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# Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales - Wales and Europe Working Party



## A Year on: How Church Leadership in Wales is responding to the Brexit Vote

A report discussing the issues highlighted by church leaders after the 2016 EU Referendum and how to progress toward a peaceful post Brexit.

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## The churches' mission and aim

**Introduction:** On the basis of a decision made in the annual meetings of the Union of Welsh Independent churches (UWI) in Llanuwchllyn in July 2016 (and which was echoed in similar decisions by the Baptist Union of Wales and the Presbyterian Church of Wales) a Working Party was formed (in co-operation with Cytûn) without delay following the referendum to begin the work of considering the results of the vote to leave the European Union.

The central question which faced the working party was: what sort of society do Christians want to see in Wales and in Britain following the UK leaving the European Union?

In light of this, its chief task is to assist the churches in promoting public Christian witness through:

- taking part in the process of developing appropriate policies and structures following the triggering of Article 50 by the Government of the UK,
- considering the policies which should have priority in the new arrangements,
- considering the role of the Welsh Assembly in the new political structures and the priorities of the Government of the United Kingdom as the transfer from Europe to the UK happens,
- to stimulate national and local discussions to promote a deeper understanding of the matters which should have the attention of the churches and other bodies in the community during the coming period in the context of the Christian values which are believed to be essential for the future of Wales and these nations.

**Cytûn Working Party:** The Cytûn Board has recognized the Working Party on Wales and Europe and so it works interdenominationally and in close co-operation with movements which share the churches' concern about some of the tendencies which are presently at work in Wales. The Rev. Gethin Rhys, the Cytûn policy officer, administers the Working Party with Rev. Dr. Noel A Davies (Union of Welsh Independents and former General Secretary of Cytûn) chairing it.

**The principles that should be the foundation for the UKs negotiating stance:** The Working Party has affirmed the UWI's resolution that these should include protecting:

- the status and rights of children and young people, the disabled and elderly.
- Human Rights relating to the Welsh language and ethnic minorities,
- legislation which protects the environment and the countryside – including the livelihood of those who work in rural industries.

Also, the deep rifts that became evident during the EU referendum need to be recognized and healed.

## Recent developments through Cytûn

### *Submissions to the Welsh Affairs Committee of the House of Commons<sup>1</sup> and the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee of the National Assembly by the Welsh Churches' Working Party on Wales and Europe<sup>2</sup>, September and November 2016*

These submissions encourage both the UK and Welsh Governments to focus on two specific areas of concern for the churches:

- 1) The relationships of the UK with European nations and states following Brexit
- 2) Expressing Christian perspectives on key issues that should be addressed in shaping society in the UK and in Wales during and following Brexit Negotiations.

The submissions identify five policy areas for consideration:

- Rights and opportunities
- Minority communities
- Agriculture and the environment
- Relationships with other nations and states
- The democratic process



BBC News source

### *Responding to the triggering of Article 50, March 2017<sup>3</sup>*

In response to the triggering of Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, to negotiate the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, Cytûn's Wales and Europe Working Party announced a list of principles which they say should be the foundation of the UK's negotiating stance.

These include protecting the status and rights of children and young people, the disabled and elderly. They say that Human Rights relating to the Welsh language and ethnic minorities must also be respected, as must legislation which protects the environment and the countryside – including the livelihood of those who work in rural industries.

The statement – issued by Cytûn on behalf of the mainstream Christian denominations – adds that the deep rifts which became evident during the EU referendum must be recognized and healed.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cytun.cymru/waleseurope/PDFs/Churches%20and%20Brexit.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cytun.cymru/waleseurope/PDFs/Assembly%20Churches%20and%20Brexit%2011%2016.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://annibynwyr.org/reacting-to-article-50/>

## ***A Year on from Brexit, Teulu Asaph (St Asaph Diocesan magazine), June 2017 (article by Cytûn's Policy Officer)<sup>4</sup>***

Listening to church members has been central, and the concerns raised have been reflected in what we have written. We had hoped to begin in the summer a series of public listening exercises across Wales- but the snap General Election has postponed that until the autumn, as churches work together on holding election hustings instead.

Amongst the issues which we have heard and want to explore further are:

- 1) The uncertainty of European Union citizens living in Wales- many associated with churches- as to what their future can be once the UK has left the EU.
- 2) Worry about the rise in hate crimes of all kinds around and after the referendum. This seems to have subsided, but there are many who now feel less secure in our society than they once did.
- 3) The public questioning by several politicians of our human rights legislation and our involvement in the European Convention on Human Rights (a different set-up from the EU itself and not directly affected by the referendum). The UK Government's intention not to transfer the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights into domestic law in the Great Repeal Bill may raise wider issues around freedom of religion and other human rights and how they are respected in the future UK.
- 4) The future of rural Wales and especially uncertainty around hill farming and meat exports, and the possibility of more cheap food imports from outside the EU.
- 5) The sense that funds designated by the EU have been spent in communities without participation in decision making by those communities, and that we must learn from those mistakes in the future.

## **Cytûn Wales & Europe Party, Llandaff meeting with European Church Leaders and the First Minister of Wales, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

Cytûn's Working Party on Wales and Europe met with the First Minister of Wales on June 7<sup>th</sup>. This was a special meeting in the company of the general secretaries of the national councils of churches of the nations of Europe (the counterparts of Cytûn in those countries). A very lively and open discussion followed regarding the implications of the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union; including the possible implications if the UK was to additionally withdraw from the human rights legislation and authority of the European Court of Human Rights.

Considerable discussion was given to how churches in Wales might respond to the moral leadership role of churches in nationally educating congregations and in tackling political disengagement and disaffection.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://s3.amazonaws.com/cinw/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/05/31124303/Teulu-Asaph-June-July-17-Web.pdf> page 4

## References to Cytûn in the: *External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee: The Great Repeal Bill White Paper: Implications for Wales, June 2017*.<sup>5</sup>

### 1) The UK's leading role in protecting and advancing human rights will not change

Cytûn believes the need to maintain clarity and stability of law in the UK after Brexit is both necessary and to be supported.

### 2) On the issue of delegated powers

Cytûn endorsed the approach by the House of Lords Constitution Committee that an appropriate balance needs to be struck between the powers and pace needed by the government to complete its legislative task to ensure proper parliamentary oversight. This means providing general provisions on the face of the bill to effect that delegated powers be granted:

“as far as necessary to adapt the body of EU law to fit the UK’s domestic legal framework, and so far as necessary to implement the result of the UK’s negotiations with the EU”.

### 3) Discussing the devolution settlements

Cytûn warned that there is “an inevitable danger of inadvertent (or deliberate) rebalancing of the devolution settlements,” pointing out the 2011 Assembly referendum result. Also, there is an important distinction to be made between administrative and legislative competence and the problems this can cause from the perspective of representation.

### 4) To ensure transparency in the political process

Cytûn pointed out that the expertise that stakeholders can bring to the process of considering technical legislation and that the appointment of expert panellists to assist relevant committees could be considered

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<sup>5</sup> Welsh Assembly, The Great Repeal Bill White Paper: Implications for Wales, Available at: <http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11079/cr-ld11079-e.pdf> (June 2017)

## Timeline of entering Brexit negotiations

### 1) *The UK invokes Article 50 of the Treaty on the European Union*

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2017 Prime Minister Theresa May triggered Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty, which formally set the two-year time limit to start and complete negotiations to withdraw the UK from the European Union. This was done in the form of a letter which was sent to Donald Tusk (The President of the European Council) to trigger the process.<sup>6</sup>



BBC News source

### 2) *General Election Result*

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, Theresa May announced a snap election to be held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June marking the beginning of a seven-week election campaign. The results of the election were that the Conservatives lost their majority in the House of Commons, receiving 317 seats (9 short of a majority) and Labour increasing their seat number from 232 to 262. The Conservatives are therefore faced with governing as a minority government or with support by other political parties. While this election has not delayed the Article 50 process, it does have political implications as to the negotiation stance to be held by the UK Government. The media has described this as 'soft' and 'hard' Brexit to explain the possible differences in the kind of withdrawal the UK government may contemplate.



BBC News source

### 3) *Brexit Negotiations*

The first round of negotiations began on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June with UK Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, David Davis, meeting with Michel Barnier, the chief negotiator for EU countries. The first day concluded that the first negotiation round will be primarily focused on the crucial issues of citizens' rights, the single financial settlement, and a separate dialogue on Ireland. The European Union has a website dedicated to the Article 50 negotiations.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Downing Street, Prime Ministers letter to Donald Tusk triggering Article 50. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/604079/Prime\\_Ministers\\_letter\\_to\\_European\\_Council\\_President\\_Donald\\_Tusk.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/604079/Prime_Ministers_letter_to_European_Council_President_Donald_Tusk.pdf) (March 2017)

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, Brexit Negotiations: The Article 50 negotiation process and principles for the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/brexit-negotiations\\_en#latest](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/brexit-negotiations_en#latest) (June 2017)

#### 4) The Queen's Speech

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, the Conservative government presented a two-year legislation plan, with 8 out of the 27 bills being directly related to Brexit. These proposed laws are designed to prepare the UK for its transition from the EU and provide the framework for EU law to be transferred to UK law. These bills include:



European Commission source

Repeal Bill = Repealing the European Communities Act 1972 and converting EU law into UK law as we leave the EU

Customs Bill = Allows the Government to charge customs duties on imported goods and adjust the rates of these duties, accommodating potential negotiated arrangements with the EU.

Trade Bill = To put in place the essential and necessary legislative framework to allow the UK to operate its own independent trade policy upon exit from the EU.

Immigration Bill = Repeals EU law on immigration, primarily free movement - that will be saved and converted into UK law by the Repeal Bill - as well as making the migration of EU nationals and their family members subject to relevant UK law once the UK has left the EU.

Fisheries Bill = Enables the UK to control access to its waters and set UK fishing quotas once it has left the EU.

Agriculture Bill = Measures to ensure that after we leave the EU, and therefore the Common Agricultural Policy, we have a system in place to support UK farmers and protect our natural environment.

Nuclear Safeguards Bill = Establishes a UK nuclear safeguards regime as we leave the European Union and Euratom. <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> UK Gov, 'Queens Speech 2017'. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/queens-speech-2017>

## 5) Welsh Government sets out its legislative priorities for 2017/2018

In his yearly statement on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2017, the First Minister for Wales set out priorities to introduce legislation to tackle harmful alcohol consumption, provide free childcare for working parents, protect tenants from unfair fees and reform local government.



First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“The bills we intend to introduce during the 2nd year of this Assembly will support our efforts to build a Wales that is healthy and active, prosperous and secure, ambitious and learning and united and connected.

“The 5 bills will tackle harmful alcohol consumption, help support working parents, protect tenants from unfair fees and reform and improve local government.

“Last week the UK government set out its legislative intentions in the Queen’s Speech. While wholly unambitious, the statement included the Repeal Bill and other Brexit-related bills.

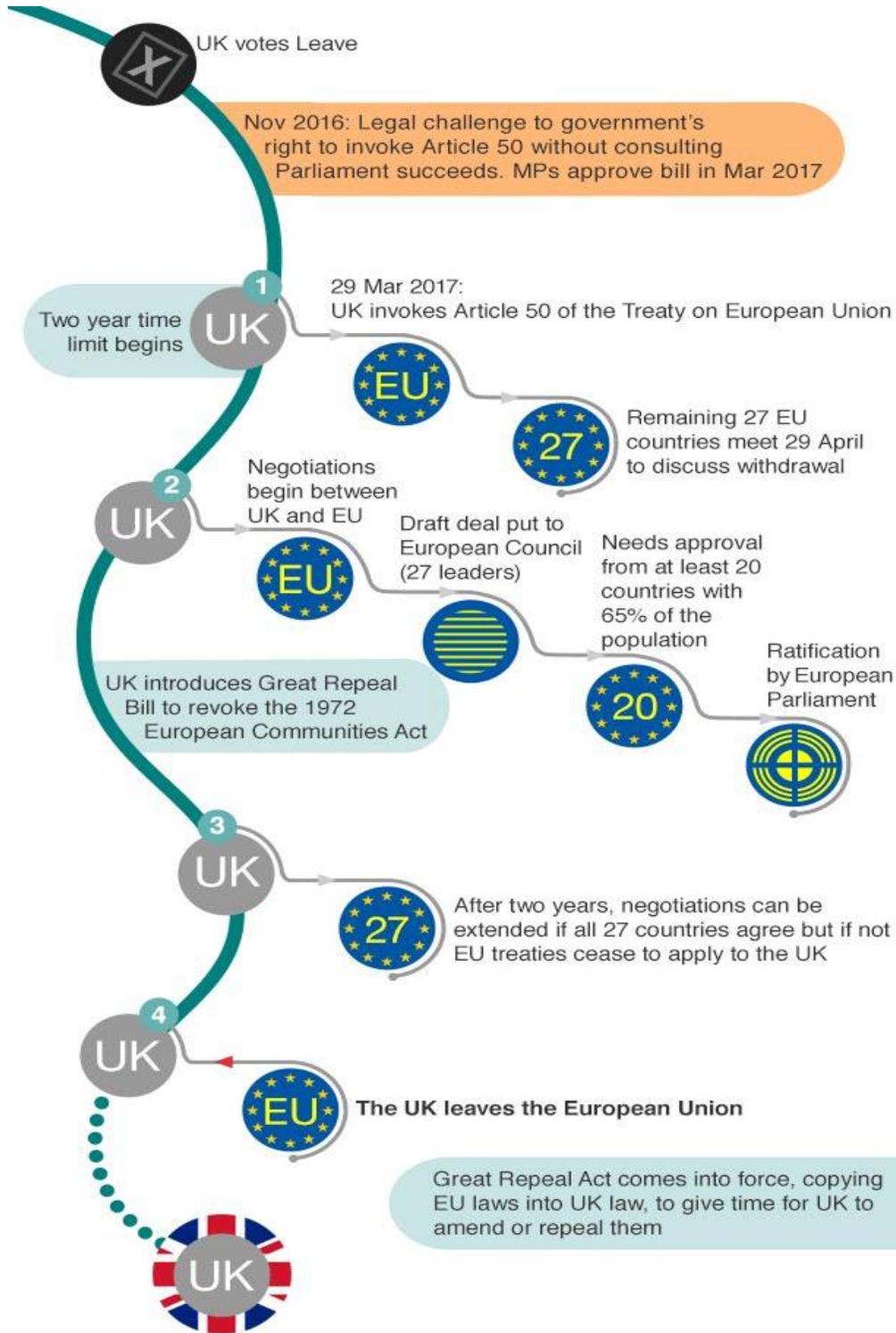
“As I have repeatedly made clear, the UK government must respect the devolution settlement. If this does not happen, we will consider other options, such as a Continuity bill, to protect Wales’ interests.

“Leaving the European Union will have a significant impact on the business of this Welsh Government and National Assembly. It would be naive to assume that it will not also have an impact on our own legislative programme – but, we will do all we can to keep driving forward progress and delivering for the people of Wales.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Welsh Government, ‘First Minister sets out legislative priorities’  
<http://gov.wales/newsroom/firstminister/2017/170627-first-minister-sets-out-legislative-priorities/?lang=en> (27 June 2017)

# Steps to the UK leaving the European Union



# Issues highlighted by Church Leadership in Wales

## ***1) Introduction: “Put People First Post Brexit”***

Last year’s referendum campaign and result drew to the attention of church leaders and Christian denominations across Wales and the UK, many problems inherent in our society today that need to be addressed. The result particularly painted a deep divides in Wales in terms of poverty levels, civic participation, and attitudes towards government.

Now as the negotiations get underway to take the UK out of the European Union the churches are striving to “Put People First Post Brexit”, as stated by the Church in Wales.<sup>10</sup> This is crucial to help forge a better Wales post-Brexit grounded in the need to protect human rights, the environment, EU citizen rights and the many forms of assistance afforded to Wales as a member of the European Union.

## ***2) Racism, prejudice, and anti-immigrant sentiment***

A common concern expressed by many Cytûn members was that racism and anti-immigrant sentiment had been given a voice during the referendum campaign. Additionally, many churches were worried how this political language may have negative consequences for society by marginalizing and alienating some from their community due to the fear of being discriminated against. The Home Office Hate Crime Statistics for Wales/England show a sharp increase in racially/religiously aggravated offences recorded by the police in June/July 2016. This was at a disturbing level, 41% higher than those offences recorded in July 2015.<sup>11</sup>

Predominantly, the worry identified at the Free Council of Wales meeting (November 2016), was that leading UK politicians were making aggressive and inappropriate comments about people from other European nations. Furthermore, the Moderator of the council Revd Peter Dewi Richards discussed how this political discussion was giving effect to a poisonous public atmosphere which legitimized making offensive comments. The Council reiterated the churches’ profound belief that respect for people of all nations, races, and cultures should be pivotal to any public debate.<sup>12</sup>

## ***3) The need to address the divide in inequality and poverty***

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<sup>10</sup> The Church in Wales, ‘Put People First Post Brexit’. Available at:

<http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/news/2017/03/put-people-first-post-brexit-urge-bishops/> (March 2017)

<sup>11</sup> Home Office, ‘Hate Crime, England and Wales 2015/16’, Hannah Corcoran and Kevin Smith. Available at:

<http://report-it.org.uk/files/hate-crime-1516-hosb1116.pdf> ( October 2016)

<sup>12</sup> The Free Church Council for Wales, ‘Wales’ free churches concern about tone of Brexit debate’. Available at:

<http://www.urcwales.org.uk/news/wales-free-churches-concern-about-tone-of-brexit-debate/> (November 2016)

An important issue revealed by the referendum result was the inequality and disadvantage apparent in many areas in Wales which correlated significantly with the “leave” vote. This correlation between poverty levels, job opportunities, education and inequality with leave areas raises questions for churches across Wales as to why some felt governmental economic and social policies were not working for them. Church leaders were very clear after the Referendum result about the need to recognize these inequalities that contribute to this wider picture of a divided nation. As stated by the Church in Wales, inequality and disadvantage need to be addressed to “build a better Wales post-Brexit”.<sup>13</sup>

This issue is further explained by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that finds that all regions in Britain are heavily divided along economic, educational, and social lines. Amongst these findings household income, job occupations and qualifications were the strongest dividers in voter makeup. The Foundation concludes that there are groups in Britain that feel “left behind” from economic change and adrift from the mainstream consensus.<sup>14</sup>

Churches have an opportunity to seek to understand these deep inequalities and the difficulties faced by the 23% of the Welsh population that lives in poverty,<sup>15</sup> ensuring no group in society is left behind so that everyone can prosper in the future. This involves raising this often-hidden issue to the top of our national conversation.

#### 4) *Bridging the generational divide*

A worrying divide noticed by many after the referendum result was the difference in voting choice between the younger generation (18-24) and the older generation (65+). This difference was shown by the fact that 73% of young people voted to stay and 60% of older people voted to leave. Underlying study of these statistics highlights a different value divide in the way these different voter classes perceived the EU, Immigration, and British identity.<sup>16</sup>



Street art painting by famous graffiti artist Banksy in Southampton

British and Irish Bishops at the plenary assembly of the Catholic Bishops of the European Union (COMECE) discussed concerns that young people may feel disenfranchised by the government institutions as the Brexit negotiations get

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, ‘Brexit vote explained: poverty, low skills and lack of opportunities’. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/brexit-vote-explained-poverty-low-skills-and-lack-opportunities> (August 2016)

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, ‘Prosperity without poverty’. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/prosperity-without-poverty> (November 2016)

<sup>16</sup> London School of Economics and Political Science, ‘Mind The Gap: Brexit & the Generational Divide’. Available at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/events/Images/Mind-the-Gap--Brexit-the-Generational-Divide.pdf> (June 2017)

underway<sup>17</sup>. Similarly, the Union of Welsh Independents stated that moving forward, it is crucial that young people feel engaged in the process and that their priorities such as educational/employment opportunities are taken centre stage along with others in the Brexit negotiations.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4) Tackling political disengagement and disaffection

As the UK faces some of its biggest political decisions in a generation, church leaders have emphasized the need of its members and the wider public to be active participants in the democratic process.

In the EU referendum and the 2017 general election, 1 in 4 people did not vote, highlighting a significant democratic deficit in our country. Local council and Welsh Assembly elections have even lower turnouts ranging between 25-50%. This shows a clear lack of engagement and active participation in the political process which can result in political decisions being



BBC news source

made that may not be representative of the entire population. Judith Morris from The Baptist Union of Wales suggested, in an article after the referendum, that churches need to do more to promote rights and freedom to vote to avoid low turn outs in future democratic decisions.<sup>19</sup>

Understanding political disengagement also requires reviewing the nature of political debate in society today. Some felt the EU referendum campaign lacked academic arguments and varied topic discussion. As well, some people felt that false promises were made during the campaign (for example, to fund the NHS with the money saved by leaving the EU), and that this has furthered the cynicism felt by some that politicians cannot be trusted.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.comece.eu/british-and-irish-bishops-on-brexit> (28/10/2016)

<sup>18</sup> <http://annibynwyr.org/commission-to-deal-with-brexit/> The Union of Welsh Independents, Annual meeting at Llanuwchllyn (04/07/2016)

<sup>19</sup> The Baptist Union of Wales, 'After the Referendum'. Available at: <http://www.buw.org.uk/after-the-referendum/> (July 2016)

Interviews with people in the Ebbw Vale as to why they voted to leave gave reasons such as:

- “Britain sends large sums of money to Europe, they send a smaller sum of money back and tell us how to spend it”
- “What has Europe ever done ever done for us, people don’t know their MEPs are”
- “People think that there will be more money for regeneration and job creation, things can’t get any worse” <sup>20</sup>

These statements show there was a feeling amongst people that the political system did not work for them or reach out to them. It is a matter of debate whether the Welsh or UK Governments or the EU itself was at fault for not adequately explaining to citizens the procedures and process of the EU. The concern for churches lies in why people feel disengaged and how it can work at connecting people with political systems and procedures so they can feel participatory citizens in a democracy.

This problem was discussed in June 2017 by church leaders in the Cytûn meeting with European church leaders and the First Minister of Wales. Highlighted was the need for churches to adapt and progress their leadership role to help educate congregations on the recent political developments to facilitate and encourage engagement with our democratic structures.

## 5) Protecting Human Rights legislation

Many churches have highlighted the priority to protect the current human rights legislation and jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights and Council of Europe in the UK. At a joint conference with the Action of Churches Together in Scotland, representatives from various churches in Wales and Cytûn supported giving priority to promote the conditions for human flourishing including the rights to access education, healthcare, family life, justice, security, and peace. <sup>21</sup>

As the UK withdraws from the EU, the UK government has made known its intention for the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union to have an effect no longer in UK law. This charter brings together the essential human rights of everyone living in the European Union. The UK Government has set out in the White Paper on the Great Repeal Bill that EU law will be preserved wherever possible when it is transferred into UK law and that European case law will be preserved too. The loss of this

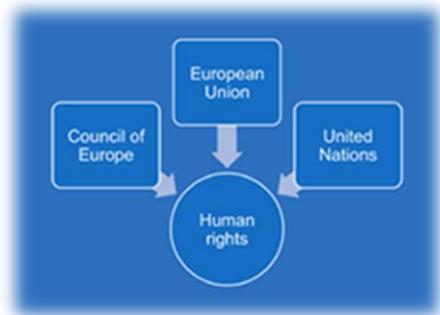


Diagram by the Academy of European Law

<sup>20</sup> Dai Davies, unpublished Interviews with residents in Ebbw Vale. (February 2017)

<sup>21</sup> Action of Churches Together in Scotland, ‘Church Representatives reflect on Brexit’. Available at: [http://www.acts-scotland.org/images/downloads/uncategorised/press\\_release\\_5\\_July\\_2016.pdf](http://www.acts-scotland.org/images/downloads/uncategorised/press_release_5_July_2016.pdf) (July 2016)

Charter does, however, raise some concerns as to the enforceability of human rights, particularly regarding rights not covered by the Human Rights Act 1998 - although the Welsh Government has taken separate action in adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as the basis of all its policy making.<sup>22</sup>

This charter is not to be confused with the European Convention on Human Rights which protects the human rights of people in countries that belong to the Council of Europe. The UK will currently be signed up to the ECHR when it leaves the EU, as afforded under the Human Rights Act (1998), although the Prime Minister in a statement after the London terror attacks, expressed a desire to withdraw from this agreement, replacing the Human Rights Act under the ECHR with a British Bill of Rights<sup>23</sup>.

## 6) Securing EU citizen rights

Cytun's Wales and Europe Working Group was clear in its November 2016 submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on human rights that the status of EU citizens should be swiftly assured by the UK government.<sup>24</sup>

The UK government has so far not given full assurance, as it seeks to resolve questions such as: who qualifies for UK residency? Which family members can stay in the UK? What are their welfare entitlements? The European Commission has been clear in its aim to seek to guarantee the rights of both EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU, as well as their families.<sup>25</sup>



Providing adequate assurance will confirm certainty and stability for 3.5 million EU citizens that currently reside in the UK. Furthermore, guaranteeing these rights would, the Free Churches Group said, show the UK to be principled on the importance of neighbourliness with other EU nations and safeguarding family values.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Welsh Government, 'Rights for children and young people'. Available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/rights/?lang=en> (July 2016)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jun/06/theresa-may-rip-up-human-rights-laws-impede-new-terror-legislation>

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[http://www.cytun.cymru/waleseurope/PDFs/Submission%20to%20joint%20committee%20on%20human%20rights%20\(Welsh%20churches'%20%20working%20party\)%207-10-16.pdf](http://www.cytun.cymru/waleseurope/PDFs/Submission%20to%20joint%20committee%20on%20human%20rights%20(Welsh%20churches'%20%20working%20party)%207-10-16.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> BBC, 'Ministers urged to protect rights of EU citizens in UK'. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-39151755> (March 2017)

<sup>26</sup> Free Church Group, 'Referendum Response'. Available at: <http://www.buw.org.uk/free-churches-group-referendum-response/> ( June 2016)

## 7) Protecting current Welsh Assembly devolution powers

Cytûn’s Wales and Europe Working Party’s response to the Great Repeal Bill White Paper<sup>27</sup>, expressed the view that the departure from the EU should not, in and of itself, lead to alterations in the devolution boundary, as the 2011 Welsh referendum result should be respected in the same way as the 2016 referendum result.



BBC News photo

It expressed concern that difficulties might arise because the current devolution legislation assumes membership of the EU; and that EU legislation assumes compliance by the member state and does not make provision for sub-state legislatures. There is, therefore, an inevitable danger of inadvertent (or deliberate) rebalancing of the devolution settlements during the process of incorporating EU law into UK law, particularly because England and Wales are unified in one legal jurisdiction. However, the Conservative Party in its 2017 general election manifesto stated its commitment to “respect the devolution settlements: no decision-making that has been devolved will be taken back to Westminster”.<sup>28</sup>

Cytûn has been explicit in expressing its concerns on behalf of churches in Wales that any delegated powers should be subject to sufficient oversight by the relevant legislature. Given that the Assembly has the power to delegate powers to Welsh Ministers, it would seem best for the Great Repeal Bill to confirm (for the avoidance of doubt) that the Assembly has legislative competence in devolved areas, and leave the Assembly to delegate powers to Welsh Ministers as it sees fit.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.cytun.cymru/waleseurope/PDFs/Ewrop-CytunEAALC-consultation-05-17.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Conservative Party, General Election 2017 Manifesto. <https://www.conservatives.com/manifesto> (May 2017). The Welsh Conservative Party manifesto 2017 has been removed from the website [www.welshconservatives.com](http://www.welshconservatives.com)

## 8) Guaranteeing Wales EU funding post-Brexit

During and after the referendum both church leaders and political commentators have pointed out that Wales has been a huge net beneficiary of the EU common fund that helps invest in communities across Wales. Approximately €3.1 billion in European structural and investment funds have been allocated to Wales for the period 2014-2020. This funding has been administered into programmes across the public, private and third sectors working to grow economic activity and increase the living standards of all citizens.<sup>29</sup> In the light of the extent of economic disadvantage in Wales, there is much concern – as expressed, for example, by the Evangelical Alliance<sup>30</sup> - that funds might be lost to Wales as the UK withdraws from the EU and that the UK government might not replicate these funds once the withdrawal is complete.

## 9) Clarifying the UK's environmental goals

As the UK progresses into Article 50 negotiations; several church leaders have raised concerns about the need for the UK to retain the environmental goals that have been currently achieved through EU legislation.<sup>31</sup> This will involve assurances that when transferring EU law into UK law, environmental protections from EU regulations and directives will not be watered down in any way.

Exiting the Single Market or the Customs Union may put pressure on areas of habitat, birds and bathing water if EU environmental laws no longer apply. This depends on the economic integration option taken by the UK, and a complete withdrawal may risk significant environmental damage in the UK.<sup>32</sup>

The church believes in responsible stewardship and taking compassionate care of the world; it is therefore important for the church that all adequate protections are given to the environment around us.



Dee Valley, near Llangollen, North East Wales

<sup>29</sup> House of Commons, 'Wales Funding Report: Effect on EU funding for Wales of the UK leaving the EU'. Available at: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CDP-2016-0186#fullreport> (October 2016)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/politics/wales-brexit-blues.cfm>

<sup>31</sup> The United Reformed Church, 'Paper I10 Mission Committee: The 2017 General Election'. Available at: <http://urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/May2017/I10-The-2017-General-Election-MC-May-2017.pdf> (May 2017)

<sup>32</sup> Friends of the earth, 'The implications for UK Environmental Policy of a Vote to Exit the EU'. Available at: [https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/eu\\_referendum\\_environment.pdf](https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/eu_referendum_environment.pdf) (2013)

# Discussion from European Church Councils and Church Leaders

## 1) *Guaranteeing residence rights for all UK and EU citizens*

Church leaders have been in strong agreement of wanting to settle this issue quickly as the Brexit negotiations get underway to provide stability and certainty for all citizens.

A consultation arranged by the Diocese in Europe of the Church of England highlighted the worries of older Christian British expats in France and Spain who were deeply worried that EU medical treatment may be revoked as the UK withdraws from the freedom of movement principle in the single market. Therefore, the group concluded how important it was for the Prime Minister to settle the issue of reciprocal rights for UK nationals as soon as possible after Article 50 has been triggered. Other concerns raised were about the possibility of border restrictions on Gibraltar and Spain as well as the difficulties that may face parishes in expat communities who need to recruit clergy from the UK. <sup>33</sup>

## 2) *UK's commitment to Human Rights*

The issue of safeguarding human rights law has been a common issue on the agenda for both internal UK church meetings and those abroad; with an EU perspective that it is important for the UK to be committed to human rights as any other country around the world.

Both the Quaker Council for European Affairs and the Salvation Army EU affairs have discussed the importance of continued international progress on human rights and that any future agreement between the UK and EU, should be centred on the “promotion of peace, sustainability and equality”. <sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Diocese in Europe, ‘Consultation with Brexit minister’. Available at: <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2017/27-january/news/world/government-hears-brexit-fears-of-european-churches> (January 2017)

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Lane-Quaker Council for European Affairs, , ‘Around Europe’. Available at: <http://www.qcea.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Around-Europe-368-Jun-Aug2016w.pdf> (September 2016)

### 3) Future political engagement with Europe

German Bavarian Lutheran Bishop Heinrich Stroh, of the Council of Protestant Churches in Germany, said in a lecture in June 2016 after the referendum result, that the focus now is how the UK will move forward in its relationship with the EU and how we can still work at engaging with our European partners in a progressive narrative<sup>35</sup>.

He discussed how the narrative should move on in a positive and orderly manner where people can unite in stories of hope and purpose. Furthermore, he called for a public theology, by which churches could guide public debates on social and ethical questions. He concluded that the churches now have a special commitment to ensure a peaceful Europe, particularly for the next generation.

The Conference of European Churches expressed similar concerns by calling upon church leaders to use the referendum to ask fundamental questions as to how future political engagement with Europe will be formed. This involves defining what our faith perspective is in the EU and how we essentially interact in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.<sup>36</sup>

A good example of ensuring a positive relationship post-Brexit between Wales and Europe can be noted from the building of twinning programmes that Welsh towns have with European settlements around Europe. For example, the North Wales town of Llandudno has hugely benefited from the twinning relationships with the French town Wormhout with regular cultural visits for both school

children and members of the public who wish to engage in fellowship and friendship with the French counterpart. In the light of Brexit, churches could take a lead in ensuring local communities renew their relationship with their European counterparts. This would help ensure that the slogan “We are leaving the European Union but not Europe” is realised through historical/cultural relationships in no way being tarnished by the political decision.<sup>37</sup>



Flags of Wormhout, France and Europe at the 2009 Victoria Extravaganza. (Photograph by Noel Walley)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/german-bishop-condemns-rhetoric-of-crisis-in-europe>

<sup>36</sup> CEC, ‘What future for Europe? Reaffirming the European project as building a community of values: An open letter of CEC to churches and partner organisations in Europe and an invitation to dialogue and consultation’. Available at: [http://www.ceceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1GB2016\\_Doc15-Open-letter-Future-of-Europe.pdf](http://www.ceceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1GB2016_Doc15-Open-letter-Future-of-Europe.pdf) (June 2016)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid 2

#### 4) *Respecting the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland*

European church leaders have expressed a great anxiety over the possible implications for the 1998 Good Friday Agreement as Northern Ireland leaves the EU along with the UK. When the UK leaves the EU, Northern Ireland will become an external border of the EU and land border with the bloc. Both parts of Ireland have benefited hugely from the free movement across the border and removal of checkpoints since the 1998 agreement was signed which marked the end of the 30 years of sectarian conflict.

At the European Churches CEOs “consultation on the future of Europe”; it was discussed how the EU was a very important part of the peace process. The Methodist Church in Ireland emphasized that in any future relationship forged between the UK and the EU; Ireland ought to be given special region status to protect the Good Friday Agreement. Similar views were expressed in the Catholic Church Autumn Plenary Assembly (COMECE) with Irish Bishops such as Noel Treanor (Bishop of Down & Connor Belfast) stating the political discussion of a hard or soft border between the Ireland nations is causing a significant amount of uncertainty and worry for church members.

With this concern highlighted, it is important that churches in Wales work together at helping our partners in Ireland and Northern Ireland to seek reassurance that any future agreement made by the UK and the EU will not in any way negatively impact the lives of those in either part of Ireland.



Map source from University of Manitoba

# Ways forward for Churches in Wales

## 1) *Combatting racism and hate crimes*

In the light of church leaders' statements, churches will wish to continue to encourage their members to challenge incidences of racism and hate crimes and report them to the appropriate channels. They will also wish to ensure that all parts of society are welcomed with kindness and hospitality.

To help break down the divides in communities than can perpetuate an anti-immigrant atmosphere, churches will need to bring together different parts of communities and as the United Reformed Church states: "Build Bridges" for people to understand and respect one another.<sup>38</sup>

In response to the rise in hate crimes over the past year, the church has a profound responsibility as peacemakers to be a voice of love, inclusion, and compassion. This involves further promoting the gospel values to respect others, offer hospitality to strangers and love thy neighbour.<sup>39</sup>

A great example of initiatives to fulfil these aims is the Church of England's "Hatebusters and neighbour lovers" strategy; where initiatives were undertaken across England to help address the bad attitudes and hate attacks. These initiatives included:

*-Love Your Neighbour events-* were held to bring people of different faiths together to join in mutual support and pledge to combat racism.

*-Promotion materials-* such as booklets, safety pins and post cards were used through the country for events, rallies and public forums to help facilitate positive conversations.

*-Social media campaigns-* amongst which a community led and police supported social



*"Churches in the UK need, now more than ever, to ask themselves: are we able to lay aside our differences to come together to tackle the evils of this world" Rev Aled Edwards CEO of Churches Together in Wales at the Brexit Edinburgh Conference.*

<sup>38</sup> United Reformed Church, General Assembly Meeting, Resolution 50, p.29. (July 2016)

<sup>39</sup> Juddith Morris: Baptist Union of Wales, 'After the referendum'. Available at: <http://www.buw.org.uk/after-the-referendum/> (July 2016)

media initiative in Manchester was successful at promoting acts of kindness and promoting small events under the hashtag #WeStandTogether.<sup>40</sup>

## 2) *Bringing people together to build a fairer and more equal society*

Churches will wish to consider how to continue campaigning on advocacy issues to protect the rights of those most vulnerable in society. Listening and bringing people together in the community will be crucial to help ensure collective action can be undertaken to help address inequality and poverty in society. Furthermore, churches can reaffirm their values of diversity and multiculturalism by bringing different parts of the community together to build bridges in people's understanding and respect for one another. Making sure communities across Wales are tightly knit together in solidarity and support for one another despite the socio, political, religious, or economic background will help create an environment where communities can tackle problems together with an even bigger impact.

A great example of this can be seen from the actions of the Church Urban Fund-Near Neighbours Initiative in England. This initiative works at bringing people together from different parts of the communities and helping them get to know each other better, building relationships of trusts and how they can collaborate to improve the local community they share. The objects include 1) social interaction: which helps people understand each other better and 2) social action: that encourages people from all faiths to come together for initiatives that improve their local neighbourhood.<sup>41</sup>

Within church congregations, church members could be resourced through reflection, exploration and discussion of theological principles to help renew their commitment to the principles of loving their neighbours and those less fortunate. Furthermore, churches may consider calling upon members to lobby their elected representative for a fairer society in which all people - such as the homeless, asylum seeker and disabled – are represented. This would enable members to take the first steps toward bridging the inequalities that exist in society today.

## 3) *Understanding the Brexit vote*

The decision by Wales to leave the EU was a huge shock to many and brought up more questions about the deep divides in society than it answered. Something the statistics do

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<sup>40</sup> True Vision, 'UK police launch #WeStandTogether campaign to bring communities together' Available at: [http://www.report-it.org.uk/uk\\_police\\_launch\\_westandtogether\\_campaign\\_to\\_br](http://www.report-it.org.uk/uk_police_launch_westandtogether_campaign_to_br)

<sup>41</sup> Church Urban Fund, 'Faiths Working Together Toolkit: Connecting for the common good. Available at: <https://www.cuf.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=68855421-2e27-47bf-9289-753be001b393> (2015)



The Quakers have had much success holding public forums using its toolkit for having a range of difficult political conversations. To help facilitate political discussion, it would be very useful for those in church leadership to view this toolkit to help advise clergy and members how to have a productive and constructive conversation.<sup>43</sup> Another useful resource to view is by the Mission Theology Advisory Group which reflects on the referendum debate and how the truth is crucial to informing political debate.<sup>44</sup> Reflecting on these resources will hopefully aid congregation members to undergo positive debate in an all-encompassing dialogue rather than an intense argument between two sides of a coin. For an issue such as Brexit, these resources will be very useful and effective at helping churches provide the best possible political conversation.

### ***5) Tackling political disengagement and disaffection***

As highlighted earlier in the report political disengagement and disaffection is a huge problem in Wales today and something that the church has given serious priority to since the referendum result. Churches may wish to consider their potential to be the mediator between people and politics to ensure representatives (local councillors, Assembly members and members of Parliament) work for all. This involves the church helping politicians to connect with those parts of society that feel disengaged from the political process and may not be informed as to how political decisions affect them and their communities. A good example of this problem raised by the referendum result was that many of the areas that voted leave in Wales had received the highest levels of EU structural funding. This showed a huge disconnect in how people perceive the benefits from the initiatives undertaken by governments. Understanding this problem will be crucial to ensure future citizen initiatives and projects are successful at fostering known personal benefits to a majority of the community.

To help keep its members engaged and updated on the Brexit negotiations, The Church of England has created an online blog called 'Reimagining Europe'. This blog creates an online space for Christian reflections on the complex issues about the future relationship with Europe. The blog posts do not reflect any political position but rather arise from a Christian ethical perspective to ensure that voices are heard from all margins of the debate. As well, the website has its own Twitter account to help further reach members of the public and younger people who are more likely to use social media.

Adopting a strategy such as this could be hugely beneficial for churches across Wales to help engage congregation members, and those who may be interested in viewing the developments from a Christian ethical perspective, in the Brexit negotiations.

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<sup>43</sup> Quakers, 'Toolkit for Action: Having Difficult Conversations'. Available at: <https://quaker-prod.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/fe5d042898d88935c2767b961535a879c89ea14b95a5796df50556252d8c> (2016)

<sup>44</sup> Hope News Church of England, 'Brexit Speaking and Truth Listening'. Available at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/3953872/see-brexit-speaking-and-listening-truth-website.docx> (2016)

## Conclusion - A leading advocate for a peaceful post-Brexit

Cytûn will continue to represent churches across Wales in responding to the policies adopted by the Welsh Assembly and the UK Parliament. As the negotiations continue over the next two years, it could be more important than ever that all churches continue to raise their voices regarding the ethical principles that should underlie such policies.

Comments by many Welsh politicians suggest a need for the devolved institutions in Wales to work even harder to make sure their views and interests, and those of the people they represent, are listened to by the UK government during the Brexit negotiations. Churches across Wales can, if they wish, help the Welsh Assembly achieve a higher profile for the concerns of people in Wales, not least through continued engagement with MPs in local constituencies.

This referendum has provided a challenge that has never quite been seen before with the evident divides drawn in towns, villages, cities, and communities across Wales. Clearly, the result has shown a real need to reassess how our democracy can best represent all its citizens and unite people in hope than fear of the unknown. Churches across Wales can play a crucial role to help bring people together in all communities, being essentially a peacemaker in its ability to be a voice of a voice of love, hope, inclusion, and compassion.

Looking across to Europe, churches across Wales will wish to continue to forge strong bonds and friendships with their European partners to ensure that we continue to follow our values of respecting others different to ourselves, loving our neighbours and always being hospitable.

Building on the first year's work through Cytûn, the churches in Wales have a great opportunity to be leading advocates for a peaceful post-Brexit.

