

CYTÛN | EGLWYSI YNGHYD YNG NGHYMRU | CHURCHES TOGETHER IN WALES

Senedd Election 2026

Manifesto Briefing for Member Denominations, Organisations and Supporters

March 2026

This briefing has been prepared by Cytûn to help member denominations, organisations and supporters understand the policy platforms of the six main parties contesting the 2026 Senedd election. It is intended as an informational resource to support reflection, discussion and engagement with candidates. It does not constitute an endorsement of any party or candidate. The election takes place on 7 May 2026. The briefing has been prepared on 12 March 2026 and will be updated should policies and priorities change or be published at a later date.

1. Overview: The 2026 Senedd Election

The Senedd election of 7 May 2026 is widely regarded as the most consequential since the establishment of devolution in 1999. For the first time, the Senedd will have 96 Members (up from 60), elected through a closed party list proportional representation system across 16 six-member constituencies. Voting age is 16 and above.

To explore the changes in the voting system and how to vote in the Senedd Election, Cytûn has published a simple guide: [Voting in the 2026 Senedd Election](#).

Wales has been governed by Labour — sometimes in coalition, sometimes in minority — at every election since 1999. That dominance is now under serious challenge. [Opinion polling throughout 2025 and early 2026](#) has placed Plaid Cymru and Reform UK neck and neck at the top, with Labour trailing and the Welsh Conservatives in significant decline following their loss of all Welsh Westminster seats in 2024. The Greens, energised by their new UK leader Zack Polanski, are expected to enter the Senedd for the first time. The Liberal Democrats, with a single sitting Member, are fighting for modest gains.

The new proportional system means that no party is likely to achieve an overall majority. Coalition negotiations, confidence and supply arrangements, or minority government are all probable outcomes. The key issues identified by analysts and parties alike include NHS waiting times and hospital infrastructure, the cost of living, housing, transport, the Welsh language, energy policy, and — with particular intensity in this campaign — immigration (though this is in large part a reserved matter not within Senedd competence: see Section 6).

The parties contesting this election present markedly different visions not just for Wales's public services, but for its constitutional future, its economic model, and its relationship with the rest of the United Kingdom. Cytûn commends careful reading of the full manifestos alongside this briefing, and encourages engagement with candidates across the campaign period.

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. Party Manifestos: A Guide

Full manifesto documents, where published, are linked under each party heading below. At the time of publication, the Welsh Greens and Welsh Liberal Democrats had not published full written manifestos but had set out detailed policy positions through conference, media and campaign materials. Those positions are reflected here.

WALES LABOUR

Wales Labour

Leader: **Eluned Morgan (First Minister)** | Campaign theme: **'A Fairer, Future Wales'**

Manifesto: [Welsh Labour 2026 Manifesto](#)

Welsh Labour entered the campaign as incumbent government but in a significantly weakened political position, following defeat in the Caerphilly by-election in October 2025 — where they finished third behind Reform UK and Plaid Cymru — and declining poll ratings. First Minister Eluned Morgan launched the party's campaign in Newport in March 2026, invoking the city's Chartist heritage and presenting five headline pledges.

Key Policies

- **£4 billion 'Hospitals for the Future Fund':** The flagship pledge. Labour commits to the largest capital investment programme in NHS Wales history, rebuilding three hospitals over the next decade, including the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff. The fund would also upgrade ageing NHS infrastructure across Wales and improve working conditions for NHS staff.
- **Same-day mental health services:** Expand an 'open access' same-day model across all seven NHS health boards, building on the NHS 111 press 2 system. Labour presents this as potentially making Wales the first country to offer such a model nationwide.
- **Cost of living:** A £2 single fare bus ticket cap (£1 for under-21s; free travel for over-60s), a freeze on rail ticket prices for one year, and expansion of funded childcare to ease pressure on working families.
- **Jobs and economy:** Investment in renewable energy and retraining guarantees, with a focus on green jobs and a just transition for workers.
- **Environment:** River clean-up commitments, action on fly-tipping, and continuation of environmental protection measures.
- **Fair work:** A minimum of £15 per hour for care workers; ending term-time only contracts for school support staff.
- **Transport:** Rejection of the M4 relief road in favour of £14 billion of rail investment including five new stations in and around Newport.

Devolution and Constitution

Welsh Labour does not propose significant constitutional change. The party supports the current devolution settlement and is open to a post-election coalition or arrangement with Plaid Cymru if necessary, though this has not been formally offered.

Key Context for Cytûn Members

Labour's emphasis on NHS investment and fair pay for care workers speaks to longstanding Cytûn concerns about health and social care provision. The party's record on social justice, Welsh language policy and environmental commitments will be familiar to many member denominations and to supporters. Labour's

rejection of the M4 road project and investment in sustainable transport reflects environmental priorities, though critics note that waiting times and NHS performance remain the party's greatest vulnerability.

PLAID CYMRU

Plaid Cymru

Leader: **Rhun ap Iorwerth** | Campaign theme: **'A New Direction for Wales'**

Manifesto: [Plaid Cymru 2026 Manifesto \(First 100 Days\)](#)

Plaid Cymru entered the 2026 campaign as the front-runner in most polls, consistently competing with Reform UK for first place. Under Rhun ap Iorwerth's leadership, the party has sought to present itself as a credible government-in-waiting, positioning to the left of Labour on public services while adopting a more cautious approach to independence — ruling out a referendum in a first term, retaining Welsh independence as a 'long-term ambition.'

Key Policies

- **NHS:** Reducing waiting times as a central priority, investing in expanding the healthcare workforce, and strengthening community healthcare and rural access to services.
- **Welsh language:** Ambitious commitments to increase the number of Welsh speakers towards the one million target and to strengthen use of Welsh in public services and education.
- **Economy:** Establishing a new National Development Agency for Wales fit for purpose in the 21st century; an Economic Fairness Bill to address regional inequality and challenge the primacy of the Barnett Formula; support for retaining primary steel-making capacity in Wales; support for the small business sector; investment in rural broadband.
- **Energy:** Support for renewable energy development, including community energy; rejection of nuclear power expansion. Opposed to large-scale infrastructure projects that damage the environment.
- **Childcare and poverty:** 20 hours of funded childcare for all 2-year-olds; piloting a Welsh Child Payment ('Cynnal') to address child poverty.
- **Agriculture:** Protection of Welsh farming; a long-term settlement for the agricultural sector; support for the Sustainable Farming Scheme.
- **Democracy and devolution:** Supports devolution of employment law to Wales; proportional representation for UK elections; abolition of the House of Lords. Rules out independence referendum in first term.
- **Apprenticeships:** Reverse Labour budget cuts to the apprenticeship programme.

Devolution and Constitution

Plaid Cymru supports an ongoing programme of increasing powers for Wales. It supports devolution of employment law, welfare powers and broadcasting. On independence, Rhun ap Iorwerth has ruled out a first-term referendum but has maintained the long-term aspiration. The party would prefer to govern as a minority rather than enter formal coalition.

Key Context for Cytûn Members

Plaid Cymru's bilingual, Wales-centred vision resonates with much of Cytûn's constituency. Its commitments on child poverty, social justice, and community wellbeing align closely with many ecumenical priorities. The party's environmental record and opposition to nuclear energy, except where generation has historically been in place, will interest faith communities engaged with climate and creation care. Its strong Welsh language policy matters to denominations ministering in Welsh. Members should note that some of

Plaid Cymru's fiscal ambitions — such as changing the Barnett Formula or devolving employment law — fall outside the current Senedd settlement (see Section 6).

WELSH CONSERVATIVES

Welsh Conservatives

Leader: **Darren Millar MS** | Manifesto title: **'Fix Wales'**

Manifesto: [Fix Wales — Welsh Conservative Senedd Manifesto 2026](#)

The Welsh Conservatives were the first party to launch a full manifesto, doing so on 2 March 2026. The party, which lost all its Westminster seats in 2024, is polling significantly below its 2021 Senedd level. 'Fix Wales' is a growth-focused document emphasising tax reduction, infrastructure investment, and NHS reform. The Institute for Fiscal Studies queried the fiscal sustainability of combining tax cuts with increased spending pledges.

Key Policies

- **Income tax:** A 1p cut in the basic rate of Welsh income tax, which the party says would save the average working family approximately £450 per year. The IFS estimates the cost of this to be at £311 million, a reduction therefore in the budget available to the Welsh Government.
- **Land Transaction Tax:** Abolish the tax (Welsh Stamp Duty) on main homes (cost approximately £175 million), while retaining it for second homes and investment properties. This would be in addition to the decrease in tax revenue for a cut in income tax.
- **Council tax:** Cap increases at 5%, with a referendum required for rises above that level.
- **Infrastructure:** Build the M4 relief road around Newport; upgrade the A55 in North Wales; dual the A40 to Fishguard. Pilot a 5% VAT rate for tourism accommodation (though VAT is reserved to Westminster — see Section 6).
- **Energy:** Support for nuclear power for energy security; a moratorium on large-scale onshore wind and solar farms.
- **NHS:** Declare a health emergency; increase hospital bed numbers; expand NHS capacity; earlier commitments include building five new hospitals.
- **Housing:** Reinstatement of the Right to Buy scheme; scrap Welsh Stamp Duty on main homes; support for new housebuilding.
- **Education:** £1,000 tuition fee discount for STEM students; refund of university tuition fees for nursing, medicine, teaching and dentistry graduates who work for at least five years in Wales.
- **Economy:** Re-establish a Welsh Development Agency; 125,000 apprenticeships over the Senedd term; £100m boost to the farming budget; abolish business rates for small businesses.
- **Senedd reform:** Oppose any further powers for the Senedd; 'no more spending on non-devolved matters.'
- The party in Wales pledges to work with the UK Government to stop illegal immigration and support withdrawal from the ECHR and scrap Labour and Plaid Cymru's Nation of Sanctuary policy.
- The manifesto contains a dedicated section on support for Wales' Faith Communities, to establish a Faith Community Covenant Scheme for public bodies to recognise the positive contribution of faith groups to Wales.

Devolution and Constitution

The Welsh Conservatives explicitly oppose further devolution and want no spending of Welsh Government money on matters outside its competence. The party does not support Welsh independence.

Key Context for Cytûn Members

The Conservatives' emphasis on economic growth, personal financial security and NHS reform will resonate with some Cytûn members. The moratorium on wind and solar farms, however, runs counter to the renewable energy priorities held by many faith communities engaged with climate responsibility. The IFS has questioned whether the fiscal arithmetic adds up, raising questions about which services might face cuts if tax pledges are delivered. The proposal to pilot a 5% VAT rate for tourism is a reserved matter and could not be delivered by a Welsh Government alone (see Section 6). The party's pledges to scrap the nation of Sanctuary policy, which has largely supported Ukrainian families fleeing the Russian invasion, may cause significant concern for member organisation and supporters as well as the pledge to withdraw the UK from the European Convention on Human Rights. Strengthening the representation of the broad faith community in Welsh public life will also be welcomed.

WELSH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

Welsh Liberal Democrats

Leader: **Jane Dodds MS** | Campaign theme: **'Restoring Faith in Public Services'**

Manifesto/Policies: [Welsh Liberal Democrats](#)

The Welsh Liberal Democrats hold just one Senedd seat (Mid and West Wales), held by Jane Dodds, and are polling at around 5%. The new proportional system could, however, convert that share into a small number of additional seats. The party has positioned the NHS and social care as its defining issues, and has been outspoken in criticism of both Labour and Conservative financial promises as uncoded or fiscally irresponsible.

Key Policies

- **NHS:** Described as the central campaign issue. Jane Dodds arrived at the party's pre-conference rally in an ambulance to highlight waiting times and ambulance delays. The party promises to 'turn the NHS around' with investment in GPs, dentists, mental health services and social care.
- **Social care:** Create thousands of new social care places and at-home support, tackling bed-blocking and reducing A&E and ambulance pressure. Funding, if not available within the budget, would be met by a 1p rise in Welsh income tax rates — the opposite direction to the Conservatives.
- **Childcare:** 30 hours of free childcare for children from 9 months to 4 years.
- **Mental health:** A 'world-class' mental health service for Wales.
- **Cross-border healthcare:** £10 million to reinstate cross-border healthcare arrangements for people in Powys who rely on services in English hospitals.
- **Agriculture:** A multi-year settlement for Welsh farming, addressing uncertainty following recent UK agricultural policy changes.
- **Environment:** Stop sewage being dumped in Welsh rivers; warm homes programme to reduce energy bills.
- **Business:** Review of business rates; investment in proper broadband for rural businesses.
- **Transport:** Improve public transport; support free travel for under-25s.
- **Constitutional:** Support for a federal UK; further devolved powers for the Senedd; firm opposition to Welsh independence. The party has stated it will not support any government — formally or informally — that spends money on the independence agenda.

Devolution and Constitution

The Welsh Liberal Democrats are federalists who support further devolution of powers to Wales within a reformed UK. They are firmly opposed to Welsh independence and have set this as a non-negotiable condition of any post-election arrangement.

Key Context for Cytûn Members

The Liberal Democrats' emphasis on social care, mental health and community healthcare will resonate with many Cytûn members, particularly those engaged in pastoral and welfare ministry. The cross-border Powys healthcare pledge addresses a longstanding issue for rural communities. The party's willingness to raise taxes to fund social care represents an unusual level of policy honesty in the campaign. Members should note that the call for the two-child benefit cap to be scrapped — raised by Jane Dodds — is a UK Government policy and not within the Senedd's competence (see Section 6).

REFORM UK (WALES)

Reform UK

Leader in Wales: **Dan Thomas** | UK Leader: **Nigel Farage** | Campaign theme: **'Putting Wales First'**

Manifesto: [Reform UK Wales Manifesto 2026](#)

Reform UK launched its Welsh manifesto on 5 March 2026 at an event in Newport, attended by UK leader Nigel Farage alongside Wales leader Dan Thomas (a former Conservative Party councillor in London, who returned to Wales after an absence of over 25 years). The party is consistently polling in first or second place alongside Plaid Cymru. Farage framed the Senedd election explicitly as 'a referendum on Keir Starmer's premiership.'

Opposition parties and commentators noted that a significant portion of Reform's campaign focused on reserved matters — particularly immigration — rather than on the devolved policy areas within the Senedd's competence. This is addressed in Section 6.

Key Policies

- 20mph speed limit: Scrap the default 20mph residential speed limit introduced by the Welsh Government (a policy broadly supported by 54% of people in Wales in recent polling, and entirely within the Senedd's competence).
- Infrastructure: Build the M4 relief road around Newport; upgrade the A55 in North Wales.
- NHS: Keep the NHS free at the point of use; cut waiting times; upgrade hospitals.
- Income tax: Cut Welsh income tax rates (similar pledges to the Conservatives).
- Council tax: Cap council tax increases.
- Immigration and asylum: End Wales's status as a Nation of Sanctuary; cease spending on 'migrant hotels'; prioritise Welsh people for social housing. These are primarily reserved matters (see Section 6).
- International aid: Scrap Wales's overseas aid spending and redirect funds to Welsh public services. This is a reserved matter (see Section 6).
- Housing: Prioritise Welsh residents for social housing allocation.
- Energy: Opposition to renewable energy mandates (particularly wind farms); support for conventional energy infrastructure.

Devolution and Constitution

Reform UK does not support Welsh independence. The party has expressed a willingness to work with other Senedd parties in the likely absence of a majority. Nigel Farage has indicated Reform would work with any other party in the Senedd. Plaid Cymru and Labour have both ruled out any arrangement with Reform.

Key Context for Cytûn Members

Cytûn members will want to consider the substantial focus in the Reform manifesto on reserved matters that the Senedd cannot legislate on — most notably immigration policy. Reform's plans to end the Nation

of Sanctuary policy and restrict asylum seeker support have significant humanitarian dimensions that many faith communities will engage with carefully. The party's climate change scepticism and opposition to renewable energy targets will also be of concern to those engaged with environmental theology and care for creation. Members will note that the party's costings have been questioned by opponents and independent analysts, including the Welsh Conservatives who accused Reform of copying their manifesto while adding unfunded promises.

WALES GREEN PARTY

Wales Green Party

Leader (Wales): **Anthony Slaughter** | UK Leader: **Zack Polanski** | Campaign theme: **'A Fairer, Greener Wales'**

Manifesto/Policies: [Wales Green Party](#)

At the time of publication, the Wales Green Party had not yet published a full manifesto for the 2026 Senedd election; the party's 2021 Senedd manifesto ('Transforming Wales') remains the most recent comprehensive policy document available on their website. The summary below draws on the party's stated policy positions, conference speeches, the 2024 Westminster general election manifesto, and the platform set out by UK party leader Zack Polanski since his election in September 2025. Cytûn will update this section when the Wales Green Party publishes its full 2026 Senedd manifesto.

The Wales Green Party is contesting the 2026 Senedd election for the first time with a realistic prospect of winning seats, thanks to the new proportional system and a significant surge in Green support across England and Wales following the election of Zack Polanski as UK party leader in September 2025. The party's membership in England and Wales has tripled to over 200,000 under Polanski. Polling in Wales has placed the Greens at around 10–13%, which could translate into multiple Senedd seats.

The Wales Green Party's policies reflect a combination of environmental urgency and left-wing economic priorities. Polanski's 'eco-populist' framing — linking the cost-of-living crisis with climate change — has resonated with younger voters and those disenchanted with Labour.

Key Policies

- Environment and climate: Net zero target for Wales by 2030; expansion of community-owned renewable energy; opposition to nuclear power; a Green Transformation Fund for Wales with bond-issuing powers; no public money to be spent with high-carbon, nature-destructive companies.
- Economy: A wellbeing economy moving away from GDP as the sole measure of success; wealth tax on billionaires to fund public services; renationalisation of water companies.
- Workers' rights: Four-day working week; stronger employment protections; support for Universal Basic Income (pilot).
- Housing: Build 12,000 new homes per year to the highest environmental standards.
- Transport: Free public transport for local journeys for under-21s; investment in public transport infrastructure.
- Education: End fees for first university degrees; outdoor and environmental education as part of the curriculum.
- Social justice: LGBTQ+ equality; drug policy reform; pro-immigration stance; scrapping the two-child benefit cap (a reserved matter — see Section 6).

- Democracy: Proportional representation for all elections; abolition of the House of Lords; votes at 16 across all elections.
- Welsh identity: Support for Welsh independence as a long-term aspiration; support for Welsh language promotion; initially seeks parity of Senedd powers with the Scottish Parliament as a first step.
- Animal welfare: A Commissioner for Biodiversity and Animal Protection.

Devolution and Constitution

The Wales Green Party supports Welsh independence as a long-term goal, and in the shorter term seeks full parity of powers with the Scottish Parliament. The party supports proportional representation and further democratic reform. A positive relationship with Plaid Cymru may lead to informal cooperation after the election.

Key Context for Cytûn Members

The Green Party's strong environmental programme and its commitment to social justice — including on poverty, housing and workers' rights — will find significant resonance within Cytûn's constituency. Its support for a wellbeing economy, and the explicit linking of cost-of-living concerns with ecological questions, reflects themes common in contemporary Christian social thought. Its progressive stance on immigration and international solidarity will also engage many members. Some in faith communities may have reservations about aspects of the party's social policy platform. Members should note that certain Green pledges — including on overseas aid, the two-child benefit cap, and some welfare reforms — involve reserved matters (see Section 6).

3. Thematic Synopsis: Where the Parties Stand

The following table summarises each party's broad position on key themes. More detailed positions are set out in Section 2 above. This synopsis is intended as a quick reference guide for discussion and hustings preparation. ✓ = broadly supportive; ✗ = broadly opposed; ~ = partial or conditional support.

Theme	Labour	Plaid Cymru	Conservatives	Lib Dems	Reform UK	Greens
NHS Investment	✓ £4bn hospitals fund	✓ Workforce & waiting times	✓ Health emergency declaration	✓ NHS turnaround central pledge	✓ Cut waiting times	✓ Public services priority
Social Care	~ £15/hr care pay	~ Expanded community care	~ NHS-linked reform	✓ Flagship pledge + tax rise	~ Efficiency focus	~ Wellbeing economy
Income Tax	~ No cut proposed	~ No cut proposed	✓ Cut by 1p	✗ Raise by 1p if needed	✓ Cut proposed	~ Wealth tax instead
20mph Speed Limit	✓ Retains policy	✓ Retains policy	✗ Reverse limit	~ Review	✗ Scrap limit	✓ Retains policy
M4 Relief Road	✗ Rail investment instead	✗ Opposed	✓ Build road	~ Not a priority	✓ Build road	✗ Opposed
Renewable Energy	✓ Green jobs focus	✓ Community energy	✗ Moratorium on wind/solar	✓ Pro-renewables	✗ Climate sceptic	✓ Net zero 2030
Nuclear Energy	✓ Supports	✗ Opposed	✓ Supports	~ Cautious	✓ Supports	✗ Strongly opposed
Welsh Language	✓ Continued support	✓ Flagship — 1m speakers	~ Supportive	✓ Supportive	~ Limited focus	✓ Supportive

Theme	Labour	Plaid Cymru	Conservatives	Lib Dems	Reform UK	Greens
Housing & RTB	~ No RTB; affordable homes	~ Social & affordable housing	✓ Reinstatement Right to Buy	~ Affordable housing focus	~ Welsh people priority	✓ 12,000 homes/yr green
Childcare	✓ Expanded funded childcare	✓ 20hrs for 2yr-olds	~ Some commitments	✓ 30hrs from 9 months	~ Limited detail	✓ Free childcare
Welsh Independence	✗ Opposed	~ Long-term aspiration only	✗ Firmly opposed	✗ Firmly opposed — red line	✗ Opposed	✓ Long-term aspiration
Immigration (reserved)	~ UK Govt policy area	~ Supportive of sanctuary	~ UK Govt policy area	~ Supportive of rights	✗ End Nation of Sanctuary (reserved)	✓ Pro-immigration
Child Poverty	✓ Childcare & fair pay	✓ Cynnal payment pilot	~ Economic growth focus	✓ Scrap 2-child cap (reserved)	~ Tax cuts focus	✓ Scrap 2-child cap (reserved)
PR for UK elections	✗ No commitment	✓ Supports STV	✗ No	✓ Supports	~ Mixed signals	✓ Strong support
Wellbeing Economy	~ Partial	~ Partial	✗ Growth-focused	~ Partial	✗ Growth-focused	✓ Central commitment

4. Cross-Cutting Themes of Particular Interest to Cytûn Members

Health and Social Care

Health dominates this election. All parties have committed to reducing NHS waiting times and investing in services, though their approaches differ significantly. Labour's £4bn hospital fund, the Liberal Democrats' social care focus, and Plaid Cymru's workforce investment represent the most detailed proposals. Reform UK and the Conservatives both promise NHS reform but rely on efficiency savings that independent analysts have questioned. The Green Party links health outcomes to housing, environment and economic security.

Poverty and Social Justice

Child poverty — affecting approximately 29% of children in Wales — is addressed by most parties. Plaid Cymru's proposed Cynnal Welsh Child Payment pilot and its childcare commitments, Labour's fair pay pledges and childcare expansion, and the Liberal Democrats' and Greens' calls to scrap the two-child benefit cap (a reserved matter) all speak to this agenda. Reform UK's economic programme, focused on tax cuts, relies on trickle-down growth to address poverty rather than targeted redistribution.

Environment and Climate

There is a sharp divide between parties on energy and climate. Labour, Plaid Cymru, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens all support renewable energy expansion, while the Welsh Conservatives propose a moratorium on large-scale wind and solar farms, and Reform UK has been characterised by opponents as climate-change sceptic. The Greens set the most ambitious target — net zero by 2030. Cytûn's engagement with creation care and environmental responsibility will make this a significant area of discernment for member denominations.

Welsh Language and Identity

Plaid Cymru's commitment to Welsh as a living community language — with ambitious targets for one million speakers — is the most extensive. Labour, the Liberal Democrats and Greens all express support. The Conservatives are broadly supportive. Reform UK's manifesto has less to say on language and Welsh

identity, and Plaid Cymru accused Farage of spending much of his manifesto launch speech talking about UK-wide matters rather than Wales.

Asylum, Refugees and the Nation of Sanctuary

This is one of the most contested areas of the campaign, and also one where the boundaries of Senedd competence are most sharply drawn. The Nation of Sanctuary policy — Wales's framework for supporting refugees and asylum seekers — is within devolved competence in several of its components (social services support, integration, housing) though core immigration control remains reserved. Reform UK's pledge to scrap it entirely raises both constitutional and humanitarian questions. Labour established the policy in 2019 and continues to support it. Plaid Cymru and the Greens are strongly supportive. The Conservatives have called for no spending on non-devolved matters. See Section 6 for a detailed constitutional analysis.

Cost of Living Crisis and Response to Middle East and European Conflict

Whichever party or parties form the next Welsh Government, they will inherit an electorate whose lived experience has been fundamentally reshaped by sustained economic pressure. The cost of living crisis — far from abating — continues to bear down hardest on those least able to absorb it: families in fuel poverty, households dependent on food banks, communities where wages have not kept pace with the cost of the most basic necessities. That pressure is no longer separable from the geopolitical context in which it sits. The ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine have driven sustained volatility in energy markets, disrupted global supply chains, and contributed directly to the inflationary pressures that Welsh households continue to feel at the checkout and on their energy bills. Defence spending commitments made at Westminster — now racing toward the NATO target of five per cent of GDP under sustained international pressure — will crowd out public expenditure in ways that Welsh Government budgets cannot escape, however limited the Senedd's formal competence in foreign and defence policy.

Faith communities understand, perhaps better than most political actors, that these pressures are not abstract: they are visible in the pews, in the foodbanks run by churches, and in the pastoral conversations that ministers are having every week. Any manifesto that fails to reckon seriously with this interlocking reality — the squeeze on household budgets, the moral weight of international conflict, and the constraints it places on domestic public spending — risks speaking past the very voters it seeks to persuade. The next Senedd will have no choice but to govern in that context, and the churches of Wales will be watching closely to see which parties have the honesty to say so.

5. Areas of Cross-Party Agreement

Notwithstanding the significant differences between the parties, there are some areas where broad convergence exists:

- Commitment to the NHS being free at the point of use — all six parties affirm this principle.
- Support for reducing NHS waiting times, though the mechanisms proposed vary significantly.
- Support for the Welsh language, albeit with varying levels of ambition and resourcing.
- Opposition to Welsh independence in the short term (Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Reform UK firmly opposed; Plaid Cymru and Greens hold it as a long-term aspiration but not a first-term priority).
- Concern about the cost of living, housing affordability and rural connectivity — all parties address these themes, though with very different prescriptions.
- Recognition that the 2026 Senedd, with its expanded membership and proportional system, represents a new political era for Wales.

6. Matters Outside the Senedd's Constitutional Settlement

Cytûn draws the attention of member denominations and organisations to this section in particular. Several parties have included pledges in their manifestos that fall wholly or substantially outside the legislative competence of the Senedd and the executive authority of the Welsh Government. While such pledges may indicate a party's broader values and policy direction, they cannot be delivered by a Welsh Government acting alone. This matters for voters assessing the credibility and deliverability of manifesto commitments.

Understanding the Devolution Settlement

Under the Government of Wales Acts 1998 and 2006, and the Wales Act 2017, the Senedd has law-making powers in a defined set of 'devolved' subject areas. These include health, education, local government, housing, the environment, agriculture, transport infrastructure (with some exceptions), economic development, the Welsh language, and certain aspects of taxation (notably income tax rate-setting and Land Transaction Tax).

A wide range of significant policy areas remain 'reserved' to the UK Parliament at Westminster. These include immigration and asylum, foreign affairs, defence, social security and welfare benefits, broadcasting, policing and justice (unlike Scotland, where these are partly devolved), most tax policy including VAT, corporation tax and national insurance, and international trade and aid.

Specific Pledges of Constitutional Concern

Immigration and Asylum — Reform UK (and others)

Reform UK's central manifesto pledges — ending Wales's status as a Nation of Sanctuary, stopping the use of 'migrant hotels', and ending support for asylum seekers beyond a specific scheme for Ukrainians — involve matters that are primarily reserved to Westminster. Immigration control, asylum decision-making and the deployment of asylum seekers across the UK are Home Office functions. A Welsh Government cannot unilaterally refuse to accommodate asylum seekers or fundamentally alter their rights of residence.

However, aspects of the Nation of Sanctuary policy are within devolved competence: the provision of social services, integration support, housing access (subject to UK law on eligibility), and healthcare. A Welsh Government could withdraw devolved support. This creates a complex constitutional picture, and any party seeking to implement Reform's stated immigration ambitions would face significant legal challenges.

Plaid Cymru's spokesperson noted that Reform's manifesto launch 'focused solely on getting their leader into 10 Downing Street and not on how to improve the lives of the people of Wales' — a pointed observation about the extent to which the Reform campaign focused on reserved rather than devolved matters.

Overseas Aid — Reform UK and Welsh Conservatives

Both Reform UK and, to a lesser extent, the Welsh Conservatives have pledged to stop Welsh Government spending on international aid or non-devolved matters. International development aid is a reserved matter: the Welsh Government does have a small programme of international partnerships and some voluntary contributions to international bodies, but the vast majority of UK overseas development assistance is administered by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. While a Welsh Government could choose not to fund its small international programme, it cannot 'abolish foreign aid' — that is a UK Government function.

Two-Child Benefit Cap — Liberal Democrats and Greens

Both the Welsh Liberal Democrats and the Wales Green Party have called for the two-child benefit cap (limiting Child Tax Credit and the child element of Universal Credit to the first two children) to be scrapped.

This is a UK Government policy administered by the Department for Work and Pensions. The Senedd has no power to remove or change it. Both parties are correct to campaign on it — it affects many children in Wales and crosses into Welsh Government responsibility through its downstream effects on poverty, housing and social services — but a Welsh Government could not itself abolish it. What a Welsh Government could do is introduce compensatory measures (such as a Welsh Child Payment, as proposed by Plaid Cymru), but this would require funding from the Welsh block grant.

VAT for Tourism — Welsh Conservatives

The Welsh Conservatives' manifesto includes a pledge to pilot a 5% VAT rate for tourism accommodation. VAT is a reserved tax, set by HM Treasury and administered by HMRC across the United Kingdom. A Welsh Government has no power to vary VAT rates. The party would need to advocate for this at UK Government level, not deliver it through the Senedd. This pledge is effectively an aspiration for UK-level policy change, not a devolved commitment.

Barnett Formula and Fiscal Powers — Plaid Cymru and others

Plaid Cymru's Economic Fairness Bill and its aspiration to challenge the Barnett Formula — the mechanism by which the Welsh block grant is calculated — involve reserved fiscal and constitutional matters. The Barnett Formula is a UK Treasury policy; its reform or replacement would require UK Parliamentary legislation. Plaid Cymru can lobby for it, and such lobbying would be a legitimate function of a Welsh Government, but it cannot unilaterally change Wales's funding settlement.

Employment Law — Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru's support for the devolution of employment law to Wales is itself aspirational rather than immediately deliverable. Employment law is currently reserved. To devolve it would require an Act of the UK Parliament. This is a policy goal rather than a first-term deliverable.

Policing and Justice

Several parties make references to policing, crime and justice. These are reserved matters in Wales (unlike in Scotland). Welsh Ministers have no control over policing structures, sentencing or the court system. Parties can advocate for the devolution of justice to Wales — the Thomas Commission in 2019 recommended exactly this — but a Welsh Government currently has no executive power in this area.

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 ambitions. A Welsh Government can use its platform to advocate for change at UK level, and some of these commitments reflect 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. Promises about immigration, VAT, welfare benefits, overseas aid and employment law, as significant as they are, cannot be delivered through the Senedd alone.

7. Engaging with the Election

Cytûn has prepared this briefing to enable informed engagement by member denominations, organisations and supporters with the 2026 Senedd election. The following are offered as practical suggestions:

- **Hustings:** Consider hosting or co-hosting local hustings events with candidates from across the parties. Cytûn's guidance on facilitating faith community hustings is available separately.
- **Discussion:** Use the thematic synopsis in Section 3 as a basis for small group discussion, reflection or prayer within congregations and faith communities.

- **Prayer:** The Senedd election is an opportunity to pray for Wales, for those seeking public office, and for wisdom in the exercise of the vote.
- **The Welsh language:** Candidate engagement in Welsh, where possible, is encouraged. The majority of parties have Welsh-language campaign materials.
- **Scrutiny:** Members are encouraged to ask candidates about specific policies relevant to their communities and faith commitments, particularly in the areas of health, poverty, housing, the environment, and Wales's responsibilities to refugees and asylum seekers.
- **Voting:** Cytûn encourages all eligible members to exercise their democratic right to vote on 7 May 2026.

Electoral Law and Charity Law Notice

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