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PARLIAMENTARY REPORT

June to September 2025

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Undoubtedly the major item of Parliamentary news was the resignation of the Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner, after the Government's Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards, Sir Laurence Magnus, had concluded that in a recent property transaction she could not be considered to have met the 'highest possible standards of proper conduct' as envisaged by the Ministerial Code.[1] In the subsequent Government reshuffle, David Lammy became Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice and Shabana Mahmood became Home Secretary, while Ellie Reeves left the Cabinet but was appointed Solicitor General.

Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill

The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill[2] completed its stages in the Commons on 30 June. It was read a second time in the Lords on 12 September and committed to a select committee to hear evidence from 'professional bodies, those with professional experience of coronial services, and Ministers' and 'notwithstanding the usual practice of the House' to report on the evidence received without making recommendations. The Committee was ordered to report by 7 November.[3]

The Bishop of Newcastle was appointed as a member to the special committee and four dates were agreed with the House to debate the Bill once the work of the Special Committee had concluded.

Crime and Policing Bill and abortion law

On 17 June, on a free vote, the Commons voted by a majority of 242 to agree New Clause 1 to the Crime and Policing Bill, which would decriminalise abortion in England and Wales:

Removal of women from the criminal law related to abortion

[1] BBC News, 'In full: Rayner, PM and ethics adviser's letters on her resignation' (6 September 2025: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ckgyn051990o).
[2] https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/61635/documents/6734.
[3] HL Deb (2024-26) vol 848 col 2604.

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> For the purposes of the law related to abortion, including sections 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, no offence is committed by a woman acting in relation to her own pregnancy.

Given that it was agreed by a considerable majority, the suspicion must be that it will become law.

At the Second Reading in the House of Lords, a large number of Peers indicated a wish to address the issues of abortion, freedom of speech and hate crime legislation alongside mandatory reporting of sexual abuse and implementing IICSA Enquiry recommendations.

Freedom of Expression (Religion or Belief System) Bill

On 10 June, the Commons debated a Ten-Minute Rule motion by Nick Timothy (West Suffolk, Con) for leave 'to bring in a Bill to make provision about freedom of expression in relation to religion or belief systems; and for connected purposes'.[4] It arose as a result of two separate prosecutions for religiously aggravated public order offences; Hamit Coskun and Martin Frost were each prosecuted after separate incidents in which they had set fire to parts of the *Quran*. Leave was granted without either an opposing speech or a division – but the chances of the Bill becoming law are minute.

Church Measures

The Clergy Conduct Measure was considered by the Ecclesiastical Committee on 10 June; its purpose is to reform the existing clergy disciplinary procedures. At the time of writing, the Measure was still under consideration by the Committee and its report on the Measure was pending. The final meeting was to be on 21 October, after which it was expected that the Committee would report on the expediency of the Measure.

On 3 April, the Church Funds Investment Measure 2025 received Royal Assent. It provides for the transfer of CBF Church of England funds to a charity-authorised investment fund jointly regulated by the Charity Commission and the Financial Conduct Authority. It came into force immediately.

The Chancel Repair (Church Commissioners' Liability) Measure 2025 also received Royal Assent on 3 April. It provides that the liability of the Church Commissioners to repair the chancel of a church that currently takes the form of an interest in land or a contractual obligation will instead become a statutory duty. At the time of writing, it had not been commenced.

[4] HC Deb (2024-26) vol 768 cols 832–834, https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-06-10/debates/49A1BE3A-99FE-4F94-82E7-8EB7841787F9/FreedomOfExpression(ReligionOrBeliefSystem).

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Chancel repair liability

Perhaps coincidentally, the Law Commission published a consultation in July on chancel repair liability and registration which aims to close what it describes as a historic loophole.[5] The consultation focuses on whether purchasers of land can determine whether they will be bound by chancel repair liability as a result of their acquisition.

The Commission explains that the intention of the Land Registration Act 2002 had been that chancel repair liability should not bind purchasers of land after 2013 unless protected on the register; however, since the 2002 Act was brought into force, a question has arisen about the legal status of the liability and whether homeowners were nevertheless bound despite the 2002 Act. The consultation was to close on 15 November.

New funerary methods

In June, the Law Commission published a consultation paper on new funerary methods[6] as part of its overall project on burial and cremation law. New methods such as alkaline hydrolysis are potential alternatives to the established methods of burial, cremation and burial at sea, and although they are not currently regulated in England and Wales, some new methods are available in other jurisdictions. The paper examines the concept of 'new funerary methods', the legislation governing them in other jurisdictions, the nature and scope of future regulation and the principles that could guide their regulation in England and Wales. The consultation closed on 4 September.

Non-stun slaughter of animals

On 9 June, there was a debate in Westminster Hall on an e-petition about the slaughter of animals without pre-stunning. Replying to the debate, the then Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs, Daniel Zeichner, made it clear that the Government had no plans to change the current law:

> Let me be clear from the outset: it is the Government's preference that all animals should be stunned before slaughter. However, the Government respect the right of Jews and Muslims to eat meat prepared in accordance with their beliefs. We therefore intend to continue to allow the religious slaughter of animals for consumption by Muslims and Jews. We believe that is an important religious freedom ...[7]

[5] https://cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaecede923f.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/sites/54/2025/07/Chancel-Repair-Liability-Full-CP.pdf.

[6] https://cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaecede923f.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/sites/54/2025/06/New-Funerary-Methods-Consultation-Paper-online-version.pdf.

[7] HC Deb (2024-26) vol 768 col 275WH, https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-06-09/debates/27E94862-93C7-4D29-B0DA-F77F92D14161/Non-StunSlaughterOfAnimals.

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Weddings law

On 12 June, the issue of humanist weddings was debated in Westminster Hall. Replying, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Alex Davies-Jones, said that the Law Commission's report on weddings law had put forward a number of complex and significant recommendations, that it was 'absolutely essential that those are considered carefully and in full' and that the Government was 'actively considering the matter of humanist weddings as part of their broader review of the Law Commission's report'.[8] In September, in answer to a written question from Toby Perkins (Chesterfield, Lab) about including independent celebrants in the Government's response to the Law Commission's report, she said that the Government appreciated the importance of the issue and would provide an update 'in due course'.[9]

The Law Commission report was published on 18 July 2022: in short, continue watching this space...

Future of the Church of England

On 17 July, the Commons held a brief adjournment debate on the future of the Church of England. Danny Kruger (East Wiltshire, Con), who opened it, said that he could not be indifferent to the extent of the growth of Islam in recent decades; however, he was particularly scathing about what he described as 'the other religion':

> ... a combination of ancient paganism, Christian heresies and the cult of modernism, all mashed up into a deeply mistaken and deeply dangerous ideology of power that is hostile to the essential objects of our affections and our loyalties: families, communities and nations. It is explicitly and most passionately hostile to Christianity as the wellspring of the West. That religion, unlike Islam, must simply be destroyed, at least as a public doctrine.[10]

In reply, the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution, Jim McMahon, made a broadly supportive but non-committal speech in which he briefly outlined 'the constitutional arrangements between the established Church, Parliament and the Executive'.[11]

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme funding tracker

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has published a Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme (LPWGS) funding tracker[12] showing the amount already

[8] HC Deb (2024-26) vol 768 col 454WH, https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-06-12/debates/88BADD43-303D-4964-8431-B8CE6CC8CBFF/HumanistMarriage.

[9] UIN 70386, https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-08-29/70386.

[10] HC Deb (2024-26) vol 771 c 552.

[11] HC Deb (2024-26) vol 771 c 553.

[12] https://listed-places-of-worship-grant.dcms.gov.uk.

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allocated under the Scheme and the funds remaining until 31 March 2026. It will be updated fortnightly. For the 2025/26 financial year, the total budget for the Scheme is £23 million.

Historic England subsequently clarified in an e-mail that the LPWGS guidance states that the only limit on applications per building is the £25,000 cap on an individual place of worship and that the DCMS had confirmed that there was no restriction on the number of times that a congregation can apply in a single financial year. The long-term future of the scheme beyond March 2026 remains uncertain, however, and in September, in answer to a written question in the Commons, the DCMS said that funding after March 2026 'will be considered as the Department works through the output of the Spending Review and Departmental business planning process'.

Whither the ECHR?

In a speech to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in Strasbourg on 18 June, the then Lord Chancellor, Shabana Mahmood KC, told the meeting that while the UK is resolutely committed to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the trust of the public was beginning to erode as the application of rights felt out of step with 'common sense':

> Across Europe, public confidence in the rule of law is fraying. There is a growing perception – sometimes mistaken, sometimes grounded in reality – that human rights are no longer a shield for the vulnerable, but a tool for criminals to avoid responsibility. That the law too often protects those who break the rules, rather than those who follow them. This tension is not new. The Convention was written to protect individuals from the arbitrary power of the state. But in today's world, the threats to justice and liberty are more complex. They can come from technology, transnational crime, uncontrolled migration, or legal systems that drift away from public consent.[13]

She explained that the Government was clarifying how Convention rights – particularly Article 8 – should operate in relation to immigration rules and the right of prisoners to socialise, concluding:

> The European Convention on Human Rights is one of the great achievements of post-war politics. It has endured because it has evolved. Now, it must do so again.[14]

The response of Kemi Badenoch as Leader of the Opposition was to announce on X/Twitter that 'Conservatives will withdraw from the ECHR and repeal the Human

[13] Ministry of Justice, 18 June 2025, 'ECHR "must evolve" to restore public confidence in rule of law, says Lord Chancellor', https://www.gov.uk/government/news/echr-must-evolve-to-restore-public-confidence-in-rule-of-law-says-lord-chancellor.

[14] Ibid.

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Rights Act. Our detailed plan for stronger borders closes the door, once and for all, on the legal blocks that stop us removing those who have no right to be here'.[15]

Northern Ireland: consultation on dissolution of marriage and civil partnership

The Northern Ireland Department of Finance launched a consultation on the law on divorce and the dissolution of marriage and civil partnerships.[16] The current legislation on divorce, the Matrimonial Causes (NI) Order 1978, allows for divorce on grounds of fault (unreasonable behaviour, adultery and desertion) or no-fault (evidenced by separation). The dissolution of a civil partnership similarly comprises fault and no-fault grounds, though adultery is not a ground for the dissolution of a civil partnership. The options included in the consultation are:

i. no-fault divorce evidenced by separation, as in the Republic of Ireland;
ii. administrative no-fault divorce, similar to the law in England and Wales, under which one party can apply for a divorce which cannot be challenged; and
iii. no change to the current law.

The consultation opened on 23 June and ended on 26 September 2025.

And finally …

As usual, the parliamentary silly season was in full swing: witness two recent written questions by Andrew Rosindell (Romford, Con). In the first, he asked the Minister for the Cabinet Office, 'if his Department will take steps to re-establish the Church of Ireland as the established church of Northern Ireland'. To no-one's surprise, the Paymaster-General, Nick Thomas-Symonds, replied with a very firm 'No'.[17]

The second asked the Minister for Women and Equalities, 'what steps the Government has taken to support (a) Anglo-Catholics and (b) traditionalist Anglo-Catholics of the Church of England in the workplace'. In reply, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Equalities, Nia Griffith, explained that the Equality Act 2010 'provides protection from discrimination to anyone with a religious or philosophical belief, as well as to those who lack a religion or belief. This includes all forms of Anglo-Catholicism'.[18]

[15] https://x.com/KemiBadenoch/status/1974895492346880125.
[16] www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Divorce%20Law%20Consultation%20Document%20Final.pdf.
[17] https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-07-17/68721.
[18] https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-07-22/69789.

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Quite apart from the obvious legal and theological difficulties of defining and distinguishing between 'Anglo-Catholics' and 'traditionalist Anglo-Catholics' in a suitably meaningful way (*Affirming Catholicism* vs *The Society*, anyone?), one cannot help wondering why those two groups in particular should need protection in the workplace.

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