
CYTŪN POLICY BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 2016



CHURCHES AND GOVERNMENT RESPOND TO STEEL CRISIS



18th January saw the announcement of the loss of 750 jobs at Tata Steel in Port Talbot. Currently, the steel works employs some 4,000 people, with many others in dependent and related occupations. This number may be far fewer than in the past, when the steel works employed some 17,000 people, but it is still a devastating blow to the town of Port Talbot and its neighbouring communities. Although Tata Steel have indicated that they are hopeful that these redundancies will secure the future of the plant, no guarantee can be given. It seems

as though the future of the steel works and of the steel industry in South Wales itself is very uncertain.

Revd Chris Gray (Superintendent Minister, Neath Port Talbot Methodist Circuit) said "The staff of the Neath Port Talbot Circuit, in consultation with Rev Rick Hayes, part-time chaplain to the Port Talbot Steel works, will now be part of a team of people willing to listen to those who need to talk with someone about their situation. As yet, no workers have been told that they have been selected for redundancy; but when that time comes there will be the need for listening ears, support and encouragement for those whose future is now so uncertain."

Canon Nigel Cahill, Rector of Aberavon, said people throughout the county borough feared there would be further redundancies to come. He said, "It is devastating for the community to lose so many jobs from such a major employer in the area. There is great concern about the knock-on effect on Tata's contractors in the area and people are also worried there will be further job losses announced in the future. Our churches are there to support and help all affected, either through prayer or through practical means such as debt advice."

The Church in Wales Assistant Bishop of Llandaf, David Wilbourne, said, "We urge the Welsh Government to do all it can to secure the future of the steel industry and also to take action to support those workers who will lose their jobs." In response to such calls, [The First Minister asked the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport](#) to chair a high-level taskforce to support workers affected by the Tata Steel announcement, which met for the first time on 20th January and again on 1st February. A statement on progress was made to the Assembly by the Minister on 2nd February.

The work of the task force is made more difficult by the complex interaction of Welsh, UK and European policies. For example, the Welsh Government controls business rates, but its ability to alter them is restricted by European state aid rules. Welsh firms receive 55% of Welsh procurement spend under [Welsh Government policy](#), but many major infrastructure projects requiring use of steel are funded by the UK Government.

Further details on these matters can be found in a helpful [blog by Gareth Thomas of the National Assembly Research Service](#).

ELECTIONS 2016

Cytûn has launched a dedicated election page on its website - www.cytun.org.uk/elections2016, including a handy guide to the elections and guidance on arranging hustings, to be followed shortly by briefing papers on key policy areas, and two videos of real life stories from Wales and responses by leading politicians.

We encourage local Cytûn groups, in partnership with other churches or faith groups where appropriate, to run hustings for their local candidates. We would encourage one or two well organised hustings in each constituency, rather than multiplying events.

Cytûn has arranged, in partnership with Citizens Cymru and Together Creating Communities (TCC), opportunities for those who are interested in organising or chairing such meetings to get together for a couple of hours to share experiences, understand more about the electoral arrangements and legal background, and the opportunities and difficulties associated with holding hustings. There will be input by the National Assembly's Communications Team in each meeting. We will welcome too attendance by experienced organisers and chairs from the past who have experience to share, even if you do not intend to do the work this year, and also people who would like to do this in the future, but are not yet committed for 2016. Here are the details of these meetings:

- Thu 11th Feb – Peniel Baptist Church, Lôn Cariadon (Love Lane), Bangor LL57 2TE, 7pm (with TCC)
- Fri 12th Feb – Justice & Peace Centre, 37 Kingsmills Road, Wrexham LL13 8NH, 7pm (with TCC)
- Mon 22nd Feb – St German's Church, Star Street, Roath, Cardiff CF24 1LA, 7pm (with Citizens)
- Tue 23rd Feb – Bethel United Reformed Church, Sketty Green, Sketty, Swansea SA2 9AS, **7.30pm** (with Citizens)
- Wed 2nd March - Bethel Community Church, 40 Stow Hill, Newport NP20 1JG, 7pm (with Citizens)

It would be useful to know who is coming (by e-mail at gethin@cytun.org.uk), but advance booking is not essential.



FUTURE GENERATIONS COMMISSIONER STARTS WORK

Sophie Howe began work in the new post of Future Generations Commissioner on 1st February. She will be responsible for monitoring and challenging the way public authorities implement their new well-being duties under the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015, which come into force on 1st April, and the work of the Public Service Boards throughout Wales.

Ms Howe, who comes to this role from having been Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales, said, "For me, it's a uniquely exciting, and slightly daunting, opportunity. For Wales, and for the people and organisations who campaigned for legislation, it's another step towards creating a sustainable nation. This is a Wales in which we have a shared purpose to achieve a better and lasting quality of life for us all – the Wales we want. It's a Wales where we will work completely differently so we all make better decisions, transform services, tackle root problems and use increasingly scarce public money to maximum effect." Cytûn has accepted an invitation to an initial consultative meeting with the Commissioner this month.

The Commissioner's temporary contact details are: Haydn Ellis Building, Maindy Road, Cathays, Cardiff, CF24 4HQ. E-mail: contactus@futuregenerations.wales

THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN WALES



Estyn, the office of the Chief Inspector for education in Wales, has published its [annual report for the academic year 2014-15](#). As usual, it offers a comprehensive picture of the state of education in Wales.

Given that the [whole school curriculum is currently being revised](#) following the Donaldson Report, *Successful Futures*, it is interesting

to note the Inspector's comments regarding the current curriculum:

Where leaders and teachers lack confidence in their understanding of teaching methods and curriculum requirements, they are reluctant to interpret the curriculum boldly and flexibly..... For example, in the Foundation Phase, some leaders mistakenly consider that only a formal approach to learning will ensure that children perform well in national tests in Year 2. (p. 30). The new curriculum will be much less prescriptive in its content, and so will put further pressure on teachers to interpret "boldly and flexibly."

In terms of current performance, there has been an increase in the number of primary schools where performance was unsatisfactory and additional support has been needed. *Often, these leaders fail to address shortcomings in the quality of teaching, planning and assessment. They do not hold teachers to account for pupils' progress and attainment.* (p. 39). As many as 38% of secondary schools gave cause for concern – although a similar number had outstanding practices. It is a concern, therefore to read that *A minority of schools provide a comprehensive range of professional development opportunities for staff.* (p. 55).

In January 2015, there were 4,000 more pupils in primary schools than a year previously – but 4,000 fewer in secondary schools. This statistic raises interesting questions regarding the policies of some local authorities with respect to school reconfiguration.

Local education authorities themselves also raise cause for concern. *By July 2015, four authorities remained in special measures (Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire and Torfaen) and one authority (Cardiff) remained in need of significant improvement. ... All these authorities made slow progress initially in addressing recommendations from their inspections.* (p. 89).

Of even greater concern is that Estyn has found that the quality of initial teacher training offered in the North and Mid Wales Centre of Teacher Education (Universities of Bangor and Aberystwyth) is unsatisfactory. Improvements were found in the South West Wales and South East Wales Centres.

Despite these concerns, there was a noticeable improvement in the results of external exams and classroom assessments of pupils at all levels, and a fall in the number of pupils excluded from secondary schools – although there was a significant increase in the numbers excluded from primary schools.

The Welsh Government has published the support categories for each individual school in Wales, together with other relevant information, on the website [My Local School](#).

WALES REMEMBERS THE FIRST WORLD WAR

First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones has launched *Programme 2016* to mark the centenary of the First World War. *Programme 2016* is the latest in the Welsh Government's series of annual *Cymru'n Cofio* Wales Remembers 1914-1918 brochures which highlight events and projects of Welsh interest taking place in Wales and further afield during 2016. See the press release and digital copy of *Programme 2016* [here](#).

The Programme includes information about *Wales for Peace*, the strand which commemorates the stand of Christians and others who decided not to fight, and a touring exhibition on the theme will be launched at the Urdd Eisteddfod in May 2016

Visit 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](#)) for further information on events and projects to commemorate the Centenary of the First World War in Wales.

NEW LAWS FOR WALES

On 18th January 2016, two new Welsh laws received Royal Assent.

The [Renting Homes \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) will reform the legal basis for renting a home from a private landlord or community landlord, including local authorities and registered landlords. It introduces a completely new pattern of housing tenure in Wales, based around 'secure contracts' (social housing) and 'standard contracts' (private).

The [Regulation and Inspection of Social Care \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) includes provision for: reform of the regulatory regime for care and support services; provision of a regulatory framework that requires an approach to the regulation of care and support services focused on outcomes for service users; reform of the inspection regime for local authority social services functions; the reconstitution and renaming of the Care Council for Wales as Social Care Wales and the broadening of its remit; and the reform of the regulation of the social care workforce. The Bill was greatly strengthened during its passage, including advocacy services in scope of Bill, introducing a minimum 30 minute time for homecare visits and placing a "fit and proper person" test on the face of the Bill. Following the [Flynn Report](#), Welsh Government undertook to require by regulation registration of homecare and residential home staff.

On 2nd February, the Assembly gave final approval to the [Environment \(Wales\) Bill](#), Minister of Crown consent for Section 6 having been received in December. Royal Assent is expected following the four-week intimation period.



CONTACTING THE CYTÛN POLICY OFFICER

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