

CLAS CIRCULAR

2026/16 (2 September)

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 AND CHARITY LAW

The Charity Commission: upcoming events

For information

The Charity Commission have announced a series of events taking place between September to November 2026, now available to book. Please note: some of these events are in person and some online, so members are asked to double-check before booking.

Safeguarding in a Faith Context: Charity Commission's Expectations

Date/Time: Tuesday 15 September 2026, 12:00 to 13:00.

For more information and to register to either watch live or receive a link to the recording of this webinar, please use this [link](#).

Preparing for "Martyn's Law": Understanding the SIA's Regulatory Approach

Date/Time: Friday 2 October 2026, 12:00 to 13:00.

For more information and to register to either watch live or receive a link to the recording of this webinar, please use this [link](#).

Reporting Serious Incidents

Date/Time: Tuesday 13 October 2026, 12:00pm to 12:45pm

For more information and to register to either watch live or receive a link to the recording of this webinar, please use this [link](#).

Safeguarding in a Faith Charity Context – Charity Commission Expectations

Date/Time: Wednesday 21 October 2026, 9:00am to 12:30pm. Location: London – Broadway House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NQ. For more information and to register to attend this face-to-face event, please use this [link](#).

If you have any further questions, or have difficulties using the booking system, please contact the Charities Engagement Team via engagement@charitycommission.gov.uk.

[Source: The Charity Commission, 1 September]

FAITH AND SOCIETY

Regulating the funeral industry in England and Wales

For information

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Yvette Cooper, has announced an update on the Government's proposals to regulate the funeral sector, announced after the conviction of funeral director Robert Bush, who was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment on a total of 67 charges, including the prevention of a lawful and decent burial, fraud, fraudulent trading and theft.

The Government is to bring forward "comprehensive proposals to ensure respect and dignity for the deceased in every setting, to drive rogue operators out of the funeral industry, and to protect other families from suffering this same heartache". The Law Commission will also undertake a review of the criminal law in relation to the deceased, consider any gaps in existing legal protections and make recommendations on the creation of new offences,

The full statement is [here](#).

[Source: *Commons Hansard*, 1 September]

PROPERTY AND PLANNING

Support for listed places of worship: update

For information and possibly **for action**

England: The second round of Expressions of Interest for the Places of Worship Renewal Fund will open on Friday 4 September. The deadline for submitting an EOI is **Friday 2 October 2026 at 5 pm**. Historic England will not accept Expressions of Interest submitted outside this window, and applicants who submitted an EOI after Round 1 closed will need to reapply. Further information and guidance on the application process will be available through the Historic England website: [Places of Worship Renewal Fund | Historic England](#).

In response to feedback from Round One, the EOI window has been increased to four weeks to give applicants more time to prepare their EOIs, and the guidance has been clarified and amended. DCMS says that applicants do not have to use the full word allowance for every question: at the EOI stage, the important thing is to provide basic information and show why the project is eligible for PWRF, and anyone who is in any doubt about that is welcome to contact the regional Historic England office to talk it through.

Those invited to prepare full applications will receive additional detailed guidance and support, so that they can submit them between 26 October and 18 November. Funding decisions are anticipated in January 2027.

In addition, Historic England has published a comprehensive [Places of Worship Funding Index](#), described as “A resource to support places of worship in England to identify potential funders for building-focused projects”.

Northern Ireland: The Department for Communities has published a public consultation on [Historic Environment Policy](#). It closes on **23 October**.

Wales: The Welsh Government has announced a call for evidence on [Culture and Sport Strategy](#). Question 1 asks, “What is the situation now? What is the current state of play for culture, **heritage**, the arts, creative industries, sport and physical activity in Wales?” It closes on **Friday 18 December** at noon.

In addition, Welsh places of worship, coordinated by Cadw, are collating data to create a report to submit to the new Welsh Government to describe their contribution to Welsh culture and language.

[Source: DCMS, 28 August, HRBA, 1 September]

SCOTLAND

Support for listed places of worship

For information

When asked by Julie MacDougall (Mid Scotland and Fife, Reform UK) what work the Scottish Government is undertaking “to provide financial assistance to the Church of Scotland for the maintenance and upkeep of its church buildings, to ensure they are safe for parishioners”, Simita Kumar, MSP for Edinburgh South Western (SNP), [said this](#):

“The Scottish Government recognises the important role that church buildings play as places of worship and as valued community assets. Responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of Church of Scotland buildings rests with the Church of Scotland and its congregations.

The Scottish Government welcomes the Scotland's Places of Worship Fund announcement by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) on 18 August 2026. This new pilot scheme for 2026-27 will provide up to £1 million to help eligible listed places of worship across Scotland recover VAT costs associated with repair and conservation works.

The Fund has been developed in direct response to the closure of the UK-wide Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme and is expected to open for applications in autumn 2026.

The Scottish Government and HES have worked closely to explore options to ensure that Scotland's listed places of worship are not disproportionately affected by the withdrawal of the UK-wide scheme. This pilot scheme will help assess demand and gather evidence to inform consideration of future arrangements.

The Scottish Government continues to engage with faith and belief organisations, heritage bodies and other partners on issues affecting places of worship, including the sustainability and preservation of historic church buildings.”

[Source: Scottish Parliament, 24 August]

CLAS EVENTS

CLAS aims to hold meetings throughout the year on issues that are important and of concern to members. We currently have three meetings planned. Further information is below, and if you would like to attend, please email info@churcheslegislation.org.uk.

AI-Generated Complaints:

Churches are dealing with an increasing number of AI-generated complaints. The Charity Commission's current guidance is outdated given how quickly AI is evolving. There is also evidence that complaints are becoming a legal issue whereas, previously, complaints were dealt with without recourse to law.

Jeremy Isaacson, a Partner at *Farrer & Co*, has kindly agreed to speak to us about how churches can best prepare for this new threat. Jeremy is a specialist in data protection and freedom of information law, and he regularly advises public authorities on request handling and dealing with complaints to the Information Commissioner's Office.

The meeting will be held online on **Thursday 10 September at 13:30**. Please let us know if you can join us and whether there are any specific points or types of complaints you would like Jeremy to address. To join the meeting on the day, please follow this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82757997549?pwd=lqfrAv7mUpfd8UpVCWiBXOxVuA7TaE.1>.

Meeting ID: 827 5799 7549

Passcode: 214109

The Equality Act and the EHRC Draft Code of Practice

Recent changes have included updated definitions of gender reassignment and new guidance on applying equality law in practice.

CLAS is holding an **online meeting on 28 September at 11:00** where we will discuss recent changes and steps that charities and churches may need to introduce to adhere to the guidance and any regulations.

Please let us know if you can join us and whether there are any specific points or questions you had. To join the meeting on the day, please follow this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85401725781?pwd=XxMyOKdLPQC0zohbNOs5lYgjlUUAUp.1>

Meeting ID: 854 0172 5781

Passcode: 430165

Future meetings:

CLAS will be holding an **in-person meeting** in October 2026, and we will inform members in due course. If you have any concerns or issues, please email us at info@churcheslegislation.org.uk.