
CYTŪN POLICY BULLETIN

JUNE 2015



BUDGET TOUR 2015 – INVESTING IN THE WALES WE WANT

Over recent years the Minister for Finance and Government Business, Jane Hutt, has established and developed an annual Budget Tour across Wales to engage with those who provide and use public services and discuss how best to plan and prepare for the financial challenges ahead. This year, a series of meetings will be held between June and September, with staff working on frontline service delivery, to discuss the Government's preparations for a further period of public spending constraint and consideration of investment priorities in response to the impending 2015 Spending Review.

The Budget Tour 2015 regional meetings and visits will particularly focus on how the Government's investments align to the national goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan.

The following meetings will be held in the Welsh Government office in each area

Thursday, 18th June, Aberystwyth

2nd July, Llandudno Junction

15th July, Cathays Park, Cardiff

23rd July, Penllergaer, Swansea

3rd August, Newtown

10th September, Merthyr Tydfil

Please contact Gethin Rhys (see back page) **immediately** if you would like to attend the meeting in Aberystwyth, and 3 weeks in advance for any of the other meetings. Numbers are limited, so there is no guarantee of space for all applicants. However, this is a great opportunity to influence directly the Government's priorities, a Cytûn would encourage local churches and other religious organisations involved in providing public services to consider attending one of these meetings.



PROTECTING LISTED BUILDINGS AND ANCIENT MONUMENTS: THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT (WALES) BILL

The [consultation](#) on this Bill (see the [May 2015 Policy Bulletin](#)) ends on 19th June 2015, and Cytûn is preparing its response at the moment. If you would like to contribute to the debate about how best to safeguard ancient monuments, listed buildings and other historic buildings (many of them churches and other religious structures), then you need to send your comments to Gethin by the **end of Tuesday 16th June**, or direct to the government by 19th June.

INTRODUCING THE PUBLIC HEALTH (WALES) BILL

The Welsh Government has introduced its Public Health (Wales) Bill, which aims to create social conditions that are conducive to good health and where avoidable harms can be prevented. It sets out specific proposals in the following priority areas of public health policy:

- *Tobacco and nicotine products*: Creating a national register of retailers of tobacco and nicotine products and prohibiting the handing over of tobacco or nicotine products to people under the age of 18. Most controversially, restricting the use of nicotine inhaling devices such as electronic cigarettes in enclosed and substantially enclosed public and work places, bringing the use of these devices into line with existing provisions on smoking. Some have welcomed this provision, but the BBC reports that Prof Robert West of University College London accused the Government of being misled by the "barrage of anti e-cigarette propaganda coming from public health activists with little knowledge or understanding of the evidence". Prof West recently authored a study which suggested that people trying to giving up smoking without professional help were more likely to succeed by using e-cigarettes
- *Special procedures*: Creating a mandatory licensing scheme for practitioners and businesses carrying out acupuncture, body piercing, electrolysis and tattooing, and introducing a ban on the intimate piercing of people under 16 years old.
- *Pharmaceutical services*: Ensuring that decisions by Health Boards are based on assessments of pharmaceutical need in their areas.
- *Provision of toilets*: Requiring local authorities to prepare local toilets strategies for the provision of, and access to, toilets for public use.



Minimum unit pricing for alcohol is not included in the Public Health Bill, whilst the Government awaits the European judgment on Scotland's Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Act 2012, but it does intend to publish a draft Bill relating to the minimum price of alcohol for public consultation in due course.

The Bill does not include either any measures to tackle obesity, although the Government does intend to set nutritional standards for pre-school and care home settings by secondary legislation.

The Welsh Government has continued to emphasise that the Public Health Bill will be complementary to the overarching approach in Well-being of Future Generations Act. But Public Health Wales stated: *The [Future Generations] Bill has been drafted in a manner which fails to include health in the common aim and health in all policies is merely implicit. This means that there is every chance that despite two potentially impactful pieces of legislation that could set public health in Wales on a trajectory to be envied on the international stage, Wales could be left with no notable levers to make the strategic, large scale changes that are needed to address public health challenges.*

The Public Health (Wales) Bill is referred to the Health and Social Care Committee for Stage 1 consideration of the general principles of the Bill.

NEW ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

Following the election of two Conservative Assembly Members as MPs - Byron Davies (Gower) and Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) – two new AMs have taken their seats in the National Assembly. They are Dr Altaf Husain (South Wales West) and Janet Haworth (North Wales). No by-elections were required as regional members are elected on a list system, and the next available person on each regional Conservative list was invited to join the National Assembly. We wish them well in their work.

PROTECTING COMMUNITY ASSETS

The Welsh Government is consulting on how best local communities can ensure that buildings, locations and services of community importance can be secured for community use when they are under threat of being sold. The consultation document can be found at: <http://gov.wales/consultations/people-and-communities/protecting-community-assets-consultation/?lang=en> The consultation document offers three possible routes to helping communities in these circumstances:

1. A voluntary framework with no legislation (the route chosen in Northern Ireland)
2. Introducing in Wales the relevant parts of the Localism Act 2010 from Westminster, which currently applies only in England
3. Introducing distinctive Welsh legislation after the 2016 Assembly election

The kind of legal steps that might be involved are setting up a register of community assets, and when one of the buildings or locations on that register comes up for sale, giving 'first refusal' to the community to bid for it (at market price – none of the proposals involve obliging owners to sell below market price). This would entail a delay of 6 months or even longer to allow the community group to seek funding, before the asset could be offered on the open market. In some circumstances, rather than buying the building, the community might ensure that the services they value which are based in that building or location might be transferred elsewhere before an open market sale could go ahead.

This proposal might affect churches as both potential buyer and as seller.

- As buyer, churches might wish to seek to take on an asset in their community, probably in partnership with other local organisations.
- As seller. The minister, Lesley Griffiths, in her Foreword to the consultation, mentions churches as an example of the kinds of assets communities might wish to register and protect. Therefore sale of churches and other faith community buildings might become a lengthier process if communities wish to bid for them.

One Cytûn member church has already asked that we respond to this consultation, which closes on 11th September 2015. **Any church or reader of the Bulletin who would like to offer comments as part of a Cytûn response should submit these to Gethin (see back page) by 21st August, please.**

Cross Party Group on Faith

God and sex – faith communities tackling pornography

Guest speakers: Shereen Aziz-Williams, The Henna Foundation and Karin Cooke, The Naked Truth Project and Porn Scars

Chair: Darren Millar AM

Wednesday 8 July 2015 12:00 – 13:15

Media Briefing Room, Senedd Building

To reserve a seat, email Jim Stewart on j.stewart@eauk.org

RENTING HOMES IN WALES

The [Renting Homes \(Wales\) Bill](#) was introduced by the Welsh Government in February, and has been the subject of consultation by the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee of the Assembly, which will report before the summer recess. The aim of the Bill is to reform the existing complex legal framework for renting, to address problems of inequality and unfairness in the current system, for example where joint contracts enable one person to end the tenancy of all parties, or where 16 and 17 year olds wish to rent on the same basis as tenants over 18.

The Bill is based around two types of contract which aim to reflect the two main types of renting: long-term renting in the social rented sector and short-term renting, mainly in the private sector. The Minister also said that the Bill will establish, for the first time, a legal framework for supported accommodation.

The proposals in the Bill are based on work undertaken by the Law Commission. The Assembly Research Service has produced a helpful [summary](#) of the Bill.

Opposition parties and housing organisations have expressed a number of concerns, which have been examined by the Committee. These include whether the new rental contracts would be sufficiently flexible to adapt to individual circumstances, and the removal by the Bill of the 'six month moratorium' which limits the ability of private sector landlords to gain possession within the first six months of an assured shorthold tenancy. Shelter and Citizens Advice Cymru believe the abolition of the moratorium will impact on security of tenure for people in the private rented sector.

WALES REMEMBERS

1914-1918

Churches and other faiths groups have joined many other organisations to help the Welsh Government commemorate the centenary of the events of the First World War.



You can link here to the [Programme 2015](#) brochure on the First World War. The brochure details the centenary commemorative events that will take place in Wales, or beyond if relevant to Wales. It also contains in-depth articles written by partner organisations which are developing commemorative events and projects.

More information can be found on the *Cymru'n Cofio* Wales Remembers 1914-1918 website (www.walesremembers.org) and associated social media ([Twitter: @walesremembers](#) and [Facebook: Cymru'n Cofio Wales Remembers 1914-1918](#))

Plans are currently being made for 2016-17 and Cytûn and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) are both represented on the Programme Board. Commemorations include the experiences of conscientious objectors and peace activists, and those whose war was spent on the so-called 'home front', as well as combatants. In 2017 there will be a focus on the Welsh poet Hedd Wyn, who was killed in 1917 and posthumously won the Bardic Chair at the National Eisteddfod of Wales, and an Irish war poet, Francis Ledwidge.

We would encourage you to let us know of any commemorative events or projects you are planning by e-mail to Cytûn (see back page) and also via the *Cymru'n Cofio* Wales Remembers 1914-1918 website.

MEETING WITH WELSH GOVERNMENT MINISTERS

Cytûn, acting on behalf of the Inter-faith Council for Wales, represents the religion sector on the Third Sector Partnership Council, which provides opportunities for representatives from across the third sector meet with Government ministers to address issues of common concern. During May and June, meetings were held with the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, Edwina Hart, and the Minister for Finance and Government Business, Jane Hutt.

The **Economy, Science and Transport** meeting covered a wide range of issues, including:

- An update on the Welsh Co-operative & Mutuals Commission
- The inclusivity of the consultation process regarding changes to bus services (an issue on which the Minister had asked for feedback)
- Improving sport and physical recreation participation in austere times
- Transfer of community assets (see page 3 of this Bulletin)
- Impact of recession on Third Sector organisations
- The role of the department in nature conservation and climate change, especially with regard to the Future Generations Act. This last item led to a robust exchange of views on how much change might be required to meet the challenges of the future.

The meeting with the Minister for **Finance and Government Business** heralded a different approach to the third sector engagement with Ministers as part of the Third Sector Scheme. Over the last year, TSPC networks each developed Manifestos, and items from the Manifestos relating to funding and financial matters were collated in a Joint action plan. This new plan was discussed at the meeting, and there are now more opportunities for collaborative activity between third sector organisations and Welsh Government officials between meetings.

The Ministerial Meeting was therefore less formal and more involved than previously. The substantive matters discussed were:

- the agreed need for investment in prevention and early intervention, and the challenges in actioning this across government
- grants management, a matter of particular concern to third sector organisations in receipt of Government grant funding. All were agreed on the importance of good governance in regard to grants, and the important role that the third sector infrastructure has in supporting organisations to achieve and demonstrate robust governance.
- procurement policy and practice. The Minister subsequently issued a revised [Wales Procurement Policy Statement](#), which emphasised using public sector procurement to help promote businesses and third sector organisations in Wales. The statement also announced the devolution of further powers in this area from Westminster to the Welsh Government.
- a short update on the devolved financial powers and taxation.

The full Partnership Council meets on Monday 13th July, chaired by the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, Lesley Griffiths.

More details about the Partnership Council can be found in the [April Policy Bulletin](#).

Please note that that the Chair of the Council is Lesley Griffiths, and not Jane Hutt, as stated in April.

MEDITERRANEAN TRAGEDIES

Shared concern was expressed at the April meeting of the Welsh Government's Faith Communities Forum regarding the loss of life in the Mediterranean amongst displaced people seeking to migrate from northern Africa to Europe. Members expressed their support for the governmental and voluntary agencies seeking to rescue those at risk of drowning and endeavouring to provide appropriate humanitarian support to those who have reached the shores of our European continent. While it was acknowledged that immigration was non devolved, members also undertook to work together and with other key partners in an effort to ensure that all those seeking asylum and refuge in Wales are well received, respected and enabled to live rewarding lives in Wales. The Welsh Government has worked with a range of statutory and Third Sector partners to deliver its Refugee Inclusion Strategy Action Plan and it will be consulting on a revised Action Plan later this year.

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) is encouraging churches to hold services of commemoration on 21 June 2015, the Sunday closest to International Refugee Day. Resources are available for download from the CCME website in [English](#) and [German](#).

EQUALITIES IN WALES

The Welsh Government is conducting a consultation on its equalities objectives for the period 2016-2020, and Cytûn will hold a Focus Group on behalf of the Inter-faith Council for Wales on **Tuesday 14th July**. If you would like to attend, please reply to gethin@cytun.org.uk by **Friday 26th June at the latest**. More details in the [May Bulletin](#).

ELECTIONS 2016 – YOUR IDEAS

National Assembly for Wales elections will be held on Thursday 5th May 2016. On the same day, there will be elections for the Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales, and some time in 2016-17 there will be a referendum on the UK's continued membership of the European Union. Cytûn and the denominational church and society officers with whom we work closely would like to hear from you what resources you would like to receive to help you understand and discuss the main issues which will be contested? What help will you need to arrange hustings with your local candidates, or engage with the elections in other ways? What have you learned from involvement in the 2015 General Election? Please contact Gethin Rhys (details below) with your ideas.



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Cytûn is a registered charity | Number: 1117071

Publication date: 15th June 2015.

The next bulletin will be published on 24th July 2015.