
CYTÛN POLICY BULLETIN

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Churches called to act 90 days before international climate conference

With only 90 days to go until [COP26](#) - the critical international climate negotiations which the UK government will host and chair in Glasgow in November - a broad coalition of Christian denominations and charities is calling on all churches to hold a local [Climate Sunday](#) and commit to effective action themselves, before talks begin. So far, more than 1,700 churches across Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland are taking part and hundreds more are planning to do so.

This widespread take up of the initiative across diverse church traditions indicates a growing commitment by churches to act on climate change, and to demand that governments act too. The Climate Sunday Initiative wants to see the UK and Welsh Governments strengthen domestic policies before the international conference, to get the UK back on track with its own emissions targets. It is also calling on the UK Government, in its role as chair of COP26, to seek faster and deeper global emissions cuts and the delivery of long-promised finance to help poorer countries adapt to the climate disruption which they are already experiencing.

The Climate Sunday initiative is the broadest-based church response to the climate crisis in the UK in the run-up to COP26. Participating churches are asked to do three things:

- Arrange to hold a climate-focused service to explore the science and theology around addressing human-caused climate disruption and [register your service](#) by Sept 5th;
- commit to taking ongoing practical action themselves. Most churches in Wales are committing to progress through [EcoChurch](#) or [LiveSimply](#) (run by Cytûn members Arocha UK and CAFOD respectively);
- sign a joint call for the government to act - the [Time is Now Declaration](#).

The [Climate Sunday website](#) contains a 'toolbox' of free resources, and enables churches to register their commitment. Many are 'speaking up' for the first time joining

other members of the public, organisations and other faith groups in signing the Time is Now declaration. Many are also adding their voice to the [Climate.Cymru](#) call for 10,000 Welsh voices to be heard in COP26.



A key milestone of the campaign before COP26 will be the [nations' Climate Sunday event in](#)

[Glasgow Cathedral on Sunday 5 September 2021](#). This will celebrate the commitments made by churches so far, and present the governments with a list of those commitments and the signatories of all churches who have signed the Time is Now Declaration. The final total of participating churches and commitments will be presented to the governments at the COP conference itself.

SENEDD CROSS-PARTY GROUP ON FAITH RE-ESTABLISHED



Picture: Darren Millar MS (with the permission of those pictured)

At the start of each new Senedd, it is necessary to re-establish the Cross-Party Groups, and among the first to do so in the 2021-26 Senedd was the [Cross-Party Group on Faith](#). Darren Millar MS was elected as Chair and Mike Hedges MS as Vice-Chair, and it was good to see MSs present from all four parties represented in the Senedd. Among them (left of middle row in the photo) was Peredur Owen Griffiths MS, who was a member of Cytûn staff until being elected as Plaid Cymru's regional member for South East Wales in the May election. Several other newly elected MSs were present or had sent their apologies, so we expect to see the Cross-Party Group go from strength to strength.

Speaking at this inaugural meeting was Mari McNeill, Head of Christian Aid Wales (fourth in the bottom row but one) whose topic was *God and the climate emergency: Faith communities and environmental stewardship*, and all present were in agreement that this is a core issue for the work of all faith communities over the coming years. More on this topic can be found on the other pages of this Bulletin.

Cross Party Group on Faith meetings (like those of other cross-party groups) are open to the public, including everyone regardless of their beliefs. The group's secretary is Jim Stewart who can be contacted via jimstewartwales@gmail.com. Although cross-party groups have no formal role in the activities of the Senedd or the Welsh Government, they enable politicians of all parties to receive input, negotiate and (sometimes) publish reports or write to the Government on matters of concern to them. The presence of members of the public as full participants in the discussion ensures that a wide range of voices can be heard. The Cross-Party Group on Faith, for example, includes not only people from the whole range of Christian churches, but also representation from the Interfaith Council for Wales and adherents of many different religions in Wales.

Cytûn also ensures representation from the Christian churches on a number of other cross-party groups relevant to our work, including the [Cross Party Group on Hospice and Palliative Care](#). During the previous Senedd we were also involved in cross-party groups on Bereavement and Funerals; Poverty; and Problem Gambling, but those groups have not yet been re-established in the new Senedd.

Welsh Government funds community facilities including two church centres

During June, £1.4m of funding was allocated to 12 community projects by the Welsh Government's [Community Facilities Programme](#). It helps well-used community facilities to improve their long-term sustainability, providing opportunities for local people to improve their day-to-day lives.

The latest projects receiving up to £250,000 of funding are: Welsh Islamic Cultural Association, Swansea, for the renovation of a building to create new classrooms; Mumbles Community Association, Swansea; Aberporth Village Hall and Recreation Ground, Ceredigion; Cwmni'r Frân, Gwynedd; and the Centre for African Entrepreneurship, Swansea.

Amongst those receiving up to £25,000 are: All Saints Church Newtown, Powys, for a new extension to the church to provide accessible toilets, kitchen and improved access to main building to create a community hub; and Valle Crucis Mission Area, Denbighshire, for accessible toilets, a new kitchen, thermal entrance doors and upgrade of heating system to enable the centre to be more energy efficient.

New UK fund for community facilities in Wales

People across Wales will have the chance to become owners of at-risk local pubs, theatres, post offices, sports grounds and corner shops with the launch of the UK Government's Community Ownership Fund, which will see more than £7m set aside for projects in Wales.



The £150m fund is part of the UK Government's plan to build back better from the pandemic by giving communities the power to save local institutions when they are under threat.

Details were [published](#) on 15 July of how voluntary and community organisations across Wales and the rest of the UK will be able to bid for up to £250,000 matched funding to buy or take over local

assets and run them.

In exceptional cases, up to £1 million will be available to establish sports clubs or help to buy sports grounds at risk of being lost without intervention - meaning a group of supporters could become the Chairman and board at their local team.

A total of £7.1 million has been set aside for community projects in Wales, whether they be sporting and leisure facilities, cinemas and theatres, music venues, museums, galleries, parks, pubs, post office buildings and shops.

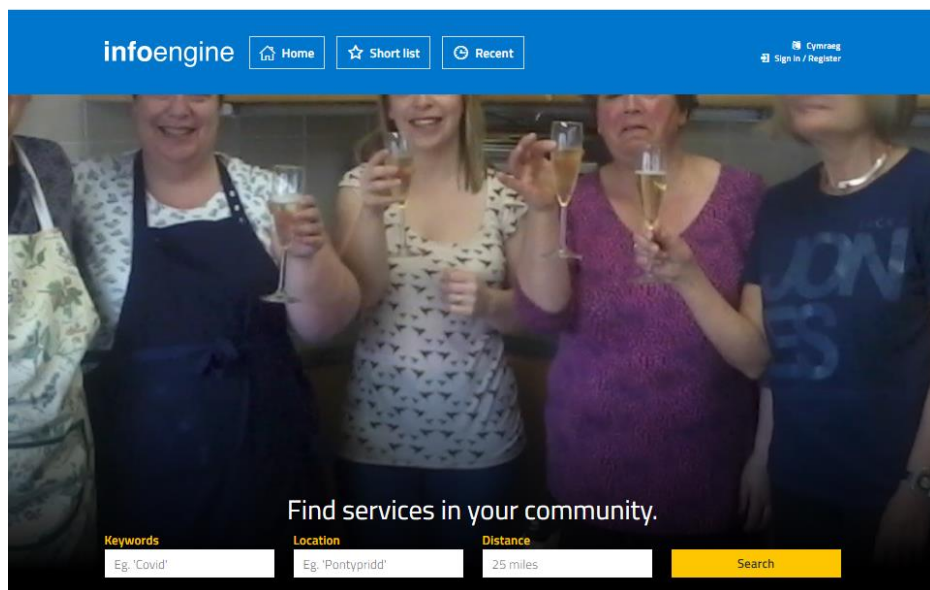
Secretary of State for Wales, Simon Hart MP, said: "The funds will play an important role in levelling up and strengthening our Union as we build back better from the pandemic. I encourage people and communities across Wales to take advantage of the opportunities the Community Ownership Fund provides in their local areas."

The announcement follows major investment and action from the UK Government to level up opportunity and prosperity across all areas of the UK, including through the £4.8 billion [Levelling Up Fund](#) and the £220 million [Community Renewal Fund](#).

The UK Government will undertake a series of information events with communities, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and local authorities in all parts of the UK. The fund will run over four years (until 2024/2025). There will be multiple bidding rounds. The first opens on 15 July and closes on 13 August.

[The Community Ownership Fund prospectus is available here.](#)

Publicising your community services to your locality



[Infoengine](#) is the online directory of third sector services in Wales. infoengine highlights a wide variety of voluntary and community services that are able to provide information and support so that anyone searching it can make an informed choice.

Infoengine is provided by [Third Sector Support Wales](#), a partnership of County Voluntary Councils and Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

It will be especially useful for local churches who wish to advertise particular groups or activities which are open to the public – such as a carers' club, a bereavement support group, food banks, services for those

in debt, and many other such activities. The information is available to everyone through the bilingual website, and through the complementary service [dewis.wales](#) all the information is available to those working in health and social care. This means that individuals can access the information themselves or can be referred by someone else.

A number of services provided by churches and other faith communities are already on Infoengine, as are many activities run by other organisations in church buildings and other places of worship. However, there are many more which are not yet included! You can go to the website to submit your own information. It will be checked prior to publication. You can update the information at any time, and you will be asked every six months to confirm that it is still accurate.

Ending physical punishment of children in Wales

The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 will come into force on Monday 21 March 2022. By law, parents and other adults acting as a parent will no longer be able to physically punish children in Wales. The Welsh Government has created a [video](#) that explains the legislation. There are other useful resources on its website, including a [briefing note](#) for stakeholders and [timelines](#) and information about developments in other countries.

A public campaign to raise awareness of the new law is under way. Online advertising has begun and external advertising - such as advertising on buses, at service stations and advertising van in holiday areas - will run during the summer school holidays. Then in September there will be TV and radio advertising before the campaign peaks in January and March 2022. Engagement will continue throughout this time.

[Parenting. Give it time](#) supports the legislation by promoting positive parenting techniques, with advice from parenting practitioners, professionals and experts on managing behaviour positively and without resorting to physical punishment. It has also developed additional content to support parents, particularly through the Covid restrictions. You can follow *Parenting. Give it time* on Facebook and Instagram.

ONLY A HANDFUL OF NEW LAWS IN THE SENEDD – BUT PLENTY AT WESTMINSTER

When Mick Antoniw MS, Counsel General in the Welsh Government, [presented](#) the Welsh Government's legislative programme to the Senedd on July 6, he announced only four new laws for Wales to be introduced in the year 2021-22. The four are:

- [The Social Partnership and Public Procurement \(Wales\) Bill](#), which will give a statutory basis to the Social Partnership Council (Welsh Government, trades unions and employers) and give it the important responsibility of drawing up policies on procurement in the public sector, including its ethical aspects (such as ensuring no slavery in the supply chain).
- [The Tertiary Education and Research \(Wales\) Bill](#), which will establish a new commission for higher and further education and funding research in Wales.
- A [Welsh Taxes Bill](#) which will enable changing rates of devolved taxes by subordinate legislation.
- The [Agriculture \(Wales\) Bill](#), which will replace the temporary arrangements for Wales in the UK [Agriculture Act 2020](#) for making payments to farmers following departure from the EU.

There will also be a bill to [consolidate legislation pertaining to Wales regarding the historic environment](#) (including listed buildings). As this is an area that affects many churches, Cytûn and our member denominations' property officers will be keeping an eye on this legislation.

Mr Antoniw expounded two reasons why the list was so brief. Firstly, Welsh Government legal officers are having to spend a great deal of time introducing subordinate legislation. Some of this relates to the continuing effects of leaving the EU and the Coronavirus. It is also in order to implement four acts passed by previous parliaments which require extensive subordinate legislation to be implemented These are:

- The [Renting Homes \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) as subsequently amended, which will affect all residential landlords and tenants in Wales, including homes let by churches and also (possibly) homes for ministers and church workers. Cytûn is co-ordinating discussions about this with Welsh Government.
- The [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021](#). Following a series of consultations this year, in which churches took an active part, it is expected that the final version of the new curriculum will be published by the end of 2021 to be implemented in primary schools from September 2022 and secondary schools year by year from September 2023 (or from 2022 in year 7 where a school so chooses).
- The [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#), which is being implemented gradually from September 2021.
- The [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#) in preparation for local elections in Wales in May 2022 and the operation of the councils elected at that time.

The second reason given is that so much legislation before Westminster at the moment relates to matters which are (wholly or partly) devolved to Wales. This means that Welsh Government needs to examine carefully the effect on devolved legislation, and the Senedd needs to consider whether to give its consent (although the UK Parliament can proceed to legislate even without such consent). Welsh Government has already recommended to the Senedd that it should withhold consent from five proposed laws currently being debated in Westminster:

- The [Subsidy Control Bill](#), as it will give a unilateral power to the UK Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to refer any business subsidies by Welsh Government to be examined the Competitions and Markets Authority.
- The [Skills and Post-16 Education Bill](#), as it will place duties on further education institutions in Wales which have previously been under devolved authority only, if they educate students from England.
- The [Advanced Research and Invention Agency \(ARIA\) Bill](#), as it reserves to Westminster the Senedd and Welsh Government's current powers with regard to advanced research and invention, and because Welsh Government will have no right to nominate any members to ARIA when it takes responsibility for this policy area.

- The [Professional Qualifications Bill](#), as it constrains the Senedd and Welsh Government's current powers regarding professional qualifications in devolved areas (such as education), by linking them to Westminster's powers with regard to international trade (which are not devolved).
- The [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill](#), as it restricts rights of protest and creates new offences regarding unauthorised encampments – clauses which could have a significant effect on gypsies and travellers. The [Quakers in Britain](#) and a number of other organisations are campaigning against these clauses.

Along with considering these bills, Westminster MPs are also debating a number of other bills which relate to matters about which churches are deeply concerned. Amongst these are:

- The [Nationality and Borders Bill](#) implements the UK Government's [new plan for immigration](#). Amongst other things, it restricts the rights of those seeking asylum, especially if they arrive in the UK through unofficial routes. A number of Cytûn member churches are concerned about this bill. The Quakers, for example, are members of the [Together with Refugees](#) coalition; the Methodists, Baptist Union of GB and United Reformed Church have published a [briefing paper](#); and the Church in Wales is also working in this area.
- The [Environment Bill](#), which establishes new arrangements for environmental governance in the UK following departure from the European Union. Although environment is a devolved area, the Welsh Government's [programme for government 2021-26](#) does not include plans to establish a devolved arrangement, so it appears that the new UK structures will apply to Wales also.
- The [Leasehold Reform \(Ground Rents\) Bill](#), which will prevent the charging of ground rent for new homes, fulfilling a promise made by Welsh and UK Governments following the [Law Commission's report](#) in yn 2020. Welsh Government is recommending that the Senedd Cymru consent to this bill. It will not, however, apply to homes which are already charged ground rent – a long-running sore in Wales over many generations.

The paid and voluntary officers of churches and Christian organisations in Wales who work in the field of public affairs meet regularly in the Laser Group to monitor all this legislation, and the group has noted that it will be necessary to give more attention to developments in Westminster in the coming years. An equivalent group across Great Britain, the Radar group, meets monthly. Both groups are intended to enable the sharing of information; it is a matter for individual denominations and organisations to decide whether they wish to campaign on particular matters.

A new duty on churches to protect the public?

A number of Cytûn member churches responded to a [consultation on the proposed new Protect Duty](#) on those responsible for locations open to the public to protect the public from the dangers of terrorism, noting the difficulties that an onerous duty could cause for places of worship. In a [written answer](#) in Westminster, Kevin Foster, a junior minister in the Home Office, acknowledged these comments, and said that the Government would take the points made into consideration.

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Hapus i gyfathrebu yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg.

Happy to communicate in Welsh and English



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