheel reinventing but a good communications network might overcome this

3 Support the development of policy to take to the General Assembly rooted in theological reflection, as a contribution to the life of the church in the world, locally and nationally.

Presbytery could do reports on wider issues but would struggle to do the kind of research to achieve the levels of work produced by the projects

4 Develop capacity to support the church’s engagement with educational issues.

Responses could be done at presbytery level as could training but again capacity would be an issue as would relationships with accrediting bodies (too many people wanting same accreditation for same thing). Presbyteries could meet with Politicians etc but there may be a resistance to having many meetings with the same organization

5 Work ecumenically and with other partners in achieving our aim of changes in society that reflect the values of the Kingdom.

Its hard to see how Presbyteries could all be represented as Ecumenical bodies

6 Support and manage the work of projects as catalysts for change locally and nationally.

Its unlikely that any presbytery could create the capacity and resource to create the projects