

Faith Communities Forum

11.30am – 12.30pm Monday 10th February 2025

Via Teams

Attendance

Name - Organisation
Jane Hutt - Chair; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip
Representative from
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
Cytun
Christian Faith Evangelical Alliance Wales
Bahá'í Council for Wales
South Wales Jewish Council
Muslim Council of Wales
Free Church Council of Wales
Sikh Council of Wales
Interfaith Council for Wales
Church in Wales
Church in Wales
Ahmadiyya Muslim Association
Catholic Church in England and Wales
Bahá'í Council for Wales
Wales Humanists
WG (Equality and Human Rights)
WG (Equality and Human Rights)
WG (Race, Faith and Belief and Gypsy and Roma and Traveller Policy Team)
WG (ArWAP Policy Team)
WG (Cohesive Communities Policy Team)
WG (Cabinet Secretary Private Office)

Meeting notes

Discussion
<u>Item one: Welcome and opening remarks</u> The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip (“the Chair”) welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies received. The Chair acknowledged that the group had not met since September 2023 due to a variety of factors but was pleased that regular meetings are now resumed. The Chair noted the ceasefire between Israel and Gaza and the hostage exchange reflecting on the release of Eli Sharabi.

The Chair recapped the discussion of the last meeting in September 2023, in particular the issue of membership of the Faith Communities Forum of non-faith organisations or representatives and the issue of whether the forum should be re-constituted as a faith and belief forum.

The Chair explained that a decision was reached on both matters. That being the forum would remain as it is established, a faith forum, however in the interests of inclusion and pursuit of social cohesion, membership was extended to Wales Humanists as an associated member. All membership requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

A review of the Terms of Reference is under review and officials will share an update in due course.

Action: Officials to update the group about the Terms of Reference.

Item two: Social Cohesion: Welsh Government policy and actions

A Welsh Government representative spoke about the actions taken by Welsh Government since the unrest last Summer including:

- Developing a misinformation toolkit to help organisations deal with misinformation spread online about them or their staff members. The toolkit is being piloted and can be shared with the group for their feedback.
- The Community Cohesion programme continues to operate including the Hate Hurts Wales programme and Wales Hate Support Centre.

A comment from the group reflected the need to include those not in the interfaith council with community cohesion work.

A member of the group updated on the work he is involved in to address concerns on far-right ideology. He is convening a group of academics to research far-right groups and create innovative ways of responding.

The role of Education and the Religion, Values and Ethics curriculum was discussed and the Chair agreed to add this to the agenda of the next meeting.

Action: WG to reach out to Cytun and Wales Humanists to discuss engagement with Community Cohesion on an ongoing basis.

Action: Muslim Council of Wales representative to update the group about the new think group on far-right ideology at the next meeting.

Action: Education and RVE curriculum to be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Action: Secretariat to share misinformation toolkit.

Item three: Wales – A Nation of Sanctuary

The Cabinet Secretary will be making an Oral Statement in Plenary on Tues 11th February on the Nation of Sanctuary.

A WG representative provided an update to the group on the Nation of Sanctuary and the whole-of-society approach. Other organisations such as local authorities will be supporting the Nation of Sanctuary and faith representatives were encouraged to express their commitment.

Dame Eagle and Lord Khan will be visiting Wales on 27th March.

Action: Secretariat to circulate Cabinet Secretary's Oral Statement on Wales – A Nation of Sanctuary.

Action: All members to consider responding to the Cabinet Secretary's Oral Statement on A Nation of Sanctuary.

Item four: ArWAP Refresh – update

A WG representative gave a presentation on the refresh of ArWAP.

The role of the new Regional Convenors was discussed and it was agreed that they be invited to attend the next Forum meeting.

Action: Secretariat to share the presentation on the ArWAP refresh with the group.

Action: Regional Convenors to be invited to attend the next meeting.

Item five: Exceptions Order Review

A WG representative informed the group of an upcoming public consultation on proposed amendments to the Exceptions Order following a review. Proposals include changes that may be relevant to faith organisations.

Action: Secretariat to share a WG email address for anyone who wishes to comment on the Exceptions Order Review.

Item six: Any Other Business

1. Listed Places of Worship grant DCMS

- The link to the website was added to the chat:

[Listed Places of Worship \(LPW\) Grant Scheme](#)

2. Section 30 Guidance for political Parties on Diversity and Inclusion - strategies for 2026' update

- The Chair gave a short update on the Section 30 guidance and the importance of this to increase diversity in political parties.

3. Next meeting date

The next meeting will be in September.

There is an Interfaith event on Thursday 13th February which has been organised by the Chair of the Interfaith Council. Cabinet Secretary will be attending.

Action: Secretariat to circulate a diary marker for the next meeting which will be in September.

Action: Secretariat to share details of the Interfaith Event taking place on Thursday 13th February.