

P-05-954 Petition for a public inquiry by the Welsh Government into the historic child abuse on Caldey Island, Correspondence – Caldey Island Victims Campaign Coordinator to Committee, 29.06.20

Dinah Mulholland: Caldey Island Victims Campaign Coordinator

Supporting Statement for Petition P-05-954 calling for a public inquiry by the Welsh Government into historic child abuse on Caldey Island.

I was the Labour Parliamentary Candidate for Ceredigion in the General Elections of 2017 and 2019. In that capacity I have been working with Kevin and Carol O'Connell, and with Ben Lake MP, in support of the Caldey Island Victims Campaign since June 2019. For the last 6 months I have had the voluntary role of coordinator for the campaign.

I believe that in acting to protect children and other vulnerable groups from harm it is necessary to act on the precautionary principle. I do not consider that the Abbot and monks of Caldey Island, despite acknowledging that abuse did take place, and do not appear to have an accountable, independent and transparent safeguarding system in place. I would therefore like to add a few short points about this in addition to those already raised within the other supporting statements for the petition.

1. Caldey is promoted and marketed, by the Island itself and via wider media, tourist websites and platforms, as a family & child friendly destination. A quick google search for Caldey throws up the following website listings for Caldey:
 - a. Letsgowiththechildren.com
 - b. Dayoutwiththekids.com
 - c. Kiddieholidays.com
 - d. The Tenby Visitor Guide listing categorises Caldey within their 'younger children' and 'older children' listings.
2. The Caldey Island website itself promotes an impression of a family & child friendly place, with photos of children feeding ducks, swings in the background of shots etc.
3. As well as children visiting the island on boat trips, children can also stay on the island at the St Philomena Retreat House which is available for short term holiday lets and retreats. The website however does say 'children must always be accompanied and supervised by an adult'.
4. In addition, properties on the island are available for longer term rentals to tenants.
5. The IICSA witness statement of the Archbishop of Wales outlined their 'in-house' safeguarding and other policies of the Catholic Church. These include:
 - a. Standards of conduct
 - b. Risk assessments
 - c. Peer support and appraisal
 - d. Disciplinary procedures and tribunals
 - e. Safeguarding
6. Of great concern is that there is no requirement for previous good conduct to enter the church as a monk.
7. Also of concern is that the Catholic Church also independently 'ministers to and manages individuals alleged to have caused harm'.
8. However, even within these guidelines the Catholic Church does not appear to have sufficient control over Caldey to ensure effective safeguarding on the island. In May 2019

ITV Wales reported that the Diocese of Menevia stated that Caldey was not their responsibility, however they had been advising the Abbey on their safeguarding policies and practices for the last 18 months. There has also been liaison between Pembrokeshire County Council and Dyfed Powys Police with the Abbey in order to improve safeguarding on the island. Bishop Tom Burns has commented on this process that “the Abbey has insisted on retaining its oversight of any specific cases, past, present, or in the future.”

<https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2019-05-14/calls-for-public-inquiry-into-historical-child-abuse-on-caldey-island-as-another-victim-comes-forward/>

9. During the last 14 years, 3 convicted child sex offenders have stayed or lived on Caldey Island.
 - a. Fr. John Shannon from 2008 to 2009
 - b. John Cronin in 2009
 - c. Paul Ashton from 2004 to 2011
10. I would also like to add that there may be a need to act with urgency if an inquiry into historic abuse on Caldey Island is to take place. IICSA received evidence of the destruction of records at Ampleforth and Downside Schools, and destruction of records may already have taken place on Caldey Island.

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