
CYTŪN POLICY BULLETIN

APRIL 2017



RESILIENT COMMUNITIES FIRST

On February 14, Cabinet Secretary Carl Sargeant made his long anticipated announcement about the future of Communities First – which you can read in full [here](#).



communities first
cymunedau yn gyntaf

In outline, he announced:

- Continued funding in full to 30 June 2017
- Continued funding at 70% until 31 March 2018

Then from April 2018:

- A legacy fund of £6m p.a. for 4 years to be distributed to individual Communities First

projects through Public Service Boards

- An additional £4m p.a. funding for the Community Facilities Fund (CFAP) to assist community centres and similar facilities
- An additional £12m p.a. for Communities for Work and other employability schemes, to be administered by local councils
- Additional funding for Children's Zones and ACEs Hubs (to tackle adverse childhood experiences) (as well as Flying Start and Families First)
- Continued funding for CAB Cymru to provide local advice services

You can see the statement and the short discussion that followed in Plenary [here](#) (starting 15.15), and the fuller discussion at the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee [here](#).

Cytûn had prepared a full response based on comments sent by churches in eight Communities First clusters. The response was sent to the Government and the Committee, and discussed face to face with Mr Sargeant prior to his making the announcement. Most of the churches were concerned about any abrupt change, although some were critical of the



Communities First programme as a whole. The arrangements for the continuation of some local schemes meet a number of Cytûn's specific requests, and we welcome this element of the announcement.

Cytûn's response was referred to in plenary by Mark Isherwood AM, and nearly all the questions from AMs of all parties expressed deep concern about the announcement and its effect, while welcoming the element of continuity

There will be further discussion about the details of the changes, and the nature of some of the new programmes to promote resilient communities, and Cytûn's Policy Officer will welcome further comments and input as matters develop (contact details on back page).

WELSH CHURCHES RESPOND TO TRIGGERING ARTICLE 50

On March 29, in response to the triggering of Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, to negotiate the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, Cytûn's Wales and Europe Working Party announced a list of principles which they say should be the foundation of the UK's negotiating stance. These include protecting the status and rights of children and young people, the disabled and elderly. They say that Human Rights relating to the Welsh language and ethnic minorities must also be respected, as must legislation which protects the environment and the countryside – including the livelihood of those who work in rural industries.

The statement – issued by Cytûn on behalf of the mainstream Christian denominations – adds that the deep rifts which became evident during the EU referendum must be recognised and healed.

“As leaving the European Union now becomes reality, we must support people whose lives are changed in ways that they would not have wished for,” said Dr Patrick Coyle, Chair of Cytûn, on behalf of the working party formed to prepare an authoritative Welsh Christian response to Brexit. “The dissatisfaction that the referendum exposed in communities that have not benefitted from globalisation must be understood and action taken to develop those areas. The suppressed racism and xenophobia that the referendum campaign uncovered must be confronted. The Churches will need to be there with those who need comfort and encouragement and above all to be peacemakers, reconcilers.”



The working party, formed at the request of the Union of Welsh Independent churches last summer, has already given evidence to four Welsh and UK Select Committees on this issue. “As we enter uncharted waters, politically, culturally and economically, it's essential that we, as Christians, contribute in a constructive and robust manner to the debate and the democratic process,” said Dr Geraint Tudur, the Union's General Secretary.

The Revd Carol Wardman of the Church in Wales added that many people were shocked by the vote to leave the EU in Wales, which has always been an outward-looking country with close ties to many other parts of the world. “Whilst it is important that Wales is not disadvantaged by the split from the EU, and that we maintain friendship and fellowship with our European neighbours, it is also important to recognise the inequality and disaffection which caused people in especially the poorest parts of Wales to vote for Brexit. The fellowship of Christ's Church knows no boundaries, and it is the calling of Christians to bring about reconciliation – so the churches are ideally placed to reflect upon the current situation and consider how to move forward together in love.”

The Revd Denzil John, of Baptist Union of Wales, said that the working party had been a vehicle for the different denominations to find a common voice in their reaction to the changes that will happen in Wales following Brexit. “This is an opportunity for us to come to grips with some of the basic issues that challenge us as a nation, and to understand them in a European and global context.”

“In a period of uncertainty, the church has an important role to play by offering stability. As so many divisions appear and deepen in society, with the feeling of alienation from others becoming obvious, faith communities have a responsibility to serve and reconcile,” said Professor Noel Lloyd, of the Presbyterian Church of Wales.

The UK Government's Great Repeal Bill White Paper: A response by Cytûn's Policy Officer

The White Paper was published on 30 March 2017, and is available [here](#). Cytûn's Policy Officer has responded to the White Paper in the light of issues previously identified by Cytûn's [Wales and Europe Working Party](#) in its published responses to consultations.

1. Devolved competence – It seems that the Repeal Bill will include provisions to incorporate EU laws in devolved areas into Welsh law (para 2.5) and (paras 1.15, 3.6, 4.6) allowing Welsh Ministers to make secondary legislation 'correcting' EU law to make it work in the Welsh legal framework. These clauses of the Repeal Bill, and any others referring specifically to Welsh competences, will require a Legislative Consent Motion in the Assembly. (The same will apply for Scotland and Northern Ireland – both of which may create their own difficulties). It is noticeable that the current proposal is that these things be achieved by Westminster legislation with devolved consent rather than by Welsh legislation. See my article in the [February 2017 Cytûn Policy Bulletin](#) (pp 4-5) explaining why this mirrors the devolution settlement for Wales at present.
2. UK legal framework – Chapter 4 begins to set out the idea that "the UK single market" will need to be regulated after Brexit in the same way as the EU single market is at present. This is then used to suggest that the framework regulations currently made by the EU will in future be made through UK legislation (para 4.4), with implementation within that framework being devolved. It adds that initially the UK framework will be very similar to the EU framework, with discussion on changes following Brexit. This is contrary to the idea put forward in the Welsh Government White Paper [Securing Wales' Future](#) (pp 27-28) that the frameworks be agreed between all the UK governments. The UK Government's proposal would require primary UK legislation with Welsh Assembly consent in those policy areas that the Wales Act 2017 does not reserve to Westminster. The White Paper adds (para 4.5) "This will be an opportunity to determine the level best placed to take decisions on these issues, ensuring power sits closer to the people of the UK than ever before. It is the expectation of the Government that the outcome of this process will be a significant increase in the decision making power of each devolved administration." I would expect some kickback from the devolved administrations on both the principle of this, and on the suggestion that detailed conversations between the UK and devolved governments will begin only *after* Brexit.
3. Rights of EU citizens in the UK – para 1.22 states "we will introduce an immigration bill so nothing will change for any EU citizen, whether already resident in the UK or moving from the EU, without Parliament's approval." This is still not a guarantee of continued status for these citizens, but it does remove the fear of a loss of rights by executive action alone, which is a step forward. Press reports that EU citizens who arrive here after triggering Article 50 would not have the same rights as those already here have not been realised – indeed, the White Paper is repeatedly clear that all rights and obligations of individuals and institutions under EU treaties and laws apply up to the moment of departure from the EU, and any changes will only begin to be worked out after departure.
4. Equalities and human rights – The White Paper specifically says that the Equality Act 2010 – based on EU law – will remain in force (para 2.17 Example 1) and that the UK "has no plans to withdraw" from the European Convention on Human Rights – despite press reports to the contrary a few weeks ago. These are both in line with what we and individual churches have asked for. However, the UK Government

does not intend to incorporate the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights into UK law, arguing that all the rights in it are either contained in other legislation or treaties which will be preserved in UK law, or are irrelevant because they relate to specific EU institutions (paras 2.23-2.25). Human rights experts will certainly have something to say about this approach in the coming days, and I anticipate this being one of the most controversial proposals.

5. Environmental law – We have publicly expressed concern at comments made to a Westminster Committee by Andrea Leadsom MP (Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) that only two-thirds of EU environmental legislation would be incorporated into UK law. The White Paper, however (para 2.17 Example 2) explicitly states “The Great Repeal Bill will ensure that the whole body of existing EU environmental law continues to have effect in UK law.” This is very welcome news – although it fails to take account of the fact that the environment is not generally a reserved matter, and legislative competence for the environment in Wales sits with the Assembly.
6. The only reference to agriculture is in para 4.2 in the context of UK “frameworks” for devolved administration – see point 2 above. This may well signify that agriculture is not at the forefront of the UK Government’s thinking at the moment, which would be a matter of concern for churches in Wales.
7. Chapter 5 relates to Jersey, Guernsey, the Isle of Man and Gibraltar. Spare a thought for the people and governments of these jurisdictions, as no detail whatsoever is supplied as to how they will fare after Brexit.

The Working Party is continuing its series of meetings with AMs of all parties. In June, it will be meeting with the General Secretaries of the Christian ecumenical councils of Europe and with First Minister Carwyn Jones to continue the conversation.

AUTISM IN WALES

On March 28, Paul Davies AM was given leave to introduce an [Autism \(Wales\) Bill](#). This would introduce a strategy for meeting the needs of children and adults in Wales with autistic spectrum disorder conditions; establish a register of autistic children and adults so that local areas can plan accordingly and give the condition its own statutory identity, recognising that autism is a condition in its own right.

Two days earlier, at the start of Autism Awareness Week, Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans, announced additional funding of £7 million for the National Integrated Autism Service, bringing the total amount of funding allocated to supporting autism services in Wales to £13 million up to 2021. Wales is the first part of the UK to create a national service to provide lifetime support to children and adults with autism, and their families. The innovative service, which will be rolled out across the country by 2018, will provide new adult diagnostic services; support for families and carers; help with transition from child to adult provision and training for professionals

This includes a commitment to developing improved autism resources, such as the new scheme developed by the WLGA, “Can you see me?” which is to be rolled out in the coming months. The initiative promotes understanding and acceptance of autism within communities in Wales. Leaflets and posters for outlets such as shops, banks, hairdressers and cinemas as well as dentists and GPs have been created to support interactions with people with autism. People with autism can also choose whether they would like to make others aware of their autism by wearing a wristband or showing a card (which will also be available for mobile phones).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT – VOTING AND REFORMING

Most People in Wales will have the opportunity to vote on May 4 for new local councillors in the 22 local authorities. It is likely that political control will change hands in some councils.

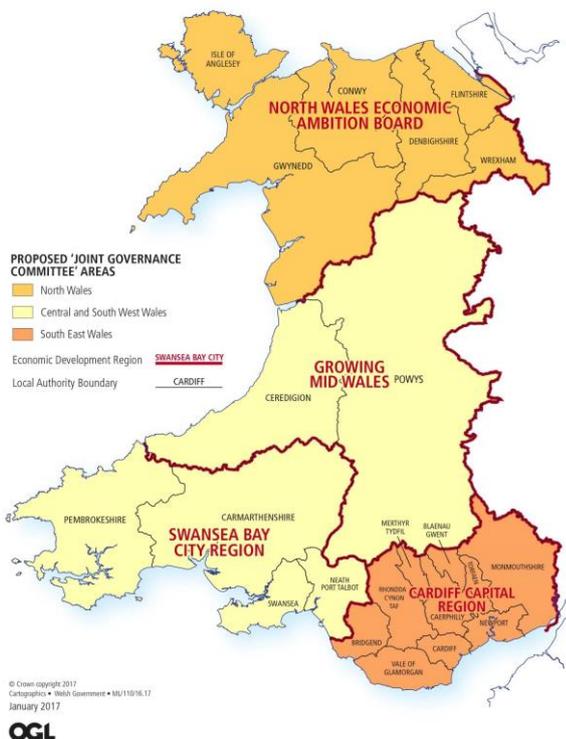
But not everyone will get to choose. Research by the Electoral Reform Society Cymru (ERS) shows that 92 councillors have been elected unopposed – compared with just 4 across England in the same round of elections. One ward (Yscir in Powys) has attracted no candidates at all. Across Wales, 127,631 electors will be unable to vote, including 25,270 in Gwynedd.

Defects such as this in the existing arrangements have led the Welsh Government to make several attempts to reform local government. In the last Assembly it did not prove possible to construct a majority for the changes, so the Cabinet Secretary for Finance

and Local Government, Mark Drakeford, has published a new White Paper called *Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed*.

WALES

Proposed 'Joint Governance Committee' Areas



The White Paper proposes retaining 22 authorities, unless any councils choose to merge voluntarily. But many of the most important council services – such as many education services, social services, economic development, planning and building control – would be delivered regionally.

Where regional patterns exist already (for example in education, and the health and social services Partnership Boards), they would continue. But the Government wishes to see more public and internal administrative services united regionally on the pattern of the city-regions and economic development regions – see the map. It is suggested that housing and refuse services might also be delivered regionally.

A Cytûn working party has responded. Some aspects are welcomed, such as:

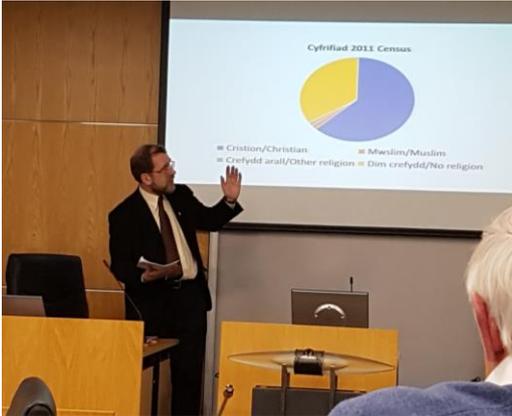
- Administrative cost savings and improvements in some specialist services, such as trading standards, through regional delivery.
- The opportunity to improve Welsh language services through regional delivery.
- Requiring independent candidates to declare membership of any political party, and setting expected service standards for councillors' performance.
- Strengthening community councils, the level of government closest to people.

But we are concerned at some of the proposals, such as:

- The danger of losing democratic accountability as services are run by joint Boards several stages removed from electors, and with no direct voice from each part of a region, thus exacerbating the current "democratic deficit".
- Permitting local authorities to choose differing electoral systems, even within the same region, which could create confusion and a sense of unfairness.

A copy of the full response can be obtained from the Cytûn office (see back page).

IS WALES A GODLESS SOCIETY?



[Gorwel](#) – the Welsh Foundation for Innovation in Public Affairs – arranged a well attended debate on this subject in Siambr Hywel (the old debating chamber) in the Senedd on March 28.

Gethin Rhys, Policy Officer for Cytûn, and Kathy Riddick, Development Officer for [Wales Humanists](#), both gave brief presentations on the topic, and a lively discussion followed.

Gethin and Kathy focussed on the difficulty of interpreting statistics for religious adherence – a notion not readily amenable to ticking a box. They disagreed as to whether religion enjoyed a privileged position in Wales, Kathy feeling that it did, while Gethin pointed to the lack of Government funding for events such as the tricentenary of the birth of hymnwriter William Williams, while non religious authors such as Dylan Thomas and Roald Dahl have had publicly funded commemorations in recent years.

The audience mainly wanted to discuss the place of religion in education, especially religious education, collective worship and schools of a religious character (so called ‘faith schools’). Gethin and Kathy are both involved in the Government’s Strategic Stakeholder Group for the new curriculum, where Gethin represents religion (along with Nor’dzin Pamo of the Buddhist Council for Wales) and Kathy represents humanism.

The discussion continued in Welsh the following Sunday on the Radio Cymru programme [Bwrw Golwg](#), with the humanist viewpoint represented this time by Iolo ap Gwynn.

PEOPLE IN RESIDENTIAL CARE TO KEEP MORE OF THEIR MONEY

From April 10, the capital limit used in charging for residential social care limit will rise from £24,000 to £30,000, as part of a phased increase to £50,000. In addition, a full disregard of the War Disablement Pension (WDP) is being introduced in all local authority financial assessments for charging for social care.

Minister for Social Services, Rebecca Evans, said: “Older people who have worked hard and paid in all their lives deserve a fairer deal. That is why, over the course of this Assembly, we will double the amount of money that older people can keep when in care.”

Local authorities are responsible for funding a person’s care if their capital is less than £30,000, only charging a contribution based on a person’s available income. Anybody who thinks they, or a family member, could benefit, should contact their local authority.



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