

CYTŪN POLICY BULLETIN

APRIL - MAY 2025



CYTŪN EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT TEACHING THE HUMANITIES IN WALES

Following announcements about major changes to the teaching of the Humanities at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, and the start of a consultation about the ending teaching of a number of Humanities subjects at Cardiff University, Cytûn's trustees decided to write to the two Vice-Chancellors, [Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol](#) (which co-ordinates Welsh-medium teaching in tertiary education), [Medr](#) (the tertiary education oversight body for Wales) and relevant Senedd members.



Churches in Wales are warning that 'tragic' cuts to Theology and the Humanities could erase Christian studies from Welsh universities.

In an open letter to key figures in Welsh education and government, Churches Together in Wales (Cytûn) argues that proposed cuts to teaching and research in these fields could 'devastate' Welsh culture and weaken the ability to teach and study key subjects in the Welsh language.

It comes as the University of Wales Trinity Saint David is closing its humanities campus in Lampeter, moving teaching to Carmarthen with significant reductions, particularly in theology. Meanwhile, Cardiff University is scaling back most humanities teaching, including history, ancient languages, and music.

The [letter](#) supports comments made publicly by two members of Cytûn churches with extensive experience in the field on the *Bwrw Golwg* programme (Radio Cymru). Professor D. Densil Morgan said, 'It seems that there won't be a single theological department in a university in Wales at all - it's a tragedy. Where you had Cardiff, Lampeter and Bangor offering the whole range of theology, Biblical studies, doctrinal studies, Church history, philosophy of religion - the departments have effectively closed.' Dr Rosa Hunt said, 'These developments are terrible for the academic subject of Religious Studies in

Wales. Considering the role of religion in shaping Wales and our diverse world today, it would be a "disaster" to lose this important area of study for students and academics alike.'

Cytûn's letter goes on to say: *We firmly believe that a good understanding of religion is extremely important in terms of fostering mutual understanding from the local level to the global level, and academic studies in all areas of theology and religious studies are essential to create such an understanding.*

But our concern extends beyond the field of theology and religion, because of the savage cuts in the other Humanities. Teaching these subjects - History, Ancient History and Languages, Modern Languages and Music - is key to enabling Wales to take its place within European culture. Losing education in these subjects through the medium of Welsh would weaken our identity and imperil the ability of future generations to use the language in these fields of learning, as well as losing the necessary pipeline of qualified students who could teach Humanities and Languages in Welsh medium schools. We ask, therefore, that you re-think the implementation of such cuts.

Cytûn's letter has attracted attention from the media in Wales and across the UK, including [Golwg360](#), [Cenn@d](#), [Church Times](#), [Nation.Cymru](#) and [Premier Radio](#).

In view of the response received through the media and directly, Cytûn will continue to seek clarity on some specific issues, especially about teaching through the medium of Welsh, and the future of the libraries and extensive resources that have been collected in the universities. It will also work with its member churches and organisations to open a wider discussion about teaching in the Humanities at all educational levels in Wales.



Cross-Party Group on Faith

Faith in Universities: the impact of higher education cuts on religious studies in Wales

Guest speakers: Dr Abdul-Azim Ahmed and colleagues to be confirmed from the Department of Religious and Theological Studies at Cardiff University

Wednesday 2 April 2025, 12.00 – 13.15

Conference Rooms C & D, Tŷ Hywel

This will be an in-person meeting with hybrid facilities available. Details below:

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 355 673 247 009 Passcode: EkeCTA

For further information or to reserve a space, email Jim Stewart on jimstewartwales@gmail.com

NEW ECO CHURCH SURVEY LAUNCHED

Now in its ninth year, [Eco Church](#) from Arocha UK (a member of Cytûn) supports churches across England and Wales in taking meaningful action for climate and nature. At its core is a practical survey that guides churches, step by step, on their journey towards change.

The newly launched survey offers greater flexibility, ensuring that every church, regardless of size, setting, or resources, can take action and make a real impact. A key highlight of the new survey is its inclusive pathways, designed to support a wider range of church settings. Whether you're part of a cathedral, a chapel with little or no land, or one without a building, the updated survey ensures everyone can get involved.

It features expanded survey categories, strengthening Worship and Teaching. This category now includes vital topics such as eco-anxiety, lament, and pastoral care, equipping churches with resources to navigate these pressing issues within their communities. This updated survey reflects the urgency and complexity of the climate and biodiversity crises, and is designed to match the scale of action needed. It stretches churches further than the old survey, yet still provides a framework that's both ambitious and achievable.

Open a survey on the Eco Church platform to get started ([click here to login or create your new account](#)). For a summary of the survey, see the [Eco Church survey overview page](#) and resource: ['The Eco Church survey at a glance.'](#)

The survey is currently available only in English, but a short introductory video in Welsh can be found [here](#) and a suite of other EcoChurch resources is available in Welsh [here](#). A video about two recent award-winning churches from Wales can be viewed [here](#).

LOVE YOUR BURIAL GROUND WEEK 7-15 JUNE 2025

Burial grounds, as well as being important sacred spaces for human remembrance, are often also havens for wildlife, free of artificial fertilisers and abounding with nature. As part of Love Your Burial Ground Week, [Churches Count on Nature](#) focuses on the brilliant wildlife to be found in churchyards and chapel yards. It is a joint initiative promoted by Caring for God's Acre, the Church of England, the Church in Wales and A Rocha UK. It can be part of working towards an EcoChurch award, or a standalone activity.

Churches of all denominations who have a burial ground can take part, and all events during the week can be registered via the link above to raise the profile of these wonderful spaces.

Housing Justice Cymru and Bevan Foundation advocate creating homes on unused faith-owned spaces.



Record numbers of households in Wales are living in temporary accommodation – 1 in every 215 households. Many of them will be living in accommodation that is unsuitable for their needs for prolonged periods of time. What they need is a secure, affordable home. However, there is a shortage of social and community homes and the delivery of new homes is slow.

One of a number of barriers to delivery is the availability of sites in the places where homes are needed the most. Much of the

land identified in Local Development Plans is unsuitable, is not in areas of high need, or is not being released for development by the owner. Land cost is also the biggest variable in development, dictating the viability of many schemes.

[A new report](#) by the [Bevan Foundation](#), [Cwmpas](#) and Cytûn member [Housing Justice Cymru](#) considers alternative ways of finding more sites for social and community homes. It explores the housing potential of faith-owned spaces which may no longer be viable for their current purpose or in many cases already sit unused – something which Housing Justice Cymru have advocated for and enabled through their Faith in Affordable Housing Project.

The author, Wendy Dearden, estimates that faith-owned land and buildings in Wales have the potential to deliver more than 1,300 homes through the redevelopment of unused places of worship and associated buildings and create nearly 5,500 homes through the release of faith-owned land holdings.

The focus of the report is on the potential of these spaces to provide homes, but there are wider benefits of finding a new use. Once they lose their purpose, disrepair and dereliction can soon follow. This in turn can lead to negative community perceptions and instigate a cycle of decline.

The report examines the practical difficulties that lie in the way of realising such a vision, and makes recommendations on how to make more use of these spaces through a shift in public policy, funding and practice. Recommendations include:

- establishing an organisation to act as a strategic third-party to act as a holding agent for spaces with the potential for housing redevelopment
- a pan-Wales consultancy team to establish the outline feasibility of opportunities and provide guidance to property managers and development teams
- strategic contracting to spread the risk of more complex redevelopment opportunities.
- flexibility in the consent of redevelopment of spaces, whilst working alongside older, often historically significant buildings and in Welsh Government standards for social homes when schemes involve the redevelopment of existing spaces
- enhanced capital funding be made available by Welsh Government for affordable housing schemes which repurpose existing spaces
- a joined-up approach by the public sector to support the potential of unused spaces.

Picture: Cover of the report showing the redevelopment of the schoolroom at Albany Road Baptist Church, Cardiff.

CHURCHES WORK TO BRING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

The Equality and Social Justice Committee of the Welsh Parliament is currently carrying out an inquiry into [Social Cohesion in Wales](#) - that is, how various groups within the community relate to each other, and how public bodies and others help that to happen.



Churches are at the forefront of this work, and evidence was presented on behalf of [Cytûn](#), the [Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales](#), the [Good Faith partnership](#), and three partnerships that include churches and other organisations - [Dyma Ni](#), [Gwynedd](#), [Llanelli Unites](#), and [Sanctuary Coalition Cymru](#). We are pleased to be able to publish extracts focussing on the work of just two of the dozens of churches referred to in this evidence.

[Canton Uniting Church, Cardiff](#) was formed by combining one Baptist church and two United Reformed churches. The congregation includes people with backgrounds from countries including the USA; the Netherlands; Japan; Hungary; Canada and Nigeria, some of whom are now in leadership positions in the church. The area around the church is very diverse in terms of culture, age, education and income levels. The church is currently looking to establish a new open garden for the neighbourhood to

enjoy, by growing edible plants, and providing a quiet place to rest and relax. There is already a small garden at the side of the church (pictured above left) and the church has won the Eco Church bronze award, which shows its care and concern for the environment.

As well as worshipping on Sundays, the church provides a venue for community activities by the community's best; concerts; groups run by the Council and the NHS; and a branch of Alcoholics Anonymous. The church says, "We are a church that welcomes and enjoys the differences between our members and those who use our facilities. We believe that the continuation of our existence as a church depends in part on practicing and promoting diversity, so that we can be ready for the Kingdom of God."

[Dyma Ni](#), a joint project between [Croeso Menai](#) and Bangor Quakers, supports asylum seekers and refugees in north Wales and helps with their resettlement. It was originally set up to welcome refugees from Ukraine, but after the Home Office started sending other asylum seekers to Gwynedd in 2023, its work expanded. They support the men, who are almost all alone, along with a few families and single women, with food, clothes (donated or from charity shops), household appliances, travel tickets, SIM cards, laptops (refurbished) and other necessities for study, and access to sports facilities, leisure opportunities and informal college sessions.



This work reflects the consistent support of Cytûn churches for Wales becoming a Nation of Sanctuary, an idea campaigned for from the outset by faith groups in Wales, and which is key to promoting social cohesion when the subject of asylum is so controversial in public discourse.

CHURCHES OPPOSE OVERSEAS AID CUTS

A number of Cytûn member churches and organisations have reacted with disappointment and anger to the UK Government's sudden announcement that it intends to [cut spending on aid to the world's poorest countries](#) from 0.5% to 0.3% of UK gross domestic product - a loss of around £5.5bn per year for those countries. The money saved will be diverted to defense spending.

Speaking on *Dros Frecwast* on BBC Radio Cymru, Mari McNeill, Head of Christian Aid in Wales, said that "our biggest concern is of course the human cost,... The news is disappointing," she said. When Labour came to power in Westminster they promised to restore the UK's position in the world to be a reliable partner for developing countries, and this news goes against that." Christian Aid has launched a campaign called [Restore](#), with a petition that can be signed to ask the Government to restore the budget immediately. Christian Aid says *Right now, the climate and debt crises are trapping people in poverty – cuts to UK aid will make this worse. We reject the false choice between defence spending and supporting people in crisis. The UK Government can step up action on poverty without costing the average UK taxpayer. It could make reckless polluters pay for climate action. It could make greedy lenders cancel debts.*

Hope has compelled us to stand up to injustice before. We created the Fairtrade movement, that's benefited farmers worldwide. We pressured the G8 to cancel billions of dollars of debt owed by low-income countries. Together we can harness the unstoppable power of hope again.

Similarly strongly worded statements have been made by [leaders of the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain](#), the chair of [CAFOD](#), the foreign aid and development agency of the Catholic Church, Bishop Stephen Wright; and the Clerk of [Quakers in Britain](#), Paul Parker, who said "this decision literally takes money away from things that save lives and channels it to weapons that destroy them." A number of statements, such as that by the [Chief Executive of CAFOD](#), draw attention to these cuts following the removal of most of the USA's international aid, and that the cuts affect many of the same countries. Welsh Government has emphasised that the UK announcement does not affect the [Wales and Africa](#) programme.

In the March 13 edition of the Union of Welsh Independents' weekly, [Y Tyst](#), there is a pro forma letter in Welsh which local churches can send to their Member of Parliament about the matter.

POLICY BRIEFS

Michael Sheen sparks calls for a Fair Banking Act



A recent Wales-based Channel 4 documentary (10 March) [Michael Sheen's Secret Million Pound Giveaway](#) has drawn attention to the impact that unaffordable credit and problem debt has on individuals, families and communities. In the

documentary, Sheen talks about the need for a Fair Banking Act.

Christian charity JustMoney Movement and other members of the Fair Banking for All Campaign are calling for the UK Government to introduce a Fair Banking Act that would require banks to transparently share information about their performance in tackling access to credit. This could be through providing affordable credit to people on low incomes themselves, or by supporting community-based credit providers such as credit unions and CDFIs (Community Development Finance Institutions) to do so. It would create a ratings system to show which banks are doing well and give the FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) the tools and incentives to drive change.

Read more about taking here: <https://justmoney.org.uk/blog/lets-make-banking-fair>

Open Doors publishes a list of countries where Christians are under siege

World Watchlist 2025 from the Christian charity Open Doors is ready to order in Welsh and English. It is a comprehensive manual that presents the 50 countries where it costs the most to follow Jesus. This handbook is full of information and encouragement to help connect with the church that is being persecuted and to pray for our Christian family that is facing persecution.

You can order up to 30 copies in Welsh [here](#), or in English [here](#). For more than 30 copies, call Open Doors on 01993 460 015 or email Jim Stewart on jims@opendoorsuk.org

WELCOME TO IESTYN DAVIES



Cytûn is pleased to announce that Iestyn Davies has been appointed to succeed the Rev. Gethin Rhys as Cytûn Policy Officer. Gethin and Iestyn will work together until the end of April, when Gethin will retire after ten years as a Policy Officer and two years before that, between 2003 and 2005, working for the organisation.

Iestyn is an experienced leader with a rich background in policy and public affairs, most notably in education and business, but also within the field of health. He served as CEO of Colegau Cymru, advocating for further education colleges in Wales, and led the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Wales, supporting small enterprises. As Pro Vice-Chancellor at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD), he advanced academic initiatives and community engagement.

Originally from Merthyr Tydfil and born and brought up in the ranks of the Salvation Army, Iestyn is a keen advocate of ecumenism and building and strengthening relationships between the diverse faith communities of Wales, and in particular, in their contribution in the public sphere.

Dr Cynan Llwyd, General Secretary of Cytûn, said: "It is a pleasure to be able to welcome Iestyn to the team. This is of course a bittersweet time as we say goodbye to a valuable member of the team in Gethin. Iestyn is an experienced policy and public relations individual with infectious energy and an exciting vision for the role. I look forward to working with him to develop Cytûn's work as we partner with our members in their mission and collaborate with external partners in order to enrich public life in Wales."

On joining Cytûn, Iestyn said, "I am really looking forward to joining the team and continuing the work done by Gethin to inform and represent our members in Wales. I am very grateful to the staff and the trustees for their warm welcome."

Gethin said, "I have enjoyed the past ten years immensely. It has been a great privilege to represent the churches and faith communities of Wales to the public sector, and attempt to ensure that their voices are heard in the Senedd, Welsh Government and other public bodies. I am delighted that Iestyn is willing to take up this responsibility, having already so much experience in the field, and I wish him all the best in his new role."

CONTACTING CYTÛN'S POLICY OFFICER



Iestyn Davies - Swyddog Polisi/Policy Officer

Cytûn - Eglwysi ynghyd yng Nghymru/Churches together in Wales

Registered office: Hastings House, Fitzalan Court, Cardiff CF24 0BL

E-mail: iestyn@cytun.cymru

www.cytun.co.uk @CytunNew www.facebook.com/CytunNew

Hapus i gyfathrebu yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg.

Happy to communicate in Welsh and English



Cytûn is a registered company in England and Wales | Number: 05853982 | Registered name: "Cytûn: Eglwysi Ynghyd yng Nghymru/Churches Together in Wales Limited" |

Cytûn is a registered charity | Number: 1117071.

Publication date: March 18 2025.