
CYTŪN POLICY BULLETIN

MARCH 2015



THE WALES WE WANT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



Cytûn was represented as the pilot [Future Generations Report](#) was launched at the SWALEC Stadium, Cardiff, on 2nd March. The actor Michael Sheen, UNICEF ambassador in the UK, gave an inspiring address. The Natural Resources minister, Carl Sargeant, referred to the co-operative work of Swansea Street Pastors with other volunteers and statutory agencies as an example of the kind of joined-up thinking that is promoted by this process and the resulting legislation.

The [Well-being of Future Generations Bill](#) returns to the Assembly on Tuesday 10th March, and if passed it will ensure that the public sector plans ahead in the light of seven well-being goals for future generations:

- **A prosperous Wales.** An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.
- **A resilient Wales.** A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).
- **A healthier Wales.** A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
- **A more equal Wales.** A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).
- **A Wales of cohesive communities.** Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.** A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.
- **A globally responsible Wales.** A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.

The specific references to climate change in the first two goals, and the brand new final goal, are amendments proposed by the government in the light of the work of a coalition of organisations, the Sustainable Development Alliance – which includes Christian Aid, CAFOD, Tearfund, Fairtrade Wales, and others. You can read more at: www.shapingfuturewales.org

Following the difficult committee session in February, a number of the amendments now tabled are proposed by the government and one or more opposition parties, suggesting that the next debate may be able to reach a successful conclusion.

SUCCESSFUL FUTURES: THE DONALDSON REPORT

Professor Graham Donaldson's report on the future of the school curriculum in Wales has been published. It is a far-reaching report, based partly on the responses from some 700 people in Wales, half of these children and young people. An analysis of these responses can be read [here](#).

Prof. Donaldson suggests that the purposes of the curriculum in Wales should be that children and young people develop as:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

To achieve this, he suggests that children from 3 to 16 years old should be taught by means not of traditional 'subjects' but through six 'Areas of Learning and Experience':

- Expressive arts
- Health and well-being
- Humanities
- Languages, literacy and communication
- Mathematics and numeracy
- Science and technology

Within the Humanities area, Religious Education would remain compulsory until 16 years of age (p. 61), and there is no recommendation to alter the role of county Standing Advisory Committees on Religious Education (SACREs) nor the right of parents to withdraw their children from RE lessons. There is no explanation of how these arrangements would work in the new system.

Donaldson recommends the "strengthening" of the place of the Welsh language within the curriculum, beginning teaching it as a second language at an earlier stage, so that a third language could be added earlier than at present. The emphasis would be on oral skills and everyday communication in order to promote the relevance of the Welsh language to pupils. In responding, Huw Lewis, the Education Minister, said in the Assembly on 4th March that the current system of teaching Welsh as a second language was "broken".

Donaldson recommends that learning by children and young people should be developed across the curriculum through three Cross-curriculum Responsibilities, for which all teachers would bear responsibility: literacy; numeracy; and digital competence.

The new national curriculum should be organised as a continuum of learning from 3 to 16 without phases and key stages. Progression should be described in relation to a continuum of learning in each Area of Learning and Experience from when a child enters education to the end of statutory schooling. Progression should be signalled through Progression Steps at five points in the learning continuum, relating broadly to expectations at ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16.

A curriculum revised in this way would be more flexible in terms of teaching and assessment techniques, and in terms of school timetabling. It will offer greater professional freedom to teachers within a framework of continued accountability. It should be relatively easy to adapt the new curriculum for children with Additional Learning Needs.

At the same time, but independently of Donaldson, the Assembly's Children, Young People and Education Committee has published its [Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income Households](#). Inevitably, the recommendations of this report relate to potential improvements within the existing curriculum. While Donaldson warmly endorses the use of educational trips to broaden pupils' experiences, the Committee draws attention to difficulty in understanding the educational purpose of some such arrangements, and at the difficulty some parents have in paying the (supposedly voluntary) contributions associated with them.

POWERS FOR A PURPOSE: DEVOLUTION COMMAND PAPER

A preliminary analysis by Gethin Rhys

This Command (White) Paper was published by the Westminster Government as a result of the ‘St David’s Day Process’, which included consultation with the Government of Wales, the Presiding Officer of the Assembly and the political parties which represent Wales in Westminster (but not the parties in the Assembly). The report was compiled in rather a hurry, between the Scottish referendum and St David’s Day, and that haste is visible in the number of recommendations for further work, as well as in the errors which punctuate the Welsh translation.

The report aims to set out implementation of those recommendations of the Silk Commission on Devolution in Wales (which reported in 2012 and 2014) about which the Westminster parties were in agreement, and which have not already been implemented. A number of these relate to improved communication between Westminster and the devolved administrations – recommendations seconded in many cases by the Smith Commission in Scotland. There are also a good number of fairly technical recommendations.

The main constitutional change would be to alter the legislative pattern of devolution for Wales to a ‘reserved powers’ model, in which everything would be devolved unless explicitly reserved to Westminster, rather than the reverse. Redrafting the legislation in this way will be immensely complex, and will bring to an end the ‘silent subjects’ not referred to one way or the other in past Wales Acts. The report is clear that one motivation for doing this is to inhibit the Assembly from expanding its powers by taking advantage of this silence, as it did – with the eventual support of the Supreme Court - in the case of the Agricultural Sector Act (paras 2.1.16-2.1.18).

The report recommends extension of devolved powers in some fields, such as licensing the extraction of oil and gas, and consenting to energy generation projects up to 350MW. However, local authorities’ current planning powers relating to ancillary buildings at power stations over 350MW would be removed and centralised in Westminster – although building regulations approval for these same buildings would be devolved to Wales (paras 2.4.2-2.4.11).

There are some areas where the haste in writing the document has led to ambiguity. For example, para 2.11.12 recommends devolving further powers in the field of equalities, while Appendix B – which includes an illustrative list of powers to be reserved to Westminster – suggests that “Equal Opportunities” as a whole will be in Westminster hands. There are still a large number of ‘silent areas’ not referred to one way or another – for example, powers over teachers’ pay are reserved to Westminster, but the statutory minimum wage is not referred to at all. There is much more work to be done in writing the draft legislation which can then be analysed with care.

The report commits to continue to fund Wales through the Barnett formula – which bases the grant to the Assembly from UK funds on levels of expenditure in England on devolved matters – but with a “floor in the level of relative funding supplied to the Welsh Government” (para 4.9). There is no explanation as to how this floor will be determined, nor whether it would be a defined amount, a per head level, or a proportion of central government expenditure.

It may be that the most significant paragraph is 4.12, where it is said – without detail – that the Welsh Government will be enabled to issue bonds to borrow for capital expenditure, in addition to the borrowing powers included in the Wales Act 2014. There is no indication that this would be conditional upon receiving support in a referendum for the devolution of a proportion of Income Tax, and – depending on any Treasury conditions – this could give the next Welsh Government considerable economic flexibility. On this, as on so many other matters, more details are awaited.

TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – BUT NOT CHILDREN

Following a passionate debate, members of the National Assembly on 3rd March voted 36-16 against a move to include a ‘smacking ban’ in the [Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Bill](#). The amendment would have removed the defence of “reasonable punishment” from anyone accused of assaulting a child.

The Archbishop of Wales, the actor Michael Sheen – speaking as UNICEF Amabassador to the UK – and many children’s charities had urged support for the amendment. Most AMs who spoke against the amendment stated that they were in favour of such a change in the law, but that it should be in separate legislation and be preceded by a period of public consultation. A few AMs defended parents’ right to smack their children. Mohammad Asghar AM argued that mothers have a “divine right” to discipline their children, and suggested that the rise of radicalisation in some communities was a consequence of the lack of such discipline. He was heckled by some AMs, and no-one else spoke in support of such a view.

A number of AMs were also fearful that the inclusion of this clause would have led to the whole Bill being referred to the Supreme Court, as it is not clear that the National Assembly has the power to make this legislative change under its current powers. The remaining provisions of the Bill are intended to ensure a focus across the public sector on the prevention of violence against women, 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 ensure that educational institutions – schools and universities – take steps to include appropriate education in their curricula to tackle this problem.

A final debate on the Bill (Phase 4) will be held in a few weeks’ time.

TIME TO RETHINK BENEFIT SANCTIONS

The Church in Wales, Methodist and United Reformed Churches, with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Church of Scotland, have published a report outlining a theological and humanitarian case against the current practice of ‘sanctioning’ benefit claimants for relatively minor failures to arrive at appointments on time or fulfil other conditions of benefits.

The report describes the hardship caused to claimants by sanctions, and includes case-studies from around the UK, including Wales. It links the sanctions regime with the growth in Foodbanks. It also gives Biblical grounds for seeking a change in policy.

Specific statistics for sanctions in Wales are not included in the report as repeated Freedom of Information requests have failed to produce this information. The Church in Wales says it is pursuing this matter.

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.

In addition to the websites listed there, you can access the work of the National Assembly Research Service on <https://assemblyinbrief.wordpress.com/>

The April 2015 Policy Bulletin will be published towards the end of the Assembly term on 26th March.

ELECTION 2015 – SEEKING THE COMMON GOOD

A growing number of church organisations are publishing their ‘manifestos’ and guidance to members for the Westminster election on **Thursday 7th May**. Many draw on the theme of “the common good” to describe the questions they wish to see asked of candidates, and the kind of society they wish to see developed by those elected.

Churches' General Election Resources

In addition to CTBI's own [2020 Vision of the Good Society](#) discussion document, a host of other church resources and briefings are now available on the website at <https://ctbielections.org.uk>. Amongst them are:

- **Faith in Politics** from the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland provides briefings on key issues for the election. The tailored edition for Wales can be found on the JPIT website [here](#). You can also order the pack [Think, Pray, Vote](#) which includes 4 short films on peace, justice, truth and wellbeing, Bible notes and materials for reflection.
- [Catholic Church in England and Wales Bishops' letter](#) in English and Welsh
- [Black Church Political Mobilisation: A Manifesto for Action](#)
- A new [briefing on economic inequality in Britain](#) from Quaker Peace and Social Witness focusses on how changes to public policy could address inequality.
- [Who is my neighbour?](#) the pastoral letter from the Church of England House of Bishops
- [Show up](#): The Show Up campaign aims to encourage positive Christian engagement in the run up to, and beyond, the 2015 General Election. Organised by Christians in Politics, the website includes a range of videos, resources and information on the main political parties and their Christian affiliate organisations, and how Christians can get involved.
- **Resources from** [CARE](#), [Evangelical Alliance](#), [Christian Aid](#), [CAFOD/Caritas](#) and others.

Local Hustings events

Cytûn groups have always been keen to organise hustings events as the election approaches. As the date is already known, now is the time to get organising! The guide to organising a Hustings event is available at: <https://ctbielections.org.uk/how-to-organise-a-hustings>

Churches in Wales have started a Twitter hashtag **#ChurchHustingsWales** so that churches holding hustings can advertise them on Twitter. Please use this hashtag to promote your hustings.

The election is for everyone

When Michelle told other people she was planning to host a candidate coffee morning as part of the [I'm One campaign](#), they told her she'd be wasting her time. Michelle has diligently signed petitions and emailed her MP over the years, but had never met a politician face-to-face to ask for their support. The National Autistic Society Cymru is encouraging its members to [Start your own candidate coffee morning](#) to help spread autism awareness in your community. It's an idea that others may like to emulate.

Many people have still not registered to vote. One reason for this is the change in the registration system to each individual registering themselves, rather than one member of the household doing so. Efforts are under way to register those who have been missed. Cardiff Citizens are working with 50 leaders from the Muslim community for a Citizens Mass Voter Registration Action taking place on Saturday March 7th in Cathays, Cardiff.

Wherever you live, you can register to vote online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

HOUSES AND HOMES – CHANGES ON THE WAY

The Welsh Government has published the [Renting Homes Bill](#). If legislated, this would introduce substantial changes to the letting contracts between landlords and tenants. This would affect every landlord – including religious bodies who let houses – and every tenant – including many members of our faith communities.

The Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee is conducting an enquiry into the general principles of the Bill, and welcomes submissions **by 27th March**. Further details can be found [here](#).

At the same time, the Government is conducting two other consultations regarding aspects of the provisions of houses and homes. Firstly, it is consulting on revised Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness. This Guidance decides who has a right to social housing, under which circumstances and how to prioritise allocation of social housing which is available. These details will be of particular interest to homeless people and those who work with them, or people in inadequate or insecure accommodation. Responses are required by **23rd March**. Further details can be found [here](#).

The second consultation relates to the White Paper on the Welsh Government's plans to change the legislation regarding Right to Buy and Right to Acquire. For the past 30 years or so, the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire schemes have allowed many tenants in social housing to buy their homes from the Local Authority or Housing Association concerned. As a result, there has been a substantial fall in the stock of social housing. This reduction in the amount of rented accommodation available to help people on waiting lists has added to the pressure on the housing stock and people's ability to find a home which they can afford.

In the current financial climate, economic and other factors have combined to put substantial pressure on the housing stock. This pressure affects many people, but especially those whose needs cannot be met by the housing market. Some people cannot afford to buy a house or rent from a private landlord. They depend on social housing or other subsidised provision. Social housing is a very important help to many people.

The White Paper presents options aimed at defending the social housing stock from being further denuded. One option is to remove the Right to Buy and the Right to Acquire. Responses are requested by **16th April**. Further details can be found [here](#).

CONTACTING THE CYTŪN POLICY OFFICER



To discuss any matter in this Bulletin, or to seek the Policy Officer's assistance, here are the contact details:

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