

National Synod of Wales Property Overview

Property held by URC churches in Wales includes church buildings (such as worship spaces, halls, meeting rooms and offices), residential properties, graveyards, gardens and car parks. Some aspects of property management are affected by devolved legislation enacted by Senedd Cymru or the Welsh Parliament. For more information about property in the National Synod of Wales, please contact Synod Office on office.urcwailes@urc.org.uk or 029 2019 5728

Trusteeship

Approximately two-thirds of property relating to churches in the National Synod of Wales is held in trust by the United Reformed Church (Wales) Trust Company Limited as the custodial trustee. The remaining property is held in trust by other denominations, such as for some churches in Local Ecumenical Partnerships, or by private trustees. For property held in trust by the URC (Wales) Trust and in use by a congregation, the elders are considered the day-to-day or managing trustees.

Listed Places of Worship

Ecclesiastical Exemption allows certain denominations to make changes to listed places of worship without needing to seek consent from the relevant local authority. Although most synods in the URC hold Ecclesiastical Exemption, the National Synod of Wales does not. Congregations wishing to make changes to listed buildings will need to seek consent from their local authority, with the concurrence of the synod.

Residential Property

Residential properties that are available for private rent are subject to the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016. The Act enforces housing standards and implements occupation contracts in place of tenancy agreements. Landlords must also register with Rent Smart Wales. The URC (Wales) Trust is the registered landlord for properties held in trust and let to private tenants. These properties are only managed by local congregations through a licensed estate agent, as permitted by the URC (Wales) Trust.

Waste Separation Requirements

Places of worship are required to separate waste for recycling and disposal under the Waste Separation Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2023. For further information about the requirements for churches in Wales, see [Fact Sheet – Workplace Recycling Requirements in Wales].

Funding

The Welsh Church Act Fund was created after the disestablishment of the Church in Wales under the Welsh Church Act 1914. The fund is administered by local authorities throughout Wales, with grants available for charitable purposes including the maintenance and repair of places of worship. The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme closed in April 2026. The scheme enabled the recovery

of VAT for costs relating to the repair and maintenance of listed places of worship. Replacement schemes have been established in England and Scotland, but no equivalent scheme is currently in place for Wales.