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# CYTÛN POLICY BULLETIN

## JUNE - JULY 2023

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### DOES GOVERNMENT 'DO GOD'?



In April, the UK Government [published](#) a substantial report by Colin Bloom, the UK Government's Independent Adviser on Engagement with Faith. The report was commissioned in 2019 by Boris Johnson MP when he was Prime Minister.

The call for evidence in 2020 was presented as applying to England only, and therefore neither Cytûn nor the Welsh denominations contributed to the report. However, the published report covers all the UK Government's responsibilities, including its work in Wales. Indeed, Mr Bloom has interesting things to say and - as he himself points out - many of his conclusions are also relevant to the devolved governments, including the Welsh Government.

Although press reports focused on Mr Bloom's comments about terrorism with religious links, most of the report deals with more positive aspects of the relationship. Chapter 2 reviews the UK Government's involvement with faith communities, notes how that

involvement improved during the Covid 19 pandemic, and calls for learning from the intense discussions that happened at that time. Mr Bloom recommends the appointment of an Independent Adviser on Faith, noting that the Church of England has traditionally performed such a role, but that the religious nature of the current population of England means that this is no longer appropriate. Many would say that it is even less appropriate with regard to Wales.

It also recommends that everyone in the public services should receive religious literacy training, which would include *training on the freedom of religion or belief enshrined in the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equalities Act 2010, greater understanding of faith-specific practices including the public expression of religious belief, awareness of intrafaith matters and sensitive issues such as forced marriages, and financial and other forms of faith-based exploitation* (recommendation 4). This would help with what Mr Bloom describes as a tendency by politicians to approach a small number of 'go-to' religious leaders, who do not necessarily represent the breadth of their communities. It could be argued that this trend can be seen within the Welsh Government and Senedd as well as within the UK Government and Parliament.

Chapter 4 focuses on faith in the prison and probation services. Mr Bloom praises prison chaplains for their work, but notes that the probation service has found it more difficult to deal with the religious diversity of our time, noting that there has been too much reliance on the Church of England in the this context. Chapter 5 notes general satisfaction with the chaplaincies of the armed forces, with followers of other religions saying they were very satisfied with the service offered to them by Christian chaplains.

Chapter 8 deals with religious marriages. He notes that the Law Commission has recently recommended [significant changes to the legal framework](#) for marriages in England and Wales. He says he is still concerned about religious marriages that are not legally recognised, and forced marriage practices within certain religions, although strangely he does not refer to the [report](#) produced by Mona Siddiqui for the UK Government in 2018 which addressed the same questions in the context of shari'a law, which has not yet been implemented.

There is a great deal in this report for UK and Welsh Government and faith communities to reflect upon, and Cytûn will be raising some of these issues with Welsh Government in due course.

# FAITH COMMUNITIES AND THE COVID-19 INQUIRY



The **UK Covid 19 inquiry**, chaired by Baroness Hallett, has begun its work. Full details can be found on the website <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/>. It will start hearing oral evidence in June 2023.

The Inquiry has divided its work into separate 'modules' which deal with different topics. The modules announced so far are:

1. How prepared the UK was for a pandemic.
2. Core political and administrative governance and decision-making for the UK. It will include the initial response, central government decisions, political and civil service performance as well as the effectiveness of the relationship between governments in the

devolved administrations and the local and voluntary sectors. Module 2 will also assess the decisions made about non-pharmaceutical measures (lockdowns and other restrictions) and the factors that contributed to their implementation.

In Module 2, **Module 2B** will focus particularly on Wales. Oral hearings will begin in February 2024; written submissions will be required well before that.

3. Government and society's response to Covid-19 and the impact the pandemic had on healthcare systems, patients and healthcare workers. This will include healthcare governance, primary care, NHS backlogs, the effects of vaccination programs on healthcare provision as well as Long Covid diagnosis and support.

Further modules will cover:

- Vaccines, therapeutics and antiviral treatments
- The care sector
- Government procurement and PPE
- Test and trace
- The Government's business and financial responses
- Health inequalities and the impact of Covid-19
- Education, children and young people
- Other public services, including frontline delivery by key workers

Organisations that wish to submit evidence must obtain the Inquiry's permission. The Inquiry has agreed to receive information from faith groups for Module 2B (Welsh Government actions and regulations and their effect) through Cytûn and the Inter-faith Council for Wales. It appears very unlikely that the Inquiry will agree to receive evidence directly from individual denominations or faith groups.

In order to submit it to the Inquiry in a timely manner, Cytûn will need to receive submissions relating to Module 2B from denominations and faith organisations by **15 September 2023** at the latest. This can include case studies from local congregations, as these will illustrate the realities on the ground better than general statements. There will be further opportunities later to present evidence relating to later modules – such as our work in offering practical help to people during the pandemic. If it is easier to send a single submission, then Cytûn will be happy to assign it to the appropriate modules. Please use the email address [gethin@cytun.cymru](mailto:gethin@cytun.cymru) for your submissions.

Cytûn maintains regular contact with the Inquiry team, the relevant officials in Welsh Government and other voluntary organisations who are presenting evidence, in order to ensure that we take every opportunity to enable faith perspectives and experiences to be brought before the Inquiry.

**Individuals** (but not organisations) who wish to share their experience with the Inquiry can do so through the [Every Story Matters](https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/share-your-experience/) initiative. There is an online portal for you to share your story and perspectives here - <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/share-your-experience/>. These can be sent in Welsh or English. The Inquiry will be starting an awareness raising exercise about this opportunity in June.

Although it is not intended to hold a similar Public Inquiry focusing only on Wales, on May 16 the Senedd voted unanimously to establish a **Wales Covid-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee** with the following terms of reference:

- i) *Following the publication of the reports in the individual stages of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry ... propose to the Senedd, ... any gaps identified in the preparedness and response of the Welsh Government and other Welsh public bodies during the Covid-19 pandemic that should be subject to further investigation.*
- ii) *Subject to Senedd approval, undertake a review into those areas identified for further examination.*
- iii) *Publish reports and make recommendations accordingly.*

Cytûn will be ready to offer evidence to that Committee, in the first place about any gaps we see in the Covid-19 Investigation, and then for any review that this Senedd Committee will undertake.

## TREES AND A SURVEY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Future Generations Commissioner's team has worked with the Carbon Community to plant 100 trees, one for each of the [100 Changemakers](#) named by former Commissioner Sophie Howe in January. Shown here is a photo of the tree planted in the name of Cytûn's Policy Officer by the Carbon Community in the forest at Cynghordy, Carmarthenshire. In this forest they are exploring the best way to help trees and soil to remove carbon from the air, which will hopefully inform all reforestation work in the UK and beyond.



As the new Commissioner, Derek Walker, begins his work, he is currently currently undertaking work ([Our Future Focus](#)) to draw up priorities for the next seven years. He has launched a survey as part of this work to gather feedback on what has had the greatest impact in the first seven years since the Well-being of Future Generations Act became law, what the priorities should be for the team's in the future and the best way to achieve the most within their resources.

The survey is live until the 3rd of July, and all are welcome to complete and share it: English survey: [bit.ly/ourfuturefocus](https://bit.ly/ourfuturefocus) Welsh survey: [bit.ly/ffocwseindyfodol](https://bit.ly/ffocwseindyfodol)

*Photo: The Carbon Community*

## CLIMATE JUSTICE FOR WALES AND THE WORLD

Cytûn - together with our member bodies Christian Aid and CAFOD and a number of other organisations - is involved with the [Stop Climate Chaos Cymru](#) (SCCC) coalition, which is pushing the UK and Welsh governments to do everything in their power to speed up the response to climate change and to do so in a just and fair way.



On May 16, SCCC launched a comprehensive policy report in the Senedd, sponsored by Delyth Jewell MS (Plaid Cymru), shown in the picture with a number of campaigners and Peredur Owen Griffiths MS, former member of Cytûn staff. There was support from MSs from other parties, and there was half an hour of open and honest conversation with the Minister for Climate Change in the Welsh Government, Julie James MS. The Welsh Government through its partnership agreement with Plaid Cymru has established the Wales Zero Net 2035 Challenge Group, convened by Jane Davidson, to investigate the challenges and opportunities of accelerating the path to Net Zero and trying to reach the goal by 2035 rather than by the current target of 2050. There was considerable enthusiasm among those present to see the fruits of that work.

*Photo: Stop Climate Chaos Cymru*



# NEWS FROM CYTŪN MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

## Through the Roof



We are very thankful to God for the provision of project funding from the Benefact Trust which has enabled us to recruit a team of people to help to scale up our volunteer **Roofbreaker** (disability champion) programme to reach out across the nations and regions of the UK. I am excited to be able to focus on engaging with churches in Wales, as well as reaching out to those in the West and South West of England.

You are invited to a Through the Roof **Cardiff Outreach event**; Disability and the Church ABC: Access Belonging Commission: 24<sup>th</sup> June 2023. The heart behind this event is to give space for people with a range of disabilities and access needs to share their experience and to equip and resource the local church to welcome more disabled people. You can find more details about the event here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/disability-and-the-church-abc-access-belonging-commissioning-tickets-629219441287>

One of the new resources we have been working on is a page which signposts churches to **funding sources**, specifically to improve access to church. You can find more details here: <https://throughtheroof.org/2023/05/04/news-release-finding-funding-for-an-accessible-church/>

I am looking to connect with churches across Wales. If we can serve you and your church community by providing more information, advice, training resources or a speaker for an event please do get in contact with me. I would love to hear from you. My direct email is [katie@throughtheroof.org.uk](mailto:katie@throughtheroof.org.uk)

*Katie Mobbs*



## Safe Families

**Safe Families** believes no one should feel alone. We exist to create relationship and connection because everyone deserves to belong. We are a Christian organisation who engage with some of the most isolated families in our community, offering friendship, hope and belonging through and with the local church. The Church is the most transformational community within our world, and we want to see its offer of belonging extended into our streets, towns and cities across South Wales. This belonging is through friendships with parents, playdates with kids or even helping a family tidy up and discover their routine. We believe more than ever connection and relationships are essential.

Currently Safe Families Wales work with families in Cardiff and Neath Port Talbot. Below are our figures to date:



Could you or someone you know make a difference to families through Safe Families?

We offer 3 ways to respond: Volunteer, Give and Prayer.

To find out more visit our website: <https://safefamilies.uk/church/> or scan the QR code above.

*Samantha Whittington*

## [ARocha UK](#)

Registrations from chapels and churches within Wales with the **EcoChurch** scheme are increasing on a regular basis. At the time of writing there were around 365 churches registered, but increasing each week, and around 123 of these have registered in the past year. There are currently 35 Silver-awarded churches in Wales, and I fully anticipate the first Gold-awarded church within months! It is especially encouraging to see more denominations now engaging with the scheme and making creation care and environmental activities a central part of their missions. I have been continuing to meet with and build relationships with representatives from all denominations across Wales, and specific ecumenical information sessions in north-west Wales in February seem to have borne fruit.

I will be attending various denominations' summer events or conferences as well as the Urdd Eisteddfod and Royal Welsh Show in partnership with Cytûn. If you have any regional or national events/meetings you think might be useful for me to attend (including local Churches Together groups), let me know. Despite the amazing growth in numbers, there is always room for more and so, please encourage your churches to look at the Eco Church scheme on our website here: <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

Our **Wild Christian** project continues to grow (currently over 6,000 members across the UK) and is for individuals and families who want to enjoy and learn about nature together, take practical action at home and in their local areas, and join with other voices for national impact - all in the context of their Christian faith. <https://arocha.org.uk/wild-christian/>

Our **Partners in Action** work is also growing and we now have 39 partners across the UK. These are practical nature conservation projects that are locally owned and managed, but for which A Rocha UK provides expertise and resources to help support and mobilise the visions of the owners to manage the land in the most sustainable ways. <https://arocha.org.uk/what-we-do/partners-in-action/>

*Delyth Higgins*

## ...and from other organisations



[God and the Big Bang](#) runs interactive workshop days with students from Year 5 – 13, providing the opportunity to discover, discuss and debate the compatibility of science and faith. The events equip young people with the tools they need in order to form their own opinions and engage in rational, exciting, well-reasoned and thought-provoking discussion about the part science plays in God's world. God and the Big Bang are currently growing and developing their Welsh language provision.

To find out more or to book a session, please visit [www.gatbb.co.uk](http://www.gatbb.co.uk) or contact Steph Bevan, [stephanie.j.bevan@durham.ac.uk](mailto:stephanie.j.bevan@durham.ac.uk)

**HEDDWCH**  **PEACE**  
**AR WAITH ACTION WALES**

Organisations from all over Wales have come together to establish **Heddwch ar Waith**, a new campaign network for peace and justice. Cytûn members the Society of Friends (Quakers) and the Union of Welsh

Independents, are among the founder bodies, together with Unitarians Wales and others.

Heddwch ar Waith (Peace Action Wales) has been funded through the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust with the intention of increasing collaboration between peace and justice organisations for the benefit of the people and communities of Wales and the world. Part of the work will be mapping the extent of militarism in Wales, establishing methods of distributing and disseminating information on non-violence and building a network of lobbyists for justice. One of the main objectives will be to work together with local and Welsh governments towards the goal of making Wales a Nation of Peace.

For more information or if you would like to be part of Heddwch ar Waith, contact [HeddwchArWaith@gmail.com](mailto:HeddwchArWaith@gmail.com)

## FAIR TRADING AFTER TRAIDCRAFT



In May, Cytûn hosted a webinar 'After Traidcraft: What's next?' in partnership with [Fair Trade Wales](#). You can now watch the three lively and informative presentations by Kate Dixon from [Transform Trade](#), Lushina Hines from [BAFTS Fair Trade Network UK](#) and owner of the Fair and Fabulous Fair Trade store in Newcastle Emlyn, and Tracy Mitchell from Fair Trade supplier [JTS](#) by clicking [here](#). (The video is introduced in Welsh but the presentations are in English).

There is a lot of support available to make sure that churches can continue to promote Fair Trade and an alternative way of trading. If you would like to receive the latest on Fair Trade from Fair Trade Wales, you can sign up for their newsletter [here](#).

A celebration of 15 years of Wales being a Fair Trade Nation will be held in the Senedd on **Tuesday July 11** at 11-2.

## Cross-Party Group on Faith

*Is Wales losing its faith? Reflections on the 2021 census*

**Guest speaker: The Most Reverend Andrew John, Archbishop of Wales**

Wednesday 21 June 2023, 12.00 – 13.00

Conference Room A, Tŷ Hywel

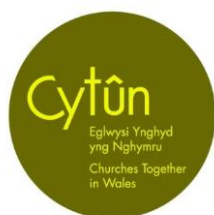
*This will be an in-person meeting with hybrid facilities available.*

*For further information, email Jim Stewart on [jimstewartwales@gmail.com](mailto:jimstewartwales@gmail.com)*

## Registration of youth workers

Following last year's consultation, in which Cytûn and a number of denominations took part, [regulations](#) came into force on May 22, which require every qualified youth worker or employed qualified youth support worker (and those working towards being qualified) to register with the Education Workforce Council for Wales annually. All denominations and local churches that employ such workers should, therefore, ensure that their workers are registered. It is the intention of the Welsh Government to work towards registering unqualified employed youth workers, and possibly some volunteers in the field as well, but as considerable opposition was expressed to that in the consultation, there will be further consultation before taking that step.

## CONTACTING CYTÛN'S POLICY OFFICER



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***Hapus i gyfathrebu yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg.***

***Happy to communicate in Welsh and English***

 **@CytunNew**



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