



Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
[Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd / Priorities for the Sixth Senedd](#)
PR25

Ymateb gan Cynhadledd Esgobion Catholig Lloegr a Chymru / Evidence from Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Executive Summary

- This consultation response is being submitted by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW).
- The Catholic Bishops' Conference has laid out eight suggested priorities for the CCEI Committee and the Minister and Deputy Minister for Climate Change. They are drawn from our experience and pioneering research on how the Catholic Church across Wales can become carbon-neutral and sustainable.
- This includes a suggested priority on the support required to ensure Catholic listed buildings can be decarbonised and protected from climate change whilst maintaining their value as contributors to the rich heritage in Wales.
- We also offer suggested priorities on how the Welsh Government can support the most vulnerable in Wales as they implement initiatives to tackle the climate crisis, as well as how communities can be further educated on climate change and protecting the environment.

Introduction

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW) is the national permanent assembly of Catholic Bishops and Personal Ordinaries in the two member countries. CBCEW represents that Catholic community across the 22 dioceses across England and Wales, with three of those dioceses sitting within Wales.

The Catholic Church in Wales comprises of the Diocese of Wrexham, the Diocese of Menevia and the Archdiocese of Cardiff. Their combined 181 parishes serve a Catholic population of around 200,000 making Catholicism one of the largest faiths in Wales.

The Catholic community in Wales contributes greatly to the nation's proud heritage of religious, cultural and ethnic diversity. CBCEW recognises the serious nature of the climate crisis and has been running a number of initiatives and research projects to ensure that the Catholic Church plays its part in protecting the environment.

Support to Decarbonise the Catholic Church in Wales

The Catholic Church has been undertaking a pioneering research project called 'Guardians of Creation' with the aim to find practical answers to the challenges of decarbonisation for diocesan buildings. This is a collaborative project working with universities, charities,



organisations and diocesan representatives.¹ Using the Diocese of Salford as a case study, 'Guardians of Creation' aims to provide an insight into how a process of decarbonisation can be rolled out across England and Wales. This research will not only ensure that the Catholic Church is able to decarbonise, but the guidance and tools can also be used by other organisations to become carbon neutral. With 181 parishes across the three dioceses in Wales, and the knowledge and research to underpin how change can be rolled out at a local level in churches, it is crucial that the Catholic Church receives financial support from the Welsh Government to implement this plan.

- **Suggested Priority:** The CCEI Committee should integrate the pioneering examples and resources of the Catholic community into their advice and recommendations to Welsh Government.

Recognition of the Need to Protect the Vulnerable from the Impact of Climate Change

Climate change is projected to impact the world's poorest more acutely due to geography and lower income in Wales and abroad. It is evident that developing countries have contributed the least to the crisis yet are experiencing the greater impact. This threatens to jeopardise many of the developmental gains that have previously been achieved. However, vulnerable communities within the UK will also be hit hard by the impact of climate change. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation lists South Wales as one of the five main coastal areas in the UK that are particularly vulnerable to coastal erosion.²

Whilst the impact of climate change can cause the most harm to vulnerable communities in Wales and globally, it is also the case that the solutions implemented to tackle climate change can adversely affect the most vulnerable. They may not have the financial ability to make the necessary changes.

- **Suggested Priority:** The CCEI Committee should prioritise an 'integral ecology', recognising the human, social, political, cultural and ethical dimensions of the climate crisis and the solutions to it.
- **Suggested Priority:** The CCEI committee should represent the most vulnerable communities in Wales to ensure that they are not adversely affected by the Welsh Government's implementations for a green transition.
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- **Suggested Priority:** The Minister and Deputy Minister for Climate Change should implement relevant support packages and national incentives to ensure that vulnerable communities are heard and not left behind.

¹ <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/environment-case-study-2/>

² <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/impacts-climate-change-disadvantaged-uk-coastal-communities>



Decarbonisation of Historic Buildings and Protection from the Effects of Climate Change

There are 47 listed Catholic buildings in Wales. Every listed building is unique and will come with its own set of challenges in becoming carbon neutral. The effort to decarbonise each of these buildings comes with different financial, time and specialist costs.

In The Historic Environment Group's *Historic Environment and Climate Change in Wales Sector Adaptation Plan* it highlights that 'all classes of historic asset are at risk from frequent high winds and storm events, including the associated storm surges, damage and erosion. Hotter, drier summers may increase tourism potential and support economic development, but increased visitor numbers can also risk harm to fragile historic assets'.³ It is important to protect Welsh heritage through our historic buildings from the threats of climate change.

- **Suggested Priority:** The Welsh Government should establish a plan to ensure that historic buildings across Wales receive the specialist support they require to ensure they are protected from the impact of climate change.
- **Suggested Priority:** The CCEI Committee should consult with the relevant Ministers to ensure that listed buildings are able to go through a process of decarbonisation without risking their unique contributions to Welsh heritage.

Whole-Community Education on the Environment

The United Nations has stated the importance of education in combatting the climate crisis: 'Education empowers all people, but especially motivates the young to take action'.⁴ The Catholic Church is committed to providing accurate and informative resources to empower people of all ages to care for the environment and make sustainable changes in their lives. The majority of Catholic schools across Wales use education resources developed by The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD).⁵ Currently their resources have the theme: 'Go Green For CAFOD'.

We recognise that often change is most effective when led by the local community. CBCEW has been sharing case studies and resources to inspire whole communities to care for the environment. The *Livesimply* Award encourages parishes and schools across England and Wales to make a commitment to live more simply, more sustainably and in solidarity with poor communities. This award offers communities the opportunity to learn about their

impact on the planet and how this will affect them and those across the world as well as the implications for future generations.⁶

³ <https://cadw.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2020-02/Adaptation%20Plan%20-%20FINAL%20WEB%20-%20English%20%281%29.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/climate-solutions/education-key-addressing-climate-change>

⁵ <https://cafod.org.uk/Education/Education-resources>

⁶ <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/environment-case-study-4/>



- **Suggested Priority:** The Welsh Government should support initiatives dedicated to educating whole communities on climate change and their carbon footprint.
- **Suggested Priority:** The CCEI Committee should involve the voices of the Catholic community and other faith communities, recognising the important role they play as diverse community hubs.