
CYTŪN POLICY BULLETIN

SUMMER 2024



UNCERTAINTY AROUND WELSH LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME 2024-26

On July 9, Vaughan Gething MS, First Minister of Wales (pictured), [announced](#) Welsh Government's legislative programme for the remainder of the current Senedd term (September 2024 to March 2026). A week later three members of the Cabinet and the Counsel General resigned, and subsequently the First Minister announced he would resign once the Welsh Labour Party has elected a successor as party leader.

Uncertainty therefore surrounds the legislative programme. However, many of these measures will be introduced. They include:

- A Bus Bill, to enable all levels of government in Wales to work together to plan one co-ordinated bus network.
- A Building Safety Bill, which will reform the building safety regime in Wales and address issues related to fire safety in buildings 11 metres and above which are part of the existing building stock. This is in addition to secondary legislation introduced in Wales to amend building regulations following the Grenfell Tower disaster, and further secondary legislation to implement in Wales reforms to leasehold introduced by recent legislation in Westminster.
- A Disused Tips (Mines and Quarries) Bill, reforming laws regarding tip safety in order to give greater security to people living in their shadows.
- A Homelessness Bill, which will include significant reforms to help people in Wales stay in their homes and prevent anyone from experiencing homelessness. A White Paper will also be published about introducing a right to adequate housing.
- A Visitor Levy Bill, which will give powers to local authorities to introduce a visitor levy to make a small extra charge for overnight visitors, and a Visitor Accommodation (Regulation) Bill, which will mean that anyone who lets visitor accommodation will need to meet a relevant set of standards to ensure visitor safety and improve their experience. Cytûn will keep a close eye on these bills, as they may affect accommodation offered in places of worship for pilgrims, accommodation offered by religious orders and retreat centres, and accommodation offered to churches for residential trips, even if it is provided free of charge or at a much reduced price.
- An Environmental Principles and Biodiversity Bill, which will establish a statutory environmental governance body for Wales, embed environmental principles in Welsh law and introduce legal targets to protect and restore biodiversity. This is a Bill that many environmental organisations, and the Climate Cymru coalition of which Cytûn is a member, have been seeking for some time. Similar laws have already been passed for England and Scotland.
- A bill to introduce a recall procedure for Members of the Senedd who engage in misconduct, and prohibit deception by MSs and candidates in elections to the Senedd, subject to the results of an [inquiry being carried out by the Senedd's Standards of Conduct Committee](#).
- A Legislation Bill, to repeal obsolete provisions, and to formalise the system of making Welsh secondary legislation. Towards the end of the term, a Bill will be introduced to consolidate planning law in Wales, with a view to making navigating it less complicated.

The First Minister also confirmed that the Welsh Government would consult on a draft Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles Bill, but the final Bill will not be presented until next term. In answering questions, he said that a Welsh Tribunals Bill might be introduced, implementing the [Law Commission's recommendations](#) in this area, but that there was no guarantee that parliamentary time would be available to do so.



Photo: Vaughan Gething presenting the legislative programme 2024-6. (Senedd.tv, Senedd Commission)

KING'S SPEECH: WESTMINSTER LEGISLATES FOR WALES

Although the Senedd legislates in many important areas, such as education and health, most laws that affect Wales are made in Westminster. On July 17 the [King's Speech](#), announced many new laws, and others to be published in draft for consultation, for the first year of the new UK Government.

A few laws, for example in the areas of housing and buses, extend to England changes that are already under way in Wales. Among the measures that will affect Wales are:

- Two laws to gradually nationalise the railways across Great Britain. It is not clear how this will affect Transport for Wales, which is already nationalised.
- An Act to strengthen the rights of workers from the first day they are employed, and the rights of trade unions in the workplace, especially in the public sector.
- An Act updating laws about digital data and the powers of the Information Commissioner.
- An Act to establish the Great British Energy company to promote the development of low carbon (including nuclear) energy and an Act to protect water quality in England and Wales.
- 'Martyr's Law' to require that all public spaces - including places of worship - take steps to protect against terrorism.
- Updating the Mental Health Act in England and Wales - this may affect a back bench measure currently before the Senedd on the same subject.
- Reintroducing the bill to raise the minimum age for buying tobacco and restrict sale of vapes.

Draft measures anticipated include:

- A Bill to stop "conversion practices" in terms of gender and sexuality. The background document for the Speech promises that the position of "religious leaders", therapists etc. will be protected at the same time.
- An Equality (Race and Disability) Bill to increase rights in the workplace in terms of ensuring equal pay and working conditions for people with regard to race and disability.

It was also promised to establish a Council of Nations and Regions to bring together the leaders of the four governments across the UK together with the leaders of the English regional councils, and to reform the procedures of the House of Lords and the House of Commons in Westminster.

Cytûn will collaborate with the Churches Legislative Advisory Service (CLAS) and churches across Britain to monitor these laws from the point of view of the interests and priorities of the churches.

Start a conversation with your new MP

Following the UK General Election, a number of Cytûn members are encouraging local churches to contact their new Member of Parliament to introduce themselves and get to know each other. And remember that even re-elected MPs serve a constituency with altered boundaries and



represent communities that will be new to them. Among the resources that have come to our attention are:

- [Send your MP a card](#) - a resource from the Joint Public Issues Team of the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain to design and send a card and simple message welcoming your new MP.
- [Break Bread with your MP](#) - a Christian Aid resource to help you welcome and discuss poverty with your Member of Parliament.
- [Do Justice](#) - a resource from CSAN, the social action network of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Although

the resource has been written with Catholic parishes in mind, many of the principles will be equally applicable to other denominations and to inter-denominational groups.

DO JUSTICE

Cytûn would also like to hear from you about your involvement with your elected members in Westminster and in the Senedd. You can contact us with your stories via gethin@cytun.cymru

Join the Journey with Jesus for Disability Awareness Week



Disability charity and member of Cytûn, [Through the Roof](#), is inviting churches to celebrate Disability Awareness Week by including local disabled people and holding a service on Sunday 22nd September 2024, or a day of their choice.

Disability Awareness Week begins on Sunday 15th September with a launch service live-streamed on YouTube, led by Revd Helen Cameron, President of the Methodist Conference. Helen is one of over 700 'Roofbreaker' disability champions who listen to disabled people in local churches and work together with them to enable full inclusion. The charity hopes every church will nominate a [Roofbreaker](#).

There are many barriers disabled people can face on their journey to join, or be fully included, in church fellowships. Not only accessibility of church buildings, but also invisible barriers, such as challenges fitting in socially and feeling you belong emotionally. Hence inviting churches on the 'Journey with Jesus' towards disability inclusion. During September's awareness week, Through the Roof encourages all churches to find ways to meet with disabled people in their community – a coffee morning or social gathering, with cake, craft activities or music that everyone can enjoy. Or come up with your own great ideas.

The Disability Awareness Week resource pack includes a video story of Revd Andrew Miles (right), a retired pastor and wheelchair-user from Derby whom God has called as a hospital chaplain, using the empathy and understanding gained from his accident and lived experience of disability. He says: "I think because I'm in my wheelchair, people are a little bit more ready to listen. I hope that by my journey, my faith, they can see that God has brought me through one of the most challenging times... and He stayed with me. And here I am still ministering, still preaching the Word, seeing lives changed."



A free Disability Awareness Week 2024 resource pack can be ordered [here](#).

New Director for Housing Justice Cymru



Cytûn member Housing Justice has appointed Nicola Evans (left) as Director for Wales. Nicola joins Housing Justice from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales where she was Head of Advice and Assistance. Prior to this, Nicola worked for Cymorth Cymru, Wales' umbrella body for homelessness and housing support, and was Chair of a Housing Association.

Nicola replaces Bonnie Williams who was promoted to Housing Justice CEO in April 2024. Nicola said: "I am incredibly excited and proud to be joining Housing Justice Cymru, and the amazing work they do in Wales to support people experiencing homelessness and seeking sanctuary. I am looking forward to playing my part in helping to achieve a society where everyone has access to a home that truly meets their needs."

On July 3, Rebecca Kentfield of Housing Justice Cymru's [Faith in Affordable Housing](#) project, gave [evidence to the Senedd's Local Government and Housing Committee](#) (right), illustrating the many barriers that government regulation put in the way of converting redundant church buildings and land into social housing for the community. Despite these barriers, there are real opportunities to do so, especially when a church that is considering this course can contact Rebecca at an early stage, at R.kentfield@housingjustice.org.uk



Picture of Nicola: Housing Justice; Picture of Rebecca: Senedd.tv (Copyright Senedd Commission)

Why volunteering is good for your health

Recent publications highlight the vital role that volunteers and community organisations, including churches, have to play within the wider context of health and social care in Wales.

Volunteers are active within frontline health care, improving patient experience, for example by providing companionship or activities for in-patients. They may help to relieve pressure points in the system, enabling timely patient discharge by collecting pharmacy prescriptions or, through community based voluntary organisations, helping patients to settle home after hospital and to remain independent. Their role in providing patient transport or community first aid represents a vital link in a chain of health care.

There is growing evidence of the positive impact that volunteers can have, on patients, staff and on 'the system' – which as we know is strained and struggling beyond its capacity. A paper [The values and value of volunteering – our hidden asset](#) written by Dr Fiona Liddell and published by the Bevan Commission, explores the relevance of volunteering in today's (and tomorrow's) health care system and makes the case for greater recognition of and investment in volunteers and the associated governance and management to support and sustain it.

Informal volunteering activity within community settings plays no less valuable a role in maintaining the health of individuals and communities and preventing acute ill health. A further paper [Why the third sector matters to health and social care in Wales](#) argues that a diversity of independent, thriving, community based organisations contributes to health and social care in ways which we can hardly measure but which we need to recognise and trust more.

Churches offer pastoral support to the bereaved; they may provide drop in facility for those suffering with their mental health, such as dementia, or a place where those who are lonely find companionship, or support carers. In doing so, they play a vital role in the provision of health care today – just as they always have done.

The personal benefits of volunteering are much acclaimed also. Evidence suggests that our [mental health is improved through five broad ways](#): connect with other people; be physically active; learn new skills; give to others (acts of kindness); be mindful of the present moment. It's not too far a stretch, therefore, to assert that volunteering can be your route to personal health and happiness!

Opportunities to volunteer can be found on the national volunteering website: www.volunteering-wales.net, or by searching the website of your local health board.

Fiona Liddell



A strategy for Warm Welcomes

The [Warm Welcome campaign](#), which launched in 2022 in response to the cost-of-living crisis, and of which the Warm Hubs in many churches are part, has launched a new five-year strategy. The big ambition is to make the country full of Warm Welcomes for All.

A new [impact report](#) for the Campaign shows that more than 120,000 people across the UK visited a Warm Welcome Space every week over winter 2023-4, and Warm Welcome Spaces hosted more than 2 million visits. However, research shows that although 62% of the population live within a 30-minute walk of a local space, only 18% of people across the UK say they are aware of a space near their home. Over the next five years, it is hoped to grow the number of Warm Welcome spaces and raise awareness so everyone can easily find their local space, just around the corner, all through the year.

By working together, faith and community groups of all kinds can make sure 100% of the population can find a Warm Welcome Space in their neighbourhood, in spaces where people of all cultures, backgrounds, faiths, and walks of life can come together in their communities. The strategy can be read here: <https://www.warmwelcome.uk/strategy>



Nature and Us

A year on since Natural Resources Wales (NRW) released its [Nature and Us](#) Vision, following public engagement with Cytûn and many other organisations. On World Environment Day in June, an event was held at the Senedd in Cardiff to celebrate the collective efforts being made across Wales to address the nature, climate and pollution emergencies.

The event theme was 'Leadership in the Climate and Nature emergency' and the day was formally opened by NRW's Chief Executive, Clare Pillman. Clare was joined in a panel discussion

(below) by Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies MS and the former Chairman of the UK's independent Climate Change Committee, Lord Deben. The Panel explored the pivotal role the public sector and environment bodies can play in helping Wales achieve its climate and biodiversity recovery milestones. Future Generations Leadership Academy graduate Arpana Chunilal closed the panel and her passion for nature and call to arms were encouraging and hopeful for everyone.



A range of different public sector organisations in Wales presented their work on nature and climate, ranging from Housing Associations to the NHS; from work on metal mine remediation to engaging the public with climate action. The [Natur am Byth](#) partnership programme showcased some of its inspirational work saving species from extinction across Wales, working in partnership with NGOs and communities. Members of the Nature and Us Citizens' Assembly also attended the event to learn about wider work across Wales that is contributing to the Vision's 6 themes.

Natural Resources Wales has aligned its Corporate Plan 2023-2030 with the findings from Nature and Us. Feedback from the audience and participants at the event on 5 June made it clear that there is a widespread desire and ambition to work together more to address the climate and nature and emergencies, and to create a future where society and nature can thrive together.

For most churches in Wales, the best way to grasp and implement this vision in a practical way will be through the [EcoChurch](#) scheme administered by ARocha UK, a member of Cytûn, and through local partnerships with community and environmental organisations in your area .

Photo: Natural Resources Wales

Fair Trade Wales Youth Art Competition

Fair Trade is celebrating 30 years in the United Kingdom, and Fair Trade Wales is holding an art competition that coincides with Fair Trade Fortnight (9-22 September 2024). The theme of the competition is *Fairtrade and Deforestation Free – How does Fairtrade work to make an impact against deforestation?* It highlights notes that the world's tropical forests are being destroyed and play a huge role in the defence against climate change. Fairtrade works with producers and farmers of products such as coffee and cocoa to help make forests more resilient and sustainable.

The competition is open to children aged 4-16 across Wales, and the closing date is 23 September. More details about the competition can be found [here](#), and about Fairtrade Fortnight throughout the UK on the [Fairtrade Foundation](#) website.

How about Sunday schools, holiday clubs and children's clubs in churches across Wales helping to celebrate by taking part in the competition?

The State of Religion, Values and Ethics in Welsh schools

The Welsh National Centre for Religious Education in Bangor has launched a report on the state of the subject (Religion, Values and Ethics - RVE - under the new curriculum up to year 8 and Religious Education under the old curriculum in years 9-11) in Wales. The findings of the report, based on the experiences of teachers in the schools, are worrying. The authors' summary is: *Findings revealed systematic challenges in the teaching of RVE in Wales, including issues of legal compliance, with over half the schools in Wales are failing to provide the minimal legal provision of RVE teaching across Key Stages 3 and 4, inadequate resources, and instructional deficiencies.*

Cytûn and representatives of a number of churches and other faiths were present when the report was presented to the Cross-Party Faith Group of the Senedd in June. Considerable concern was expressed about the lack of resource materials for the subject, and the lack of in-service training for teachers, especially as the new curriculum was extended up the age range in secondary schools. The representatives of the regional education consortia present were keen to draw attention to what was available, but it was clear that some teachers were unable, or did not wish, to take advantage of the provision, or felt that it did not meet their needs.

There was considerable discussion in the Cross-Party Group about the lack of resource materials, especially as there are only 25 accredited resources for RVE on the Welsh Government website, [Hwb](#), many of which are designed to teach broader topics such as human rights. In response to demand, another bilingual website has been set up by an initiative outside government, called [RE Hubs](#). We are pleased that a number of Cytûn members, including Cyhoeddiadau'r Gair, the Welsh Sunday Schools Council and Catholic Education Service have links to their material on this website, so that they are accessible to schools. There is also a link to the useful [guidance from the Free Church Council of Wales](#) on the Cytûn website for churches who want to engage with their local schools. RE Hubs also provides online training courses for those who are willing to be invited to schools to talk about their faith, or welcome schools to their place of worship to learn more.

Religion, Values and Ethics are not the only subjects where concerns are raised by teachers about a lack of support and training. In a [statement in the Senedd](#) on July 2, Lynne Neagle MS, Cabinet Secretary for Education, announced that additional support would be available to help schools draw up their new local curriculum, particularly in the area of numeracy and literacy. There was no specific reference to Religion, Values and Ethics in the statement or in the short debate that followed.

This may therefore be a good opportunity for local churches to contact their local schools to ask if they can be of assistance with visits and resources as they develop a curriculum for their *cynefin* (neighbourhood), and also to offer pastoral care to teachers under pressure. We believe that teachers will greatly appreciate such signs of practical and spiritual support for their work.

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