
BWLETIN POLISI CYTÛN

CYTÛN POLICY BULLETIN

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LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED

Addressing Assembly Members in the Senedd, the First Minister Carwyn Jones set out the legislative priorities of his new government.

Among the areas the Bills will address are:

- Making local authorities to further collaborate when delivering services.
- A new Food Hygiene Rating Scheme to help improve food safety and provide consumers with easily understandable information.
- Organ Donation Bill to create an opt-out system of organ donation.
- The Schools and Standards Bill to tackle under performing schools.
- Reforming social services to provide for the first time a coherent Welsh legal framework to meet changing social expectations and demography.
- Action to address homelessness and empty dwellings, as well as improving standards and tenants' rights in the private rented sector.
- Introduce a duty on Local Authorities to provide and maintain cycle paths in key areas.
- Consolidate existing legislation to make the planning system more transparent and accessible.

EDUCATION, LEARNING AND ENTERPRISE

Faith in Education - joint report highlights contribution of church schools

The role church schools play in helping to raise standards of education in Wales was discussed at a recent seminar led by the Welsh Education Minister Leighton Andrews and two Archbishops.

Mr Andrews gave the keynote address at the Faith in Education seminar on 23rd June as part of an initiative between the Welsh Government, the Church in Wales and the Roman Catholic Church.

The event launched a joint document called Faith in Education which sets out the positive contribution of church schools in the publicly funded school system and recognises the role faith communities play in schools across the country.

The event was introduced by the Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan, and Archbishop George Stack in one of his first public duties as Archbishop of Cardiff.

Free Churches' role in education pressed at government level

The free churches of Wales are to meet with Ministers and officials of the Welsh Assembly Government to highlight the important role the free denominations play in the school system in Wales.

Mr Rheinallt Thomas, who advises the Free Church Council of Wales on education matters has circulated the highly-regarded report, "A Free Church Voice in Education" which will be used as the basis of discussion.

New Framework to Raise Literacy and Numeracy Standards in Welsh Schools

The Welsh Education Minister, Leighton Andrews AM announced that a new statutory National Literacy and Numeracy Framework for all learners aged 5 to 14 is to be introduced in schools across Wales.

The Framework will provide schools with annual expected outcomes in literacy and numeracy for learners aged 5 to 14. This will help inform teachers of all subjects on how they need to apply literacy and numeracy across the curriculum in order to raise levels of attainment.

Planned reading and numeracy tests, the government says, will play an important role in the Framework and will provide teachers with clear indicators of skill development and progress. In the long-term the Framework will provide teachers with the information they need to plan their teaching programmes and alert them to where additional support is needed to help those that are falling behind.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Framework will be introduced in schools in September 2012 and rolled out across the whole of Wales by 2013.

Welsh Government announces changes to funding for part-time students

Part-time students, ordinarily resident in Wales, will be entitled to the same fee support as those who choose to study full time, Education Minister Leighton Andrews has announced.

Subject to the Education Bill, the Minister proposes to set the maximum amount for part-time tuition fees at £7,000 pro rata rather than £9,000 to encourage more learners to enter higher education on a part-time basis. Welsh-domiciled part-time students will be entitled to a non-means-tested loan and grant to meet the up-front cost of their tuition fees. In line with the support announced for full-time students, a loan will be available to cover a proportion of the fee and a grant from the Welsh Government will be available to cover the remaining cost.

For example – under the proposals Higher Education Institutions could charge a maximum of £7,000 pro rata for a part-time course. Based on a student studying at 50% intensity

(intensity ranges from 25%-75%) the student would pay £3,500. The student would be eligible for a student loan of £1,732.50 and the Welsh Government would pay the remaining £1,767.50. The student loan does not have to be repaid until the student is earning, and the fee grant from the Government is non-repayable.

There are currently around 27,000 undergraduates studying on a part-time basis in Wales making up a significant proportion of the student population. The fundamental importance of part-time higher education provision both to the economic buoyancy of Wales and social inclusion was recognised in *For our Future*, our strategy for higher education, published in 2009.

Reform of the taxation of non-domiciled individuals

This consultation document, published on the [HM Treasury website](#), seeks views on the detailed policy design of the changes announced at Budget 2011 to the taxation of non-domiciled individuals. The Government welcomes views from individuals, business advisors, businesses and representative bodies who are affected by, or have an interest in, the rules on non-domicile taxation.

EQUALITIES

Consultation period ends on plans to allow Civil Partnerships within religious premises

The formal period has now passed for comments to the UK Government's consultation on enabling civil partnerships to be registered on the religious premises of those faith groups who wished to host them.

The provision removes the legal prohibition on civil partnerships being registered on religious premises, enables regulations to be made setting out the arrangements for these premises to be approved by the local authority and clarifies that there is no obligation on faith groups to have civil partnership registrations on their premises.

Civil partnerships on religious premises: a consultation sets out detailed proposals for this voluntary measure which enhances the freedom of both faith groups and same-sex couples. The proposals are designed to enable faith groups to opt in, respect the different decision-making structures of different faith groups, minimise the risk of successful legal challenges and be straightforward for local authorities to operate. The law will make clear that faith groups are not obliged to host civil partnerships. It would also be unlawful for a civil partnership to be registered on a religious premises that had not been approved for the purpose by the local authority. That approval will be given only with the approval of the faith group concerned.

EHRC seeking comments on its new Strategic Plan 2012/2015

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission has launched the first of three phases of consultation to develop its next strategic plan.

The plan will cover its plans and priorities from April 2012 to March 2015 and is due to be laid before Parliament in April 2012.

COMMUNITIES AND CULTURE

Concerns continue to be expressed over the future of S4C

A range of organisations and individuals have continued to lobby the UK government over the future of S4C.

The First Minister, Carwyn Jones expressed his concerns over the future of public broadcasting in Wales in a meeting with Lord Patten, Chair of the BBC Trust.

The Welsh Government has already raised the issues of the future of BBC Wales and changes to S4C with the UK Government. The First Minister said: "While broadcasting is not devolved, we have major concerns over the future of both BBC Wales and S4C. A strong, well funded public broadcasting sector for Wales is vital for our economy, civil society and cultural life. The changes being proposed have widespread implications. There are major implications arising from changes in the funding arrangements of S4C and possible reductions to the BBC's budget.

Welsh churches have also voiced their concerns. The Annibynwyr, Presbyterian Church of Wales and others have written to the UK government, and Archbishop of Wales, Barry Morgan also received prominent media coverage for his representations.

Welsh Language Commissioner Appointment Process Underway

The process has begun to appoint a Welsh Language Commissioner is to get underway following the passing of the necessary regulations in the National Assembly.

The regulations, which are now in force, make provision about the establishment of the selection panel which will be responsible for interviewing candidates and making recommendations to the First Minister in relation to the appointment. This latest announcement is an important step on the road to implementing the new system of language standards provided for under the Welsh Language Measure which was introduced by the last Assembly Government.

The Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews, said that the aim was to advertise the post in July and announce the successful candidate in the autumn

The Welsh Language Commissioner will be responsible for developing a new regulatory system, based on standards, to ensure the delivery of Welsh language services to the public. He or she will also advise the Welsh Government and others on language policy and will be able to conduct inquiries into a wide range of matters relating to the Welsh language.

Welsh Population breaks 3 million barrier

Attributed to births, deaths and migration, mid-year estimates of population for Wales in 2010 show the population as 3,006,400.

The statistics show there are now more people 65 or over than children under 16 for the first time ever.

The number of people in the upper age bracket has risen to 558,100 which makes up 18.6% of the population, while the number of children fell to 548,000 (18.2% of the population).

The population has been increasing by about 10,700 a year since 2001.

There are now 76,500 people in Wales over the age of 85 (2.5%), and due to differences in life expectancy between the sexes, women outnumber men by 2 to 1 in this age group.

The area of the country where the population has increased most since 2001 is Cardiff (up 10 per cent) followed by the Vale of Glamorgan (up 4.8 per cent), whilst the biggest population decreases have been in Blaenau Gwent (2.3 per cent decrease) and Merthyr Tydfil (0.9 per cent decrease).

In 1841, the population of Wales stood at 1.05 million. The population of Wales increased dramatically between 1841 and 1911, more than doubling to 2.42 million, as Wales played an important part in the industrial revolution.

The population growth in the 20th Century was more modest increasing by around 10 per cent between 1911 and 1961 to stand at 2.64 million. There was a further 10 per cent increase between 1961 and 2001 to 2.91 million in 2001.

[National partnership forum for older people in Wales](#)

This consultation seeks views on the membership composition of the Forum and offers a number of options for respondents to consider.

The National Partnership Forum for Older People in Wales (NPF) was established in 2005 as part of the Strategy for Older People. The Forum is an independent advisory body to Ministers.

An independent review of the structure membership of the NPF was commissioned. The review suggested that current structure is no longer fit for purpose, and should be shaped to allow a greater range of expertise and diversity to be represented on the NPF. The consultation document presents a number of options for its future structure and any other observations and comments that respondents may have.

[Independent review of health and safety legislation – call for evidence](#)

The Government has established an Independent Review of Health and Safety legislation. The review will consider the opportunities for reducing the burden of health and safety legislation on UK businesses while maintaining the progress made in improving health and

safety outcomes. This review - under the chairmanship of leading risk management specialist Professor Ragnar Löfstedt - is due to make recommendations to Ministers by the end of October 2011.

The Professor and advisory panel are asking all interested parties to provide evidence that will help inform the scope for reducing the burden of health and safety regulation on UK businesses whilst maintaining health and safety outcomes.

Arts Council for Wales launches [Draft Capital Strategy](#)

This [draft Capital Strategy](#) identifies a number of options for future investment. Some of these have emerged through the re-examination of funding policy that we completed last year – our [Investment Review](#). Others flow from the findings of the Artservice Review. We now want to share our proposals more widely.

This consultation paper sets out, and seeks views on, the proposal to publish a draft charter for the current Coroner Service.

This consultation is aimed at coroners, coroners' officers, voluntary organisations who deal with bereavement, local authorities, bereaved people and all those who have an interest in the Coroner Service.

Responses to the consultation can be submitted using either the online or Word versions of the questionnaire.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Wales' Recycling Increase

Wales' recycling rate hit 44 per cent in 2010-2011, according to data released by the Welsh Government in June.

The preliminary report shows that 43.6 per cent of municipal waste was recycled or composted, a 4.4 percentage point increase on 2009-2010's rate of 39.3 per cent. This is a greater increase than that experienced between 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, when the rate increased by 3.4 percentage points. The figures put Wales firmly on track to reach its 2012-2013 statutory target of 52 per cent.

Recycling in Wales has increased significantly in recent years, with the 2010-2011 recycling rate more than six times that of 2000-2001 (7 per cent). A number of 'waste milestones' have been reached, which mean that Wales is:

- The only country in the UK to introduce statutory recycling targets for municipal waste.
- The only country in the UK in which all local authorities operate a separate food or food and green waste collection.

- The first country in the UK to introduce the Landfill Allowances Scheme.
- The first country in the UK to introduce compulsory charges for single-use carrier bags, in October 2011.

The figures can be found [here](#).

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

National Workforce Development Plan for Wales

The Professional and Organisational Development Team have now launched the consultation on the National Workforce Development Plan for Public Health in Wales. This document was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and aims to set out a training plan for public health in Wales a required action from Our Healthy Future.

The PODT led the work supported by the National Workforce Development Group for Public Health in Wales. The aim was to develop a training plan in Wales considering all levels, sectors, partners and stakeholders etc. A number of individuals and teams across the public health system were interviewed and contributed to the information gathering stage which helped to shape the aims and objectives of the plan.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Government Minister Challenges Local Authorities

Local Government Minister Carl Sargeant recently addressed the WLGA conference in Swansea. He said he expected to see a much more strategic approach to collaboration between authorities with joint appointments being at the forefront of this approach.

The Minister said that the senior staffing structure of Wales's 22 local authorities was unsustainable and outdated. He also expressed frustration at the reluctance of local authorities in making joint appointments for senior posts, such as chief executives, and called on local government to stop talking and start delivering on this issue.

He also challenged Local Authorities to look more closely at the effectiveness of their partnership working:

- "While partnership is essential, we must avoid a culture of meetings and strategy production," he said. "For my part, I will be reviewing partnership activity which the Welsh Government drives in order to simplify and reform the structures."

The Minister however ruled out full-scale reorganisation of local government, saying that it would take much longer, cost much more and disrupt service delivery more seriously. Instead, he would move to implement the Simpson Review of local service delivery as soon as possible.

CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

Bishops to remain in reformed House of Lords, but fewer in number

The House of Lords Reform draft Bill and White Paper set out options for a wholly or mainly elected House of Lords. Key proposals include:

- a reformed House with 300 members, each eligible for a single term of three Parliaments
- elections using the single transferable vote (STV), electing a third of members each time with elections normally taking place at the same time as General Elections
- multi-member electoral districts, to be drawn up independently based on national and county boundaries
- a continuation of the presence of Bishops of the Church of England in the House of Lords, reducing their number from 26 to 12
- a transition to the new membership staggered over the course of three electoral cycles.

The first elections would take place in 2015.

Liberal Democrat AMs suspended following election

The National Assembly has voted to restore suspended AM Aled Roberts to his seat as Regional Assembly Member for North Wales following an inquiry into his disqualification from office. Colleague, John Dixon (South Wales Central) remains disqualified and his seat will now be taken up by the Liberal Democrats' second List candidate, Eluned Parrott.

CHURCH AFFAIRS

CWM General Secretary granted UK Visa after long delay

The General Secretary of the Council for World Mission (CWM), Revd Dr Collin Cowan has been granted a visa permitting him to live and work in the UK.

The move means Dr Cowan, who took up his post as general secretary in January, can move with his family from Jamaica to London and continue his role alongside secretariat staff at CWM's Ipalo House office.

Welsh Churches took part in a considerable, world-wide lobbying campaign of the UK Government to allow the Visa to be granted following delays by the UK Border Agency.

Dr Cowan said: "We are most grateful for the support of our ecumenical partners and initiatives of our UK-based churches, which have helped considerably to bring us to this place."

He added: "This has been a long process, but it is now over and my family and I can get settled in the UK in short order."

GERAINT HOPKINS

POLICY OFFICER,

CYTŪN – CHURCHES TOGETHER IN WALES