



# Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales

## European Parliament elections 2019

### – key issues

## 1. Climate Change

The latest report of the UN International Panel on Climate Change, issued in October 2018<sup>1</sup>, emphasised that to avoid profoundly dangerous consequences, the world's human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases must fall by 2030 by about 45% from the level they were at in 2010. Action cannot be postponed; the scientists' clear message is that humanity faces an emergency.

The scientific consensus is that the economic costs of dealing with climate change, both by cutting emissions and by adapting to the consequences, become ever-greater the later we leave it. The sooner we change, the more likely we are to have a successful and prosperous economy. Ignoring climate change simply pushes unmanageable costs onto our children.

Current progress falls well short of these recommendations.

- Between 1990 and 2015, emissions in Wales fell 19% - well short of the target set by the Welsh Government some years ago of cutting Wales' emissions by 40% by 2020. The figures exclude emissions from flying and shipping
- Welsh Ministers have now set a statutory target under the Environment (Wales) Act that Wales' greenhouse gas emissions should fall by 45% by 2030 compared to Wales' emissions in 1990<sup>2</sup>. This is a significantly weaker target than the 45% cut on the lower level of emissions in 2010, recommended by the UN Panel.

Climate change is already hitting the world's poor, for instance through extra flooding, drought and famine. Cytûn member organisation Christian Aid sees tackling climate change as "the biggest challenge we face"<sup>3</sup>.

Christians also have a duty to care for the world, which they believe to be God's Creation, but tackling climate change is also a matter of self-preservation. Much of Wales' population is vulnerable to flooding (whether from the sea or from rivers), and no country will be able to insulate itself from the international chaos that dangerous climate change would bring<sup>4</sup>.

The European Union has played a significant role in driving action so far, for instance through its carbon-trading scheme, by changing product standards in the Single Market to insist they become

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/> The Panel is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change.

<sup>2</sup> As recommended in December 2017 by the UK's Committee on Climate Change -

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/building-low-carbon-economy-wales-setting-welsh-carbon-targets/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/campaigns/climate-change-campaign>

<sup>4</sup> The Welsh Government set out some of the implications in a draft climate change adaptation plan in 2018 - <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2018-12/climate-change-adaptation-delivery-plan-for-wales.pdf> Cytûn submitted a response to this consultation, the outcome of which is awaited.

more energy-efficient, and through environmental regulations. Wales and the UK outside the EU would need to establish its own ways of dealing with the challenge.

## Agriculture and climate change

The issues that climate change raises for Welsh farming are less high-profile than the current issues around Brexit but are fundamental.

First, farming will have to adapt to the changing climate. For instance, within two decades, summer droughts of the sort seen in Wales in 2018 are projected to be common. During that summer, grass did not grow for a couple of months, posing serious challenges for livestock farmers. There might, however, be opportunities for new crops. For instance, wine-growing could increase.

Second, agriculture currently accounts for something over 10% of Wales' greenhouse gas emissions. Livestock farming has high emissions (eg via methane from animals' digestive systems). These are not easy to reduce without reducing the amount of livestock on Welsh farms and switching to other forms of agriculture. Welsh Government's consultation *Brexit and Our Land*<sup>5</sup> proposed that Government payments to farmers after we leave the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy should encourage such a shift.

Other changes that might be required of farming to tackle climate change include planting additional woodland to absorb carbon from the atmosphere. Soils will need to be managed in new ways to cope with more extreme weather and to restore soil carbon.<sup>6</sup>

## Questions for candidates

1. If elected, will you press for more action on climate change as an emergency?
2. Will you give priority to cutting emissions by at least 45% from their 2010 levels by 2030, as urged by the UN International Panel on Climate Change report of October 2018?
3. Should the UK and Wales continue to follow EU climate change standards and targets after leaving the EU? If we establish our own system, how should it differ from the EU's?
4. Do you agree with the Welsh Government's suggested changes to agricultural support after Brexit to encourage farmers to contribute to tackling climate change? Do you believe that the EU's Common Agricultural Policy should be reformed in a similar way?

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<sup>5</sup> [https://gov.wales/support-welsh-farming-after-brexit?\\_ga=2.231953311.1233021821.1533113594-1005977374.1461854342](https://gov.wales/support-welsh-farming-after-brexit?_ga=2.231953311.1233021821.1533113594-1005977374.1461854342) Cytûn responded to this consultation whose outcome is awaited.

<sup>6</sup> <https://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/posts/good-soils-increase-resilience-welsh-farms-during-weather-extremes>