
CYTÛN POLICY BULLETIN

JANUARY 2015



CYTÛN'S NEW POLICY OFFICER

Cytûn has appointed the Reverend Gethin Rhys as Policy Officer, in succession to Geraint Hopkins, who has left Cytûn after 7 years to concentrate on his work as a member of the Cabinet of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council.

Gethin was born and brought up in Rhiwbina, Cardiff, and educated at Ysgol Gyfun Rhydfelen and the Universities of Oxford and Birmingham. He is a minister of the United Reformed Church. He has served pastorates in Brecon (jointly with the Welsh Independents), Trefforest, Porth and Penrhys (in Llanfair Uniting Church). He and his wife, Dr Fiona Liddell, have also served as Joint Wardens of Coleg Trefeca (Presbyterian Church of Wales) and in 2003-5 he was General Secretary of the Covenanted Churches in Wales and Assistant General Secretary of Cytûn. He started his work as Policy Officer in January 2015 and is pleased to be able to combine in this post his background in both Politics and Theology. He has a lifelong interest in aspects of the interconnections between Biblical theology and public affairs, and he wrote the chapter on Wales in *Belonging to Britain: Christian Perspectives on a Plural Society* (Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, 1991).

NEW HERITAGE BILL ON ITS WAY

Ken Skates, the Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport, will be announcing a new Heritage Bill to the Assembly on Tuesday 20th January, to begin the legislative process in April. The Bill will:

- give the Welsh Government powers to prevent damage to scheduled monuments
- enable local authorities to take immediate action if a listed building is under threat from unauthorised work.
- establish an independent panel to advise on historic environment policy and strategy at a national level in Wales.
- Owners of historic assets would be allowed to negotiate partnership agreements with consenting authorities for a period of years. This will enable maintenance and repair programmes to proceed without repeated consent applications

Churches in Wales will wish to follow the progress of this Bill closely as so many of Wales's listed buildings are the responsibility of faith communities. Cytûn will liaise closely with member Churches as the Bill is published and progresses through the Assembly.

You can read more about the proposal here: <http://cadw.wales.gov.uk/about/news/heritage-bill/?lang=en>

AGEING WELL IN WALES

Ageing Well in Wales is a national strategy bringing individuals and communities together with the public, private and voluntary sector to develop and promote innovative and practical ways of making Wales a good place to grow older

The programme was launched in October 2014, and is chaired by Sarah Rochira,

Older People's Commissioner for Wales. The aims over the next five years are:

- To make Wales a nation of Age-friendly Communities
- To make Wales a dementia-supportive nation by developing and enabling dementia-supportive communities
- Supporting older people to reduce their risk of falling, and thus reduce the number of falls suffered by older people in Wales
- Improving the health and welfare of older people in Wales by reducing the negative effects of loneliness and isolation
- Ensure that older people in Wales have the best possible experiences through employment and lifelong learning

You can find out more about the Ageing Well in Wales programme 2014-2019 by visiting www.ageingwellinwales.com

If you are, in your work or your community, engaged in activities which contribute to the aims of Ageing Well in Wales, or if you plan to do so, they would love to hear from you. You can e-mail ageingwell@olderpeoplewales.com or phone the Ageing Well in Wales team on 08442 640 670.

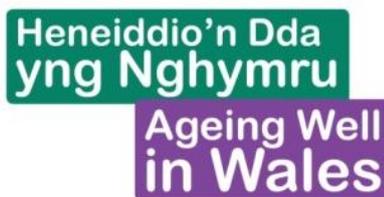
VISION 2020

What will Britain look like in 2020? What is our view on the basis of our faith? That is the question at the heart of a new resource commissioned by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) to help churches prepare for the Westminster General Election on May 7th. The resource, prepared jointly with a number of Christian organisations, is designed as a discussion starter within churches and with the candidates who will shortly be knocking on our doors.

The Joint Public Issues Team shared by three denominations (the Methodist Church, Baptist Union of Great Britain and the United Reformed Church) will also be producing impartial briefing papers entitled *Faith in Politics 2015*. These will give brief background information about each policy area and offer suggested questions. Each section will also explain whether the policy area concerned is devolved to Wales or not, so that you can judge whether your new MP will be able directly to influence what happens in that area in Wales.

All these resources will be available on a special CTBI election website as they are published: <http://www.churcheselection.org.uk>

You can read the election manifestos of many other movements and organisations across Britain at: <http://centrallobby.politicshome.com/members/member-page/sites/politicshome-manifesto-hub/pages/welcome-449222955f/>



Rhaglen bartneriaeth ar gyfer gweithredu ar y cyd ar draws Cymru ac yn Ewrop
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A partnership programme for collaborative action across Wales and in Europe



INFO ABOUT THE ASSEMBLY AND GOVERNMENT OF WALES

You can find full details of the work programme of the National Assembly and the Government, and how to respond to it, on the web. These are the key pages:

On the website www.assembly.wales you can find the [timetable of Assembly and committee debates](#) and details of progress of [legislation](#) laid before the Assembly.

Amongst the bills being discussed at the moment are:

- [Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Bill](#), which aims to reduce the prevalence of such violence
- [The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Bill](#) which would impose a duty on public authorities to consider future generations, and not only the present, as they make decisions, with a Commissioner who would monitor this. Many environmental organisations are seeking to strengthen this measure – for example you can read the response of WWF in Wales here [here](http://wales.wwf.org.uk). (wales.wwf.org.uk)

Bills relating to Planning and Qualifications are also being considered at the moment.

The Wales Council for Voluntary Action (www.wcva.org.uk) produces a weekly bulletin listing all the [consultations](#) currently in progress which affect Wales.

Amongst those to which you can respond at the moment are:

- Should the minimum age for purchase of [e-cigarettes](#) be increased to 18?
- The [Talk to me 2](#) scheme to seek to reduce the number of young people committing suicide
- The [Draft National Transport Plan](#)
- The [NHS Healthcare travel costs scheme](#), which helps people afford to travel to hospital appointments etc.
- The Welsh Language Commissioner is consulting regarding a second round of investigations of the standard of [Welsh language services provision](#) to the public
- [Community based approaches to tackling poverty](#) – does your church have experience to offer?
- Detailed regulations about how statutory services will [safeguard children and vulnerable adults](#) who are at risk

Follow the weblink in each case to find information about how to make your comments, as an individual or on behalf of your church.

WILL YOUNG PEOPLE IN WALES BE ABLE TO VOTE?

National Voter Registration Day is being held on 5th February 2015 as part of a Week of Action (2-8 February) to inspire young people especially to register to vote. The aim is to add 250,000 people to the electoral register that day. Are the young people in your church registered to vote? If not, could you encourage them to make sure they don't lose their voice?

Further details can be found at www.bitetheballot.co.uk

HOUSING TENANTS IN WALES IN DIFFICULTIES

Many policy areas are not devolved to Wales. The Auditor General for Wales has recently published a report saying that recent changes to the housing benefit system have had a greater effect in Wales than in the rest of Britain, and that local councils and social housing providers should work more closely together to mitigate the effects. You can read the report in full on www.wao.gov.uk

AND WHAT ABOUT EUROPE?

We received in the Cytûn office recently a letter from the Revd Keith Clements, an expert on the relationship of the churches with Europe, asking whether the churches of Wales are taking an interest from a Christian perspective in the public debate which is developing about our future in the European Union and the possibility of a referendum on the subject in 2017.

Keith reminds us of how the churches engaged with this matter at the end of the Second World War in 1945. The British Council of Churches produced discussion material such as *Christians and the Common Market* in preparation for Britain's joining the European Community (now the European Union) in 1973, and the referendum which confirmed that in 1975.

The belief at that time was that this should be considered from an ethical perspective, part of our Christian responsibility towards our neighbours. The Conference of European Churches (CEC) continues to promote a Christian response to issues of justice and peace across the continent.

Do the churches of Wales have a perspective on these matters as they rise once again to the top of the political agenda? Cytûn's Policy Officer would love to hear your response, and about any steps your church is taking to promote the discussion.

WHAT KIND OF BULLETIN DO YOU WANT?

The aim of this Policy Bulletin is to add value to signpost and add value to all that is already available on the web at sites such as those referred to on page 3. I would therefore like to hear from you **what kind of Policy Bulletin** would be of use to you in the future. What topics and areas should be the primary focus? How much detail would you like about Welsh legislation? And about the work of the Welsh Government? Are constitutional matters of importance to your Church? What about our inter-faith work and partnership with others in the wider 'Third Sector' (charities and other not-for-profit organisations)? I will be glad to hear all suggestions – while having to be realistic that the Churches of Wales are at the moment funding only a single Cytûn officer to work in this area for three days per week, so the resources are strictly limited.

I would also like to ask, therefore, **can we help each other?** I would like to compile a list of those within our churches – both officers and ordinary members – who are experts in their field, and who would be ready to consider documents in specific areas when they arrive and comment on them from a Christian perspective. I would welcome volunteers and nominations!

In the same way, I would like to know **who in your Church should be receiving this Bulletin**. It is freely available, of course, on www.cytun.org.uk but we are happy to e-mail it direct as long as we know who would like it. We will also delete you from our e-mail list if you no longer wish to receive it – just let me know.

Here are my contact details for this and any other matter:

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Hapus i gyfathrebu yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg.

Happy to communicate in Welsh and English

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