
CYTŪN POLICY BULLETIN

DECEMBER 2024 – JANUARY 2025



WESTMINSTER SUPPORTS BUT SENEDD OPPOSES ASSISTED DYING

On November 29, there was an impassioned and emotional [debate](#) in the House of Commons about the legalisation of medical assisted dying in England and Wales. At the end of the debate, MPs voted in favour of the [Terminally Ill Adults \(End of Life\) Bill](#) by 330 votes to 275. If it becomes law in its current form, a person could request help to die subject to two doctors certifying that they are within 6 months of the end of their life. The patient themselves would need to take the necessary medication, although a doctor could assist, and a doctor would need to be present. There would be no compulsion on any doctor to participate in such an arrangement.

A different result followed an emotional and respectful [debate](#) about the subject in the Senedd on October 23. The result of that vote was 19 in favour of the proposal, 26 against, 9 abstaining and the remainder not voting. The proposal that was rejected differed in its details from the Westminster Bill. In particular, it proposed that *adults of sound mind who are intolerably suffering from an incurable, physical condition and have a clear and settled wish to die should have the option of an assisted death, subject to robust safeguards*. As the Westminster Bill continues on its journey, that Bill will require a legislative consent motion to be passed in the Senedd, as it would be implemented by the devolved health service in Wales.

Christian speakers were to be found on both sides of the debates and votes in both parliaments. Religious beliefs were referred to by two MSs speaking against the motion in the Senedd, but in Westminster all the references to religion emphasised the importance of personal conscience.

Before the discussion in Westminster, a letter was published in [the Observer](#) by leaders of a number of religious groups, including the Catholic Church, the Church in Wales, the Salvation Army, the Methodist Church and the Assemblies of God, who are all members of Cytûn, and the Moderator of the Free Churches Group of England and Wales, which includes a number of Cytûn members. It expressed deep concern about the dangers of putting unfair pressure on people to choose this path, about extending assisted dying to other groups of people in time, and about a lack of resources for end-of-life care. These arguments were voiced many times in both parliaments. A [similar letter](#) was published by the bishops of the Catholic Church and the Church in Wales and leaders of a number of other religions prior to the debate in the Senedd.

Several Cytûn member churches have published statements opposing assisted dying, including:

- [The Bishops of the Church in Wales](#)
- [Catholic Archbishop of Cardiff](#)
- [The Salvation Army](#)

The Presbyterian Church of Wales distributed material to help its members write to MPs before the debate in Westminster, opposing the Bill, and similar steps were taken by a number of other Christian organisations, such as the [Evangelical Alliance](#) and [CARE](#).

Some denominations believe that this is a matter of personal conscience and therefore have not published a definitive position. In each case, they draw attention to statements by Christians opposing assisted dying, and to theological convictions, but also identify some resources that express a different point of view, and call for a careful and thoughtful discussion. Among them are:

- [Baptist Union of Great Britain](#)
- [The Methodist Church](#)
- [The United Reformed Church](#)

With the discussion in Westminster now moving to a Committee, which will seek evidence from various organizations and the public, the discussion will continue and Christian contributions will multiply in coming months. These will be addressed in future editions of the Policy Bulletin.

UK Covid-19 Inquiry to consider religion in Module 10



Baroness Hallett has [announced the opening of the last module of the inquiry](#), Module 10, exploring the extremely broad area of 'Impact on society'. Among the topics included are "restrictions on worship" and "the bereaved, including restrictions on arrangements for funeral and burials and post-bereavement support" as well as wider effects on society which would also be of interest to the churches. The Baroness has said that 'Core Participant' status in this module will be restricted to organisations that cover the whole UK (although this is subject to challenge). In view of this, the [Churches' Legislation Advisory Service \(CLAS\)](#), of which a number of Cytûn member churches are members), has applied to be a core participant in this module on behalf of the churches. A response to the application is expected before Christmas.

There is no restriction on who can submit evidence to the Module, and it is Cytûn's intention to do so, as well as supporting the work of CLAS. Denominations, presbyteries, local churches etc. can also contribute if they wish. Individuals can contribute through the [Every Story Matters](#) scheme. Closing dates for the submission of evidence (probably around autumn 2025) and the dates of the oral hearings (spring 2026) will be announced in due course.

NEW BURIAL AND CREMATION LAWS FOR WALES?

The Law Commission has published recommendations for amending the law on burial and cremation, which would affect all funerals and all burial grounds. The full report, Welsh and English summaries and the response form can be seen here - <https://lawcom.gov.uk/project/burial-and-cremation/> A seminar about the proposals was held in Cardiff on November 12, where it was emphasized that most of these issues have been devolved to the Senedd, which means that there could be different laws in England and Wales in the future.

The closing date for responses is **9 January 2025**. Cytûn will prepare a response regarding matters common to all churches in Wales, while a number of individual member denominations intend to respond directly to the consultation. Any contributions to the Cytûn response should be sent to gethin@cytun.cymru as soon as possible.

This is only the first step in reforming the law – the Commission will publish final recommendations towards the end of 2025, and the UK and Welsh Governments would need to decide whether they wished to accept some or all of them and then draw up appropriate legislation.

Welsh Government seeks to register and tax visitor accommodation

Following a lengthy period of consultation, in which Cytûn played a full part, Welsh Government has introduced the [Visitor Accommodation \(Register and Levy\) Etc. \(Wales\) Bill](#). This will require the registration of all those who provide overnight visitor accommodation in Wales "in the course of trade and business". This wording is taken from the equivalent legislation in Scotland, and was requested by Cytûn during the consultation process, in order to exclude from registration the provision of overnight accommodation on a purely charitable or donated basis, for example in "pilgrim churches" (the use of a church building to 'camp'), or a farmer allowing the use of a field for a church youth group to stay overnight. During the scrutiny process, we will continue to seek clarity on the face of the Bill that this is the intention.

Each local authority will have discretion to decide whether to require registered accommodation to charge each visitor (adults and children) a levy of £1.25 per person per night or 75p per person per night for hostels and camping pitches. This will require a further process of local consultation and decision, and the earliest possible date for charging is 2027. Proceeds of the levy will have to be spent on "destination management and improvement" in the local area, including infrastructure, facilities, mitigating visitor impact and supporting the Welsh language.

Further information about the Bill can be found [here](#), including an [impact assessment](#) which (on page 20) refers to the consultation held with Cytûn and the Inter-faith Council for Wales.

HOUSING JUSTICE SAYS WALES WON'T BECOME A NATION OF SANCTUARY WITHOUT ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO HOUSING

A [report](#) released in November by Cytûn member [Housing Justice Cymru](#) calls on the Welsh Government to work with charities, local government and housing associations to prevent people seeking sanctuary in Wales from becoming homeless. It suggests that without increasing the engagement of the housing sector, the current housing crisis will derail the Welsh Government's goal of being the world's first [Nation of Sanctuary](#). Cytûn was central to the campaign to establish this goal.

The report, *We Can't be a Nation of Sanctuary Without Housing*, found that 86% of housing associations in Wales have supported councils through UK Government Resettlement Schemes to find housing solutions for people affected by the wars in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. However, few have been engaged in finding housing solutions for people from other countries.

Nicola Evans, Director of Housing Justice Cymru said, "Many interviewees told us that councils are generally looking to the private rented sector to provide accommodation for most people seeking sanctuary in Wales. At the same time, they reported a huge decline in the number of private rental properties available. We also know from our work and that of partner organisations, that people seeking sanctuary generally don't have the references or deposits needed to access accommodation in the private sector. In our view, social housing providers need to be part of the solution. Without their engagement, we anticipate seeing more people who have fled war and persecution facing homelessness and it's very difficult to see how we will ever legitimately be able to call ourselves a Nation of Sanctuary."

The report's findings and recommendations are based on interviews with 35 housing associations registered and operating across Wales. All were open to contributing to the Welsh Government's aim of becoming the first Nation of Sanctuary whilst at the same time, expressing their deep concern about the level of homelessness generally that now exists across Wales.

When asked about what stands in the way of them doing more to help, one interviewee is quoted as saying: "Barriers? Just not enough housing...people are still in hotels post-pandemic. There is no move-on. The majority are single people, but some are families. We're supporting one family where there's 3 people in one room."

The report contributes to a Comic Relief funded collaborative project between Housing Justice Cymru, Wales Refugee Council and Tai Pawb. Alicja Zalesinska, Chief Executive at Tai Pawb said: "Earlier this month, the Welsh Government published its [updated Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#). The plan re-affirms the commitment to anti-racism in all housing endeavours, central to which is the ambitious goal to make homelessness rare, brief and unrepeatable. We cannot achieve this ambition without decisive government action to address the rising homelessness amongst people seeking sanctuary."

The House of Good: Health



Churches are good for your health

The National Trust for Churches (NCT) has published a new report highlighting the contribution of churches to the health of their areas. Entitled [The House of Good: Health](#), it is the result of detailed research into all the activities that take place in Christian places of worship of all denominations that contribute to physical and mental health, such as food banks, mental health services, youth groups and support with drugs and alcohol. It is estimated that these activities together save £8.4 billion for the National Health Service across the UK, as well as helping tens of thousands of people every year.

The report's webpage is illustrated with a video, which contains a powerful account of the work of St Martin's in Roath, Cardiff, in partnership with Alcoholics Anonymous.

Voluntary bodies express concerns on National Insurance increases

Following the announcement of the [UK Government's budget](#) on October 30, voluntary organisations, including churches, have expressed concern about the increase in employer's National Insurance contributions..

The Lead Representative for Religion on Wales's [Third Sector Partnership Council](#), Gethin Rhys, signed a letter by a number of organisations, led by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), to Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language, Mark Drakeford MS.

The letter says, "Many voluntary organisations in Wales operate under tight financial constraints and play a vital role in delivering essential services alongside the public sector, yet only public sector employers are set to be reimbursed for these increased costs.

"This increase in National Insurance contributions is a significant new cost that many organisations simply cannot absorb without a corresponding impact on their service delivery. We therefore urge the Welsh Government to:

- Carefully consider these impacts as it produces its draft budget
- Uplift grants and contracts in line with these and other inflationary pressures.

"This change represents more than just a financial setback; it is a fundamental challenge to a sector already under immense pressure from sharp rises in service demands, increases in the cost of living driven by inflation and constrained funding. These are not just figures – they represent critical services that could face cutbacks if funding does not adapt to meet these unforeseen costs.

We stand ready to work with the Welsh Government as partners to address these concerns."

WELSH GOVERNMENT FUNDS WARM WELCOME SPACES



£1.5m has been [announced](#) by Welsh Government to support and expand safe and warm places for people of all ages to access within local communities.

The hubs, which are located across Wales, many in religious buildings, provide spaces for people to be able to socialise and access services and advice over the coming months. These are variously referred to as Warm Hubs, Warm Welcome Centres, Warm Spaces, Croeso Cynnes, Canolfannau Clyd and Cosy Corners.

The funding builds on what is already on offer at hubs in communities and will help support centres in several ways, ranging from offering refreshments and food, to funding additional opening hours, for activities such as exercise and art or to learn new skills.

The £1.5m will be distributed to local authorities, through the Welsh Local Government Association, and is part of a wider [Welsh Government package of support](#) for people across Wales including the Discretionary Assistance Fund, [Single Advice Fund](#), and Fuel Vouchers Scheme.

Over 850 spaces were established across Wales during late 2022 and early 2023, providing support to over 117,000 people. Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS, said, "I am pleased we are providing funding which will help build on what we have previously provided, and which will see them continue to offer their important services for the benefit of the people they serve."

David Barclay, Campaign Director for [Warm Welcome](#) – which is hosted by the Good Faith Foundation - said: "We know the demand for these hubs will be high and we look forward to working with the Welsh Government in raising awareness of these vital spaces."

Cytûn encourages all churches looking to establish or continue warm spaces (under any designation) to register on the Warm Welcome website and access the resources to be found there. To find out more about hubs in your area please contact your relevant local authority.

PORTHCAWL CHURCHES DISCOVER THAT POLITICS MATTER!



Prior to the General Election Cytûn member CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) published a guide to Voting for the Common Good, as part of the [Catholic Church's preparation for the general election](#). The early election caused the Churches Together in Porthcawl group (CTiP) to postpone its talk around this subject, and organise a similar event in October to include local interested parties. The aim was to create an opportunity to encourage young people to become interested in politics.

The group invited Therese Warwick from CAFOD to talk about the moral decisions we should contemplate (including poverty, overseas debt, the climate crisis) over self-interest to ensure the best for our communities and our world. She was followed by Debbie Cooper (Green Party) who talked through her party's policies and how they related to the common good but struggled, through lack of media attention and exposure to gain sufficient votes.

From the general discussion which followed we collected not only numerous ideas, but also volunteers, to plan future activities for young people in the community; activities to empower and give them ownership of their futures. Many might perceive that their vote won't make a difference. But it is one of our roles, as Christians, to give them hope and understanding that by voting for the common good they are helping to create a fairer world, where everyone can achieve their potential.

Jenny Worthington, Churches Together in Porthcawl

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE: ENGAGING WITH A POLITICAL PARTY CONFERENCE

Co-secretary of Churches Together in Porthcawl, Mark Worrall, recently had the opportunity to attend the Labour Conference in Liverpool to advocate for Parkinson's UK. Here is his account.



I was attending as a volunteer, sharing my lived experience of caring for my father, who had Parkinson's with Lewy Body dementia, and who passed away last July.

Together with other volunteers and senior members of staff at Parkinson's UK, we discussed 3 main topic areas, which were: NHS workforce crisis, the need for more Parkinson's research, and better employment rights for disabled people, including additions to the Employment Rights Bill which is currently going through Parliament. Between us, we managed to discuss these important issues with 1 Secretary of State, 6 Ministers, several MPs who are taking actions forward, plus lots of Trade Unions.

It was fantastic to work with the team, and Mark Mardell (from the Movers and Shakers group) was great at Chairing the Parkinson's UK Fringe event: 'How the Parky Charter could improve lives for millions living with neurological conditions'. Members of the panel (pictured) were also joined by Stephen Kinnock, MP for Aberafan and Maesteg, who was fully understanding of the above issues and the need to do more. We hope to see change soon!

If you or someone you know needs support of Parkinson's UK, please call their helpline: 0808 800 0303, and if you're able to donate please visit: <https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/donate>

Mark Worrall, Porthcawl

CALLING FOR PEACE – A CENTURY AGO AND TODAY

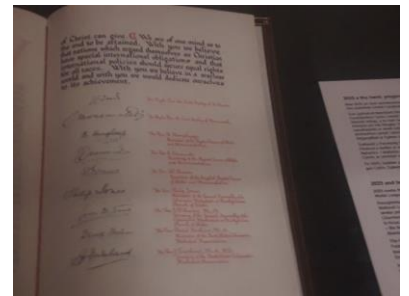


In 1924, a remarkable petition signed by almost 400,000 women in Wales was presented to the women of the USA, calling on the US Government to join the League of Nations. The centenary has been celebrated by returning the petition from the United States to Wales, and digitising the signatures - enabling today's descendants to reveal the 'hidden history' of action for peace by this generation of grandmothers and great-grandmothers. All this activity was celebrated at the Academi Heddwch (Peace Academy)'s first Annual

Conference at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff, with the President of the Academy, Bishop Rowan Williams (pictured). There is more about the history of the appeal at www.PeacePetition.wales

The occasion also saw the publication of Academi Heddwch's report, *Wales as a Nation of Peace*, calling on the Welsh Government today to do everything in its power to promote peace as part of its aim (under the Well-being of Future Generations Act) to make Wales a "globally responsible nation". It is hoped that the report will lead to widespread discussion about these topics.

The Women's Peace Petition was a remarkable achievement, but it did not immediately achieve its main goal. Back in Wales, the Welsh League of Nations Union (WLNU) considered what to do next. They decided to invite faith community leaders in Wales – in effect, the Christian churches - to sign a similar appeal, the Churches' Peace Appeal, to the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. Many of the documents have been digitized and can be viewed, along with a short explanatory feature film, at: <https://www.wcia.org.uk/1925-churches-peace-appeal/> The document was displayed at the celebration on November 16 (photo on the right). A webinar presentation about the history by Gethin Rhys (Cytûn) and Craig Owen (Welsh Centre for International Affairs) can be seen [here](#) or on Cytûn's website.



The appeal was conveyed personally to the Federal Council at their annual congress in Detroit in November-December 1925 by Revd Gwilym Davies, Secretary of the WLNU. During 2025, it is intended to commemorate this history - an early example of ecumenism in Wales – and its contemporary relevance, in partnership by Cytûn, Academi Heddwch, the Welsh Centre for International Affairs, historians, faith leaders and peace activists in Wales and the USA.

The first event will be a meeting to mark the 70th anniversary of the death of Rev. Gwilym Davies - Baptist minister, founder of the Peace and Good Will Message by the Youth of Wales, and one of the main drivers of the peace movement between the two World Wars. The meeting will be held at **Tonyfelin Baptist Chapel, 36 Heol Ton-y-Felin, Caerphilly CF83 1PA at 2-3.30pm on Sunday January 26 2025**. The meeting will be held with the support of the Gelligaer and Merthyr Tydfil Historical Societies in conjunction with the chapel. Among the speakers will be Siân Rhiannon, Aled Eurig, Siân Lewis (Urdd Gobaith Cymru) and Gethin Rhys. Simultaneous translation will be provided. All welcome – admission is free of charge.

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