

Child burial fees will no longer apply in Wales

The Welsh Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with local government to stop charging for the burial of children, ensuring there is a clear, fair and consistent approach across Wales.

To support local authorities in making this step, the Welsh Government is making up to £1.5m available between now and 2020. This funding will also be available to all other providers of cemeteries and crematoria in Wales who agree not to charge on the same basis.

The MOU comes into force with immediate effect and the First Minister is urging councils to ratify the agreement as soon as possible.

The First Minister said:

“We must do all we can to support families who have lost a child. I am pleased we are able to work with local authorities to take away just one of the stresses and strains on the shoulders of grieving parents during a hugely distressing time.

“Today’s commitment will also end the unfairness caused by charging different fees across Wales and I am grateful to the WLGA and One Voice Wales for their support.”

Mr Lyn Cadwallader, Chief Executive of One Voice Wales said:

“We have worked in collaboration with Welsh Government and WLGA colleagues in implementing this important government policy – when we surveyed the community and town council sector there was overwhelming support to scrap child burial fees.

“It is hard to comprehend how difficult it must be for grieving families to cope with this tragic circumstance. The introduction of this approach will take away any unnecessary stress and help to ease the pain of grieving families.”

Councillor Debbie Wilcox, WLGA Leader said:

“Local government is very pleased to be able to help to support families who are going through the most difficult period in their lives. Losing a child is a harrowing experience and a trauma that will stay with families throughout their lives. We are pleased to be working with Welsh Government to ensure that there is fairness

and consistency in this regard in all areas of Wales.”

Appointment to the Education Workforce Council

The EWC was formed in April 2015, following the introduction of the Education (Wales) Act 2014. The EWC are responsible for:

- establishing and maintaining a Register of school teachers, Further Education (FE) teachers, school and FE learning support workers, youth workers, youth support workers and work based learning practitioners
- reviewing and revising the Code of Professional Conduct & Practice
- investigating and hearing cases involving the fitness to practise of registered persons
- on request, advising Welsh Ministers and others on a range of professional matters including standards of conduct and practice; professional roles and standing; training, career development and performance management; recruitment, retention and supply related to registered education practitioners
- accredit courses or programmes of initial school teacher education (ITE)
- monitor the compliance of accredited courses or programmes of ITE with Welsh Government published criteria
- withdrawing the accreditation of courses or programmes of ITE.

The Education Workforce Council (Appointments and Membership) (Wales) Regulations 2014 provides for membership of the EWC is to consist of not less than 14 members. Seven members would be directly appointed by Welsh Ministers and seven members would be appointed by Welsh Ministers having being nominated by organisations listed in the Schedule of the 2014 Regulations.

This post is not remunerated and members of the ECW are not paid, however, they are reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence costs. Members have a typical time commitment of 10-12 days per year.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education said:

“I am pleased that Mrs Jones has agreed to work on the EWC; I am sure she will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to her role as Council member.”

These appointments were made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in

the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for the political activity of appointees (if any declared) to be published.

This individual had carried out political activities in the last five years that relates to canvassing on behalf of the Labour party.

UK government must commit to key Welsh infrastructure projects and future investment – Mark Drakeford

In a letter to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford set out Wales' priorities ahead of the Autumn Budget on 22 November 2017.

The Finance Secretary is urging the UK government to make a series of commitments to Wales, including:

- acting on the recommendations of the Hendry review and giving the green light to the Swansea tidal lagoon
- address the significant under-investment in Wales' rail infrastructure
- reversing its decision to cancel the electrification of the mainline between Cardiff and Swansea
- deliver important connectivity projects in North Wales
- provide a fair and equitable funding settlement alongside the devolution of the Wales and Border franchise
- recognise expert reports and reverse the decision not to devolve Air Passenger Duty to Wales.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“It is time for the UK government to change tack and listen to the expert views of the OECD and the IMF and increase investment in infrastructure. This would bring a much-needed boost to the economy across the UK.

“In Wales, there are a number of specific projects which are ready for UK investment. I have written to the Treasury urging them to finally commit to these key infrastructure projects and provide much needed clarity on future investments.

“It is now months since the Hendry review gave the green light to the Swansea tidal lagoon – we now need to see a clear commitment from the UK government to progress with this project.

“The UK government’s decision to cancel the electrification of the mainline between Cardiff and Swansea has been widely condemned. They should now use the Autumn Budget as an opportunity to reverse this decision and commit to full electrification, which businesses and passengers across the region had been promised.

“Wales must receive its fair share of new infrastructure investment, including important connectivity projects in North Wales.

“I urge the UK government to make it a priority to set aside funding in the Budget to address the very significant under-investment in Wales’ rail infrastructure. Equally, with the devolution of the Wales and Borders franchise in 2018, it is only right that we receive a fair and equitable funding settlement.

“I am also calling on the UK government to reverse its decision not to devolve Air Passenger Duty to Wales. Not only are they ignoring the recommendations of the Holtham and Silk Commissions but also the independent report published this week. There is absolutely no reason why this tax should be devolved to Scotland and Northern Ireland and not to Wales.”

The Finance Secretary also urged the UK government to ensure Wales receives the same level of funding from current EU programmes after Brexit – without any claw back to Whitehall.

The Finance Secretary added:

“EU funding is vital for agriculture, businesses, higher education and the regeneration of communities across Wales.

“We must have the same level of funding as we benefit from currently and this funding must not be subject to any new UK government constraints or top-slicing. Any attempt to claw back this money to Whitehall and run it as a UK government programme would fundamentally disrespect devolution.”

[Cadw to remain in Government as it builds on record year](#)

As a government division, Cadw has put a greater focus on diversifying its appeal over recent years, becoming more economically sustainable and improving its ‘big 10’ attractions – something which has paid dividends, with

record attendance numbers in 2017, up 8.4% on the previous summer.

Earlier this year a steering group report ([Historic Wales – A roadmap towards Success, Resilience and Sustainability for the Heritage of Wales](#)) included a specific recommendation relating to the future governance of Cadw. A robust business case was then taken forward to identify the best option.

The business case considered the steering group's recommendations that Cadw should become 'a charitable body or an executive agency outside of Welsh Government'. This was measured against the status quo, undertaking an in depth analysis of the functions of Cadw and the drivers for change.

The case was taken to Cabinet colleagues in October, with Dafydd Elis-Thomas happy to implement the decision to accept its core recommendation that the successes of Cadw are best built on and developed from within Government.

The Culture Minister said:

"I have long admired the good work done by Cadw in showcasing some of the magnificent heritage we have here in Wales, opening it up for all to enjoy.

"This has been done largely from within Government, and whilst it was appropriate at this juncture to explore all avenues as to how we can build on this success, I'm pleased to implement Cabinet's decision to accept the business case's clear recommendation that Cadw should remain part of Welsh Government.

"But it is also imperative that Cadw looks to evolve and progress, keeping up with best practices and having the flexibility and courage to make the best decisions for all its stakeholders and for the thousands of historic sites that comprise our unique historic environment.

"On this basis, I'm equally pleased to accept recommendations relating to increased autonomy for Cadw in certain aspects. These include establishing a formal system of delegation and internal freedoms, making best use of strategic partnerships between national organisations and establishing an internal operating board.

"These recommendations will maximise the contribution that Cadw can make to an accessible and well-protected historic environment for Wales. In particular they will help ensure that the public continues to have the best possible quality monuments, attractions and events to enjoy."

Cadw is the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Service, working for an accessible and well-protected historic environment for Wales. It looks after and opens to the public 129 monuments across Wales. Of these, 29 are staffed sites and the remainder are free open-access sites.

Welsh Government supports White Ribbon Day

On 25 November the world marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. It is also White Ribbon Day which provides an opportunity to reflect on how, in Wales, we can make violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence a thing of the past. The Welsh Government does not believe that violence against women is inevitable and we are committed to preventing it.

Leader of the House and Chief Whip, Julie James, who now has responsibility for this important work, will speak and light a candle at a multi-faith remembrance service in Llandaff Cathedral on Monday 27 November in support of those victims of domestic abuse who may be suffering in silence. The service is organised by BAWSO in partnership with Llamau, New Pathways, Safer Wales and Cardiff Women's Aid.

On 25 November, a joint initiative between the Welsh Government and Cadw will see images of the White Ribbon projected onto The Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay and Caerphilly, Caernarfon and Conwy Castles from 5-8pm in order to raise awareness of the day.

Other events include a lunchtime cross party event in the Oriel at the Senedd on 21 November, where a debate will be held on engaging men and boys in challenging all forms of violence against women. During the evening a multi-party vigil will take place at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay.

On 23 November, both the Leader of the House and Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, will take part in a walk through Carmarthen, organised by the Women's Institute. On 24 November, Joyce Watson, AM, has organised a walk through Harlech concluding at Harlech Castle.

The UN describes violence against women as a global pandemic. It is an incredibly serious problem; for the world and for Wales. It includes (but is not limited to) domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, sexual exploitation, honour based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The Leader of the House and Chief Whip said:

"I am honoured to have become responsible for this important work following the tragic death of my colleague and friend, Carl Sargeant. This agenda was of huge importance to him and I am determined to continue to build on that work, with equal passion and commitment."

“The Welsh Government has been accredited as a White Ribbon organisation since 2014 and over the past few years, we have led a national response to tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. We broke new ground with the introduction of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Act in 2015. This landmark legislation was created to end violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales; to protect those at risk and to prevent abuse happening in the first place.”

“We are proud of progress to date, but there is more to do”.

“We must continue working together to change attitudes, so that it is understood that abusive behaviours are not acceptable and will not be tolerated in Wales”.

“By raising awareness of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, and their impact, we can continue to build a society which does not tolerate these abhorrent acts”.

“We must continue working towards a Wales where every body can live fear free”.