

## **CLAS CIRCULAR**

### **2025/07 (2 May)**

#### **Disclaimer**

**CLAS is not qualified to advise on the legal and technical problems of members and does not undertake to do so. Though we take every care to provide a service of high quality, neither CLAS, the Secretary nor the Governors undertakes any liability for any error or omission in the information supplied.**

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

### Cybersecurity breaches survey 2025

For information **and possibly for action**

The Home Office has released a [survey](#) detailing the effect of cybersecurity breaches across businesses and charities.

It found that 30% of charities reported some kind of cybersecurity breach in the previous 12 months (a small decline from the previous year). While there were negative consequences from the breach in only 16% of the cases, the loss of access to third party services increased from 1% to 5%. 85% of breaches were a result of phishing.

The report concluded that budget constraints were a limiting factor for charities facing cyber-crime but that most organisations could benefit from basic security improvements including two-factor authentication, VPNs and user monitoring.

[Source: Home Office, 10 April]

### Consultation: VAT relief on business donations of goods to charity

For information **and possibly for action**

HM Treasury is seeking views on the design of a VAT relief on business donations of goods to charity for distribution to those in need or for use by the charity in the delivery of its services. The Government recognises that the current VAT rules, which relieve VAT on goods donated to charity for sale (for example through a charity shop) but not for onward donation or for the delivery of the charity's services, are not aligned. The rules were designed to protect against fraud in the VAT system, and the Government is exploring options to align the rules without compromising the security of the VAT system.

The consultation aims better to understand the different types of operating models used by businesses and charities which would be impacted, as well as gathering views on the scope of a relief, particularly eligible goods, and the design of its administration, among other topics. The consultation document is [here](#); it closes on **21 July**.

[Source: HM Treasury, 28 April]

## EMPLOYMENT

### Consultation on minimum wage for 2026 and beyond

For information **and possibly for action**

The Low Pay Commission has published a consultation to inform its recommendations to the Government on the minimum wage in 2026 and beyond.

In particular, it is looking for feedback on the Government's ambition for all workers over 18 to receive the National Living Wage, which is currently restricted to those aged 21 and over. It is also seeking feedback on the impact of minimum wage, apprenticeship wage, and other questions around the future of the minimum wage.

The consultation can be accessed [here](#), and additional documents can be found [here](#). It will close on **30 June**.

[Source: Low Pay Commission, 2 May]

### Legal definition of a "woman": considerations for employers

For information

In a landmark decision, the UK Supreme Court ruled unanimously on 16 April that the legal definition of a "woman" and "man" in the Equality Act 2010 is based on biological sex: see *For Women Scotland Ltd (Appellant) v The Scottish Ministers (Respondent)* [\[2025\] UKSC 16](#). The Court issued a summary of its judgment [here](#). Subsequently, the Equality and Human Rights Commission said that it was reviewing its guidance.

In the aftermath of the judgment there has been a lot of debate about its implications for employers and others, and that is likely to continue. Amy Wren and Siobhan Murray, of Farrer & Co, have produced a [nuanced and detailed article](#) on employment law implications which is well worth reading (and it's not an area that we would ever dream of pontificating on ourselves).

[Source: Farrer & Co, 25 April]

## FAITH & SOCIETY

### House of Lords and mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse

For information

On 22 April, the Bishop of Manchester and Chair of CLAS, the Rt Revd David Walker, [said this](#) in a Lords debate on tackling child sexual abuse:

“I want to pick up on mandatory reporting, which has been referred to already. For some in the Church of England, and for many in the Roman Catholic Church and some other churches as well, the tradition of the seal of the confessional has been honoured for many centuries and established in canon law in this land. There is an arguable case that the seal allows somebody—and it is more likely to be a victim or witness who comes to the confessional—to make a kind of protected disclosure, which then often would lead to them being helped to make a more public disclosure and allow a perpetrator to be taken to justice. I hope there will be careful discussions with religious bodies as to exactly where the seal of the confessional will fit in with this; I know my Catholic colleagues will particularly be concerned around that. We want what will produce the best safeguarding, but it is not simply that mandatory reporting or getting rid of the seal of the confessional will get better reporting at the end of the day”.

On behalf of the Government, Lord Hanson of Flint, Minister of State at the Home Office, replied:

“I am grateful to the right reverend Prelate for his approach to the issue. I hope I can reassure him that I have already had representations from churches, and I have received at the Home Office a delegation from a cross-religious group to discuss the very issue that he has mentioned about the relationship between the priest or vicar and the individual. I want to explore that, and I have given a commitment to discuss that further with those from the Churches who made contact with me, and we have had submissions on that. I cannot give him definitive, final positions today, but I hope that we can debate this during the course of the passage of the [*Crime and Policing*] Bill in this House.”

[Source: Commons *Hansard*, 22 April]

## PROPERTY & PLANNING

### National Churches Trust: National Church Survey

For information **and possibly for action**

The National Churches Trust is conducting a major survey “to give a voice to those who care for the country’s 38,500 churches and ... an opportunity to celebrate the heritage and role of church buildings”. The hope is that, given the uncertainty about the future of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, the study will reveal the current status of church buildings, how they are maintained and funded, and the support they provide for local communities.

The survey will go live at the start of May 2025. If you register your interest here, in May you will receive an invitation to participate: <https://www.research.net/r/NCT2025>.

Obviously, this is something that CLAS cannot do corporately – individual places of worship need to respond as individuals – but the more responses, the more representative and effective the survey will be.

[Source: Historic Religious Buildings Alliance, 1 May]

## SCOTLAND

### Rent control areas

For information **and possibly for action**

The Scottish Government is seeking views on how the Housing Bill, which creates a power for Scottish Ministers to introduce rent control areas, could be used to exempt certain types of properties from rent control.

Rent increases for properties let under Private Residential Tenancies (PRTs) in rent control areas would be limited to one per year, regardless of how many tenancies are granted by the landlord in that period – “one increase per property per year”. This means that the rent cap would apply to rent increases both during and between tenancies, to stabilise the level of rents within the area and to avoid the potential for rents to continue to “rise more steeply between tenancies”.

1. The Bill also allows for consultations on certain types of property which it might be appropriate to exempt from rent control and on circumstances where it might be appropriate for landlords to increase rent above the level of the rent cap.

The Government regards the consultation as crucial in ensuring that the Bill contains the correct measures to make the rented sector work for tenants, landlords and those who invest in rented homes.

Further information on rent control provisions in the Bill, as introduced, is available [here](#). The consultation closes on **18 July** and the consultation documents can be accessed [here](#).

[Source: Scottish Government, 23 April]

## WALES

### Draft Vision Statement on Volunteering

For information **and possibly for action**

The Welsh Government has published a draft Vision Statement on Volunteering, as follows:

**“Volunteering is at the heart of Wales’ identity - vital to the well-being of our communities**

- Volunteering is good for those who give, as well as those who benefit. It is good for people and places and defines the kind of country we want to be.
- It is a pillar of community life – vital to the services and support that everyone, of whatever gender, ethnicity, language and ability, needs at some time in their lives.
- Safe, supported and sustainable volunteering should be at the heart of Wales’ national life.”

It has opened a consultation on the content of the statement, [here](#). The consultation closes on **30 May**.

[Source: Welsh Government, 14 April]