

CLAS CIRCULAR

2026/06 (21 April)

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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.

CHARITIES AND CHARITY LAW	2
Consultation on amending the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008	2
Disclosure and Barring Service: faith groups	3
Employment Rights Act 2025: key measures and employer actions webinar	3
FAITH AND SOCIETY.....	5
Faith and belief leaders' letter on Crime and Policing Bill, March-April 2026	5
PROPERTY & PLANNING	7
Places of Worship Renewal Fund: update	7
Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025: Security Industry Authority consultation	8
NORTHERN IRELAND	10
Places of Worship Renewal Fund: Northern Ireland.....	10

CHARITIES AND CHARITY LAW

Consultation on amending the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008

For information and **possibly for action**

The Northern Ireland Department for Communities has opened a [consultation](#) on amending the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. The consultation document, which includes a draft Bill, is the result of a review of the operation of the 2008 Act carried out in 2021. In the meantime, the Department held a separate consultation on the advisability of repealing the uncommenced section 167 of the Act (which would require institutions which are not charities under the law of Northern Ireland but which operate for charitable purposes in or from Northern Ireland to register there), and concluded that its repeal would avoid duplication of regulatory oversight and disproportionate burdens on charities.

This latest consultation looks at

- broadening the bodies with whom the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland can share information to include “persons discharging functions of a public nature”;
- the possibility of giving the Commission, and possibly its officials, an official warning power;
- expanding the scope of the power to remove trustees to include those trustees who have resigned from office;
- giving the Commission the power to issue directions to trustees not to undertake certain actions;
- extending automatic disqualification as a trustee following an inquiry to cover employment in such roles as an officer, agent or employee of a charity;
- changes to the requirement to prepare accounts;
- relaxing the audit/independent examination requirement for small charities; and
- “template reporting”.

The consultation closes on **24 April**.

[Source: Department for Communities, 27 March]

Disclosure and Barring Service: faith groups

For information

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is expanding its Faith in Safeguarding campaign nationally. The campaign is to raise awareness of the legal duty to refer: the process that organisations must follow by law when there are safeguarding concerns about individuals in regulated activity. According to the DBS, faith organisations are currently among the lower-referring sectors for barring referrals, despite the thousands of people working and volunteering in regulated activity roles across churches, mosques, gurdwaras, mandirs, synagogues, and faith charities. The DBS suspects that many faith organisations may be unaware of their legal obligations under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

The DBS is running free, in-person pop-up clinics across England, offering practical guidance tailored to faith settings. Each session will include: an introduction to DBS and eligibility for DBS checks; what the legal duty to refer means for your organisation; practical scenarios applying the legal duty in faith settings; a walk-through of the Barring Referral Service; and a Q&A session. Remaining sessions are as follows:

- Leeds, Wednesday 22 April, 9:30am–1:00pm, Radisson Blu Hotel.
- Birmingham, Tuesday 28 April, 9:30am–1:00pm, Clayton Hotel.
- Bristol, Wednesday 6 May, 9:30am–1:00pm, Holiday Inn City Centre.
- Newcastle, Tuesday 12 May, 9:30am–1:00pm, Leonardo Hotel.
- Peterborough, Tuesday 19 May, 9:30am–1:00pm, Park Inn by Radisson

Further sessions in Wales and Northern Ireland will be confirmed at a later date. All sessions are free to attend. To register, visit the [DBS Eventbrite page](#).

[Source: Disclosure and Barring Service, 23 March]

Employment Rights Act 2025: key measures and employer actions webinar

For information and **possibly for action**

As members know, the [Employment Rights Act 2025](#) received Royal Assent in December 2025. It will be brought into force over the next couple of years and will introduce additions and amendments to existing legislation, including to the Employment Rights Act 1996.

The Government has announced a webinar on the Act, which

“will give an overview of the major reforms, including changes to sick pay, dismissal rules, family-related rights, and new protections for zero-hours and agency workers. It will also explain when each change is due to take effect”.

The webinar will take place at 2 pm on **Thursday 23 April**: sign up [here](#).

[Business.gov.uk]

FAITH AND SOCIETY

Faith and belief leaders' letter on Crime and Policing Bill, March-April 2026

For information

In response to the Crime and Policing Bill's new clause on "cumulative disruption", various faith and belief leaders came together to express their opposition. This is the letter:

"Dear Sir/Madam

We write as faith and belief leaders to express our opposition to the new 'cumulative disruption' clause in the Crime and Policing Bill.

Across our traditions, despite our differences, we share common principles of love and justice. Members of all our communities are led by their consciences to protest peacefully for a variety of causes. Peaceful protest is allowed by international conventions to be disruptive, and successful campaigns for positive change have always involved cumulative action, from the suffragettes to villagers standing up against proposed fracking sites.

We believe the Bill's new clause on 'cumulative disruption' undermines our right to peaceful protest. It is vague and broad, meaning that it could affect a huge range of protests. It could mean that we are stopped from demonstrating because another protest previously took place in the same area, even if it was on a completely different issue.

Peaceful protest motivated by faith, belief and love should be celebrated, not criminalised. We urge the government and MPs to drop the clause on 'cumulative disruption' and to enable our right to peaceful protest.

Yours sincerely

Bishop Mike Royal, General Secretary, Churches Together in England ; Rabbi Gabriel Kanter-Webber, Rabbi, Brighton and Hove Progressive Synagogue; Lord Indarjit Singh of Wimbledon, Director, Network of Sikh Organisations UK; Dr Wajid Akhter, Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain; Jo Backus, Chair, Network of Buddhist Organisations; Mrs Krishna Bhan, Chair, Hindu Council UK; Andrew Copson OBE, Chief Executive, Humanists UK; Adwoa Burnley, Clerk of Yearly Meeting, Quakers in Britain; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain ; Ms Raghda Altikriti, Chair, Muslim Association of Britain; Sarah Kerr, President, The Pagan Federation; Dr Cynan Llwyd, General Secretary, Cytun: Churches Together in Wales; Jamie Cresswell, Director, Centre for Applied Buddhism; Canon Giles Goddard, Vicar, St John's Waterloo; Catriona Wheeler, General Assembly Moderator, United Reformed Church; Elizabeth Slade, Chief Officer, General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches; Revd Richard M Andrew, President of the Methodist Conference, The Methodist Church; Matthew Forsyth, Vice President of

Methodist Conference, Methodist Church; Revd Lynn Green, General Secretary, The Baptist Union of Great Britain”

[Source: Quakers in Britain, April 2026]

PROPERTY & PLANNING

Places of Worship Renewal Fund: update

For information

Historic England has published [a notice about the new Places of Worship Renewal Fund](#). It says that "Detailed guidance, including the remit of the fund and all eligibility criteria, is currently being prepared and will be published here in due course. This will include information on how to apply". (In other words, watch this space.)

The Historic Religious Buildings Alliance (HRBA) suggests that

"A listed place of worship in England considering making an application will be able to proceed promptly if it has to hand:

- A current quinquennial inspection (or equivalent professional assessment of the building)
- Photographs of the building
- Photographs of the area where work is needed, for which the grant is sought
- A letter of support for the application from the denomination or faith group (where relevant)
- Assurance that any consents needed are granted or soon will be
- The basis on which the cost of the project has been estimated
- Assurances that the proposed works can be delivered in a timely way."

The HRBA also emphasises that the Scheme is funded for equal amounts in each of the four years, and "It is therefore important to have a strong round of applications ready when the scheme opens, which we expect to be soon".

[Source: HRBA, 8 April]

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025: Security Industry Authority consultation

For information and **possibly for action**

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025. The Home Office has confirmed there will be an implementation period of at least **24 months**. The Home Office will confirm the exact date of commencement of the Act via Parliament.

The regulator under the Act will be the Security Industry Authority, which is now consulting on a draft of its guidance under section 12 of the [Terrorism \(Protection of Premises\) Act 2025](#). The draft guidance sets out how it intends to carry out its role as regulator under the Act, which is expected to come into force in Spring 2027. As members will be aware, the Act requires certain larger premises to take appropriate steps to reduce their vulnerability to a potential terrorist attack, after the attack at the Manchester Arena in which 22 people lost their lives. It aims to keep people safe by ensuring that publicly accessible premises and events are better prepared and protected in the event of an attack. It also requires certain larger premises to take appropriate steps to reduce their vulnerability to a potential terrorist attack.

The SIA's draft section 12 guidance explains how it plans to operate and use its powers, taking a supportive, proportionate and risk-based approach. It sets out:

- that the SIA's regulatory approach will be driven by its public protection objectives;
- how the SIA will provide guidance to help premises comply with the law;
- when the SIA may provide tailored regulatory advice in response to specific compliance concerns;
- how the SIA's powers to obtain and share information will work;
- how the SIA will carry out inspections and assessments of compliance documents; and
- how the SIA will address non-compliance, including how it will make compliance decisions, when it may use enforcement powers and how financial penalties will be set.

[The SIA's consultation webpage](#) contains both the draft guidance itself and a cover consultation paper which highlights the key aspects in the guidance on which the SIA is seeking views. *The draft section 12 guidance is designed to be read without needing to refer to the legislation.* Some of the content of the guidance is determined by the wording of the Act, which has been agreed by Parliament and is therefore final.

The SIA says that the consultation is likely to be of interest to organisations and people responsible for premises and events that will be in scope of the Act, those who will be supporting or advising them, others who may have responsibilities under the new law, including the persons designated senior individuals and those who may have a duty to co-operate with premises and events in scope those with a wider interest in protective security or regulation, and the general public.

In addition, the SIA's draft guidance has been published alongside the Home Office's final [section 27 statutory guidance](#), also released on 15 April. That guidance – not part of the SIA's consultation – explains what those responsible for premises and events must do to comply with the Act. The SIA's section 12 guidance complements this by setting out how the SIA intends to oversee and support compliance.

The SIA intends to publish further practical information about its operational processes, including how and when responsible persons should notify the SIA that they are in scope of the Act, once its online notification system has been built, nearer to commencement.

The consultation will close on **Friday 12 June 2026**. Views can be submitted [here](#).

[Source: The Security Industry Authority, 15 April; Home Office 15 April]

NORTHERN IRELAND

Places of Worship Renewal Fund: Northern Ireland

In answer to a Written Question from Robert Swann (South Antrim, UUP) asking how much funding has been allocated through the Places of Worship Renewal Fund to places of worship in Northern Ireland, Ian Murray, Minister of State at DCMS, [said this](#):

“The Places of Worship Renewal Fund is England only as Heritage is a devolved policy area. The Northern Ireland Government received Barnett consequentials at the Spending Review, taking into account any changes to DCMS’s overall settlement. It is for the Northern Ireland government to consider whether to set up new arrangements should they so wish.

We are working closely with other funders in the sector to ensure that opportunities for funding places of worship throughout the UK are maximised. The National Lottery Heritage Fund already offers grants for places of worship across all the UK and is currently investing £100m over 3 years through National Lottery Heritage Grants and a strategic initiative designed to provide targeted support to build capacity.”

[Source: Commons *Hansard*, 15 April]