

CLAS CIRCULAR

2024/12 (22 August)

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It would be very helpful if members could let us know of anything that appears to indicate developments of policy or practice on the part of Government or other matters of general concern that should be pursued.

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CHARITIES & CHARITY LAW

The Charity Commission and campaigning during the General Election

For information

The Charity Commission has published a [report](#) of its casework during the 2024 General Election, revealing a significant decline in serious concerns about charities' campaigning activity compared with previous elections.

The report reveals that out of more than 170,000 registered charities, the Commission opened just 34 new compliance cases to assess concerns about general election campaigning and responded to 35 advice requests between 22 May and 4 July. Only 14 of these were high-risk cases, fewer than half the number seen during the 2019 election. The report also found a rise in proactive efforts by charities to seek advice from the Commission.

[Source: The Charity Commission, 14 August]

Charity Inquiry: Salvation Proclaimers Ministries Limited

For information

The Charity Commission has published its [inquiry report](#) into Salvation Proclaimers Ministries Limited, also known as SPAC Nation, a Christian charity which held services in London.

The report concludes that the charity's trustees were responsible for serious misconduct and/or mismanagement over safeguarding practices and financial failures over a substantial period. Houses associated with the charity and intended to support the local community were set up which were also the homes of church leaders, and the inquiry subsequently found the nature of the relationship between the charity and the houses was unclear. The inquiry also found that the charity's financial record keeping was inadequate, donations and expenditure were not properly recorded and there was also found to be a lack of segregation of duties between the pastors and the trustees.

Further, the trustees failed to act with reasonable care and skill, including while the inquiry was open. They also repeatedly failed to address the Commission's regulatory concerns. The Commission issued an Order in December 2019, directing the charity to bank all its cash; however, the trustees informed the regulator that they had decided to stop collecting donations. The inquiry's view was that the trustees failed to provide convincing reasons as to why this was in the best interests of the charity.

[Source: Charity Commission, 21 August]

FAITH & SOCIETY**Church of England parochial fees**

For information

The Church of England General Synod has agreed [The Parochial Fees Order 2024](#), which will come into force on 1 January 2025 and prescribes parochial fees for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026. The fees are calculated using the “base figures” (article 3) and are set out in [Schedule 1](#).

[Source: Archbishops' Council, 26 March]

ODDS & ENDS

New Minister for Faith

For information **and possibly for action**

Lord Khan of Burnley has been announced as the new [Lords Minister for Faith, Communities and Resettlement](#) within the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

Lord Khan began his career as a lecturer in law at the University of Central Lancashire for 11 years. He became a Labour MEP from 2017-2019, sitting on the EU Parliament's Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Committee, and was Labour's spokesman for human rights during this time. Shortly after entering the House of Lords in February 2021 he became a Shadow Spokesman for the same department.

[Source: Department of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, 19 August]

PROPERTY & PLANNING

Community Ownership Fund round 4

For information **and possibly for action**

The Government has released the updated [prospectus](#) for the fourth round of the Community Ownership Fund.

The purpose of the fund is to allow incorporated voluntary and community organisations, and parish, town and community councils to apply for funding to take ownership of assets at risk of loss in their communities. This is to strengthen community ownership and preserve local community social infrastructure. This can include purchases (and/or refurbishment) of physical assets such as buildings or land, local community businesses, collections, or intellectual property. Previous successful applications have included community centres, leisure facilities, pubs and shops, and heritage sites. A full list of successful bids can be found [here](#).

Capital funding of up to £2 million for all asset types is available, but most awards are expected to be for up to £250,000 of capital funding. Revenue funding is also being offer, but no more than £50,000 or 20% of the total capital funding applied for, whichever is smaller. The Department for Housing, Communities, and Local Government is encouraging all groups to apply for revenue funding, as all projects will incur initial running costs.

[Source: Department of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, 15 August]

SCOTLAND

OSCR publishes Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24

For information

The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) has published its [Annual Report and Accounts](#) for the year 2023-24.

Some of the key facts and figures for 2023-24 include:

- OSCR removed 400 inactive charities which failed to submit their accounts from the Scottish Charity Register.
- OSCR launched a new [online annual return](#) to provide support and guidance to help charities.
- OSCR refreshed its [inquiry policy](#) and launched a new [online form for concerns](#).
- 100 per cent of applications from charities to make certain changes (such as changing their names or purposes) were completed within 28 days.

[Source: OSCR, 19 August]

WALES

Changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

For information

The Welsh Government has published a [summary](#) of results from its consultation on the council tax reduction scheme (CTRS). The consultation ran from 12 March until 6 June 2024.

The CTRS is used as a means of reducing the tax burden for those with low incomes, and therefore reducing poverty. The consultation proposed several changes to the scheme to make it easier to access and simpler to administer:

- Proposal 1: simplifying the application process.
- Proposal 2: reducing the administrative complexity of the scheme

A majority of respondents agreed with the proposal that a person in receipt of Universal Credit may be recognised by a council as having made an application for a council tax reduction. As a result, this change will be made in the next iteration of the Regulations. Views received related to non-dependant deductions favoured a simplification of calculations to two income bands. Changes to non-dependant deductions will be confirmed in 2026 when the affordability of any changes becomes clearer.

[Source: Welsh Government, 15 August]