
CYTŪN POLICY BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 2015



ELECTION 2015 – VISION 2020

Our society is facing some fundamental challenges – rising levels of poverty and inequality, an increasing cost of living, the prospect of climate crisis. This isn't new, but whoever forms the next government will have a tough job and key decisions ahead. These will ultimately shape the type of society that we become.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) has published **2020 Vision**, which is drawn from a common desire to see a society that works for all – in which each of us is valued and which respects the Earth. In short - a society for the common good. The 2020 Vision focusses on five key areas – wealth and inequality, home, children and young people, livelihoods, and the environment and climate. Whilst these are not the only fundamental issues of our time, they do represent areas where we feel that the churches have something particular to contribute right now.

You can read the vision [here](#), and the website also allows downloads of a Welsh language version and of summaries in both languages.

Christian Aid has outlined its **Contract with the World's Poor**:

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/manifesto-leaflet-September-2014.pdf> and they also have a campaign to support an [Anti-tax avoidance Bill](#).

All General Election resources from the churches can be found on a dedicated website:

www.churcheselection.org.uk This includes detailed guidance on arranging hustings with candidates in your constituency. You can also contact Cytûn for further information.

Local churches thinking of campaigning around election issues would do well to read the briefing note from the Methodist Church regarding the Lobbying Act, available online [here](#).

You can read the manifestos of many movements and organisations across the UK at:

<http://centrallobby.politicshome.com>



TIME TO PLAN AHEAD: CHANGES TO MARRIAGE NOTICE LAWS

From 2 March 2015 the notice period for marriage and civil partnership will be extended from 15 days to **28 days** for all couples in England and Wales marrying following civil preliminaries or forming a civil partnership. *This includes marriages in Nonconformist churches with an 'Authorised Person'*. Where one of the couple who wish to marry in the Church of England or the Church in Wales is a non-EEA national that person will be required to complete civil preliminaries and give notice at a register office. This is a new procedure in those circumstances.

All proposed marriages and CPs involving a non-EEA national who has limited or no immigration status in the UK, or who is not exempt from the scheme, will be referred to the Home Office, which will be able to extend the notice period to **70 days** in order to investigate. *Those who give notice of marriage or civil partnership before 2 March 2015 will not be affected by the changes.* Transitional arrangements will also apply for couples who by that date have been granted, or applied for, a common licence to marry in the Church in England or Church in Wales.



THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) BILL

This pioneering Bill offers an amazing opportunity to pass a new law to ensure that the public sector in Wales does everything in its power to ensure social justice and protect the environment for the well-being of people and nature in Wales and beyond – not only for this generation, but – as the title suggests – for future generations also. An independent statutory Commissioner for Sustainable Futures would oversee the adherence of public bodies to these principles. A ‘National Conversation’ has been taking place under the banner [The Wales we Want](#). The resulting [Future Generations Report](#) will be launched at the SWALEC Stadium, Cardiff, on 2nd March and in Venue Cymru, Llandudno on 6th March. Tickets can be booked through [Eventbrite](#).

A coalition of organisations, the Sustainable Development Alliance – which includes Christian Aid, CAFOD, Tearfund, Fairtrade Wales, and others – has been arguing that the Bill has the potential to ensure that Wales is seriously committed to tackling climate change, prioritises ethical spending and Fair Trade and is committed to tackling global poverty. But in order to ensure this, they argue that the Bill needs to be strengthened and be more specific in its goals. Some organisations in the coalition have also called for the inclusion of cultural aims in the Bill, especially regarding the Welsh language. You can read more at: www.shapingfuturewales.org

In a long and detailed session on 5th February, the Environment and Sustainability Committee of the Assembly discussed over 200 proposed amendments to the Bill. There was considerable disagreement on the aims of the Bill, and concerns from the opposition parties that the Bill gives too much power to government ministers. The committee has 5 government and 5 opposition members. The overall result of the discussion, therefore, was that most of the government’s attempts to strengthen the Bill, and the opposition’s to strengthen it further, failed to achieve a majority. As a result, it is the aims outlined in the original Bill – which now satisfy nobody – that will move forward to Stage 3 of the legislative process. There will need to be extensive further discussions across the parties to come to agreement on these vitally important matters.

FRACKING FOR ‘UNCONVENTIONAL GAS’

Fracking and how to control it has become a talking point in many communities. At the moment, Westminster decides on the issuing of fracking licences in Wales, but it is possible that will change when Stephen Crabb, the Secretary of State for Wales, announces the next stage of devolution proposals on St David’s Day. In the meantime, the Assembly voted on 4th February in favour of a [moratorium on fracking in Wales](#).

Churches Together in Lancashire have published factual and theological resources about fracking. This is not yet available on the web, but copies can be obtained from the Cytûn office.

St Mary’s Centre have prepared a [school assembly](#) on the subject including many useful links.

WALES TO REMEMBER FIRST WORLD WAR KEY EVENTS IN 2015

Key moments in Wales’ history during the First World War, including the Gallipoli Campaign, will play an important part in the events planned this year to mark the conflict’s centenary, First Minister Carwyn Jones has said, during a visit to the Christmas Truce exhibition at Bodelwyddan Castle on 6th February. You can read more about the plans [here](#).

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE – WALES AND THE WORLD

The National Assembly is currently considering the [Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Bill](#) formerly known as the Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill (the title was changed in committee on 22nd January).

The provisions of the Bill are intended to ensure a focus across the public sector on the prevention of these issues, the protection of victims and the support for those affected by such issues. The Bill places duties on the Welsh Ministers, Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to prepare and publish strategies aimed at ending domestic abuse, gender-based violence and sexual violence. The Bill also empowers the Welsh Ministers to issue guidance to relevant authorities on how they should exercise their functions with a view to contributing to ending domestic abuse, gender-based violence and sexual violence. The Bill contains provision for the appointment of a Ministerial Adviser. The Bill will next be discussed in a plenary session of the Assembly on 3rd March 2015.

On **Wednesday 11th February at 12-1pm GMT**, members of the *We Will Speak Out* coalition and global faith leaders will be online for one hour to discuss how to mobilise churches in ending sexual and gender-based violence. You can register for the webinar at <http://view6.workcast.net/register?pak=4190568644793728> – you will receive an email with log in details, just click the link on 11th February to join the discussion live!

Presenters include Thérèse Mema Mapenzi, from CAFOD in Democratic Republic of Congo, and Mara Luz, from Christian Aid in Brazil.

We are inviting questions and discussion on issues such as breaking the silence on sexual and gender-based violence, tackling impunity and bringing justice, supporting survivors, and engaging men and boys on positive masculinities. The Anglican Alliance's Latin America and Caribbean Facilitator, Paulo Ueti, will give a theological reflection on gender justice. For more information see <http://anglicanalliance.org/news/19968>.

NEW HERITAGE BILL IS COMING – BUT NOT QUITE YET!

In a statement on 20th January, Ken Skates, the Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport, announced that the new Heritage Bill will be published before the summer recess, rather than in April as stated in the January Bulletin. Along with the Bill there will be published a complete new suite of



guidance for all those who have charge of listed buildings and historic monuments. You can read more on the [CADW website](#).

Very many of Wales's heritage assets are in the hands of religious bodies. Once the exact date of the publication of the Bill is known, Cytûn will call a meeting of denominational Property Officers to discuss it and agree on appropriate responses. If you would like to be part of this meeting, please contact Gethin (see page 4 for contact details).

FINDING OUT ABOUT WELSH ASSEMBLY AND GOVERNMENT

You can read our guide about how to get hold of information about the activities of the Assembly and the Government of Wales in the [January 2015 Policy Bulletin](#) on Cytûn's website.

The March 2015 Policy Bulletin will be published on 11th March.

DEVOLUTION, DEMOCRACY AND DELIVERY: REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Welsh Government has published a White Paper on the future of local government in Wales. This is not about revising council boundaries – more will be announced about that in the summer – but about discussing the principles of local government for the future. Churches and their members deal daily with their local councils, so this is an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Among the changes proposed in the White Paper are:

- Council elections every five years, not four as at present
- Maximum five terms - 25 years - for councillors
- Maximum two terms - 10 years - for council leaders and cabinet members
- Pay councillors in line with those on similar sized councils elsewhere in the UK
- Public sector employers to give staff unpaid leave to carry out duties as councillors, and other employers encouraged to do the same
- Council leaders and chief executives given a duty to promote and respect diversity
- Youth councils to be set up by each authority

Public consultation on the white paper - [Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People](#) - is open until 28 April.

The [Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee](#) is also conducting an enquiry into the general principles of the Local Government (Wales) Bill, which closes on 13th March.

IMPROVING THE BULLETIN AND HELPING ONE ANOTHER

Thank you for the positive response to January's Bulletin. But I am certain it could be better still if we could draw more on one another's gifts and expertise.

I would like to ask again, 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:



Parch./Revd Gethin Rhys - Swyddog Polisi/Policy Officer
Cytûn - Eglwysi Ynghyd yng Nghymru/Churches Together in Wales
58 Richmond Road, Caerdydd/Cardiff, CF24 3AT
Tel: 029 2046 4378 Mudol/mobile: 07889 858062

Hapus i gyfathrebu yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg.

Happy to communicate in Welsh and English

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