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A JEWISH
MANIFESTO
FOR THE
NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY
FOR WALES
A JEWISH MANIFESTO FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES

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The Board of Deputies of British Jews is the voice of UK Jewry – the only organisation based on cross-communal, democratic, grassroots representation.

Founded in 1760, it is the first port of call for Government, media and others seeking to understand the Jewish community’s interests and concerns.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2016 election for the National Assembly of Wales will take place on 5 May.

This Manifesto is aimed at informing both existing and prospective members of the Welsh Assembly about Jewish interests and concerns. The Board of Deputies of British Jews and the South Wales Jewish Representative Council hope that the Manifesto will empower our elected representatives to understand and champion these causes.

In each section, the Manifesto outlines in bold the ‘Policy Asks’ for which we would like support from AMs and their political parties. As a summary, we have also highlighted ‘Ten Commitments’ that capture the essence of the community’s needs.

The 2011 Census put the Welsh Jewish population at 2,064. The largest numbers live in Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, but there are Jews in every part of the country. The Welsh Jewish community is diverse in terms of religious and cultural affiliation, as well as in socioeconomic terms.

Whilst there is no single ‘Jewish view’, through this document we have sought to represent as much of a consensus as possible, and capture the diverse range of issues which affect the Welsh Jewish community across its religious, cultural and socioeconomic diversity.

We hope that you find it useful and informative.
THE TEN COMMITMENTS

To summarise the Jewish community’s aspirations for our political representatives, we have produced the following guide.

Please share your support for these ten commitments on social media with the hashtag #tencommitments @boardofdeputies

1. Defend the right to a Jewish way of life, including kosher meat; religious clothing; circumcision; and flexible working to accommodate Shabbat and festival observance.

2. Oppose all forms of hate crime, including antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and other types of racism, promoting and enhancing community safety.

3. Promote good relations, understanding and cooperation between all of Wales’s communities.

4. Support efforts to remember and understand the Holocaust, and strive to prevent any future genocide.

5. Advocate for a permanent, comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, resulting in a secure Israel alongside a viable Palestinian state.

6. Promote peace projects that unite communities, and resist boycotts that divide communities.

7. Affirm the importance of faith schools within the overall provision.

8. Support the provision of religiously and culturally sensitive health, social care and youth services.

9. Promote a more just and sustainable future in Wales and beyond, supporting efforts to tackle poverty, climate change and human rights abuses.

10. Celebrate and support Jewish heritage and cultural institutions.
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

FLEXIBLE WORKING AROUND THE JEWISH SABBATH AND FESTIVALS

A key element of the Jewish faith is the observance of the Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat) and religious festivals. Because the Jewish calendar runs according to the lunar cycle, Shabbat and festivals begin on the evening before the dates specified for them by most calendars. During Shabbat and the festivals, observant Jews will refrain from work, and will not use money, electricity or transport.

Traditionally-observant Jews will often seek to take a number of festival days as leave and may ask to leave work early on Fridays, particularly in the winter months when Shabbat can begin as early as 3.30pm on a Friday afternoon. Employers should seek to be as flexible as possible, making reasonable accommodation for these religious requirements. The same principles should apply to those who are legitimately claiming state benefits when their signing on arrangements may coincide with festivals. The relevant agencies should understand that traditionally-observant Jews are not generally available to work, or sign on for benefits, on Shabbat or festivals.

In many professions, observant Jewish employees will come to an arrangement with their employer to make up during the week the time that they wish to take off on a Friday afternoon, and will take the festivals off as part of their annual leave. However, this is sometimes harder in the education sector, where holiday dates are much more prescriptive for both teachers and students. Schools and higher education bodies should be alive to the needs of teachers and students who require time off for religious observance, and seek to be as flexible as possible. The Board of Deputies will sometimes intervene where it feels a school or university is not making reasonable accommodation of requests for leave.

Similarly, the Board of Deputies, together with the Jewish Chaplaincy Board and the Union of Jewish Students, seeks to help students in both schools and higher education to navigate issues around the times when Shabbat and Jewish festivals coincide with exams. This is often mitigated by the sensitivity of examination boards, schools and universities, which create procedures to accommodate various religious and cultural needs.

POLICY ASK: To support accommodation and flexibility for employees, benefits claimants, teachers and students of different faiths and beliefs who wish to take time off or make alternative arrangements to observe religious holy days, including the Jewish Sabbath and festivals.

CIRCUMCISION

Brit Milah is the Hebrew term used to describe neonatal male circumcision in accordance with Jewish law. It is traditionally performed when a boy is eight days old, based upon the Biblical commandment (Gen. 17:10-14 and Lev. 12:3). It is regarded as a physical sign of male Jewish identity and is probably the most widely observed of all Jewish practices. It is a minor procedure that has no negative impact on the child or on the rest of his life. It is against Jewish law to perform Brit Milah if the procedure could pose a danger to the child, so is always postponed if required on medical grounds.

By contrast, the Jewish faith strongly opposes Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), regarding it as humiliating and abusive to women, and an assault which is often performed under unsafe and unhygienic conditions, causing serious long-term damage. FGM and Brit Milah should not be conflated.

In Wales, Brit Milah is performed by a highly-trained ‘Mohal’ (plural: Mohalim) who has undertaken both religious and practical instruction. The regulatory bodies for UK Mohalim are the Initiation Society (founded 1745, serving the Orthodox communities) and the Association of Reform and Liberal Mohalim (serving the Progressive communities). The Welsh Jewish community is likely to call on Mohalim who are registered members of these two organisations to perform Brit Milah. These organisations are responsible for training, audit and appraisal, and for ensuring that Brit Milah is carried out under the safest possible conditions. The underlying principle is to maintain the highest possible standards for our children. An organisation called Milah UK provides information to the public and official bodies about Jewish circumcision.

It is important that Governments recognise the centrality of Brit Milah to the identity of a Jewish male. Article 8 and Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights are of particular relevance. Article 8 focuses on the protection of private and family life, and for a Jewish male, circumcision is a key aspect of being part of the Jewish community. Article 9 provides a right to freedom of thought, conscience or religion: the right to perform Brit Milah according to Jewish tradition is a key example of a religious freedom.

POLICY ASK: To defend the right of Jews to practise circumcision according to their tradition.
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KOSHER MEAT

In order for meat to be suitable for traditional Jews to eat – i.e. ‘kosher’ – the animal from which it is derived needs to be slaughtered in a very specific way. Shechita is the Jewish religious method of slaughtering animals for food, and thus is a key aspect in the daily life of Jews.

Shechita is a process that is based on biblical commandments given to the Jewish people, which forbid cruelty to animals. For example, Jewish law prohibits the killing of animals for sport. However, in permitting the slaughter of animals for food, the premise of the stringent Jewish religious regulations is to ensure that the animal has a swift death, with as little pain as possible. Any slaughter that does not meet the high standards demanded will render the animal “non-Kosher”, and prohibited to Jews.

The Shechita method is conducted by a specifically trained professional known as a Shochet (plural: Shechetim) who is an expert in the laws of Shechita, pathology and animal anatomy. The trainee Shochet will serve an apprenticeship with an experienced Shochet before becoming fully qualified.

In the UK, a Shochet must hold two licences, one issued by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the other by the Rabbinical Commission for the Licensing of Shochetim. This Rabbinical Commission is a statutory body established by the Westminster Parliament and governed by Schedule 12 to The Welfare of Animals [Slaughter or Killing] Regulations 1995. To satisfy the Rabbinical Commission, Shochetim must reapply and undertake examinations on an annual basis.

There are occasionally moves in some European countries to limit or ban religious slaughter. The Jewish community seeks to work with Government, Assembly Members and other relevant authorities to foster understanding about this key facet of Jewish life in Wales, the UK and beyond. To support this, a dedicated organisation, Shechita UK, has been established to lead the Jewish communal response on this issue, and to offer information on this central Jewish practice.

There is little Shechita, if any, performed in Wales. This does not mean that Wales is immune from anti-Shechita campaigns. The background to this relates to recent food labelling controversies. The Jewish community has a long tradition of labelling its food products to inform consumers that food is Kosher. But there has been alarm at recent moves by some groups to introduce pejorative labelling on Kosher (and Halal) meat. Rather than genuinely informing consumers, this campaign tends to stigmatise religious forms of slaughter over common practices in the wider meat industry that are prohibited to Jews.

Equally, whilst the moment of slaughter is important, labelling could helpfully inform consumers about other aspects of animal welfare, including how it was fed, housed and transported. The Jewish community would support comprehensive labelling that would allow consumers to know more about the lives of animals from which their meat had been sourced, and labelling which would inform consumers as to whether their meat had been killed via the Shechita method, or methods prohibited to Jews like captive-bolt, shooting, gassing, electrocution, drowning, trapping or clubbing.

POLICY ASK: To defend the right of Jews to practice Shechita (religious slaughter of animals for food).

POLICY ASK: To oppose the stigmatisation of religious minorities through pejorative labelling, and to support instead non-pejorative labelling that lists all methods of stunning and slaughter, offering real consumer choice.
Additionally, existing Government funding for Jewish communal security, administered by CST and predominantly for security guards at Jewish schools, was significantly increased for 2015/16. Along with wider society, the Jewish community remains particularly vulnerable to violent extremism. The threat is predominantly from Jihadists, in particular those returning from the battlefields of Syria and Iraq, but the threat from right wing extremists cannot be discounted.

Extremism can be espoused by so-called Hate Speakers, some of whom are alleged to hold and promote antisemitic views and who often rail against the British values we hold dear. This is anathema to respecting diversity and equality, and threatens our cohesive society.

**POLICY ASK:** To publicly support all efforts to combat antisemitism, racism and extremism.

**POLICY ASK:** To be particularly aware of the risk of increased antisemitism at times of heightened conflict in the Middle East.

**POLICY ASK:** To take action on hate as expressed on social media.

**POLICY ASK:** To provide assistance to third-party reporting bodies and security agencies, such as the CST, who monitor and protect vulnerable groups, including the Jewish community.

Since 2005, Wales has officially marked Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January every year. The Day does not just commemorate the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews, but also the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. Like other Holocaust-related activities, the aim is not just to remember the past, but to create a consciousness that will prevent any other genocides happening in the future.

Holocaust denial and revisionism is widely abhorred, but it continues - particularly in the context of opposition to Israel. The Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, has previously sought to question the veracity or extent of the Holocaust. In Europe, convicted French racist Dieudonné M'bala M'bala has suggested that Jews fabricated the Holocaust for financial gain. He was banned from the UK in 2014.

With each passing year there are fewer Holocaust survivors able to tell their stories. Therefore, it is important for schools across Wales to teach students about the Holocaust. Bodies like the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Wiener Library, the Anne Frank Trust, Yom HaShoah UK, the Centre for Holocaust Education and the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre all merit support.

**POLICY ASK:** To support Holocaust education, remembrance and commemoration, research and survivor testimony.

**POLICY ASK:** To refute and confront individuals and political movements who seek to minimise or downplay the Holocaust.

**POLICY ASK:** To include and expand Holocaust education in schools to prevent ignorance which can in some cases lead to revisionism or denial.

**POLICY ASK:** To consider implementing the Board of Deputies’ recommendations to the Prime Minister’s 2014 Holocaust Commission in the Welsh context, for example formally designating Holocaust Memorial Day as a recognised day in mainstream schools and ensuring continued and sustained funding for the Holocaust Educational Trust’s Lessons from Auschwitz Project.

**POLICY ASK:** To show solidarity with all the victims of Nazi persecution, including Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, disabled people and political opponents of Nazism, as well as the victims of subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.
ISRAEL & THE MIDDLE EAST

The Jewish community in Wales has a very strong attachment to the State of Israel. A 2010 survey by the Institute of Jewish Policy Research (JPR) showed that 95% of UK Jews have visited Israel and that 90% view Israel as the “ancestral homeland of the Jewish people”.

The Jewish community is committed to peace, security, prosperity and equality for Israel, the Palestinians and the wider Middle East.

PEACE

According to the survey, 78% of the Jewish community support a two-state solution. Achieving peace will require difficult concessions by both Israelis and the Palestinians, and can only be achieved through negotiations. In this spirit, we urge resistance of calls for boycotts of Israel at both an Assembly and a local level. By their very nature, such measures attribute blame to only one side of the conflict, perpetuating a one-sided narrative. Wales should be seen as a place to unite and not further divide.

POLICY ASK: To promote peace projects that unite communities, and resist boycotts that divide communities.

SECURITY

The EU classifies the military wings of Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist organisations, responsible for indiscriminately targeting civilians with suicide bombings and shelling, often whilst using civilians as human shields. These groups should not be given the legitimacy of engagement until they agree to desist from terrorist attacks, recognise Israel and move to the path of political resolution.

POLICY ASK: To refuse to engage with Hezbollah and Hamas members or supporters until they agree to desist from terrorist attacks, recognise Israel and move to the path of political resolution.

PROSPERITY

The total amount of bilateral trade between the UK and Israel was estimated at £5.1 billion in 2013, and it continues to grow. Israel is a leader in technology and medical research. In September 2015, Israeli companies announced £3 million of investment in South Wales which could lead to up to 100 jobs being created and £13 million being spent with local suppliers. Israel also has a vibrant cultural sector. Further cooperation in these fields and a greater trade network between Wales and Israel will be of great benefit to both societies.

POLICY ASK: To support, nurture and promote the growing trade and cultural links between Israel and Wales.

EQUALITY

Exceptionally for the Middle East, Israel is a state where there is respect for freedom of religious practice, women’s rights, trades’ union rights and LGBT rights. However, like many advanced countries, there are challenges faced by minorities which need to be addressed. One particular example is Israel’s Arab minority. The Board is one of the founders of the UK Task Force on Issues Facing Arab Citizens of Israel, set up to inform the UK community and facilitate partnerships to advance the opportunities of Israel’s Arab minority. Over 30 organisations have since joined the coalition.

POLICY ASK: To be constructive partners in the pursuit of greater integration and equality in Israel, including offering financial and political support to initiatives aimed at Arab–Jewish coexistence, and supporting projects that empower and advance the position of Arab citizens within Israeli society.
EDUCATION

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education (RE) develops pupils’ knowledge and understanding of the principal religions, their cultures and values. The Jewish community believes that the teaching of RE helps foster greater understanding and sensitivity between communities. RE can ultimately help to combat misunderstanding, discrimination and prejudice, including antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred. The Jewish community is very concerned by any erosion of the status of RE, especially where that results in a reduction of teacher training places, and puts in doubt the future recruitment of high-quality teachers.

The Jewish community urges that Judaism is fully represented within all local RE syllabi, thereby promoting tolerance and respect for the Jewish community. The Jewish community would also support development of a programme of Judaism-specific teacher training and education. It is important that Judaism is incorporated into teacher training programmes as part of the content of the religious studies curriculum, leading into GCSE Judaism options.

By incorporating RE fully into the school curriculum, schools will be better placed to satisfy the Welsh education inspectorate Estyn’s requirement to educate students about Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development and to promote understanding and tolerance, thus satisfying the inspection services’ obligation to report on this important aspect of school life.

POLICY ASK: To affirm RE as a priority subject, including the allocation of appropriate resources for RE teachers and their training.

SUPPLEMENTARY FAITH SCHOOLS

Support should continue for the provision of Jewish faith supplementary schools, which promote religious understanding, cultural identity and Jewish values.

POLICY ASK: To pledge support for the continuation and development of supplementary faith school provision. To ensure that an authentic Judaism teacher training is offered to Welsh schools.

SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT STRATEGY

It is vital that students and staff can work and study without fear of experiencing hatred or racism. We would like antisemitism to be incorporated within a formal anti-bullying policy within the Welsh school system, including policies that enable schools and individuals to respond to antisemitic abuse.

POLICY ASK: To support the ability of schools to report and respond to antisemitic incidents.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

SOCIAL CARE

Many Jews value the option of culturally-sensitive care when choosing a social care provider. This can mean, for example, care providers and carers who can offer kosher food and meaningful experiences for Shabbat and other Jewish festivals. This is applicable irrespective of whether the care is based at home or in a residential system.

In areas where there is high Jewish population density, the UK Jewish community has developed a market-leading care sector which embraces some of the best practices in social care, and which cover a wide range of ages, stages and levels of care requirement. These central facilities are able to offer advice, and sometimes practical help, for smaller Jewish communities such as those in Wales.

The costs of culturally-sensitive care provision can be higher than in non-faith care organisations because of increased costs to provide for Jewish observance, including Kosher food. The organisations involved, and their care facilities, are funded primarily by the Jewish community. However, local authorities often pay a significant share of the cost because these providers offer a service that no public body could supply.

Jews looking for specialist care can sometimes run into problems. Local authorities are sometimes reluctant to contribute to the additional cost of care. Furthermore, in order to receive the appropriate type of care within a suitable religious- and culturally-sensitive environment, Jews may request to leave the local authority area and the host local authority may be unwilling to contribute to it. Likewise the ‘destination’ local authority is frequently unwilling to assist funding a resident who has come from elsewhere.

The Jewish community would ask for a constructive approach to resolve these problems, which could include flexibility from local authorities or the creation of a centrally-held funding source for citizens seeking to obtain such specialist, religiously and culturally-sensitive care.

POLICY ASK: To offer financial support to facilitate provision for specialist care providers that cater for the religious and cultural needs of their clients.

POLICY ASK: To work with local authorities to ensure that people who need to obtain care from a specialist provider in a different local authority (for religious and cultural reasons, as well as for reasons such as accessibility and availability) are able to do so, and that such care is funded.
GENETIC SCREENING

Genetics and genetic testing is playing an increasingly prominent role in healthcare. From the Jewish perspective this has considerable impact – ranging from the increased incidence amongst them of infrequent lethal conditions, such as Tay Sachs disease, through to more common situations, such as in cancer screening, where Ashkenazi Jews are known to have a high frequency of mutations in the genes associated with breast and ovarian cancer.

The Jewish community believes that, in addition to the support for long term care and treatment of those affected by genetic diseases, preventive screening and research should be supported by the Government and NHS Wales. Funding for the commissioning of services for this purpose – which may be provided most efficiently by testing laboratories elsewhere in the UK – needs to be assured.

**POLICY ASK:** To support the provision of appropriate care facilities for people with rare debilitating diseases and advocate for more extensive provision of appropriate genetic screening, and in particular, for screening and support for populations at risk.

AGEING

Judaism interprets the core Biblical commandment to ‘honour and respect one’s parents’ (Exodus 20:12), and the instruction to “Stand up for an older person and show honour to the elderly” (Leviticus 19:32) as general standards for the treatment of older people.

However, there is a concern that society increasingly sees older people as a ‘burden’ rather than as an asset. Particularly with the challenges facing NHS Wales, there is concern that older people might be declined treatment or neglected, including their religious and cultural needs.

The Jewish community wants to see a concern for ensuring the inclusion of older people in terms of access to services, and also in terms of the social, cultural and spiritual life of our society, in partnership with the relevant agencies, organisations and community groups.

**POLICY ASK:** To ensure that elderly people receive the treatment and care that they need in a religiously and culturally sensitive way.

**POLICY ASK:** To seek the inclusion of older people in terms of both access to services, and to the social, cultural and spiritual life of our society.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND END OF LIFE

Judaism upholds the principle of the sanctity of life. When confronted with a seriously ill patient, the default Jewish option is a presumption in favour of saving life. At the same time, Judaism is also sensitive to the very real issues of suffering, and endorses palliative care, as defined by the World Health Organisation. Jewish teaching does not support futile treatment; but does regard a failure to provide for basic needs, including hydration, as unacceptably cruel.

This combination of values can directly influence patient care. They are of particular concern for people who do not have anyone to advocate for them; who have not signed advanced directives; or who do not have the capacity to give instructions. In these cases healthcare professionals may make decisions based on their subjective evaluation of “quality of life” without due consideration for patients’ religious and cultural beliefs.

The provision of palliative care services has been shown to be seriously deficient. The Jewish community is strongly supportive of efforts to improve the situation. The Jewish community strongly commends the recent Bill sponsored by Baroness Finlay in Westminster. The Bill is consistent with our religious and cultural beliefs, and irrespective of whether or not it is passed, we hope that the principles underlying it would be regarded as standards of practice by the Welsh Assembly.

**POLICY ASK:** To support the premise that religious, cultural and personal beliefs should be taken into account when making decisions in the final stages of life.

DEATH CERTIFICATION AND CORONERS’ SERVICES

Jewish tradition requires that burial should take place as soon as possible after death, preferably within 24 hours. Funerals do not take place on the Sabbath or on Festivals, but take place as soon as possible afterwards.

Therefore, handling by the coroner – and death certification and registration by the local authority – should be concluded as expeditiously as possible. When there is any uncertainty about cause of death, and a death certificate cannot be issued, then in Wales and England the death is reported to the coroner who must decide whether or not to release the body for burial. Coroner’s may also order autopsies and initiate inquests.

This process can also be adversely impacted by no coroner being available ‘out of hours’; the absence of the appropriate doctor; or the lack of available facilities in local authorities for rapid registration. This can cause distress to bereaved families and can delay both the funeral and the traditional Jewish mourning process.

Standards across the country vary significantly, and the promised reform of the coroner system has not yet been fully implemented. A missing component is the appointment of medical examiners who will be able to expedite handling of registration and release of bodies for burial without undue delays.

**POLICY ASK:** To fully implement the Coroner Reform programme, and ensure that areas with high Jewish and Muslim populations have good ‘out of hours’ cover from all the necessary professionals.
AUTOPSY

Jewish tradition is that the body of the deceased should be buried without any undue interference. There is a strong preference for avoiding invasive autopsies, and consent is only given when there is clear evidence that the procedure will be of benefit. The exception is when the requirement for autopsy is legal, i.e. ordered by the coroner. This can occur where there is uncertainty as to cause, as well as when there is suspicion of an offence.

Recently there has been considerable public interest in the use of minimal invasive autopsy – where a computerised tomography (CT) scan is used – which has been validated in Government-funded studies. This technology is of value not only to Jews but also to the wider population, since the quality of this form of autopsy is as good – if not better than – conventional procedures.

However, minimal invasive autopsy is not available in many parts of the UK, and there is no protocol as to how bereaved Welsh Jews (and Muslims) can request it. Also in some jurisdictions, scans have not yet been accepted by coroners.

POLICY ASK: To support the drive to make minimal invasive autopsies more financially and physically accessible in Wales.

ORGAN DONATION

In principle, Judaism encourages organ donation in order to save lives. Whilst, in Judaism, avoidance of interference with the dead body and rapid internment are prime concerns, each case is different. Where there is a possibility of organ donation it can be considered, particularly if these are the known wishes of the deceased.

Orthodox Judaism holds that organs may not be removed from a donor until death has definitely occurred, but there are varying views about what constitutes ‘death’. Some traditionally-observant Jews accept the “brain stem death” criteria, and therefore the heart and lungs can be transplanted as well as other organs. Other Orthodox authorities will only agree to removal of organs from a “non-beating heart” donor, which reduces the range of usable organs.

In 2013, the Welsh Assembly passed a bill to introduce an ‘opt-out’ system of organ donation. The Jewish community, together with other faith communities, has expressed considerable concern about protecting the role of family consent throughout the development of this legislation.

In order to make it easier for Jews, and members of other faiths with similar beliefs, to donate their organs, a short statement was drafted which commits to the principle of donation but clarifies that the potential donor and their family should be entitled to consult with their particular personal religious adviser before consenting. In May 2014 the Human Tissue Authority published a Code of Practice which became operative on 1 December 2015. In this code, inter alia, the following is stated:

If a person appointed a representative/s to make a decision, their consent cannot be deemed. The decision of the appointed representative/s should be acted upon. If the appointed representative is unable to act, then the express consent of a person in a qualifying relationship or a person with parental responsibility (in the case of children) may be sought.

The Welsh Assembly is aware of this since regulations have been put in place already concerning the requirement for appointed representatives to have satisfactory mental capacity.

POLICY ASK: To support a process whereby the religious and cultural rights of Jews should be respected before organs are taken for transplantation.

POLICY ASK: To support and fund a process whereby the Welsh public in general and the Jewish community in particular, are properly informed about how the Act operates; and about the relevant provisions of the Human Tissue Authority Code Practice.
INTERFAITH RELATIONS & SOCIAL ACTION

INTERFAITH RELATIONS

The Jewish Community is committed to positive and authentic engagement with people of all faiths and none. Promoting good relations between communities proactively prevents tensions, racism and violence. Steps should be taken to educate people of different faith and belief backgrounds about each other, and proactive efforts and investment should be put into developing good interfaith relations in order to prevent tensions and promote cooperation.

Whilst much of this work is driven from faith groups themselves at a local and national level, the Welsh Assembly has the resources to facilitate the strategic growth and direction of this work. The Jewish community, led by the South Wales Jewish Representative Council and the Board of Deputies, prides itself on working to enhance the interfaith encounter, producing joint research, projects and events. Organisations and projects like the Welsh Government’s Faith Communities Forum, the Interfaith Council for Wales, the Wales Inter-faith Network, as well as UK-wide bodies like the Inter Faith Network for the UK, 3FF, Mitzvah Day, the Council of Christians and Jews and the Joseph Interfaith Foundation offer sustainable mechanisms and partners to deliver a more cohesive and integrated society.

**POLICY ASK:** To support initiatives which promote dialogue and understanding between different groups in society; to prevent tensions and promote cooperation.

**POLICY ASK:** To outline a clear strategy to enhance community relations in Wales supported by a clear, designated budget.

THE ENVIRONMENT

A Jewish approach to the environment begins with Genesis 2:15, where it says, “The Lord G-d took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it”. In other words, humankind has been given custodianship of the planet by the Higher Power who is its true owner. Humankind should enjoy the World, but must take care of it.

Individuals must play their part, but only national governments can effectively tackle the threat posed by human-made climate change and other forms of environmental degradation and pollution; protecting water resources, reducing carbon emissions and encouraging the use of renewable energy.

**POLICY ASK:** To advocate and act for individual, nationwide and international efforts to tackle climate change; protect our environment and ensure the habitability of our planet for future generations.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Numerous Jewish texts speak about the importance of caring for others and upholding their rights. Genesis 1:27 tells us that all people are created, “in the image of G-d”. If all humans are created in the ‘image of G-d’, it follows that all human beings have an equal, innate dignity which must be respected.

Jewish thinkers, biblical ethics and the experiences of the Jewish people have been crucial to the development of human rights. Indeed, René Cassin, a principal author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, was profoundly influenced by the ethics of his Jewish background and the Jewish experience of the Holocaust. UK Jewish NGOs René Cassin and the Jewish Council for Racial Equality continue to articulate Jewish human rights concerns.

As a community, we feel it is important for Wales to continue to advocate universal human rights both inside and outside its borders. Addressing issues of human rights abuses in Wales and beyond – such as modern slavery and human trafficking – is key to society’s continued advancement.

**POLICY ASK:** To advance the cause of human rights in Wales and across the world.

IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM

The Jewish community is a community of immigrants who arrived in Wales either as economic migrants or as refugees fleeing persecution. The Jewish community takes a particular interest in the plight of immigrants and asylum seekers, and shares a discomfort in loose, pejorative language that stigmatises new arrivals in this country. Even though some controls are necessary, our political leadership must be careful not to promote hatred or baseless suspicion towards migrants or asylum seekers, who are vulnerable in an unfamiliar country. This is particularly pertinent in view of the current Syrian refugee crisis.

**POLICY ASK:** To promote fair policies towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, taking pains to challenge hatred against these groups.

VOLUNTEERING

Charities like the Jewish Volunteering Network and Mitzvah Day are leading examples of how to manage and mobilise volunteers. Volunteers are a valuable asset to any charitable endeavour, but it is sometimes assumed that charities can fill budget gaps by using volunteers. However, those who successfully manage volunteers know that, whilst volunteers may save on costs, they are not ‘cost neutral’, because the training, managing and equipping of volunteers all require resources. Any public or private sector funding into the field of volunteering is extremely worthwhile, because it has a clear ‘multiplier effect’.

**POLICY ASK:** To support charities to improve and develop volunteering.
A flourishing Jewish cultural scene is testimony to a thriving and integrated community. The Senedd’s hosting of the civic menorah lighting in 2015 and the Board of Deputies’ Jewish Living Experience in 2014 both celebrated the Welsh Jewish experience and opened it to the wider community.

In some parts of Wales, the heritage of the Jewish community is preserved through cemeteries. The Board of Deputies of British Jews, through designated charity BOD Heritage, holds the title to cemeteries in Merthyr Tydfil and has interests in cemeteries in Swansea and Newport. Jewish Law prohibits interference with burial grounds or graves except in very limited circumstances. Accordingly, there is significant importance placed on the preservation, maintenance and protection of Jewish burial grounds. This is sometimes threatened by developers or geological issues, such as subsidence.

BOD Heritage protects these cemeteries and ensures they are safeguarded from both desecration and physical dereliction. In this respect we need greater support from the authorities in ensuring that these grounds are properly protected but also supported with maintenance and preservation.

Meanwhile, the work of the South Wales Jewish Representative Council plays a vital role in educating the wider, non-Jewish public and promoting good community relations through education about Judaism and the comparative experiences of Wales’s migrant populations.

The Jewish Living Experience is an exhibition which travels the country giving schoolchildren and the wider public information about the Jewish way of life. It was hosted at the Senedd in 2014. The Board of Deputies and the Representative Council always welcome the opportunity to bring the exhibition to new places, and Assembly Members should feel free to inquire about bringing it to their own constituencies.

**POLICY ASK:** To advocate for the protection and preservation of Jewish cemeteries in Wales, including through legislation and funding.

**POLICY ASK:** To fund faith-based cultural bodies and events which promote knowledge, understanding and good relations between different religious and ethnic groups.