
BWLETIN POLISI CYTÛN

CYTÛN POLICY BULLETIN

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WELSH LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME PUBLISHED

The Welsh Government has published its Programme for Government, which contains its objectives for the life of the Assembly.

It is published under the following headings:

Chapter 1: **Growth and Sustainable Jobs**

Chapter 2: **Public Services in Wales**

Chapter 3: **Education**

Chapter 4: **21st Century Healthcare**

Chapter 5: **Supporting People**

Chapter 6: **Welsh Homes**

Chapter 7: **Safer Communities for All**

Chapter 8: **Equality**

Chapter 9: **Tackling Poverty**

Chapter 10: **Rural Communities**

Chapter 11: **Environment and Sustainability**

Chapter 12: **The Culture and Heritage of Wales**

Key commitments include:

- Establish a Welsh jobs fund.
- Increase access to GP services.
- Funding 500 new community support officers.
- Increasing frontline spending in schools.
- Doubling the number of children benefitting from the 'Flying Start' programme.
- Introducing a statutory Literacy and Numeracy Framework, supported by national reading and maths tests.
- Moves to release more public land for affordable housing.
- An anti-poverty action plan by next year that will bring together all the devolved policy levers.
- Increase the number of organ donors in Wales.
- Create new marine conservation zones.
- Press for an independent review for S4C.
- Publish a five-year Welsh Language Strategy.

WELSH BUDGET PUBLISHED

The Welsh Government's spending plans for the next three years, which include a boost for jobs, children, hospitals and schools, were announced this month

Finance Minister Jane Hutt set out a Budget "for growth and jobs" which the Government claims will support delivery of the its Programme for Government.

The Budget comes following the toughest budget settlement since devolution.

The Welsh Government states that its resources are being maximised in this budget in order to support the priorities that matter to the people of Wales – jobs and growth, education, health and stronger communities.

Key measures in the draft Budget include:

- £75 million invested over the next three years in a new Jobs Growth Wales scheme that aims to help 4,000 young people every year through tailored training and employment opportunities.
- £55 million to extend the successful Flying Start scheme which aims to help an additional 18,000 children.
- An extra £27 million for schools in 2014/15, which the Government claims means school budgets will continue to grow faster than the overall Welsh budget.
- An extra £288 million to be invested into the NHS in Wales over the next three years.
- Additional investment to recruit 500 new Police Community Support Officers across Wales.

This year the focus has been on assessing the impact of changes to previous plans and where extra funding has been allocated, and details are published in the Budget.

ARCHBISHOP OPPOSES "PRESUMED CONSENT"

The Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan has voiced his opposition to Welsh Government plans to introduce an opt-out system for organ donation in Wales.

Speaking at the Church in Wales Governing Body in September, Dr Morgan encouraged all people in Wales to become donors, and indicated he might favour a system which made registering one's wishes in relation to donation to be made compulsory.

But the Archbishop wished to make the distinction between presumed consent, and the concept of donation as a gift.

WELSH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS MEET CHURCHES ON HOUSING

In September, the Minister for Housing, Huw Lewis' officials met with officers of the Welsh churches to explore the Minister's aims and aspirations for social and affordable housing in Wales. Providing quality affordable housing is a key priority for the Welsh Government. Under the Programme for Government over the next five years, the Welsh Government wants to increase the supply of quality homes and provide more choice for people in housing need.

The Minister wishes to work with partners across Wales, including churches, to discuss how land and resources could be made available to increase the capacity, particularly of the social rented sector.

Churches have a role to play in this agenda due to their ownership of redundant buildings which could be used for residential development, and land holdings which could be released for new build.

These discussions are ongoing, and the officials have agreed to meet again in the near future to explore the opportunities further.

The Welsh Government has provided £3 million to help create a new venture that will see four of Wales' social housing providers work together to meet the country's housing demands.

Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd and Coastal, Hendre and Seren groups have joined forces to create the Welsh Housing Partnership which aims to provide more affordable homes across north and south Wales. The Principality Building Society has also supported the Partnership with £12 million funding.

It is hoped the venture will lead to an extra 150 affordable homes in the first year whilst reducing waiting lists for social housing. The Partnership also aims to provide homes for those in low paid employment who aspire to own a home in the long term but cannot afford to buy immediately.

INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP LOOKS AT PLANNING IN WALES

Environment and Sustainable Development Minister, John Griffiths, has announced a review to consider how planning services in Wales should be delivered in the future.

The review will be conducted by an independent advisory group under the chairmanship of former Welsh Director of the Planning Inspectorate, John Davies. An announcement on other members of the group will be made shortly. A call for evidence will be issued this month. During its review, the group will:

- Identify the key policy objectives that the planning system is required to deliver now and in the future;

- Assess existing institutional delivery arrangements, noting areas of good practice and areas in need of improvement; and,
- Propose options for the future delivery of the planning system, including plan making and development management services.

The group's recommendations will form part of the evidence base for the Welsh Government's proposed new Planning Bill. The Welsh Government's Legislative Statement 2011-16 includes a commitment to introduce a Planning Bill to consolidate existing legislation and make the planning system more transparent and accessible. A white paper will be published during 2013 which will inform a Planning Bill to be introduced into the Assembly at a later date.

The independent advisory group will deliver its report by June 2012

PROTECTING CHILD VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN WALES

Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services, has published the All Wales Protocol on Child Trafficking. The protocol sets out the action Welsh Government intends to take with a wide range of agencies to ensure that Wales will not tolerate human trafficking in any form.

The protocol provides practice guidance to professionals and volunteers from all agencies to help enable them to effectively safeguard children who are abused and neglected by adults who traffic them into and within the UK for purposes of exploitation. This protocol will form part of the national child protection procedures which will ensure that all Local Safeguarding Children Boards are signed up to its principles and practices.

Reports by the Children's Commissioner (*'Bordering on Concern'* published in March 2009) and by National Assembly's Cross Party Group on Human Trafficking (*'Knowing No Boundaries'* published in May 2010) highlighted the issue of human trafficking. Partly in response to these important publications, the Welsh Government asked the All Wales Child Protection Procedures Group to produce an all Wales protocol to ensure consistent and effective action to safeguard children. The production of this protocol follows the appointment of Bob Tooby, the first All Wales anti-human trafficking co-ordinator, earlier this year. The co-ordinator's role is to raise awareness of human trafficking to uncover the hidden problem and bring more traffickers to justice.

The All Wales Child Protection Procedures Group has a mandate and representation from all of Wales' Local Safeguarding Children Boards and partner agencies.

Other recent work undertaken by the Welsh Government to tackle trafficking includes:

- The commissioning of an on-line training resource, available to key partners of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) and to frontline practitioners to help them identify and support possible child victims of trafficking;

- Funding for an all Wales anti-trafficking coordinator, to lead on issues around public protection. The coordinators role will be to ensure that a multi agency approach is adopted to help eliminate human trafficking in Wales. Bob Tooby was appointed to this post in April 2011.

NEW CAMPAIGN TO TACKLE DOMESTIC ABUSE LAUNCHED

The Minister for Local Government and Communities, Carl Sargeant, has launched the Welsh Government's latest campaign to help raise awareness and challenge attitudes towards domestic abuse in Wales.

'Live Fear Free' is part of the government's ongoing 'Right to Be Safe' agenda, its six year strategy to tackle violence against women and domestic abuse. It consists of two high-impact videos that will be hosted on the campaign's website – www.livefearfree.org.uk. The first video focuses on sexual violence against women while the second video looks at the effects of domestic abuse on children. Both videos will run in the fortnight following the launch and include information on how to seek help.

SCHOOL STANDARDS AND ORGANISATION (WALES) BILL

The Welsh Government has published a White Paper which seeks views on the proposed legislation for the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Bill.

The Government intends to legislate for the following areas:

- intervention for schools causing concern
- school improvement guidance
- school organisation
- Welsh in Education Strategic Plans
- annual parents' meetings
- post-16 learners with special educational needs (SEN) in schools
- free school breakfasts
- school-based counselling
- flexible charging for school meals.

The Consultation closes on 5th January 2012.

MAJOR REVIEW OF QUALIFICATIONS ANNOUNCED

Deputy Minister for Skills, Jeff Cuthbert, has announced a wide ranging review of all qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales.

Mr Cuthbert told the Business Skills Conference in Swansea that he wants to ensure the Government is getting value for money from the qualifications it delivers, and that they are meeting the needs of learners and the economy.

The review will be wide ranging but centred around three themes:

- Identify the most relevant qualifications and ensure they are available to learners.
- Ensure qualifications are trusted and understood.
- Ensure qualifications remain fit for purpose.

The Welsh Government will also be reviewing the way they fund post 16 education, which currently has more than 10,000 different qualifications.

The Government's vision is to ensure that Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds meet the needs of Wales, are understood and valued, with public money focused in the right direction to help provide the skilled workforce our economy needs. The choices available to learners should also make a difference in allowing them to progress to work or higher education while qualifications need to be trusted and understood. As part of this, the Welsh Government wants to ensure that the assessments which form part of our qualifications are appropriate and fit for purpose.

The person who will lead the review and members of the advisory group will be announced shortly.

CARRIER BAG CHARGE IN FORCE

On 1st October, Wales became the first country in the UK to introduce a charge for carrier bags.

The 5p charge, which applies to all single use bags, is aimed at reducing litter and avoiding unnecessary damage to the environment.

The Welsh Government predicts that as a result of its charge, carrier bag use in Wales will reduce by 90%.

The net proceeds of the charge, which are estimated to be up to £3million in the first year, will be passed on by retailers to environmental and other good causes.

Last year people from Wales took home an estimated 350 million carrier from major supermarkets. This figure does not cover high street shops, local shops or shopping outlets. Local Authorities estimate that they spend £1 million per year clearing up carrier bag litter. It is hoped that the charge will help to dramatically reduce this cost.

GYPSY AND TRAVELLER FRAMEWORK LAUNCHED

The first national Gypsy and Traveller Framework in the UK was launched today by Equalities Minister Jane Hutt.

“Travelling to a better future,” together with an accompanying Delivery Plan, aims to ensure equality of opportunity for Gypsies and Travellers in Wales and to set out the practical ways the Welsh Government can achieve this.

The purpose of the Framework is to develop an informed direction for the development of policies and initiatives across Welsh Government departments and local authorities with a view to addressing the inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers in Wales. The documents sets out how the Welsh Government will ensure that Gypsy and Traveller communities have fair and equal access to the key priorities of accommodation, health and education.

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty upon public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and other conduct prohibited by the Act and to foster good relations.

The Welsh Government has made £2m of funding in 2011-12 for new sites or to refurbish existing sites.

NEW WELSH ENTERPRISE ZONES ANNOUNCED

The Welsh Business Minister, Edwina Hart has identified the preferred locations for the first five Enterprise Zones in Wales.

They will be:

- Cardiff Central Business District - with a particular focus on the Financial Services sector.
- Ynys Mon – focussed on the energy sector
- Deeside – with a focus on the advanced manufacturing sector
- St Athan – with a focus on the aerospace sector
- Ebbw Vale – with a focus on the automotive sector

SUPREME COURT AFFIRMS PARITY OF DEVOLVED LEGISLATION

A ruling by the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom has affirmed that laws passed by the National Assembly and the Scottish Parliament have equal status as Acts of Parliament.

A legal challenge by insurers AXA against a Scottish legislation passed in Holyrood (which gave people suffering from asbestos-caused health problems the right to claim damages). AXA challenged the judgement of the Scottish Parliament. The Supreme Court has said its judgement - as an elected body - must be respected.

So it appears that the principle has been established that devolved primary legislation can only be challenged on the same basis as UK legislation.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION INTO FUNDING FOR WALES

The independent Commission on Devolution in Wales, which has been announced by the UK Government, will begin work shortly, and will focus on building consensus within Wales on the issues around the funding of Wales. It aims to report its recommendations on financial accountability in the autumn of 2012, and its recommendations on the constitutional settlement in Wales in 2013.

The First Minister said: "We have already looked into how Wales is funded through the Holtham Commission and this new inquiry will follow on from that work and its conclusions. I am pleased that the first phase of the Commission's remit is due to be completed by next autumn. I am sure that the Commissioners will be aware of the need to make quick progress."

"We will seek to work positively with the Commission while also continuing to press hard for a funding floor and borrowing powers in the ongoing inter-governmental talks. Those talks will continue while the new Commission carries out its work. But this is a twin-track process - progress on issues of accountability can only be made if there is also real progress on fair funding and borrowing powers. Wales needs a comprehensive package of financial reforms that delivers a fairer, more stable settlement."

FIRST MINISTER ANNOUNCES DEBATE ON A SEPARATE LEGAL JURISDICTION FOR WALES

First Minister Carwyn Jones has announced that the Welsh Government will be starting a public debate on the issue of a separate legal jurisdiction for Wales in early 2012.

Speaking at the Legal Wales conference in Cardiff, the First Minister set out his belief that the time is right to take forward the discussion on this issue.

The Welsh Government intends to launch the public debate early in the New Year by publishing a Green Paper, collecting views from all interested parties. These views will provide an evidence base on which the Welsh Government can formulate a view to present to the Commission on Welsh Devolution.

UK BILL OF RIGHTS CONSULTATION

The UK Government has launched a consultation on its plans to introduce a UK Bill of Rights. A Commission on a Bill of Rights has been established by the Government and is required by its Terms of Reference

"To investigate the creation of a UK Bill of Rights that incorporates and builds on all our obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, ensures that these rights continue to be enshrined in UK law, and protects and extends our liberties.

“To examine the operation and implementation of these obligations, and consider ways to promote a better understanding of the true scope of these obligations and liberties.

“To provide advice to the Government on the ongoing Interlaken process to reform the Strasbourg court ahead of and following the UK’s Chairmanship of the Council of Europe.

“To consult, including with the public, judiciary and devolved administrations and legislatures, and aim to report no later than by the end of 2012.”

The Rev. Aled Edwards, Chief Executive of Cytun – Churches Together in Wales has been appointed by the Welsh Government as one of its representatives to assist the Commission’s work.

The public consultation ends on 11th November 2011.

GERAINT HOPKINS,

POLICY OFFICER,

CYTÛN – CHURCHES TOGETHER IN WALES