

Senedd Election 2026

Manifesto Briefing for Member Denominations, Organisations and Supporters

23rd March 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Executive Summary accompanies the full Cytûn Senedd Election 2026 Manifesto Briefing. It is intended for denominational leaders, trustees and senior officers who require a rapid overview of the electoral context, the party platforms, and the key issues for faith communities. The full briefing, including detailed party profiles, a thematic synopsis, and a section on reserved-matter pledges, is available separately. This document does not constitute an endorsement of any party or candidate. Election date: **7 May 2026**.

1. Electoral Context

The 2026 Senedd election, taking place on **7 May**, is the most significant since the establishment of devolution in 1999. For the first time, 96 Members will be elected under a system of proportional representation across 16 six-member constituencies, and the voting age has been extended to 16. The new system makes an overall majority for any single party highly unlikely; coalition negotiations, confidence and supply arrangements, or minority government are the probable outcomes.

Wales faces this election in a context of sustained economic pressure. The cost of living crisis continues to affect households across the country, compounded by energy market volatility linked to ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine, and the downstream pressure on public spending created by increased UK defence commitments. All six parties have had to navigate these realities in framing their programmes, and faith communities will want to assess not only what is promised but what is genuinely deliverable within the Senedd's devolved competence.

Opinion polling throughout 2025 and early 2026 has placed Plaid Cymru and Reform UK neck and neck at the top, with Wales Labour trailing and the Welsh Conservatives in significant decline following their loss of all Welsh Westminster seats in 2024. The Greens are expected to enter the Senedd for the first time. The Liberal Democrats are fighting for modest gains.

In this and other briefings and interviews, based on our charitable objectives to support people across the whole of Wales, we have chosen to focus on the six main parties that are likely to be represented in the future Senedd. Across constituencies candidates may include representatives of other parties as well as independents seeking your vote. A full list of candidates will be shared on our website once these are declared. The deadline for nominations is the 9th of April.

2. The Six Parties: A Summary

Party	Key Platform and Context
Wales Labour	Incumbent government under Eluned Morgan. Flagship pledge of £4 billion NHS hospital investment fund, same-day mental health services, bus fare cap, and fair pay for care workers. Polling significantly below 2021 levels. Constitutional position: supports the current devolution settlement.
Plaid Cymru	Front-runner under Rhun ap Iorwerth. Ambitious programme on child poverty (Welsh Child Payment), NHS workforce, Welsh language, and economic fairness. Independence referendum ruled out in a first term. Some fiscal ambitions — including on the Barnett

Party	Key Platform and Context
	Formula — fall outside current Senedd competence.
Welsh Conservatives	Growth-focused 'Fix Wales' manifesto under Darren Millar. Pledges income tax cut (1p in basic rate), abolition of Land Transaction Tax on main homes, M4 relief road, and NHS investment. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has questioned the fiscal arithmetic. Opposes further devolution.
Welsh Liberal Democrats	NHS and social care as defining issues under Jane Dodds. The only party explicitly proposing a 1p income tax rise to fund social care investment. Supports a federal UK; firmly opposed to Welsh independence as a condition of any post-election arrangement.
Reform UK	Consistently polling at or near the top under Dan Thomas / Nigel Farage. Campaign heavily focused on immigration — a largely reserved matter — alongside scrapping the 20mph limit and income tax cuts. Climate sceptic. Labour and Plaid have ruled out any arrangement with Reform.
Wales Green Party	Entering the Senedd for the first time with a realistic prospect of seats under Anthony Slaughter / Zack Polanski. Ambitious net-zero target for Wales by 2030, wealth tax, renationalisation of water, free public transport for under-21s. Linking cost-of-living concerns explicitly to ecological justice.

3. Key Themes for Faith Communities

The full briefing contains a detailed thematic synopsis (Section 3). The following themes are of particular relevance to Cytûn member denominations:

- **NHS and health:** All six parties identify NHS waiting times as a priority, but differ significantly on funding mechanisms, infrastructure investment, and the role of the private sector.
- **Poverty and cost of living:** Labour, Plaid Cymru, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens all offer targeted measures on child poverty, childcare costs, and transport affordability. Reformed economic approaches from the Conservatives and Reform UK are more focused on tax reductions.
- **Housing:** Significant divergence between parties on Right to Buy, new build targets, social housing allocation, and environmental standards for new homes.
- **Education and RVE:** Religion, Values and Ethics (the Welsh curriculum subject) is referenced in several manifestos. Parties differ on school standards, Welsh-medium education provision, and tuition fee policy for higher education.
- **Environment and climate:** A clear left-right divide. Labour, Plaid Cymru, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens broadly support renewable energy and net-zero targets. The Welsh Conservatives propose a moratorium on large-scale onshore wind and solar. Reform UK is sceptical of renewable energy mandates.
- **Refugees, asylum seekers and migration:** Several parties address immigration in their manifestos. Members should note that immigration is a reserved matter: the Senedd has limited competence in this area (see Section 4 below).
- **Welsh language:** Strong commitments from Plaid Cymru and from Labour; less emphasis in the Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Reform UK and Green platforms.

4. A Critical Note: Reserved Matters

Several parties have included in their manifestos pledges that fall outside the Senedd's devolved competence. Member denominations are encouraged to be aware of this distinction when assessing party programmes. The full briefing addresses this in detail at Section 6; the principal examples are:

- **Immigration and asylum** — largely a reserved matter for Westminster. Senedd action is limited to devolved areas such as housing access and healthcare.
- **The two-child benefit cap** — administered by the Department for Work and Pensions. A Welsh Government cannot abolish it, though it could introduce compensatory measures.
- **Overseas aid** — the vast majority is administered by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. A Welsh Government cannot 'abolish foreign aid.'
- **VAT rates** — a reserved tax. The Welsh Conservatives' tourism VAT pledge would require UK Government action.
- **Employment law** — currently reserved. Plaid Cymru's aspiration to devolve it would require an Act of the UK Parliament.

Important note for Cytûn members: The inclusion of reserved-matter pledges in a Senedd manifesto does not make them invalid as expressions of values or political ambition. A Welsh Government can use its platform to advocate for change at UK level, and many of these commitments reflect genuinely important moral and political positions. However, members assessing the practical programme of a potential Welsh Government should focus on what is genuinely within Senedd competence.

5. Cytûn's Recommended Response

Cytûn does not endorse any party or candidate. The following practical steps are commended to member denominations, organisations and supporters:

- **Read** the full manifesto briefing, available from Cytûn's website at www.cytun.co.uk.
- **Host or attend** local hustings events with candidates from across the parties. Cytûn's guidance on facilitating faith community hustings is available separately.
- **Use** the thematic synopsis (Section 3 of the full briefing) as a basis for small group discussion, reflection or prayer within congregations.
- **Encourage** candidate engagement in Welsh where possible. The majority of parties have Welsh-language campaign materials.
- **Scrutinise** candidates on the specific policy areas most relevant to your community: health, poverty, housing, the environment, and Wales's responsibilities to refugees and asylum seekers.
- **Vote** on 7 May 2026, and encourage all eligible members to exercise their democratic right.

Electoral Law and Charity Law Notice

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