



Manifesto 2016

A Wales that Works for you



Our Vision for Wales



Our vision for 21st Century Wales is straight forward. Wales should be a dynamic, innovative and vibrant economy; a nation, proud of our past yet confident of our future and our place in the world.

To get there, politics in Wales needs nothing short of a revolution.

Time and time again, people have told us they feel let down by an out-of-touch Government in Cardiff Bay. The Welsh Liberal Democrats share this frustration. We still believe that decisions need to be made closer to people, as that is the best way to deliver our vital public services. But in 17 years of continuous Labour Government, they have failed to get even the basics right.

People have similar aspirations now as they did when our National Assembly was first established. As a minimum, they expect their government to deliver effective public services. But we all had hoped for more – innovative policies enabling Wales to outperform its neighbours. We have been sorely disappointed on both counts.

It is time for Wales to have politicians that listen and then work to solve problems.



Welsh Liberal Democrats

A Wales that works for you



This manifesto is a roadmap for an ambitious, optimistic and pioneering Wales, based on our values and our nation's needs.

- We all want NHS staff to have the time to care for our loved ones, which is why the Welsh Liberal Democrats will ensure safe staffing levels across the NHS, by putting **more nurses** in our hospitals and in our communities.
- We all want teachers to have the time to teach our children properly, which is why the Welsh Liberal Democrats will deliver **smaller class sizes** in our schools.
- We all want secure jobs and homes to build a better life, which is why the Welsh Liberal Democrats will create an **Opportunity Economy** that helps businesses to grow and assists people to buy their own homes. We believe that if you have ambition, you should have the best opportunity to succeed.

For over 150 years, Welsh Liberals have fought for fairness on behalf of local communities. We're still doing that today. We used our influence in the Assembly to secure major investment in schools through our Pupil Premium, thousands of new apprenticeships, and improved access to life-saving NHS treatments. These were all policies delivered despite being in opposition with five AMs.

The more votes and AMs we have, the more we can do for you. And, never forget, it was the Welsh Liberal Democrats who fought the outrageous £10,000 Assembly Member pay hike.

Welsh Liberal Democrats are the outsiders, working on the inside. We are the outsiders, working on your side.

We understand that people are increasingly fed up of politicians lecturing them. This manifesto turns that on its head; it's a manifesto full of fresh ideas and ambition that shows we are listening.

This is a manifesto for Wales - a Wales that works for you.



Kirsty Williams, Leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats

A Wales that Works for You

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Our Vision for the Economy



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I have hopes for my future. Yes, I want work for now but I don't want my career to be washed out in 10 years' time because the Welsh Government lacks the foresight to plan for the jobs of the future. It is time for a government that is ambitious for Wales, not one that harks back to the past.

”

- Caitlin, Newport

“

We all want secure jobs and homes to build a better life. The Welsh Liberal Democrats will create an Opportunity Economy that helps businesses to thrive. We believe that if you have ambition, you should have the best opportunity to succeed.

The economic challenges facing Wales didn't develop over a single Assembly Term but now is the time to get real. We are facing a crisis in our steel industry, the lowest wages in Britain and initiative after initiative from Welsh Government that just isn't helping. We need a long-term 'Sustainable Growth Strategy' that creates a resilient economy, where no-one is left behind. That means tackling the structural problems in our economy - creating a business environment that faces out to the world and has the confidence to make Welsh products and services globally successful. We need to support our key industries, steel chief amongst them. Only then will the Welsh Liberal Democrat ambition of an **Opportunity Economy** be realised.



”

- Eluned Parrott, candidate for Cardiff Central

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1 Establish a Welsh Development bank to support small businesses

To change the fate of the Welsh economy, we will set up a Welsh Development Bank with three, clear aims; to bring together finance and support for small businesses seeking to grow; to develop export markets for Welsh businesses; and to draw in funding for major infrastructure projects.

2 Create a transport, digital and social infrastructure fit for the modern world

Accessible and affordable infrastructure is vital in helping to reduce isolation and ensure people can access services. We will look not just at transport infrastructure, but digital and social infrastructure too.

Public transport is expensive and often infrequent. We will create regional transport authorities to meet local need by re-regulating the buses, deliver major projects like the South Wales metro, and improve connections so you can get to work on time.

The digital revolution has changed every aspect of our lives. Wales has the lowest level of superfast broadband of anywhere in the UK and unacceptably poor levels of mobile coverage. The current snail's pace of delivery will not be tolerated by the Welsh Liberal Democrats, and we'll hold negotiations with BT Openreach for a timetable of delivery. We will work with businesses, OFCOM, infrastructure owners and network operators to improve mobile coverage and digital inclusion across Wales.

3 Building a skilled modern workforce by investing in apprenticeships and universities

The success of the Welsh economy must be measured by the opportunities we create for everyone. We've secured new apprenticeships for 5,000 young people in Wales. We will continue this momentum by creating tens of thousands of new apprenticeship places. We will equip Welsh workers with the skills they need by supporting in-work training and build a highly skilled, modern workforce to help Wales prepare for the future. We will encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity by investing in technology transfer from our universities and colleges to create new 'Made in Wales' businesses, with the capacity to create jobs for now and for future generations.

Fact:

Wales' economy is dramatically lagging behind the rest of the UK – our employment is lower than England and Scotland; we have the least productive economy in the UK; and the highest child poverty levels outside London. (Source: StatsWales)

A 25-year plan for Sustainable Growth

For 17 years, Wales' economy has suffered from a 'chop and change' approach to economic strategy, despite one party being in control. Our business community needs stability in order to plan for the future.

For too long, plans for growth have ignored the structural problems in the Welsh economy. Wales has a huge number of micro-businesses, and a small number of branch operations from inward investors which many jobs rely on. Wales needs to promote the growth of the stable, medium-sized companies to provide a strong backbone for our economy.

Our economic strategy will nurture a business environment that is internationalist in its outlook, eagerly looking for opportunities beyond our borders and confident enough to take advantage of them. We must improve Wales' skills and innovation, access to finance and capital, and access to markets, in order to increase productivity and deliver long-term growth.

To make sure nobody is left behind, we must enable communities to build their own economic future by unlocking power and potential across Wales, not just in Cardiff Bay.

We must set out a clear, long-term strategy for Wales that will bring confidence to businesses based here and those who would trade with, and invest in, us. We will:

- Develop a 25 year Sustainable Growth Strategy, setting out our vision for creating a rebalanced and resilient economy, supported by a Growth Strategy Panel, ensuring all aspects of government are focused on growing our economy.
- Cut red tape by introducing a 'one-in-one-out' rule for regulation and bring forward a Regulatory Reform Bill.
- Encourage local authorities to engage more proactively with local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as part of their procurement strategy, including auditing businesses in their areas to enable them to design contracts that meet the needs of local businesses.
- Explore giving Chambers of Commerce an enhanced legal status so experts and businesspeople, not bureaucrats, provide support for SMEs on behalf of the Government.
- Support areas that suffer sudden economic shocks such as Port Talbot including by enabling the creation of Development Companies and developing crisis management approaches with local leaders.

The Welsh Development Bank

The Welsh Liberal Democrats want a Welsh Development Bank (WDB) to be the driving force for delivering the more resilient economy that Wales deserves. The Welsh Development Bank will assist businesses to grow, find new markets for Welsh products and services, and deliver an infrastructure that ensures wherever you live and whatever your background, you will not be left behind as Wales' economy develops.

We will create a Welsh Development Bank with three arms:

- A Small Business Administration, to bring together finance and advice for growing businesses.
- An international office, to support businesses find new export markets and to broker international investment links.
- An infrastructure investment bank, to lever in investment for transport, digital and social infrastructure.



Innovation for Sustainable Growth

Innovation and education are key to creating high-value, sustainable jobs in Wales. We recognise that our universities are a key contributor to Wales' economy. We must create an environment that allows entrepreneurship and innovation to flourish, making sure those with the ideas to build a successful business receive the support they need.

We will develop an innovation strategy to maximise the opportunities for our universities and private sector to create wealth together, including:

- Creating a database of Research & Development at Welsh universities to encourage collaboration between Higher Education and the private sector.
- Expanding investment in Knowledge-Transfer Partnerships to transfer academic knowledge smoothly to real-life businesses' projects.
- Providing additional finance for universities to support more expensive subjects such as engineering and computer science and tackle gender imbalances in student recruitment.
- Establishing a Wales-wide alumni network for European and international students who have studied in Wales, and Welsh students who have studied abroad, as part of a broader Diaspora Strategy to develop international business links.



Building a Skilled and Inclusive Workforce

In order to achieve sustainable prosperity, all of the people of Wales need to be able to develop the skills they need for the workplace now and in the future.

We need a high skill base in order to be an attractive destination for inward investment and to grow our own high-value businesses. It is also vital that in an inclusive modern economy, all of our citizens have the opportunity to get on in life regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality or disability.

We will:

- Extend apprenticeship opportunities by:
 - Doubling the number of apprenticeship placement starts in Wales.
 - Creating a national schools liaison programme to promote apprenticeships.
 - Investing in apprenticeship facilities in Further Education Colleges.
 - Offering grants to small businesses for each young person not in education, employment or training taken on as an apprentice.
- Embed wider skills such as entrepreneurship, leadership, and management into the curriculum at all levels, and instruct Estyn to evaluate this in inspections.
- Invest in proactive, professional careers guidance, including a guaranteed one-to-one interview for every child in Wales who requests one.
- Create a study maintenance regime to support mature applicants for apprenticeships.
- Improve reporting on the long-term outcomes of study, by instructing universities, sixth forms and FE colleges to report on graduates' destinations five years after graduation.
- Encourage businesses to publish data on the diversity of their board memberships.
- Set up a minister-led commission to examine gender disparity in the Welsh workforce, such as under-representation and pay gaps.
- Support LGBT+ people in accessing employment and trans* individuals in returning to work after transition.
- Endeavour to make all work programmes in Wales accessible for people with disabilities.



Creating a Transport, Digital and Social Infrastructure fit for the Modern World

For too long, Wales' weak digital and physical infrastructure has held back our economy, but without considering the social fabric of our communities, there is a risk that even if we attract growth, it won't reach all of our people.

Years of under-investment have left Wales at a competitive disadvantage.

We will set out a 10-year rolling capital investment plan, leveraging in investment using the Welsh Development Bank to deliver:

- Major infrastructure developments to enable our economy to grow.
- Public transport that connects our communities.
- Mobile and digital communications fit for the modern world.

Infrastructure is central to our economy - whether that is through large projects employing Welsh workers, or innovations to transport goods around the country. We will:

- Press the UK Government to publish a long-term timetable for the full electrification of Welsh railway lines including the North Wales Coast line.
- Press ahead with the full electrification of the South Wales Valleys Lines.
- Encourage further private sector investment in rail freight terminals and rail-connected distribution parks to shift more freight from road to rail, with access to major ports to attract inward investment and help Welsh businesses to export.



Transport Infrastructure

Public transport connects us to jobs, services and family. With more and more people commuting, efficient public transport is vital. Being connected to the rest of Wales, especially in rural areas, can mean everything to a local community, its people and its economy.

In the next Wales and Borders Rail Franchise we will:

- Specify speed and capacity improvements for commuter services, and develop a rolling-stock strategy to deliver a more comfortable, accessible fleet of trains.
- Seek to protect rail routes from Wales to Chester, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham, and keep the Marches lines in the Welsh franchise.
- Improve services on the Heart of Wales line especially on weekends, and support the Community Rail Hub project.
- Investigate the creation of additional routes such as from South Wales to Bristol and the South West.
- Explore a fairer 'per mile' ticket cost for most rail journeys in Wales through the specification of the next Wales and Borders Rail Franchise.
- Commission a feasibility study into reinstating the rail links between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen to link up with the already existing network.
- Introduce carnet-style multi-buy ticketing, and part-time and off-peak season tickets to reduce the cost of part-time commuting.
- Work to re-open smaller stations, such as Carno, and introduce new stations in communities with poor connectivity through the South Wales Metro.
- Remove the *Y Gerallt* Gymro Business Class loco-hauled service and replace it with standard express.
- Make it easier to combine rail and cycle travel, including taking your bike on the train.

We will also:

- Create Passenger Transport Authorities, based in the communities they serve, to deliver more affordable, accessible and integrated transport services:
 - In North Wales, to deliver improved services, focused around the A55 corridor, and develop a North Wales Metro with links to Chester, Manchester and Liverpool.
 - In Mid Wales to improve public transport connectivity into regional hubs and market towns.
 - In South Wales to deliver the South Wales Metro and expand it to include the Swansea Valleys
- Re-regulate bus services to improve coverage of routes in rural and poorer areas of Wales.
- Introduce an all-Wales 'Oystercard' on bus services.
- Extend our Youth Concessionary Fare Scheme to more young people, for example to all full-time students.
- Develop a comprehensive aviation strategy for Wales and scrap the wasteful Anglesey-Cardiff Air Link.
- Ensure all major new developments include provision for sustainable, integrated public transport, including access to walking and cycle routes.
- Help make community transport more sustainable with three year budgeting and support.
- Ensure public transport is accessible to those with disabilities through the franchising system, introduce visible and audible real time information at bus stops, and introduce a concessionary bus pass for those with mental disabilities to bring buses into line with the eligibility for a Disabled Person's Railcard.



We will work to bring a better balance between all the users of our streets, encouraging active travel alongside smart interventions in our road network to improve connectivity across Wales.

We will:

- Campaign to abolish tolls on the Severn Bridge once the debts are paid off.
- Improve the infrastructure to bring the A55 up to standard, ensuring junctions and hard shoulders are fit for purpose.
- Oppose the "Black Route" development of the M4 relief road and implement alternative approaches to tackle congestion in South-East Wales such as improving the distributor network around Newport and invest in public transport.
- Work with local government to roll out 20mph zones in residential areas.
- Make a commitment to teaching every school child to safely cycle.
- Create an active travel fund to encourage the development of new active travel infrastructure across Wales, and make progress towards a target of £10 per person per year cycling investment.
- Encourage walking and cycling by providing support for route development and education programmes.
- Abolish tolls on the Cleddau Bridge and trunk the full length of the A477.



Digital Infrastructure

Digital infrastructure is vital for businesses and central to the social and cultural infrastructure of Wales. To ensure digital innovation in Wales, we will:

- Use Welsh Government resources and land to deliver comprehensive mobile phone coverage.
- Hold crisis negotiations with BT Openreach and demand a delivery timetable that ensures every Welsh business hub and park, hospital, and school has superfast broadband delivered by 2017.
- Ensure that the Access Broadband Cymru scheme is widely advertised and improved.
- Ensure planning rules support the development of digital infrastructure.
- Support targeted, local, face-to-face training schemes for businesses and individuals to tackle digital exclusion.
- Encourage the spread of free Wi-Fi in town centres through collaboration between local government and industry, such as has happened in Monmouth.



Empowering our Cities, Towns and Villages

Decisions over local communities are centralised in Cardiff Bay. We will ensure that whatever the size of your community, you will be empowered to set your own priorities, lead your own regeneration, and protect the social infrastructure that keeps your community alive.

We will:

- Give local authorities a statutory duty for economic development, along with tools such as the local retention of a proportion of business rate income to incentivise it.
- Establish High Street Wales to support local communities by sharing best practice and supporting the creation of Business Improvement Districts and other forms of collaboration such as Traders' Associations.
- Scrap the Enterprise Zone policy of Welsh Government which has failed to deliver.
- Introduce new Growth Zones, managed by Local Enterprise Partnerships, to provide tailored support for businesses and innovation.
- Support City Deal and City Region initiatives, putting them on a statutory footing where practical.
- Make our Market Towns the hubs of regional economies by ensuring they are served by transport and digital infrastructure.
- Develop crisis management approaches to help local economies cope with local economic shocks, such as the closure of a major employer.
- Create a Reoccupation Relief Scheme for business rates, to encourage businesses to take on empty shops.
- Develop networks of recommended advisors through the Welsh Development Bank's small business arm in each region to provide tailored professional business support.

Save Our Steel

Britain's steel industry is facing a perfect storm of a flood of cheap imports from China, reducing global demand, and high electricity costs and business rates - these have contributed to Tata Steel's decision to sell off its' UK assets, putting at risk plants in Port Talbot, Newport, Trostre, and Shotton.

The Port Talbot plant is the crucible of the British steel industry. It is a proud beacon of our industrial heritage and part of the reason we are a world leader in manufacturing. Wales needs a steel industry - it is of utter strategic importance that we are able to produce our own, high-quality steel.

In October, the Emergency Steel Summit, steel employers and trade unions tabled five 'key asks' to save the industry: helping with high energy costs, avoiding gold-plating regulations, supporting local content in major projects, introducing fairer businesses rates, and backing EU-level anti-dumping action.

As this document goes to print, Tata Steel is seeking a buyer for its plants. The UK Government must be willing to step in as an 'investor of last resort' in order to make sure that it can be passed as a going concern to a new investor and prevent a gap in operation. We must do all we can to avoid the furnaces going quiet at Port Talbot.

We will:

- Take immediate action on removing plant and machinery from business rates;
- Produce guidance for supporting local steel through procurement, setting high thresholds for quality and environmental impact of steel used in Welsh Government and Welsh local authority projects;
- Develop a sustainability strategy for the future;
- Produce a financial support package for the plants, designed to taper off as the plants become sustainable;
- Lobby at the EU level to strengthen anti-dumping measures, scrap the lesser duty rule, and oppose Market Economy Status for China - all vital steps to take to save the steel industry and give them a level playing field on which to compete; and
- Build an investment plan for Port Talbot so that it can compete on quality and product differentiation, and create an Urban Development Company for Port Talbot to diversify the economy in the area.

Open for Business

An open economy is a strong economy. We need to nurture a business environment in Wales that looks beyond our borders to new markets and new opportunities, in order to unlock economic growth. We must encourage every business to look outside their current comfort zone - whether that means selling to the other side of the world or the next valley along.

We will:

- Produce a clear export strategy for Wales to match private sector ingenuity with public sector support.
- Task the Welsh Development Bank with building international links and supporting companies to get the best deal with exporting.
- Make accessing international support less cumbersome, reducing the paperwork and guaranteeing businesses quicker decisions.
- Charge growth zones, city regions and other bodies with identifying potential exporters and linking them up with potential supporters.
- Develop a Welsh Trade Show access programme with match-funding to attend shows in emerging and established markets.
- Introduce supply chain buddying programmes, where large companies engaged in exporting help SMEs in their supply chain find new overseas customers.
- Improve business representation in Brussels, with a business representative at Wales House.



Our Vision for Education



“

I don't want my son taught in an over-crowded classroom. I trust teachers to know what is best for my child and I want them to have the time, resources and freedom to be able to do their jobs properly.

”

- Kate, Cardiff

“

We know that a good education sets a child up for life. Their achievements, skills, even their future happiness, hinge on giving children the very best start in life. We will place our trust in educators and make sure that teachers have the freedom to teach and leaders have the ability to lead their schools to success.

"We also have to make sure education is accessible for all, meaning our further and higher education systems have to be there to support people of all ages and build on research to help our economy grow.



”

- Aled Roberts, lead candidate for North Wales

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1 Reduce infant class sizes to 25

Class sizes in Wales are some of the highest in the developed world, yet evidence shows that children do better in smaller classes, particularly at an early age. We would introduce a 'Class Sizes Reduction Fund' to ensure that infant classes normally contain no more than 25 pupils, to give teachers the time to focus on a child's individual needs, which we believe is central to raising standards.

2 Expand the Pupil Premium

We believe every child deserves a great start in life and are determined to make sure our education system nurtures the best in everyone. Wales performs worse than the rest of the UK in international rankings, schools are underfunded and too many children are failing to learn the skills they need.

We have already secured over £282m for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, through our Welsh Pupil Premium, giving over 65,000 children each year the extra support they need to get ahead in life. The Welsh Liberal Democrats will continue to increase this funding to close the gap between children from poorer and wealthier backgrounds from the early years upwards and ensure schools are properly funded.

3 Increase access to university

The Labour Government's tuition fees policy is draining our universities of funding and leaving students without the support they need. We recognise that it is living costs, not tuition fees, which are the biggest barrier to people applying to go to university. We will introduce a 'Student Living Support Grant' for all Welsh domiciled pupils, no matter where they study.

Fact: International rankings show that schools in Wales perform worst in the UK in reading, maths, and science.

(Source: OECD Programme for International Student Assessment)

Support in the Early Years

Education is the key to social mobility and unlocking opportunity. Too many people's life chances are decided at birth rather than by their own endeavours. We believe every child deserves a great start in life and are determined to make sure our education system nurtures the best in everyone. We need an education system which helps children flourish and empowers pupils and parents. Everyone should reach their full potential; we will not let a poor education system hold back our children and our country.

Helping children get on in the early years has the greatest impact on their overall life chances. We need a comprehensive system of early years support that is focused on the needs of children and their families and aims to prepare every child for a successful future.

We will **deliver smaller infant class sizes**, reducing the size cap for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes from 30 to 25, so teachers can devote their time to giving every child the support and attention they need and deserve. Smaller class sizes will mean teachers have a lower workload per class, so can spend more time with pupils, more time innovating, and more time teaching. We would work to ensure that infant classes normally contain no more than 25 pupils, prioritising the largest classes first. This would be done by investing in more teachers, to give them the time to focus on a child's individual needs which we believe is central to raising standards. We would establish an Infant Class Size Reduction Grant of £42m over the next Assembly term, with funding prioritised towards the largest classes.

We want to support parents with flexible childcare provision, which is essential for getting parents back into work and ensuring the best outcomes for the child. This means more household income, more women in the workforce, and a stronger society.

We will:

- Offer 10 hours a week of free, quality childcare to all working parents from the end of paid parental leave (nine months) until their child is two.
- Offer 10 hours a week of free, quality childcare for all children aged two to three by removing childcare from Flying Start and reinvesting this funding in more flexible, universal provision.
- Increase the statutory duty on local authorities to provide a funded early education place for three to four year olds to fifteen hours a week.
- Introduce a Qualified Early Years Teacher qualification and promote Apprenticeships in Early Years and Childcare.
- Increase access to parenting programmes, ensure programmes and support promote relationship building and bonding, and support parents to develop their child's early language skills in the home.
- Develop training through Flying Start for health advisors and midwives to recognise signs of neglect.
- Require all nursery staff to complete an officially recognised paediatric first aid course.
- Promote the use of community buildings, leisure centres and school premises to increase the level of childcare provision in Wales including wrap-around care.
- Support children's opportunity to play in public places, and make it easier to close off roads temporarily for play.

Freedom for Schools

Teachers can transform the lives of children but too often they don't feel empowered to deal with the challenges they face. All teachers should have more freedom and support to deliver the best possible education to our children.

Teachers deliver the best results when they are given flexibility and support, not smothered by bureaucracy. We will provide more freedom for teachers and greater flexibility to our schools. It is time to let teachers **teach** and let leaders **lead**.

We will allow schools which have demonstrated key values of leadership, innovation and improvement to **gain new powers and autonomy** from local and central government, providing they maintain a demonstrable track record of excellence. Democratically-elected local authorities should still be able to manage the provision of school places across the areas they serve and have the ability to intervene if necessary.

Teachers can teach at their best when they have the freedom to innovate. Teachers and experts know better than politicians what should be included in the school curriculum, and where they need flexibility. We will establish an **Educational Standards Authority to set the curriculum content in Wales**. Ministerial powers will set the broad overall direction, but it will be independent of government interference and run by experts in the field.

We would set direction for the ESA to develop a 'curriculum for life' covering issues such as financial literacy; physical and mental first aid; political education and citizenship; coding; and age-appropriate sex and relationship education, tackling issues of gender identity, sexuality, consent and healthy relationships.



World-Class Standards

There is much to be proud of in our schools but too many children are failing to learn the skills they need; gaps in attainment between rich and poor are too wide. We cannot fail our children - especially those who need the most help.

We are proud to have secured over £282 million for the Pupil Premium to close the gap between children from poorer and wealthier backgrounds. We will go further by continuing to expand the Pupil Premium and increase the Early Years Pupil Premium every year to reach £1000 per eligible child by the end of the next Assembly.

We want the highest standards in our schools, and will ensure that every child has a thorough grasp of the basics. We want schools to have flexibility and freedom, but parents and pupils also need to know that the school curriculum will cover the essentials, and their teachers will be skilled educators who inspire a love of learning. Wales is the traditional land of education, taking pride in our teachers - we want to develop the status of the profession, support and nurture teachers in their work, and so drive up standards in every school.

We will:

- Establish a nationwide high attainment programme.
- Enhance individual pupil monitoring so schools report on how they support each pupil individually, and automatically place schools which do not adequately support the development of all pupils into special measures.
- Set a clear ambition to eradicate child illiteracy and innumeracy by 2025.
- Introduce a Talented Head Teachers programme to draw top leaders to the schools where they are most needed.
- Establish a Welsh Academy of Leadership to ensure we have excellent leaders in Welsh schools, commission an up-to-date Teachers' Qualifications Framework and set up a new, national scheme to deliver cutting-edge continuous professional development for teachers.
- Introduce closely monitored targets for the uptake of modern foreign languages.
- Expand the remit of the Education Workforce Council to include accreditation of initial teacher training and continuous professional development, and introduce elected representation from the teaching profession.
- Conduct an annual teachers' workload survey.
- Ensure that the National Youth Musical Ensembles are provided with the necessary resources to thrive.
- Support schools in Wales to establish a Parent Teacher Association and establishing a National Parent Forum, as in Scotland.
- Expand access to educational psychologists by establishing national guidance based on the needs of children and eliminating the current quota-based system.
- Set July as compulsory holiday between school years, enabling Welsh families to book more affordable holidays at home and abroad.
- Abolish regional consortia.

Schools should be welcoming environments for all students, regardless of their background - particularly their gender, race, and sexual orientation. Education should prepare our students for the wider world and develop children into responsible adults.

We will:

- Require all schools in Wales to tackle homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, racist and ableist bullying and discrimination, and to establish a tolerant and inclusive environment for all pupils.
- Prevent violence against women in Wales with a 'whole education' approach to SRE, violence prevention, and challenging gender stereotypes and early sexualisation, working with schools to promote positive body image and widespread understanding of sexual consent law.
- Embed gender and sexuality awareness training in all PGCE, Master of Education and Careers Service training to address gender stereotypes and help create gender aware learning environments in Welsh schools.
- Ensure schools are a safe and productive environment for all pupils by rolling-out a programme of Additional Learning Needs-testing across Wales, promoting the use and teaching of British Sign Language, and recognising "play" within the definition of "learning".
- Ensuring early years staff have specific training in supporting children with disabilities with new childcare provision adapted to meet the needs of disabled children.



Skills for Work, Ready for Life

Education provides our children with the skills they need for life. Compulsory education might be followed by an apprenticeship, Further Education or Higher Education. Welsh Liberal Democrats are committed to lifelong learning, including ways to help the existing workforce upskill, retrain or develop their talents in new ways through adult education and work based learning. To grow our economy, we need to grow the skill base of the whole population. Further education must be an equal part of education provision in Wales.

We will:

- Support vocational education by enabling learners to mix and match vocational and academic learning.
- Develop prospectuses for business so employers can find new apprentices or employees, or upskill their existing workforce.
- Establish a placement scheme for businesspeople to teach part-time in colleges.
- Create a National Cyber College to promote online courses.
- Earmark Community First funding to facilitate access to FE.
- Establish a programme to improve the skills and employability prospects of people over 50 who are not in employment, education or training.
- Establish a cross-party commission to examine adult education and skills in Wales.



We believe Higher Education should be available to all on the basis of ability. Social background, age, geography or financial resources should not be barriers. We propose to shift the focus of government assistance for students from tuition fee debt relief to maintenance support as a fairer and more effective way of eliminating finance as a barrier to participation in Higher Education.

We will:

- Introduce a Student Living Support Grant for all Welsh students registered for a first undergraduate degree at a UK university, including part-time students, payable on top of the existing means-tested Assembly Learning Grant, replacing the Tuition Fee Grant.
- Require universities to adopt a 'Fair Access Agreement' outlining measures to broaden access and improve student retention.
- Pay the full tuition fees of care leavers.
- Protect hardship funding for the most vulnerable students.
- Introduce an Employability Enhancement Bursary to support students on postgraduate courses at universities in Wales and appropriate work placements that emphasise employability skills.
- Protect funding for Higher Education in Wales, and increase funding for HEFCW.



Our Vision for Health and Social Care



“

My late husband was recently in hospital. I saw that some staff were so overworked that they struggled to give basic care, like giving him a glass of water when needed. I'm proud of our NHS, but the staff shouldn't be put under pressure like that – it is obvious, something is really wrong.

”

- Janet, Swansea

“

Wales' NHS has been used as a political football for too long. We would establish an independent NHS Commission to look at how our future health services are delivered.

For too long patients' views have been side-lined. Our plans for the NHS have your views at heart, which means more nurses on our wards, better mental health services and prompt appointments with your GP at a time that suits you.



”

- Dr Victor Babu, candidate for Clwyd West

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1 Ensure there are more nurses on Welsh hospital wards

Nurses in Wales have more patients to care for than any other part of the UK. We believe nurses must have the time they need to care for our loved ones, so that patients receive the treatment they deserve.

Kirsty Williams' More Nurses Bill, which recently became law, makes Wales the first country in Europe to introduce safe staffing levels. We will build on this success by expanding this law to include maternity wards, mental health wards and community care teams.

2 Improve access to your GP

Too often people in Wales cannot get an appointment with their GP. We believe that patients should be guaranteed the best treatment, in the right place, at the right time to meet their health needs. We will invest £10m in a GP Access Fund to improve access to general practice including through extended opening hours and innovative ways of providing care services.

3 End mental health discrimination

For too long mental health has been stigmatised and ignored. Waiting times for young people with mental ill-health in Wales are getting worse under Labour. We will legislate to put mental health care on an equal footing with physical health in our NHS and reduce waiting times.

Fact: Nearly 40% of people say it is difficult to see their GP. (Source: National Survey for Wales health report)

Building a Health and Social Care system for the Future

Our party will always be guided by the founding principles of the NHS - providing free care, when you need it, regardless of your ability to pay. We want to build a health and social care system for the future. It must provide care at the right place and at the right time; work for the changing needs of our changing society; and centre on dignity, compassion, and choice for individuals. Community-based services should be maintained wherever possible and wherever there is a clinical case for that service to remain in the community. We understand that people are waiting too long to access their services and to get the help they need - we will have a relentless focus on driving down waiting times.

The future of the NHS is too important for party politics. We need to look at what services will meet the needs of our population, where these services should be, how they should be staffed and how they would be funded. We will set up an **all-party and non-party Commission to ensure Wales has an NHS that is clinically and financially sustainable, and to secure a historic and long-term plan for health and social care**. The Commission, led by experts for the benefit of the public, will stop politicians playing political games with our NHS.

We must encourage effective collaboration and break down boundaries between health care and social care services. Patients suffer when they are simply passed around different services. **We need more cooperation between health and social services, but we do not support mass top-down re-organisation** imposed by Ministers in Cardiff Bay.

We will:

- Support local initiatives that bring frontline services closer together and avoid duplication.
- Promote joint projects with a single management and budgeting structure.
- Permit health and social care providers in a local area to form a single integrated health organisation, ensuring any integration must be led by patients and communities, and delivered jointly by Local Health Boards and Local Authorities.



We will develop a national workforce and training strategy, encompassing all professional groups that work within the NHS and social care, to ensure that staff are deployed and trained effectively. We will tackle urgent recruitment and retention issues, ensuring that high-quality undergraduate education, postgraduate training, and continuing professional development are priorities.

Most people's experience of the NHS is their local GP, or the nurses and support staff in hospitals or who visit them at home or work in community clinics. Easier access to care in GP surgeries and closer to home is better for patients and will also help reduce pressure on hospitals, A&E departments and ambulances.

We will:

- Deliver safe staffing levels across the NHS, putting more nurses on hospital wards and in our communities.
- Make it easier to see your GP by:
 - Introducing an Access to GPs Scheme, funding GP practices to make sure people can get the appointments they need.
 - Making it easier to register at a GP's practice near where you work
 - Develop alternative ways, using modern technology, to connect GPs and patients.
- Supporting GP federations and clusters being given real decision-making powers with delegated budgets.
- Work with Westminster for a unified list of GPs to ease shortages and improve recruitment.



There when you're in need

The NHS is your best friend when you're in need - there for you, no matter what happens. We have to make sure the NHS is at the forefront of medical advances, including for rare conditions. All groups in society should be helped to access the care they need.

We will:

- Develop an all-Wales Individual Patient Funding Requests panel and remove the 'exceptionality' hurdle which prevents many patients' access to drugs that their clinician thinks could help them.
- Put the Welsh NHS at the forefront of medical advances, in particular into stratified medicines, by extending the Health Technologies Fund to support the take up of new medicines and establish a new Office of Life Sciences.
- Ensure we respect the wishes of people at the end of life by ensuring proper palliative care and advanced care planning.
- Develop an NHS 'student guarantee' to support students away at university.
- Ensure the needs of patients with sensory loss are met in the NHS and fund eye clinic liaison officers in each LHB and the Hear to Help project.
- Ensure members of the armed forces community receive the priority medical treatment to which they are entitled.
- Establish a Gender Identity Clinic, train GPs to better support trans* individuals, and develop a consistent all-Wales healthcare access pathway for the trans* community.

Cancer causes more than one in four deaths, yet Wales is the only UK nation without a cancer awareness campaign. There are currently huge variations in cancer care within Wales. To improve standards of cancer care, we will:

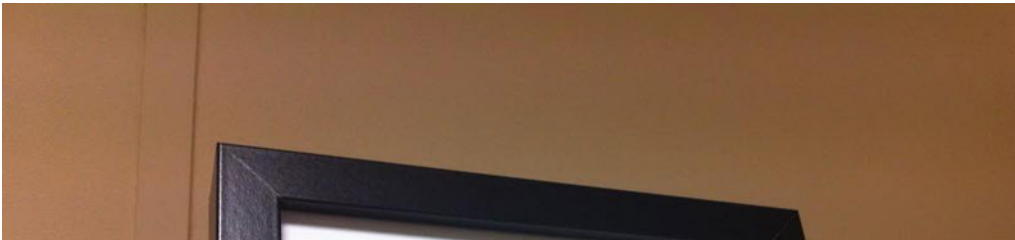
- Close the gap in cancer care between the best and the rest.
- Establish a national cancer awareness campaign.
- Appoint a National Cancer Director to fully implement the National Cancer Plan.
- Bring chemotherapy closer to people's homes through mobile units and community hospitals.

We acknowledge that many citizens with autism and other learning disabilities are struggling to get the services they need - we will address this in new legislation.

Mental Health

One in four people experience a mental health problem in any given year. For too long, mental health has been stigmatised and ignored. We strongly believe mental health should be taken as seriously as physical health and are determined to give it the equal attention it deserves and commit to ending mental health discrimination.

We will:

- Legislate for parity of esteem between mental and physical health.
 - Expand liaison psychiatry services which provide immediate access to specialist mental health support for people being treated for physical health problems.
 - Seek over the course of an Assembly term to increase the relative size of mental health spending to match the needs of the population.
 - Set waiting time targets and invest in access to therapies such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Counselling, and Interpersonal Psychotherapy.
 - Reduce waiting times for children waiting for an appointment with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
 - Strengthen the Crisis Care Concordat and improve follow-up support for people attending A&E after self-harm or a suicide attempt.
 - Ensure seamless support for veterans and emergency service personnel, including through schemes such as 'Change Step' which offer peer mentoring, and offering treatment within a maximum of 18 weeks from referral.
 - Support community services and volunteers working to combat loneliness, particularly in later life.
 - Set up Mental Health Taskforce in Government, to get the whole of Welsh Government to combine efforts and pool resources.
- 
- A photograph showing the bottom-left corner of a dark, possibly black or dark brown, wooden picture frame. The frame is set against a light-colored, textured wall, likely off-white or light beige. The lighting is soft, and the focus is on the frame's corner.



Care that Works for our Older Citizens

The proportion of the Welsh population over 65 is expected to rise to nearly 26% by 2033.

While older people are an asset to Wales, contributing to our economy and society, an aging population undoubtedly presents challenges for our health service. As people age, they tend to become more susceptible to health problems caused by disease, disability, social isolation and falls.

We will establish **a new model of healthcare for older people** by:

- Tasking GP practices to lead multiagency care teams and virtual wards to identify people at risk of needing unscheduled care and pro-actively manage their care.
- Supporting older people following emergency hospitalisation through care co-ordinators, helping them receive the support required to live at home.
- Supporting new investment in cottage hospitals and community care, designed to ensure flexible capacity.
- Training clinicians in specific care for elderly people and tackling age-related illnesses.
- Making dementia awareness and care training mandatory for healthcare professionals and running a sustained public awareness campaign.
- Setting a target for health boards to improve dementia diagnosis rates by a minimum of 5% per year until they achieve a diagnosis rate of 75%.



Making Social Care Work for You

Social care should provide dignity and independence. Care services should be defined and shaped by the user, not 'done to' the user. We need greater proportions of care to be provided at home (where appropriate) or in smaller-scale local hospitals and care homes. We will:

- Ensure that local authorities are no longer using fifteen minutes for care slots as it is simply not long enough to provide the care that vulnerable individuals need.
- Maintain the Intermediate Care Fund.
- Introduce a Carers' Well-being Fund to provide additional breaks for carers.
- Work with industry to raise the status of care workers - we will work with the sector to ensure that staff are paid for travelling, promote the living wage, and end the use of zero hour contracts.
- Ensure local authorities fast-track applications for social care for terminally-ill people, their families and carers.
- Develop public information on the role of carers, and support carers seeking to balance work, education or training with caring.
- Raise the capital allowances limit for social care.



Public Health and Prevention

It is better for patients and for the NHS if we keep people healthy in the first place, rather than waiting until people develop illnesses and need treatment.

This means a focus on prevention and early intervention to avert possible crisis and improving public health, promoting healthy living habits, and ensuring that everyone has the chance at a long and healthy life.

We will:

- Abolish Public Health Wales and transfer responsibility and funding for public health to local government.
- Require health impact assessments on policy decisions taken at all levels.
- Integrate planning of health and social services with transportation planning, so lack of transport does not prevent people from accessing care.
- Develop social prescribing and 'insulation on prescription' to link up the NHS with the fuel poverty agenda and other schemes.
- Develop an all-Wales emergency transport plan and invest in transport and emergency services, including the air ambulance service.
- Introduce 'street triage' schemes at pressure points when there's likely to be a high demand for health care on the street (e.g. Saturday nights) with professionals such as nurses working with police on the front line.
- Ensure A&Es have co-located, primary care, out-of-hours services, to tackle less urgent cases, and look to support and develop the number of minor injury units across Wales.
- Develop a National Non-Communicable Disease Strategy aimed at preventing premature NCD deaths such as heart disease by 20% by 2025.
- Ensure pharmacies play a full role at the heart of public health and in their local communities.
- Support systematic screening programmes, where appropriate and cost-effective.
- Focus resources on youth smoking cessation services and tackling illegal tobacco.
- Ensure schools have access to a nurse, appoint good health champions and identify a local pharmacist to oversee issues relating to medicines taken by pupils.
- Tackle the obesity crisis in Wales, through promoting walking and cycling, expanding 20mph zones, and using some of the proceeds of the 'sugar tax' to supplement public health budgets for community projects.
- Protect an individual's free right to use electronic cigarettes where they like by opposing Labour's ban on e-cigs in public places.
- Introduce a national sexually transmitted infection screening programme and develop a Hepatitis C elimination plan.
- Introduce a new vaccination programme against HPV for men and boys, subject to a vaccine available for commissioning at a cost-effective price.
- Make Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis available to those at high risk of contracting HIV.

Empowering Patients

Reablement is about helping people to do things for themselves; to maximise their ability to live life as independently as possible. People set their own goals and are supported by a team from a range of backgrounds to achieve them. It is a liberal approach, focused on enabling individuals to get on in life, championing their freedom, dignity and well-being. Welsh Liberal Democrats would embed reablement at the heart of our approach in Government to health and social care and will:

- Introduce a National Reablement Steering Group to provide strategic leadership.
- Develop training and resources for carers to support reablement processes.
- Provide patients with a mix of information, action plans, structured education and training, and access to specialist advice from trained health care professionals and volunteers or through online or face-to-face peer support when needed.
- Support patients who need it by linking them to an independent advocate.
- Ensure consistent self-referral access across Wales to health professionals such as physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

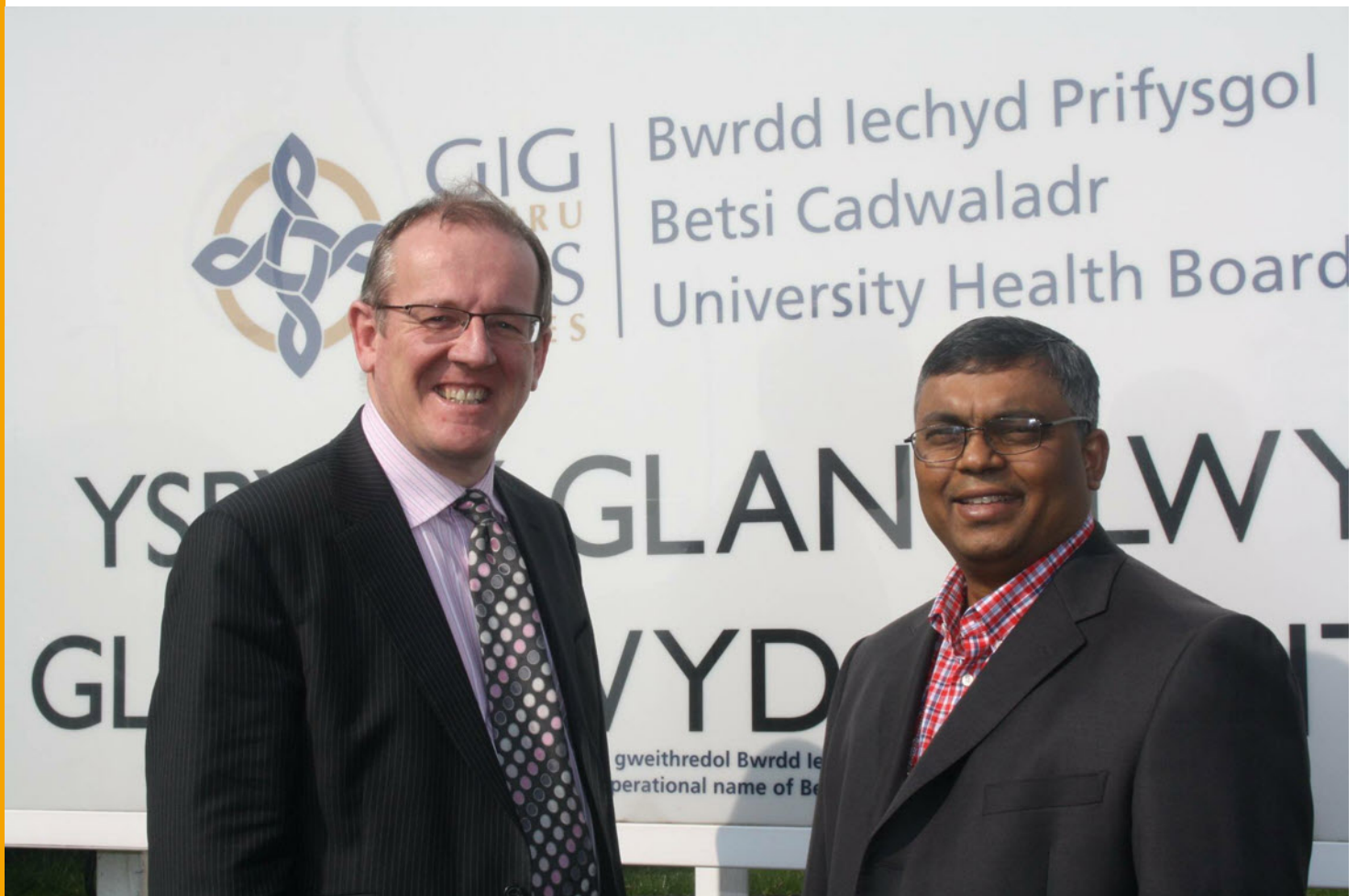


Monitoring and Assuring Quality

Wales needs a robust, proactive and strong system of inspections to assure quality in our hospitals but the current system does not provide that. Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board, the only one in special measures in Wales, has suffered scandal after scandal in recent months - we will take action to make sure such horrendous scandals as Tawel Fan ever happen again. We need a hospital inspection system that keeps the people of Wales safe, puts patients at the heart of everything the NHS does; and ensures the people of Wales have trust in our NHS.

We will:

- Scrap Health Inspectorate Wales and establish a new health watchdog fully independent of Government with a Chief Inspector for Hospitals and Health Care.
- Introduce clinically-led and peer-reviewed inspection, with significant patient input, as in Scotland.
- Properly resource assistance to Community Health Councils so they can fully represent the interests of patients and the public in the Welsh NHS.
- Introduce a free whistleblowing hotline, available solely for NHS staff in Wales.
- Revolutionise the use of ICT in the health service, including developing new software and apps which give patients greater control over their records and interactions with the health service.
- Trial new Patient-Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) which measure real experiences of care.





Our Vision for Housing



“

I'm 28, work full time on a reasonable salary and I'm struggling to save up for a deposit. I look at my parents' generation, and everyone could afford a home at my age. My generation have to delay our plans, whether that is starting a family or putting down roots, in a way our parents wouldn't have ever considered. Some days it seems like I'll never have a home of my own, because I'm paying so much in rent and fees.

”

- Emma, Cardiff

“

For too long Wales hasn't been seen as a place where people can fulfil their dreams and ambitions: we need to change that. We are the only party that will make sure an extra 20,000 affordable houses are built in Wales by 2020, while also introducing support to help people achieve their dream of owning their own home.

”



- Peter Black, lead candidate for
South Wales West

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1 Fund 20,000 extra affordable homes by 2021

For decades, successive Conservative and Labour governments have not built enough homes, leaving us with a crippling undersupply of housing while demand for social housing has soared. We believe that every person should be able to provide a secure environment for their family. We will set a target of 20,000 affordable homes, increasing the Social Housing Grant from £35 million to £75 million per year to provide funding.

2 Help first time buyers get on the ladder

Saving for a deposit and securing a loan is a huge barrier before even hoping to buy a first home. We will help first-time buyers to get on the property ladder through an innovative new 'Rent to Own' model. First-time buyers will steadily build up a share in their home through monthly payments equivalent to rent until they own the property outright after 30 years, just like a normal mortgage. We will aim to deliver at least 2,500 Rent to Own homes over an Assembly term.

3 Protect and empower tenants, especially those who are vulnerable

Tenants should not expect poor standards, poor maintenance, or weaker rights than homeowners. We will take action to protect vulnerable people in the private housing sector, with a cap on letting agency fees and rent increases, a dedicated housing tribunal with the power to mediate on disputes, and more information for tenants and homeowners on their rights and responsibilities.

Fact: The average house price is 6.6 times the average annual salary in Wales. (Source: Office of National Statistics)

More Houses, More Homes

For people to live fulfilled lives, they need a decent home, at a price they can afford. But that simple ambition is out of reach for many, and getting further away. Government has an essential role to play - be it in enabling people to buy their first home, ensuring an adequate supply of affordable housing or making sure private rented homes are up to the mark.

Seventeen years of Welsh Labour in Government has left thousands of people waiting over a decade for a home. Independent analysis shows we need to build an average 5,100 non-market and affordable homes every year - but the Welsh Labour Government only aims to build 10,000 new affordable homes over the entire Assembly term. Meanwhile, many older people are in homes that are no longer right for them and would like to move but don't have suitable options.

To tackle this problem we need to incentivise house building and find new sources of capital for social housing providers. We need to offer more support to small local builders in securing finance and in overcoming barriers they may face to development. We need to enable Local Authorities and Housing Associations to build many more homes.

We will:

- Set a target to build 20,000 affordable homes in Wales by 2021.
- Within six months of the Assembly election set a target for the number of affordable homes to be built in Wales during the Assembly term, and report on progress each year.
- Ensure local authorities develop compulsory accessible housing registers and provide advice on building disability friendly homes.
- Establish a new Rent to Own model where monthly payments steadily accrue the tenant a percentage stake in the property, owning it outright after 30 years, and aim to deliver at least 2,500 Rent to Own homes over the Assembly term.
- Introduce a new Help to Rent scheme to provide government-backed tenancy deposit loans for first-time renters under 30.
- Develop a national Empty Homes Strategy.
- Allow social housing grant to be used to renovate disused properties for social housing, so that additional homes can be brought into use and local construction markets stimulated.

Good planning is essential to delivering sustainable communities. With effective planning rules, we can ensure the new homes we build are well connected to public transport, resilient to the threats of climate change, safe, warm, secure, and situated in real communities. We will work with councils to ensure they think long-term.

We will:

- Improve housing needs assessments to ensure they respond to demand and take account of local factors such as the future of the Welsh language, price signals, and demand from different kinds of household, including high-quality shared accommodation for young people.
- Make provision so that all areas are planning for the needs of older people with age-appropriate housing and to ensure appropriate sized housing units are available in each area for those who wish to downsize their accommodation to one that is a better fit for their needs.
- Facilitate the replacement of industrial-style agricultural buildings with sensitive and appropriately designed housing.
- Facilitate the use of space above shops for much needed housing and development of town centre communities.
- Take a more flexible approach to change of use where retail or business premises may be changed into much needed housing in town centres.
- Ensure new social housing is built to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and that at least 10% are built to full wheelchair accessibility standards.
- Ensure all councils have an accessible housing register, so they know where their wheelchair accessible, adaptable and adapted homes are, and how many they have.



Protecting People in their Own Home

More and more people and families are renting in the private sector for the long term. Private renting is an important part of the housing market and most landlords treat their tenants with respect, but too many people are left powerless against the unscrupulous. Tenants should not have to put up with poor-standards, poor-maintenance, and weaker rights than homeowners.

We will:

- Replace letting agency fees on tenants with a schedule of set charges for specified services to ensure cost transparency.
- Ensure that for the duration of tenancy, rent increases can only increase in line with CPI, so that the sector is an affordable and flexible option for all.
- Model the impact of introducing a Business Rate category for HMOs and landlords who own more than 3 properties, subject to Valuation Office Agency regulations, which will incentivise improved energy efficiency whilst providing additional income that councils can offer to landlords to improve their properties.
- Use new planning guidance that requires HMOs containing between 3 and 6 residents to apply for planning permission to develop policies that improve the sustainability of communities containing large numbers of such properties.
- Enable council tenants to take control of their services such as repairs, grounds maintenance and security.
- Introduce a charter setting out obligations for landlords and letting agents under the new registration and licensing process.
- Develop an independent online resource for tenants and homeowners acting as a one stop advice and information portal.
- Give the Residential Property Tribunal the power to act as a housing court dealing with challenges to rent increases and to adjudicate and mediate disputes on fitness for human habitation, succession rights, failure to supply contracts, and discrimination.
- Update the Wales Housing Survey so as to better inform government policy.
- Commission research that looks at equality issues on evictions, work with landlords to ensure energy rating targets are met, and work with students' unions and tenants groups to ensure tenants know their rights.
- Continue to improve enforcement of standards and training of landlords to ensure better housing quality.
- Expand the remit of Welsh Tenants to include representation for private rented sector tenants and fund them accordingly.
- Prioritise and maintain Supporting People Funding and Homelessness Prevention.
- Establish publically funded safe houses for LGBT+ victims of abuse or those who face homelessness as a result of being LGBT+.
- Protect refugee services' funding and ensure a sustainable funding model for refuge and other independent specialist domestic and sexual violence services.
- Issue guidance classing trans* individuals as 'vulnerable' for the purposes of allocating social housing and ensure full equality monitoring and customer profiling questions on gender identity are asked.

Affordable Warmth

Helping individuals to make their homes more energy efficient is crucial both to tackling climate change and poverty in Wales. Going green must be an option for everyone, not just those who can afford it. Energy prices in Britain are lower than the EU average but our bills are higher because our homes are so poorly insulated. Around 30 per cent of Welsh households are estimated to be in fuel poverty. By lifting people out of fuel poverty, their health, educational achievement and wellbeing can be improved.

We will:

- Legislate for a minimum standard for the private rented sector, including over energy efficiency.
- Tackle fuel poverty by incentivising private sector landlords to insulate homes.
- Reinststate the Fuel Poverty Advisory Group with appropriate powers to recommend policies.
- Encourage a portion of any community benefit scheme to be set aside to tackle fuel poverty and high energy bills in the community.
- Extend Resource Efficient Wales to offer a more comprehensive scheme to improve resource efficiency, address fuel poverty and tackle climate change.
- Incentivise private sector landlords to insulate homes.
- Increase the profile and prominence of Energy Performance Certificates in home sales and rentals.
- Utilise NEST funding to develop an emergency crisis fund for heating breakdown.
- Support the development of community-based energy efficiency advice and mentoring schemes, especially in areas of significant fuel poverty.
- Give local authorities responsibility for overseeing the delivery of home energy retrofits to low-income and fuel-poor households, as is the case in Scotland.



Our Vision for the Environment and Energy



“

We've all seen the floods across Wales in recent months. We know that climate change is happening now, and we have to take action now to make sure it doesn't get worse.

”

- Rhys, Aberystwyth

“

Our changing climate affects all of us. We must prepare for the possible impacts, such as flooding as well as taking action to reduce emissions. The Welsh Liberal Democrats have always been the most environmentally aware of the major Welsh parties and we are fully committed to the fight against climate change, which means investing in renewable energy and green jobs.



”

- William Powell, lead candidate for Mid and West Wales

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1 Enshrine renewable energy and greenhouse gas targets in law

Tackling climate change offers an opportunity to build a stronger, greener economy here in Wales. At present global warming is still projected to be well above the threshold set by scientists to avoid irreversible damage. We will set a target for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and to produce all our electricity from renewable sources by 2025, with a carbon impact assessment for all new laws to assess their environmental impact.

2 Support community energy projects

Small and micro-scale energy ownership and generation is vital to empower communities and individuals to meet their energy needs from diverse sources, especially solar and hydropower. We will encourage this by ensuring microgeneration projects are considered with a presumption in favour of development, given priority access to the grid and enabled to sell energy within their own locality.

3 Introduce a drinks container Deposit Return Scheme

Wales throws away far too much. We need to make sure we minimise waste by reducing, reusing, and recycling wherever possible. We will introduce a Deposit Return Scheme, so customers will receive a small cash payment when they return drinks bottles to a collection point.

Fact: Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Wales rose by 10% between 2012 and 2013, while emissions fell in England and Scotland.

(Source: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory)

Preparing for the worst: Climate Change

We are proud of being the greenest of Wales' major parties, working to protect the environment for future generations.

While the Tories are systematically dismantling support for renewable energy, Welsh Liberal Democrats will place a low-carbon, renewable, environmentally-friendly future at the heart of our vision for Wales. Rather than denying the overwhelming evidence for the reality of climate change, we must prepare for the harsh effects and play our role in the fight against further global warming, in order to protect our communities and our world for future generations. Tackling climate change shouldn't just be seen as an obligation, but as an opportunity. Our vision is for a zero-carbon Wales that delivers green growth, a green economy and green jobs.

We will:

- Publish a Carbon Budget alongside the Budget every year so that people can tell what impact our plans will have on the environment.
- Add carbon impact assessments to all new Welsh legislation, so we can assess its environmental impact and ensure we remain on track to meet emission reduction targets.
- Interlace climate change and education policies to recognise the role of education in delivering behaviour change, and bring more understanding of ecological issues into our schools.

We must set ambitious goals for Wales to play its role in the global fight against climate change. We would set as targets:

- Net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with a 50% reduction below a 1990 baseline by 2020 and an 80% reduction by 2030.
- 100% of Welsh electricity demand met from renewable sources by 2025.
- A 50% reduction in energy used for heating and electricity by 2030.
- Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2020 with a 15% increase in biodiversity by 2050 and ensuring all our finest wildlife havens reach a favourable condition by 2026.



The devastating floods experienced over the past few years are a sign of accelerating climate change. From Aberystwyth to St. Asaph, people have been left homeless - and the risk of flooding is only set to increase. We must prepare our communities to protect themselves from the effects of climate change, at the same time as fighting climate change itself.

We will:

- Establish a Welsh Standard for flood defence.
- Prepare a national resilience plan to help the Welsh economy, national infrastructure and natural resources adapt to the likely impacts of climate change.
- Promote schemes to alleviate flood risk through innovative land management - including planting trees and vegetation to slow run-off, restoring wetland areas, and creating safe flood reservoirs.
- Make improvements to increase the resilience to flooding and storms of the transport infrastructure in South, West and North Wales using EU Convergence Funding and the European Investment Bank.
- Enable dual use of new coastal and river renewable energy generation schemes to provide flood defence.
- Protect funding for new flood and coastal defence schemes, and for the flood risk responsibilities of Natural Resources Wales.
- Offer grants to householders to defend against future flood event.
- Provide assistance to households and landowners in areas that cannot be cost-effectively protected with large-scale flood or coastal defences to support the retrofitting of individual properties with flood protection measures, or to help facilitate relocation.
- Base all future risk modelling on a "known record level extent model" for flood management and create whole-catchment plans for Welsh Rivers designed to reduce flow rates.



Powering Wales' Future

To meet our targets and reach a sustainable, low-carbon future for Wales, we must make an ambitious change in how we generate energy. We will do this by incentivising and nurturing a diverse mix of renewable and low-carbon technologies, supporting microgeneration and community-owned generation, and improving our energy efficiency.

We will:

- Support solar developments, in particular community and micro-scale generation.
- Utilise Wales's rich and diverse marine environment to develop renewable energy, such as offshore tidal and wave, by only offering incentives to companies to install the highest energy generating equipment, while giving due consideration to ecosystems, conservation areas, and the sustainability of Welsh fishing and tourism industries.
- Promote the development of Marine Energy Hubs to help Wales gain a competitive advantage in emergent marine technologies and support tidal range power, including the development of the world-first Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon, and expand the concept to new projects should they be judged to be environmentally safe such as Colwyn Bay, Cardiff and Newport.
- Aim for a greater focus on offshore wind and more widespread use of floating wind turbines to make large offshore windfarms more cost effective.
- Commission an immediate review into Technical Advice Note (TAN) 8 on renewable energy, so it can be updated to meet our current technological requirements. This should include consideration of the National Grid network; minimising the impact of wind energy on the landscape; road/transport access to Strategic Search Areas; and the impact of noise pollution.
- Minimise the impact of wind energy on the landscape where possible by encouraging the use of the latest technology and maximum innovation in relation to wind turbines and pylons, such as t-pylons and undergrounding.
- Use biomass primarily for heating and small-scale power generation.
- Explore developing new pumped storage facilities to ensure a stable supply of low carbon electricity and focus public support for research into large-scale electrical storage technology such as batteries.
- Maximise the economic benefits of renewables by working with developers and educational institutions to expand supply chains and centres of excellence for the next generation of engineers and apprentices.
- Reject development of new fossil fuel power plants without appropriate CCS technology or a clear plan to recover heat for supply.
- Establish a frack-free Wales by refusing licences for fracking applications once powers are devolved, and implementing a moratorium through the planning system in the meantime.

Small- and micro-scale renewable energy ownership and generation is vital to empower communities and individuals to meet their energy needs. We will enable people to develop as much energy as possible from such sources, especially solar and run-of-river hydropower. Communities must also be empowered when larger-scale generation projects set up in their area - community benefit funds are an excellent way to ensure that communities prosper when we go green.

We will:

- Ensure that microgeneration projects are considered with a presumption in favour of development, given priority access to the grid and enabled to sell energy within their own locality.
- Provide a model legal and business framework for Community-Owned Renewable Energy Co-operatives to reduce the legal costs and complexity for communities
- Ensure the advice and support offered by the Welsh Government Local Energy Programme serves to increase community energy generation beyond the modest outputs of Ynni'r Fro.
- Create a library of resources to support community groups in applying for support for community generation projects.
- Give community co-operatives the right to develop renewable energy projects in or on suitable publicly owned buildings and land, where practicable.
- Work with industry to develop regional community benefit schemes, along transportation and grid corridors.
- Ensure that communities benefit from economic investments supported by renewable energy schemes, particularly in the fight against fuel poverty.



Cracking down on Environmental Waste

Wales throws away far too much. We need to move to a 'circular' economy, where waste is minimised, resources are re-used through repair, remanufacturing and recycling, energy is captured from waste that cannot be re-used and landfill is kept to the absolute minimum.

We will:

- Introduce a Deposit Return Pilot Scheme, which would explore the potential of a national scheme to see customers pay a small cash deposit when they buy a bottled drink, and get the money back when they return the item to a collection point.
- Use regulation both nationally and in the EU to promote sustainable design where repairability, reuse and recyclability are prioritised, and to reduce packaging waste.
- Change rules on the Landfill Communities Fund to ensure up to 10% is used to fund wildlife and biodiversity projects.
- Increase penalties for fly-tipping, aiming to move from an average fine of £50,000 to £75,000 and to an average prison sentence of 12 to 18 months for serious cases, and make it easier to penalise fly-tippers through on-the-spot fines in order to clean up our streets and countryside.
- Introduce an incineration tax to further encourage recycling.





Our Vision for Communities, Social Justice and Local Government



“

It was devastating when the last local pub was closed, as the post office had before. But what was worse was knowing there was nothing our community could do to stop it. The local council was no more than a talking shop, distant and unaccountable when we needed them the most.

”

- Jackie, Llangattock

“

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe in putting people in charge of what happens in their community and in re-invigorating local councils so they deliver for Wales. We'll make sure communities can come together and protect the assets that make their community a home, by protecting the last pub, the village shop, or the local swimming pool.

”

- Cllr Chris Holley, candidate for Swansea West



The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1 Give more powers to communities

We want to empower local communities and promote a flourishing system of democratic local government where power exists at the most viable local level. We will give more powers to communities by devolving new powers to community councils and give local authorities new powers over public health, regeneration, strategic transport and economic development.

2 Reform local government to make it more accountable and transparent

We will introduce a fair voting system for all local elections to ensure people get the politicians they voted for and deliver more accountable, transparent councils and better public services.

3 Enable you to protect vital community assets

We will strengthen the capacity of communities to protect local interests by passing a Community Bill of Rights to empower communities to take initiative over their local services and assets. This will include a 'Right to Bid' to ensure that assets of community value can be kept in public use and remain an integral part of community life. We will introduce the 'Right to Build' to allow local communities to propose small-scale, site-specific, community-led developments, putting communities in charge of building the housing they need. We will give community councils the automatic right to bid to take over services that local authorities are closing.

Fact:

11 pubs close every month in Wales – while in England over 1,200 pubs have been protected as assets of community value and forty-five communities have successfully taken ownership of their local pub.

(Source: CAMRA)

More Powers for Communities

We want to empower local communities and promote a flourishing system of democratic local government in which power should be exercised at the most viable local level.

Too many local community councils are too weak or don't have the expertise to tackle new powers, services, and responsibilities. We will improve the quality of community governance by enabling devolution of new powers, such as over local regeneration, to community councils if they pass an accreditation test - designed to make sure their governance, training, financial management, accountability and community engagement are sufficient to take on such powers.

We will task the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission to merge smaller community councils into larger *cantref* councils, covering meaningful areas, with an enhanced capacity to act in other areas.



Local Government Reorganisation

Wales has too many councils, many of which are too small and are underperforming. However, if councils are going to be larger, then it is essential that they are representative of the people that voted for them. Without introducing a fair voting system and devolving powers to local communities, any reorganisation process is pointless.

New councils should recognise the importance of Wales' major cities such as Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, potentially redrawing boundaries to encompass nearby communities and travel to work areas, but still enabling our cities to stand alone and plan for their own futures, in some cases as part of wider city regions.

We do not agree that major cities should be merged with large rural hinterlands, as neither community will find their needs met. We do not agree that the return of Dyfed or Gwent meets any recognisable definition of local.

However, it is not the job of politicians to design new councils.

We will:

- Commission the Local Government and Boundary Commission to draw up alternative proposals for the restructuring of local councils in Wales based on natural communities, and which are locally accountable and have demonstrable public consent.
- Repeal powers that allow Ministers to merge councils by decree.
- Introduce a new Local Government Bill which devolves more powers to councils including over public health, regeneration, strategic transport and economic development, gives them a power of general competence to enable them to work better for their area, reduces the number of key performance indicators, and repeals many of the restrictions on local action.
- Require all councils to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment of their structures, meeting schedules, standing orders and working practices.
- Update the local government funding formula and seek to protect smaller councils from inappropriate variations in funding relative to others.
- Introduce the Single Transferable Voting system for all local elections so as to ensure election outcomes reflect the way people have voted and which will deliver more accountable and transparent councils and better public services.

Planning for the Community

Planning sets the framework for building our communities. If it doesn't work, our communities can be left to stagnate. We will put local communities in charge of what their local needs.

We will strengthen the capacity of communities to protect local interests by passing a Community Bill of Rights to:

- Empower communities to take initiative over their local services and assets and introduce:
 - A 'Right to Bid' to ensure that assets of community value can be kept in public use and remain an integral part of community life.
 - A 'Right to Challenge' to allow community groups to bid to run a local authority service where they can do so differently and better.
 - A 'Right to Build' to allow local communities to propose small-scale, site-specific, community-led developments, putting communities in charge of building the housing they need.
 - A 'Right to Reclaim Land' to help communities improve their local area by giving them the right to ask that under-used or unused public land is brought back into use.
 - A 'Right to Contest' that public land could be better used, and for communities to take it over.
 - A 'Right to Buy' to give community councils the automatic right to bid to take over services that local authorities are closing, such as leisure centres or libraries.
- Establish a new listing system for village greens and other spaces that have community value and designating gardens as greenfield sites - making it harder to develop on them.



- Introduce Community Shares, to enable residents to invest in projects by becoming supporters, not just customers.
- Remove permitted development rights for assets of community value.
- Establish an Asset Transfer Advisory Committee in each local council area.
- Strengthen planning guidance to ensure a more thorough assessment of community need in any planning decision.
- Ensure no pub can be demolished or undergo a change of use without planning permission or community consultation by creating a separate use class for community pubs and closing loopholes in planning law.
- Develop a dedicated Welsh planning inspectorate and a single National Planning Advisory and Training Service.
- Trial a system of accreditation for planning agents.
- Replace existing planning guidance with respect to development in the flood plain with a new robust strategy, along with new Planning Design Notes and Building Regulations.

Power to the People

Liberal Democrats have always believed in enabling individuals being involved in the decisions which affect their lives. We believe workplace employee participation, together with wider employee ownership, is important for diffusing economic power, promoting enterprise, increasing job satisfaction, and improving service to customers.

We will:

- Encourage the promotion of greater employee participation and ownership, develop mutual, and strengthen worker participation in decision-making.
- Ensure that government advice on setting-up a business provides explicit support for founding a mutual or co-operative.
- Develop support for companies to consider a co-operative and mutual business model as a means of saving a failing but economically viable enterprise.
- Re-establish the Ministerial Advisory Group for Credit Unions.
- Require the Welsh Treasury to report on diversity and representation of mutuals and cooperatives in Wales.
- Require the Regulatory Policy Committee to report on potential impacts on mutual and cooperatives.
- Support projects for credit unions to boost enterprise and enable growth such as joint IT procurement and a shared service hub, keeping operating costs down.
- Promote payroll savings schemes with local credit unions, making it easier for people to save and make access to credit unions a standard workplace benefit.
- Develop specialist support for credit unions facing mergers or succession issues.



A Public Service Delivering for You

We need to make sure that the public sector is open to and supports all people equally, and reflects the breadth and diversity of Welsh society.

We will:

- Conduct a thorough review of all external funding to restore public and investor confidence in the ability of the Welsh Government to monitor and regulate Welsh Government funding.
- Move towards the Welsh public sector becoming a Living Wage employer and use procurement tools to drive up wages elsewhere.
- Embed an assets-based approach in all policy and service delivery aimed at helping people break out of poverty.
- End the culture of excessive 'golden-goodbyes' by instituting a maximum figure of £90,000 on all future redundancy and severance payments across the public sector in Wales, subject to provisions to protect those who are paid below average but who have long service records.
- Explore the potential for participatory budgeting at a local and Wales level.
- Continue to support the National Advice Network by mapping existing advice services and making the best use of available funding.
- Transfer responsibility for Commissioners from Welsh Government to the National Assembly to ensure accountability and transparency of appointment, and recognise the title of a Children and Young People's Commissioner for Wales.
- Support a new Public Service Ombudsman Act to give "own initiative powers" to proactively deal with public service complaints and systemic failures, and a new Complaints Standards Authority to drive improved responsiveness to citizens' concerns across the public sector.

Our public services and the people who run them should represent and support the diverse people of Wales. We want to make sure that, throughout Wales, there are equal opportunities for all.

We will:

- Maintain the Public Sector Equality Duty and move to 'name blank' recruitment wherever possible in the public sector.
- Ban the use of Credit Scoring Checks as part of the employee recruitment process.
- Work to ensure the shift to Digital by Default for public services does not leave people behind, by upholding the highest standards of accessibility in digital services and maintaining government programmes on digital inclusion.
- Require all recipients of public money to demonstrate they understand the gender issues in their organisation/sector, have an action plan in place to address these issues and are monitored on progress.
- Introduce a presumption that every public appointment shortlist should include non-male and BAME candidates, and establish an independent committee to monitor the drive for greater diversity in public appointments and verify the independence of the appointment process.

Keeping your Communities Safe

No one can fulfil their potential if they live in fear. By ensuring our laws are upheld, we can build strong communities with opportunity for all.

While Wales doesn't currently have justice powers, we believe that such powers should be devolved to the National Assembly. No other party offers an effective, liberal, community-based approach to policing and tackling crime. Devolving powers over policing and justice would mean policies could be more responsive to the needs of Wales, and enable more cooperation with devolved services like youth services, health and education, and local councils in Wales.

We also believe in the importance of protecting civil liberties - others try to tell you how to live your life, taking away human rights in the name of security. Welsh Liberal Democrats believe everyone should be able to be their own person and act as their own spotlight, their own guiding light - everyone should be enabled to live life how they choose, as long as it doesn't encroach on the freedoms of others.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

- Continue investment in PCSOs to protect local communities from Conservative Government cuts in policing.
- Tackle drug and alcohol misuse through:
 - preventative, health-based approaches for drug users, treating them as victims and not criminals;
 - ensure drug and alcohol agencies are adequately resourced to tackle substance misuse, which often drives violent and acquisitive crime; and
 - targeting organised crime groups and drug dealers, emulating the approach of Durham Constabulary.
- Tackle violence against women and girls by:
 - Ensuring teachers, social workers, police officers and health workers in areas where there is high prevalence of female genital mutilation or forced marriage are trained to help those at risk.
 - Requiring the teaching of sexual consent in Welsh schools as part of age-appropriate sex and relationships education and ensure that Female Genital Mutilation, violence against women and girls and all domestic violence feature appropriately.
 - Protecting funding for tackling violence against women and girls.
- Guarantee the police pursue the public's priorities by replacing Police and Crime Commissioners with Police Boards made up of Councillors from across the force area
- Oppose a single, centralised Welsh police force, ensuring the system is responsive to the different local needs of communities up and down Wales.
- Ensure that a high priority is given to investigating allegations of elder abuse, and raising awareness of and training in, protecting the elderly from such crimes.
- Push for the devolution of powers over youth justice, policing, and in the longer term other justice powers such as prisons and probation to the National Assembly for Wales, in line with the recommendations of the Silk Commission.

- Develop a strategy that will deliver advice and legal support to help people with everyday problems like personal debt and social welfare issues, working across government and involving non-profit advice agencies.
- Establish a Children's Hearings System and Children's Panel.
- Ensure that there is a named person in every school to help the victims of cyber-bullying.
- Simplify the process for 'No Cold Calling Zones', to protect older people from unscrupulous rogue traders and doorstep scams.
- Introduce a new scheme to identify mental health and substance abuse issues of offenders and seek proper treatment for them when they enter the criminal justice system in Wales.
- Promote Restorative Justice which places the victim at the heart of rehabilitation.
- Tackle rough sleeping in Wales by looking at the Housing First model used so successfully in the state of Utah and in Medicine Hat, Alberta, and improving recording.
- Reconsider *vulnerability* classifications for homeless individuals and increase the homelessness prevention period from 56 days to 90 days.
- Work with credit unions to create the conditions whereby social housing providers will be able to rehouse those with historic rent arrears.
- Promote the use of alternative buildings for magistrates' courts and local dispute resolution programmes like Community Justice Panels to bring justice back into the community.
- Lobby to keep justice as local as possible by opposing court closures where possible.
- Challenge discrimination in the criminal justice system by:
 - Promoting representation within the police by boosting police recruitment from BAME groups.
 - Conducting a full review of the causes of the overrepresentation of BAME individuals in the criminal justice system.
 - Ensuring all people are treated fairly, including monitoring how diverse communities are affected by policing priorities and methods.



Our Vision for Rural Communities



“

The Labour Government in Cardiff Bay has forgotten about us, just as the Tory government in London has turned its back on Wales. They don't understand what it's like to live in rural Wales. We feel left behind, as more and more of our services close, and more projects are announced for the English cities - we need someone to speak up for us.

”

- Gurleen, Llandrindod Wells

“

Welsh Liberal Democrats have represented rural communities for over 100 years – we are as much a part of rural life, as rural life is a part of us. Rural Wales is in our DNA, which is why we want to see prosperity across all of Wales, not just near the M4.

”



- Elizabeth Evans, candidate for Ceredigion

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1

Increase recruitment into rural GP surgeries

One of the most pressing concerns anyone has is getting the care they need, when they need it, where they need it. We are fighting to protect local health services, so that people in rural areas do not have to travel miles to access care. We will establish a centre of excellence in rural healthcare, focus recruitment into GP surgeries, and provide more placements in rural practices and hospitals.

2

Increase the number of rural apprenticeships

Young people in our rural communities need to have access to proper careers and jobs. We want to see our rural areas as places of opportunity. We will work with the agriculture, renewable energy and tourism sectors to supply more apprenticeships in rural Wales.

3

Support rural services, like banks, schools, broadband and mobile infrastructure

Just because someone lives and works in rural Wales does not mean that they do not need or want high speed broadband. The Welsh Liberal Democrats believe modern infrastructure is a must everywhere in Wales. A thriving rural community needs local services and community facilities. We understand the changes needed to support a living, working countryside. We have stood up for rural Wales for over 100 years, and will maintain our commitment to rural Wales in the next Assembly. We will encourage community budgeting to combine services to keep them in communities. We will support community banking and deliver broadband connectivity to more remote rural areas by allowing use of Welsh Government land and promoting alternative technologies.

Fact:

35% of rural communities in Wales have poor or very poor broadband quality.

(Source: Wales Rural Observatory)

A thriving rural community needs local services and community facilities like schools, public transport, local shops, cultural venues and pubs. It needs enough homes, affordable for local families, to ensure those services are viable. And it needs public transport: travel costs are a major component of rural poverty. Welsh Liberal Democrats understand the changes needed to support a living, working countryside. We have stood up for rural Wales for over 100 years, and will maintain our commitment to rural Wales in the next Assembly.

We will:

- Develop the Community Budgets model in Wales for use in rural areas to combine services, encouraging the breaking down of boundaries between different services -this will help keep rural services like GP surgeries, pharmacies, post offices and libraries open by enabling them to co-operate, share costs and co-locate in shared facilities.
- Review TAN 6 guidance on 'Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities' to achieve real progress in the delivery of affordable rural housing across Wales.
- Issue refreshed guidance on One Planet Developments in Wales in order to promote low-carbon community living and achieve real progress in delivering rural housing.
- Reform national park authorities by introducing directly elected members, to ensure that the conservation of nationally important natural and cultural environments is balanced with local accountability and sustainable economic activity.
- Convene as a matter of urgency a series of round table meetings with major retail banks to encourage support for a community banking model to create a cost effective way to sustain a branch presence in vulnerable communities, extend opening hours and reduce operating costs.
- Work with credit unions to increase lending to businesses.
- Work with businesses in the agricultural, renewable energy and tourism sectors to identify ways to overcome barriers to increasing the supply of rural apprenticeships.

- Promote and support alternative technologies such as satellite and mobile broadband, which can deliver connectivity to more remote rural areas.
- Ensure National Parks have regard for the housing, employment and regeneration needs of local communities as part of their wider duties.
- Protect rural schools by creating a presumption against closure, requiring more rigorous consultations, protect schools from closure for five years if a closure is initially rejected, and enable Ministers to 'call in' decisions.
- Pilot Village Colleges, where rural Sixth Forms provide other functions in a community, to help expand provision in rural areas and make sixth forms more sustainable.
- Oppose wholesale open access, and instead establish an approach to improving access to land and water which respects current business activities, the environment, and habitats, and develop Rights of Way Improvement Plans and a monitoring role for Local Access Forums.
- Extend the protection afforded to coastal National Parks and Areas of Natural Beauty to their adjacent marine environment.
- Make Wales the world's first Dark Skies Nation.



One of the most pressing concerns anyone has is that they can get the care they need, when they need it, where they need it. People in rural areas often have to travel miles to access the services they need, while everyone is concerned about accessing the care they need when and where they need it.

We will:

- Negotiate a new Compact on Cross-border Health Provision with the Westminster Government to ensure that there is a consistent approach to treatment for Welsh and English patients, develop individual protocols between each border Local Health Board in Wales and neighbouring NHS Trusts in England, and include non-border LHBs in considerations for the Protocol/Compact.
- Improve information on differences in care on either side of the border.
- Focus recruitment into rural GP surgeries and other healthcare settings by:
 - Introducing a scheme to encourage high school students to study medicine, including work observation, shadowing and career visits.
 - Developing e-learning for students on placement in rural areas, to expand opportunities for specialism.
 - Establishing a network for students and new practitioners to provide personal and professional support such as assistance in finding housing, financial support for relocation and the establishment of rural practice networks.
 - Work with universities to develop departments of rural medicine and a centre of excellence in rural healthcare including rural and remote medicine training pathways, provide placement opportunities in rural practices and hospitals, and preferentially admitting students from rural backgrounds.
- Promote tele-medicine to reduce the burden on rural practices and lower waiting times to see GPs.

Mid-Wales has particular concerns regarding coverage of services. We are committed to the future of Bronglais General Hospital, and would implement the recommendations of the Mid Wales Health Care Study report. Amid concerns of potential relocation of hospital services from Shrewsbury to Telford, we would work with NHS England to ensure that services remain accessible for Welsh patients, and Welsh patients are treated with equal importance as English patients when planning for the future of hospitals and GPs on the English side of the border. We believe that A&E and support services should be retained at Shrewsbury until at least there is proper Mid Wales provision. We would establish an Urgent Care Centre in Montgomeryshire to take the pressure off these A&E services.



Our Vision for Agriculture



“ Governments have let down farmers for decades. Our nation's food security depends on farmers, but we have seen farm gate prices fall to such low levels in recent years, along with a growing burden of red tape, that it is placing rural livelihoods at risk. ”

- David, Llanbister

“ Welsh Liberal Democrats are passionate about protecting Wales' proud farming tradition in order to protect the land and natural environment, safeguard food security and create flourishing rural communities. We must ensure that farmers are incentivised to farm in an environmentally-sensitive way and promote the benefits of European Union membership for agriculture, such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Rural Development Plan (RDP) and access to tariff free export markets. ”



- Jane Dodds, candidate for Montgomeryshire

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1 Promote share farming and succession planning, ensuring the survival of the family farm

More needs to be done to support and encourage young people to enter the farming industry. We will promote succession planning to combine the experience of the older generation with the energy of the younger generation to drive business forward and encourage share farming to help young people get their foot on the farming ladder.

2 Ensure dedicated support for hill farming

Hill farmers are vital to the well-being of their local communities and the management of our upland environment, yet they remain unappreciated and unrewarded by a government that ignores farmers' role as stewards of the countryside. We would deliver a dedicated 'Areas of Natural Constraint' scheme to support those farming in moorland areas and help them diversify into more profitable areas of farming.

3 Provide more small-scale grants to farmers to enable them to diversify, reduce their carbon emissions, and improve their resilience and competitiveness

Effective agri-environment schemes are vital to protect farmers from market volatility and reward high standards of environmental practice. Sadly, Glastir has been a source of confusion and frustration for many farmers, with low take up and an over bureaucratic application process. We need to simplify existing schemes and ensure that farmers receive payments on time. We would offer more small-scale, accessible grants for farmers to invest in animal welfare, reducing carbon emissions, flood mitigation, more efficient IT and increased diversity and profitability.

Fact: Average farm business income in Wales is forecast to decrease by nearly 16% this year, and 40% for dairy farms. (Source: StatsWales)

Agriculture is more than a living, for many it is a way of life, a culture and a community. Farmers do an essential job of putting food on our table and enhancing the natural environment. But incomes are falling, and farmers wishing to modernise increasingly find themselves facing planning obstructions which can unfairly extend the process and reduce the cost-effectiveness of the steps they need to take to maintain a viable business. We will ensure farmers get a fair deal and encourage investment, growth, innovation and new entrants, securing the future of the Welsh food and farming industry.

We will:

- Work within the EU to ensure that CAP and the RDP are focused on ensuring that farming is more competitive and resilient, acknowledging the role of farmers as custodians of land and the natural environment.
- Safeguard agriculture and food production across Wales and embed food production using suitable systems into all environmental decision-making in rural Wales.
- Work at EU level to ensure clear and unambiguous country-of-origin labelling on meat, meat products, milk and dairy products.
- Fully implement recent reforms of the Common Fisheries Policy, working with industry and others to develop a national plan for sustainable UK fisheries, with fair treatment for the inshore small boat fleet.
- Implement a full review of agri-environment schemes to ensure they achieve sustainable farming and agricultural management, and properly reward farmers for the conservation work they carry out.



Many farmers depend on a positive relationship with Government, to give them the support they need. All too often, farmers feel forgotten and misunderstood by Labour in Cardiff Bay, and abandoned by the Tories in Westminster. We know what farmers need, having represented rural communities for over 100 years.

We will support farmers by:

- Delivering a dedicated Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) scheme to support those farming in moorland areas and help them diversify into more profitable areas of farming.
- Reforming the Farming Advice Service so that it is more individualised and ensure advice is offered on sustainability as well as profitability, in order to promote small energy facilities on farms such as wind, hydro and anaerobic digestion.
- Offering more small-scale, accessible grants for farmers to diversify and invest in animal welfare, reducing carbon emissions, flood mitigation, more efficient IT, renewable energy schemes, and increased diversity and profitability.
- Supporting the Farming Connect network to help farmers and landowners to find the best route to both profitability and sustainability according to their situation.
- Increasing support for farmers with dead stock.
- Ensuring that planning legislation supports the development of agricultural businesses and sustainable communities by working with local authorities to improve the current system and reduce delays to a minimum.
- Reviewing forestry practices to promote greater use of native species and natural forest management; investigating lighter regulation of commercial forest thinning, and facilitating natural woodland creation.
- Establishing a short-life working party to identify areas of marginal land for forestry and explain woodland creation opportunities to a broader range of farmers and landowners.
- Speeding up and simplify the application process for creating new woodland.
- Introducing special protection for ancient & veteran trees, beyond that afforded by the current TPO regime.
- Establishing new Welsh food and drink awards to give producers a recognised benchmark of excellence in quality and help raise the profile of Welsh food and drink in the UK and abroad.
- Reducing waste in agricultural food chains and encouraging the re-use of energy from waste with schemes such as farm-scale anaerobic digestion.

The natural environment is best cared for by a continuation of farming tailored to the needs of individual areas, including their environmental needs. It is important that today's farmers can pass on their traditions to the next generation.

We will:

- Promote share farming as a way of encouraging mobility within the industry and making it more accessible to young people interested in working the land.
- Promote succession planning, thus ensuring the survival of the family farm.
- Increase apprenticeships in agriculture to help pass on the vital skills and knowledge of the industry.
- Ensure direct funding of the Wales Young Farmers Club to safeguard its future and support YFC activity in urban areas to bridge the urban-rural divide and take learning about farming and food production into schools across Wales.



We believe in the highest standards of animal welfare. We will continue to improve standards of animal welfare and build a modern, up to date framework for protection of animals by:

- Reviewing and minimising the use of cages, crates and routine antibiotics on farm animals.
- Reviewing the rules surrounding the sale of pets to ensure they promote responsible breeding and sales.
- Minimising the use of animals in scientific experimentation - we remain committed to the three Rs of humane animal research: Replace, Reduce, Refine.
- Banning the use of wild animals in circuses in Wales.



Our Vision for Taxation



“

I'm happy to pay my fair share in tax to pay for decent schools and hospitals, but I also need to make sure I have enough left at the end of the month to be able to save for the future. There must be a way to get a fairer balance.

”

- **Chris, Montgomeryshire**

“

Liberal Democrats in government delivered tax varying powers to Wales as we believe this will bring much needed accountability to our political system. This will enable Wales to be more creative in its approach to tax and more responsive to Wales' needs. Our vision of an Opportunity Economy looks to reduce the tax burden where possible to help people get on in life, while ensuring we have the financial resources to deliver top quality public services.



”

- **Veronica German, lead candidate for South Wales East**

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1 Reduce the tax burden for Welsh workers

We will not increase income tax. Instead, our long-term aim will be to reduce the income tax burden for the low and middle income earners when Government expenditure is increasing again.

2 Cut council tax for energy efficient homes

Poorly insulated homes means higher bills for residents and holds us back in the fight against climate change. Council tax is already a high burden for many. We will cut council tax by £100 for homes that have their energy efficiency rating improved by two bands or more.

3 Ensure business rates drive positive investment and support economic growth

Business rates are one of the greatest fixed costs for start-up businesses and are a huge burden for existing business. We will establish a relief fund for new occupants of empty premises and we will remove plant and machinery from the rateable value of premises, which will support many businesses, including our steel industry.

Fact: Over 1.2 million people will have had a £905 tax cut since 2010 because Liberal Democrats secured higher personal allowances. (Source: Treasury Figures)

Responsible Finances

Wales now has control over our own taxes for the first time in 800 years. We need a tax system which re-energises the economy so entrepreneurs, innovation and ideas flourish. At the same time we need to protect funding for public services, raise our standards of living and ensure environmental sustainability.

The Welsh Liberal Democrats have always supported more devolution to Wales. Our task now is to manage these new taxes in a prudent and responsible way, whilst making the case for further powers which will give us an economic advantage as a country.

We will:

- Establish an independent Welsh "Office of Budget Responsibility" to provide a rolling independent and authoritative analysis of Wales's public finances.
- Publish a Government Expenditure and Revenue document on a regular basis.
- Commission quarterly GVA/GDP data from the Office of National Statistics, giving us the tools to better influence and manage Welsh economic activity.

Income Tax

Power to vary income tax rates is expected to be devolved to the Assembly towards the end of the next Assembly term. That power will arrive at a time when public expenditure is severely constrained.

Not only do we guarantee not to increase income tax, our aim will be to use the power over income tax to reduce the tax burden -not increase it - for the lowest paid first, when government expenditure is increasing again. This will enable us to give people more back in their pockets, to help kick-start spending.

Your Home and Community

Major progressive reforms have already made stamp duty a fairer and more effective system - you'll pay less tax if your property is worth less than £938,000 when you sell it. This was a good start, but we need to do even more to lower the cost housing in Wales for the majority of people, focusing on council tax.

We will:

- Introduce a Council Tax break of at least £100 a year for 10 years, when a resident's home undergoes an improvement of at least two Energy Performance bands.
- Encourage councils to use provisions that enable them to levy up to 200% Council Tax on second and empty homes, especially when this activity impacts local communities.



Business Rates

Business rates should drive positive business investment and support economic growth. But at present, business rates are one of the greatest fixed costs for start-up businesses and are a huge burden for existing business, which fear surpassing the threshold for more onerous rates if they invest in their property. The system is no longer fit-for-purpose and must be reformed.

We will seek to:

- Remove plant and machinery from the rateable value of commercial premises in order to boost manufacturing in Wales such as the steel industry.
- Establish a 50% relief for new occupants of retail premises that have been empty for a year or more.
- Review hardship relief to ensure equitable access across Wales.
- Ensure future increases are fair by having multiples follow the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than the Retail Price Index (RPI).
- Apply rates to out of town retail unit car parks larger than 1,000m² with spaces for more than 45 vehicles.
- Review exemptions for social enterprises and commercial facilities that exist as a lifeline for their community, such as village shops, pubs or post offices.
- Build an automatic tapering system into the revaluation process to ensure businesses that have significant rises in the rateable value can phase in any rises over several years to adjust to new costs.
- Explore a simplified revaluation system, based around bands, which would sustain more regular revaluations and reduce the burden on businesses during a downturn.



Reform needs to be more comprehensive than simply tinkering with eligibility for the business rates relief scheme and we would launch a radical and systematic review of the way that business rates are run in Wales, involving all stakeholders, and commit to implementing changes as soon as feasible to ensure a minimum of uncertainty.

We will allow local authorities to retain a percentage of the business rates generate in order to incentivise business growth. We will give them the power to:

- Apply local knowledge when deciding which properties should have rate relief.
- Designate town centres and district centres as 'local footfall business rate zones' and alter the business rates in those areas in response to changing trading conditions.
- Use Tax Increment Financing to encourage business investment, invest in major regeneration programmes and service the loans from the additional business rates income that would be generated.



Our Vision for Political Reform



“

I don't have a lot of time for politics or politicians - they all just seem to be out for themselves, never listening. I have to work hard in my job. I expect the people who represent me to do the same. I'm looking for someone with a plan to clean up politics and make sure politicians listen to the people who put them there.

”

- Luke, Blackwood

“

People are sick to death of politicians lecturing them about what to think, while ignoring the views of the very people they are meant to represent. In contrast, we listen to our communities, which is why we were the only party to vote against the outrageous £10k hike in Assembly Members' pay. The system needs a shake-up; we will give people the power to recall their Assembly Member, if they are found to have behaved dishonourably.



”

- Brendan D'Cruz, candidate for Blaenau Gwent

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1

Restore trust in politics

Politics and politicians have a bad reputation - from expenses scandals, to voting for pay increases, many politicians have lost the respect of their constituents. We want to clean up politics and make our politicians accountable to the people who elected them. We will enable you to recall your AM for wrongdoing, clean up the Ministerial Code, and link AM pay to public sector pay.

2

Ensure fairer elections with fair votes

Our voting system needs to change to deliver maximum power to voters. We will lower the voting age in Wales to 16, strengthen citizenship education, establish a National Youth Assembly for Wales, and introduce a fair voting system.

3

Deliver more powers for Wales

We have always been at the forefront of devolution. We endorse the Silk Commission's proposals in full as the next step in Wales' devolution but this does not represent the sum total of our ambitions for devolution. The Welsh Liberal Democrats will continue to seek further powers and Home Rule for Wales, within a Federal UK.

Fact:

Assembly Members voted to increase their salary by £10,000, an increase of 18% - only the Welsh Liberal Democrats voted against. (Source: National Assembly voting record)

Restoring Trust in Politics

Democracy in Wales is facing a crisis of trust and legitimacy. It's no wonder voters lose confidence when Labour Ministers can apparently breach the Ministerial Code with impunity, the First Minister tries to hide the reasons for Welsh Government decisions, and we have a fundamentally unfair voting system leading to an unrepresentative Assembly. These failures of accountability hurt us all, as they allow poor decision-making and mismanagement to go unchecked year after year. To make the Welsh Government and the National Assembly really work for Wales, and to make the best use of the new powers we seek for Wales, we need to open up the system to force politicians listen to the needs and priorities of the electorate.

Politics and politicians have a bad reputation - from expenses scandals, to voting for pay increases, many politicians have lost the respect of their constituents. We want to clean up politics, make our politicians accountable to the people who elected them.

We will:

- Require potential breaches of the Ministerial Code be investigated by the Standards Commissioner.
- Establish a system of recall for sitting AMs, triggered by a petition of the 20% of the electorate leading to a Recall Referendum and then a by-election.
- Establish a public register of meetings between Welsh Ministers or their officials and lobbyists or other external pressure groups.
- Reform the Assembly's urgent question process, including a register of questions rejected by the Presiding Officer and the reason for rejection.
- Enable the election of Committee Chairs by the whole Assembly, rather positions being the gift of party leaders.
- Continue publishing the Ministerial Decision Reports that the Welsh Labour administration attempted to axe.

We were the only party to vote against the recent £10k increase in AM pay - it is simply not fair that while nurses, police and teachers face pay freezes, AM pay rises. We would link rises in AM pay to general rises in public sector pay.

As Wales gains powers over more policy areas and levers, the capacity of backbench and opposition AMs to scrutinise the Government's plans is being stretched. There have been wide-spread calls to increase the number of AMs, in order to improve scrutiny and ensure accountability of Welsh Government.

The Welsh Liberal Democrats are committed to increasing the number of Assembly Members to between 80-90, in line with the recommendations of the Silk Commission. This option should be made cost neutral by the planned reduction in the number of Westminster MPs and the anticipated cut in the number of councillors as a result of the Williams Commission - the cost of politics should not be increased.

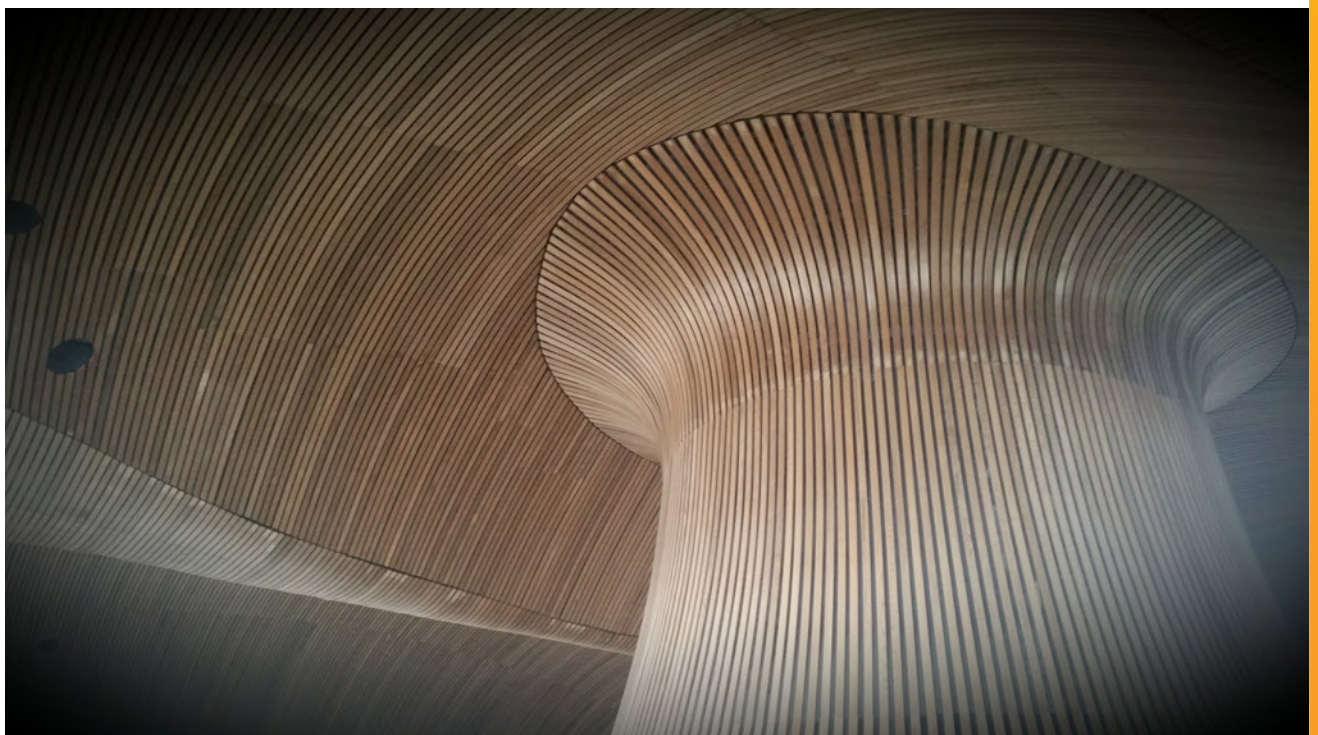
Improve Engagement in Fairer Elections

Our voting system needs to change, to deliver maximum power to voters, enabling them to support representatives of their choice without fear of wasting their vote, and get elected members that are genuinely accountable and a representative body that reflects the views of the people. We will ensure all elections in Wales, including for local council and the National Assembly, will be conducted using single transferable vote, a fair proportional representation voting system that makes every vote count.

Democracy only works if there is an engaged electorate. The downward trend in voter turnout in Wales shows that democracy is weakening. There are a range of reasons for this including: feeling your vote won't count, seeing little difference between the parties thinking that politics doesn't affect your life, and not wanting to vote for any of the candidates.

We will:

- Lower the voting age in Wales for all elections to 16.
- Strengthen citizenship education in schools.
- Modernise the voting system including by allowing same day registration, registration in schools, early voting, and voting at alternative polling stations.
- Introduce the opportunity to indicate an alternative preference to candidates - such as "none of the above", "re-open nominations" or having a write-in candidate - on the ballot paper.
- Establish a National Youth Assembly for Wales that is enshrined in law, independent of Government, and receives direct funding from the Assembly Commission to ensure the continuation of activity.
- Support collaborative measures to see greater diversity in democracy.
- Encourage community and town councils to co-opt non-voting youth representatives, legislate to enable principal authorities to do this, and legislate for Councils to introduce Youth Councils where they do not already exist.



Home Rule for Wales in a Federal UK

Liberal Democrats have always been at the forefront of devolution - the Silk Commission which reviewed our financial and constitutional arrangements would never have been established if not for our presence in the Coalition, nor the Wales Act 2014 passed, nor the St. David's Day agreement reached.

We endorse the Silk Commission's proposals in full as the next step in Wales' devolution. However Silk does not represent the sum total of our ambitions for devolution. Our aim is for proper home rule for Wales, within a Federal UK, based on a written UK constitution, so the powers of the Assembly cannot be taken away by a future Westminster Government.

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will continue to seek further powers for Wales over:

- Transport and drink drive limits;
- S4C;
- Youth justice, policing and in the longer term other justice powers including over prisons and probation;
- Funding of Network Rail in relation to the Wales network;
- Air Passenger Duty;
- Set Bank holidays (including a St David's Day Bank Holiday);
- Section 36 planning consents;
- The Community Infrastructure Levy;
- Family services including fostering and for vulnerable children; and
- Alcohol, venue and taxi licensing.

The nations of the United Kingdom have long had different needs with regard to funding. The Barnett Formula is the mechanism used to adjust spending allocations across the UK. We believe that the Barnett Formula underfunds Wales, and will continue to argue the case for Wales to be funded fairly.



Our Vision for the Welsh Language and Culture



“

Wales has a rich culture and heritage, but ever more frequently it is becoming difficult to participate in it. Funding for the arts is always the first thing to be cut, with theatres, libraries and museums closing all around us - this a quick fix to save pennies at the cost of losing our culture. Our music and our culture is intrinsic to our wellbeing.

The Welsh language is important to us as part of that culture. We always wanted our family to learn Welsh but it's hard to find the chance to be involved and use the language in our community. Everyone should be able to live, work and study in Welsh if they want.

”

- Gretchen and Danny, Rhyl

“

Everyone should feel a part of our beautiful and diverse culture and heritage, and we must make sure that our visitors can benefit too. We have to stop the decline of cultural events, and help support venues to become sustainable.

Speaking Welsh shouldn't be restricted to certain communities, but all people living in Wales should be enabled and encouraged to speak Welsh if they wish to - it has to be promoted as a living language, one that everyone should be able to learn and use.



”

- Sara Lloyd Williams, candidate for Arfon

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1 Create a Wales Cultural Endowment to fund the arts

Wales has a bold and dynamic cultural life, which all people in Wales should feel connected to. In order to support a rich cultural life in Wales, we will create a Wales Cultural Endowment to build a sustainable funding base for the arts. We will establish the endowment and, over time, it will build it to a level where it can be used to fund all non-commercial cultural events in Wales, relieving pressure on Welsh Government budgets.

2 Ensure everyone has the opportunity to learn Welsh

The Welsh language is an inherent strand of the fabric of our country but still feels inaccessible to too many. We believe that learning Welsh should be open to all. We will reform the teaching of Welsh in English medium schools, launch an intensive national campaign to encourage more parents to choose Welsh language education and make sure oral language skills suitable for the workplace are embedded in the Welsh language curriculum - to ensure everyone who wishes to speak Welsh can do so.

3 Campaign to cut VAT on tourism

Our culture, history and heritage all act as powerful attractions for tourists from the rest of the UK and around the world. At least 100,000 people are employed in the industry in Wales. To support this important industry, we want to see the VAT cut on visitor accommodation and attractions from 20% to 5%.

Fact: At least 100,000 people are employed in the tourism industry in Wales, 9% of the workforce.

(Source: StatsWales)

A Language for Everyone

The Welsh language is an inherent strand of the fabric of our country. We believe that everyone should be enabled to speak their native language, that everyone should be able to access good quality Welsh public services, and that learning Welsh should be open to all.

We will:

- Ensure Welsh Government policies undergo Welsh language impact assessment.
- Ensure all bodies in receipt of Welsh Government funding publish and implement a Welsh Language Policy.
- Ensure that Welsh public services are open and accessible to people of all backgrounds and cultures.

We recognise the value of distinctive Welsh language broadcasting and the important contribution of S4C in safeguarding our Welsh language and enriching the culture of Wales. We recognise the need for a sustainable funding basis to protect the future of Welsh language broadcasting. We will campaign to protect the funding and editorial independence of Welsh language broadcasters.

Everyone in Wales must have the right to speak and learn Welsh - whether you come from a Welsh-language family or are newly-arrived in our beautiful country, you should be able to speak Welsh in your community. We will promote Welsh education by:

- Reforming the teaching of Welsh in English medium schools as a key policy aim and duty of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and include further education provision to promote courses for post-16 learners.
- Launching an intensive national campaign to persuade more parents of young children to choose Welsh language education.
- Ensuring oral language skills suitable for the workplace are embedded in the Welsh language curriculum.
- Ensuring every primary and secondary school has sufficient numbers of teachers qualified and able to teach Welsh.
- Preparing individual strategies to support the Welsh language in communities with the highest proportion of Welsh language speakers, to maintain the language in its heartlands.
- Targeting Welsh speaking teenagers as a key group for the future of the Welsh language, increasing youth services for this group.
- Support moves to develop a Welsh Labour Market to connect demand for Welsh-medium services with those who can provide them, and take Welsh medium provision in all workforce planning strategies.
- Encouraging parents whose first language is English and whose children are at Welsh medium schools to participate in Welsh lessons.
- Introducing special provision for pupils to catch-up learning Welsh in order to enter Welsh-medium education at a later stage.
- Expanding the remit of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to include the FE sector, to support collaboration between FE colleges, and between the FE and HE sectors, in the development and provision of Welsh medium teaching and learning materials, and protect its funding.
- Changing the terms of the basic skills education programmes funded by European structural fund to establish Welsh as an essential basic skill.

The lack of provision for Welsh language speakers in the health care system can actively hamper their recovery - only 3-6% of people are actively offered healthcare services in Welsh. When an individual comes into contact with primary healthcare, it will often be during a period of frailty when they are feeling vulnerable. Individuals living with a wide variety of health issues such as dementia or experiencing a mental health crisis can experience severe difficulty in expressing their needs through a second language.

We will:

- Conduct a language skills audit in the health sector, using this to develop access to services in Welsh, including consulting on setting targets for recruitment of Welsh speakers - our proposals for targeted recruitment in rural areas, due to the higher numbers of Welsh speakers in rural areas, would help towards this, and Welsh language provision is a key to a national workforce strategy.
- Publicise the services that members of the public might reasonably expect to receive in Welsh.
- Promote the 'active offer' model, enabling it to be implemented systematically and effectively across primary care services.
- Ensure that forthcoming legislation and subordinate legislation reflects the need to promote the Welsh language within primary care services.

Housing and planning policy can be used to support the Welsh language.

We will:

- Support affordable housing in rural Welsh-speaking areas, ensuring young people can stay and support their communities.
- Review TAN 20.
- Make language impact assessments of proposed developments a statutory requirement before planning permission is granted.
- Ensure that language can be a material consideration determining planning applications where appropriate.

A Cultural Shift

From the Millennium Centre to Venue Cymru, from Cardiff Arms Park to Park Avenue, from the Eisteddfod to the Hay Festival, Wales has a bold and dynamic cultural life. Our beautiful, unique and original culture allows us to project ourselves on the world stage.

To support a rich cultural life in Wales, we will:

- Reinststate the Culture Ministry with responsibility for Culture, Tourism, Heritage and Broadcasting.
- Create a Wales Cultural Endowment, designed to build like a sovereign wealth fund to invest in the cultural sector.
- Establish a Cultural Enterprise Agency to give grants, advice and mentoring to those with small enterprises in arts, publishing, media and cultural retailing.

Our culture, history and heritage all act as powerful attractions for tourists from the rest of the UK and around the world. At least 100,000 people are employed in the industry in Wales - around 9% of our workforce. To support this important industry, we will:

- Campaign to reduce VAT on Visitor Accommodation & Attractions from 20% to 5%.
- Re-establish the Wales Tourist Board and improve co-ordination of visitor information.
- Develop a statutory requirement for local authorities to develop a local list of buildings which are considered historic assets for their areas.
- Attract more visitors to Wales' Places of Worship, including with an integrated strategy to promote faith tourism paths such as the Cistercian Way.
- Further develop the market from cruise ships.

With discussions at UK level on public broadcasting, the Welsh Liberal Democrats will defend Wales' voice in broadcasting by:

- Supporting Welsh Government being responsible for appointing Welsh members of the BBC and Ofcom.
- Pushing for the devolution of community radio licensing to the Assembly.
- Working with universities and FE colleges to act as hubs for radio stations, including training facilities in both technical and content skills.

We must also ensure that everybody has access to our cultural heritage. Whether that is making sure young people can learn about our history and continue our traditions, or protecting our museums and arts for generations to come. To protect our culture and defend our traditions we will:

- Ensure continued free entry to Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum sites for people of all ages.
- Bid for the Tour de France and Commonwealth Games, and work with Cardiff Council to enter a bid for the European Capital of Culture.
- Work with CADW to produce a category for listing buildings which illustrate important aspects of local social, economic, cultural or military history.
- Protect the grant for Arts Council Wales and Wales Arts International.
- Support Arts Council Wales in re-opening regional offices and work with Wales Arts International to build stronger cultural relationships worldwide.
- Establish an investment fund for young cultural entrepreneurs.
- Modernise the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act to take account of digital provision and the changing nature of public libraries and update local authorities' standards for provision.
- Ensure Estyn monitors schools on the range and quality of cultural learning, including extra-curricular opportunities.

Our communities are the frontline in our fight to protect Welsh culture. To enable local people, businesses, and councils to play their part in our cultural life, we will:

- Establish an Innovation Fund for businesses and Local Authorities which devise and implement the best ideas for improving cultural life.
- Institute an apprenticeship scheme for heritage-related crafts, including artwork restoration.
- Explore business rate relief for independent book and music stores to help protect the last stores in a town, providing that books and recordings from Welsh authors and artists are stocked.
- Give Councils a statutory duty of care for the cultural infrastructure and organisations and list sport, leisure provision and youth provision.

Sport and leisure remain a big part of Welsh culture. We will protect their provision and accessibility by:

- Working with the Sports Ground Safety Authority to prepare guidance under which domestic football clubs may introduce safe standing areas.
- Encouraging better recognition of the positive roles and impact of athletes and participants from under-represented groups.

Our Vision for an Internationalist Wales



“ It's awful seeing politicians demonising refugees, they are innocent people who have been forced out of their homes to find safety. We need to share responsibility with our European neighbours, not shy away from it.

”

- Jen, Vale of Glamorgan

“ We believe Wales should take our place on the world stage, and work together through the UK, EU and UN in order to spread peace and stability worldwide. We believe we are stronger together, and are better off leading in the EU, not leaving it. We believe we must show compassion to those less well off than ourselves, in a world full of chaos and turmoil.



”

- Rhys Taylor, candidate for Rhondda

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

1

Campaign for Wales to lead, not leave, the EU

With the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union fast approaching, Welsh Liberal Democrats are proud to be united for IN. Wales benefits from EU membership, receiving £144 million more every year in investment than membership costs us. We have always combined our recognition of the essential role of EU membership with a constant drive to make EU institutions more democratic, efficient, and transparent.

2

Double the international development budget

We are stronger when we work together. In Westminster, Liberal Democrats were responsible for ensuring the UK meets the UN target of pledging 0.7% of GDP towards foreign aid, and enshrined this in law. Wales should play our role in international development, building genuine partnerships with the developing world, involving marginalised groups in Wales, supporting cultural exchanges, and helping people out of poverty. We will cement Wales' position as a globally responsible nation.

3

Establish Wales as a 'Nation of Sanctuary'

We are privileged to live in relative security and liberty - and we must show our values of compassion to those in greatest need. Immigration and asylum are the responsibility of the UK Government, however there is much more that could be done to create a culture of hospitality and welcome for people seeking sanctuary. We will use devolved powers over equalities, housing and social care to make sure that all people living in Wales, including asylum seekers and refugees, are treated with equal respect and care across the country.

Fact: Almost a third of doctors in Wales studied outside the UK. (Source: General Medical Council)

Stronger IN

With the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union fast approaching, Welsh Liberal Democrats are proud to be united for IN.

Wales benefits from EU membership - 160,000 Welsh jobs are linked to our continued membership of the EU, over 10,000 Welsh companies trade in the EU's single market, and overall, Wales receives over £144 million per year more in EU investment than membership costs us.

The many benefits to Wales of EU membership include:

- Gaining access to the world's largest single market;
- Giving us our best hope for building a more peaceful world;
- Tackling climate change and biodiversity loss;
- Guaranteeing a wide range of workplace, consumer and citizens' rights; and
- Enabling law enforcement to work collaboratively across borders and so respond to the growing threat of organised crime in areas such as human trafficking.

We have always combined our recognition of the essential role of EU membership with a constant drive to make EU institutions more democratic, efficient, and transparent.

We believe Britain must look to lead, not leave, the EU. We will campaign for Wales and Britain to remain IN the EU.



Compassion for those in need

As we exercise our democratic rights in Wales, people are fleeing tyranny and war in Syria, desperate for a place of safety. We are privileged to live in relative security and liberty - and we must show our values of compassion to those in greatest need. We want Wales to be an inclusive and outward-looking country, welcoming refugees from persecution from all over the world.

Immigration and asylum are the responsibility of the UK Government, and we sought in Coalition to build a fair but reliable immigration system. In Wales, we will:

- Establish Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary, an open and welcoming place for those in need, and support cities establishing themselves as Cities of Sanctuary.
- Engage with the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme.
- Improve integration of refugees, through continued support for ESOL provision or Welsh lessons, and encouraging schools with large numbers of children speaking English as a second language to host English lessons for parents.
- Support schools in tackling discrimination against refugees and asylum seekers.
- Provide non-monetary short-term support for refugees and asylum seekers who are left destitute in Wales as a result of systematic delays out of their control.
- Support voluntary organisations to provide support for refugees, including submission of family reunion applications.

We must also play our part in supporting those who live in poverty around the world. Billions of people live in unsanitary conditions, are malnourished, or are without a stable education. In Coalition, we ensured that Britain meets the UN goal of 0.7% of national income being allocated to support the world's poorest people.

We will:

- Double Welsh Government funding for International Development.
- Ensure Wales's international public procurement is socially just, focusing on products which support people in poverty (such as Fairtrade goods) and discouraging purchase of things which make poverty worse (such as conflict minerals or unsustainable timber).
- Create a nation of ethical and informed young citizens of Wales and the world.



A Welsh Lib Dem Budget

Costings Annexe

Welsh Liberal Democrats are proud of producing costed manifestos. This has never been as important as it is in the current economic climate. The figures below illustrate how a Welsh Liberal Democrat Government will approach our first Welsh Liberal Democrat Budget. Our key priorities are set out at the start of each chapter of this manifesto, and they will be our primary focus to deliver.

Many of our core priorities represent regulatory changes which can be met by redirecting funding within existing budgets and reallocating staff. For example, establishing a Welsh Development Bank, carbon impact assessments on new laws, and developing a Community Bill of Rights should not result in additional direct costs which cannot be met from existing resources. Others primarily involve legislative changes such as policies to improve trust in politics, lowering the voting age, and promoting community budgeting. Some involve redirecting existing schemes towards new policy goals such as targeted recruitment for rural GP surgeries, encouraging parents to choose Welsh-medium education, promoting share farming, and establishing Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary.

We would establish a Student Living Support Grant in order to help students tackle their cost of living while at university. This would be funded by withdrawal of the Tuition Fee Grant – this would provide sufficient funding for the SLSG and for an influx of much-needed funding to HEFCW to support universities to teach and research. Our previous policy paper *Fairness and Freedom in Higher Education* developed costed proposals for this based varying levels of the SLSG. We estimate that a Student Living Support Grant of £2,500 per full-time student per year and the equivalent pro-rata for part-time students would result in at least £80 million additional funding for universities, including funding for improving accessibility and high-quality research. As this proposal is for reallocating funding within the same ‘pool’ of money – moving from deferring future debt to supporting students living costs and investing in university education now – we have not accounted for it in further detail in the costings tables below.

Our top three health priorities - ensuring more nurses on Welsh hospital wards, ending mental health discrimination and introducing an Access to GPs fund - will be our primary targets for any new funding within health. In particular, should the Government in Westminster maintain their manifesto commitment to increase funding for the NHS in England by £8 billion by the end of the Parliament, this will generate around £450 million extra in Barnett consequential for Wales.

We are committed to rooting out wasteful or inefficient spending - so that we can invest in programmes that will make a real difference to people's lives. We will drive forward a programme of value for money, to ensure that existing programmes meet rigorous standards of efficiency. In 2011, we proposed a series of efficiency savings such as rolling ring-fenced grants into the Revenue Support Grant and merging environmental bodies, which were later adopted by the Welsh Government. We have a track record of pressing the Welsh Government to spend taxpayer money wisely, and cut out waste.

We will reprioritise funding by asking Ministers to find efficiency savings within their departments of 1.5% in the Local Government, Communities and Tackling Poverty, and Economy, Science and Transport Main Expenditure Groups. The Welsh Government regularly reallocates from several hundred million up to half a billion pounds in underspends as a matter of course through their supplementary budgets.

By devolving functions such as public health (by abolishing Public Health Wales) and programmes such as Communities First direct to local authorities, we will reduce bureaucracy and enable savings from the Central Services and Administration Budget, particularly in terms of staff costs.

Revenue

Figures in £000s

Expenditure	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Establishing Regional Passenger Transport Authorities	1,210	1,210	1,210	1,210	1,210
Doubling Apprenticeship Starts	28,000	28,000	28,000	28,000	28,000
Expanding Knowledge Transfer Partnerships	210	210	210	210	210
Introducing the GP Access Fund	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000
Introducing the Infant Class Size Reduction Grant	6,930	6,930	6,930	6,930	6,930
Increasing the Pupil Premium to match the English Pupil Premium	16,814	16,814	16,814	16,814	16,814
Increasing the Early Years Pupil Premium to £1000	2,325	4,650	6,975	9,300	10,850
Ensuring a dedicated Housing Tribunal & more information for tenants and homeowners	60	60	60	60	60
Piloting a Deposit Return Scheme	1,107	1,107	1,107	1,107	1,107
Delivering a dedicated Area of Natural Constraint Scheme	20,687	20,687	20,687	20,687	20,687
Cutting Council Tax for energy efficient homes	605	1,814	3,628	6,045	12,090
Establishing a relief fund for new occupants of empty premises	90	90	90	90	90
Removing plant and machinery from rateable value	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Establishing a National Youth Assembly for Wales	418	418	418	418	418
Doubling International Development Spending	50	150	350	600	860
Expanding Childcare	63,700	63,700	63,700	63,700	63,700
Expanding the Youth Concessionary Fare Scheme	3,226	3,226	3,226	3,226	3,226
Total	182,432	186,066	190,405	195,397	203,252

Savings	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Bring unallocated funding to recommended levels	86,159	86,159	86,159	86,159	86,159
Efficiency savings of 1.5%	64,033	64,033	64,033	64,033	64,033
Scrapping Jobs Growth Wales and utilising new Apprenticeships spend	27,500	27,500	27,500	27,500	27,500
Removing the School Effectiveness Grant from the EIG	5,000	10,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Eliminating 'capacity building' funding from Regional Consortia	4,104	4,104	4,104	4,104	4,104
Eliminating funding to Regional Consortia for Qualified for Life	5,630	5,630	5,630	5,630	5,630
Scrapping the North-South Air Link*	0	0	1,600	1,600	1,600
Funding from the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Reducing Central Administration Staff Costs by 1% - devolving functions to local government	504	1,009	2,019	2,019	2,019
Scrapping the First Minister's Delivery Unit	358	358	358	358	358
Savings from Local Government Improvement BEL	230	460	460	460	460
Savings from Business Improvement BEL	2,083	4,166	4,166	4,166	4,166
Savings from Welsh Government Policy Development BELs	3,902	3,902	3,902	3,902	3,902
Savings in Corporate Programmes	250	500	1,000	1,000	1,000
Savings in Building Local Democracy BELs	174	349	698	698	698
Communities First Underspend	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Savings from discontinuing M4 Relief Road projects	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
Total	217,927	226,170	239,629	239,629	239,629
Contingency	35,495	40,104	49,224	44,232	36,377

* We will seek to end the subsidy as soon as possible, but we have only accounted for money available following the termination of contractual obligations.

Capital

Expenditure	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Funding 20,000 new homes including 2,500 Rent to Own homes	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
Expanding Childcare	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Introducing the Infant Class Size Reduction Grant	1,463	1,463	1,463	1,463	1,463
Introducing the GP Access Fund	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Total	64,462	64,462	64,462	64,462	64,462

Savings	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Bring unallocated funding to recommended levels	161,000	161,000	161,000	161,000	161,000
Total	161,000	161,000	161,000	161,000	161,000
Contingency	96,538	96,538	96,538	96,538	96,538

Our Legislative Programme

If we are to deliver for the people of Wales, we must use legislation proportionately and effectively.

We oppose the recent trend of the Welsh Labour Government for framework bills and fast-tracked or emergency legislation which undermines the capacity for effective legislative scrutiny and strong democratic accountability.

We will also aim to publish targets and statistical indicators alongside all government strategies and policies. We will add a carbon impact assessment to all new Welsh legislation, so that we can assess its environmental impact and ensure that we remain on track to meet emission reduction targets for Wales.

We will introduce:

- An Economic Growth Bill to establish a Welsh Development bank.
- A Regulatory Reform Bill to cut red tape and ensure proportional regulation.
- A Transport for Wales Bill to establish passenger transport authorities and re-regulate buses.
- A Nurse Staffing Levels Bill to extend safe nurse staffing levels to maternity wards, mental health wards and community care teams.
- A Health Safety Bill to establish a new health watchdog, independent of government.
- A Mental Health Bill to establish parity between physical and mental health.
- A Housing Bill to set targets for the number of affordable homes to be built during the term and to protect tenants.
- An Environment Bill to set binding targets for renewable energy, greenhouse gasses, and biodiversity, and to increase penalties for environmental crimes such as fly-tipping.
- A Bill of Rights for Communities to give local areas more powers over their own future.
- A Freedom for Local Government Bill to give councils the power of general competence, reduce the number of key performance indicators and repeals many of the restrictions on local action.
- A Rural Schools Bill to protect schools in rural Wales.
- A Youth Empowerment Bill to legislate for all principal authorities to be able to co-opt non-voting youth representatives and introduce Youth Councils where they do not already exist.
- A Children and Families Bill to coordinate early years support services, including free child care provision, play opportunities, parental and health support for families, and requirements for paediatric first aid training for early years staff.
- A Commissioners Bill to transfer responsibility for all Commissioners from Welsh Government to the National Assembly to ensure accountability and transparency of appointment, and recognise the title of a Children and Young People's Commissioner for Wales.
- A new Public Service Ombudsman Bill to give “own initiative powers” to proactively deal with public service complaints and systemic failures.
- An Autism Bill, to meet the needs of autistic people for the next Assembly term and beyond.
- An Additional Learning Needs Bill to support children and young people with ALN.

Policy Note

This manifesto represents our key priorities for the Fifth term of the National Assembly for Wales 2016-21, in a range of policy areas. Our party has passed a number of policy papers during the Fourth Assembly covering these topics in greater detail, which provides a broader context for how we will achieve our aims. Policies from these papers which are not included in this manifesto remain our party policy and we will seek to implement in future as the opportunity arises.

For more information, visit www.welshlibdems.wales/policy_papers

Equalities Note

Opportunities are not equally distributed in modern Wales. Your ethnicity, health, sexuality and gender still too often affect your chances in life, educational attainments, work prospects, how you are treated by the police and the justice system, and even how long you will live. That must change. There is a need for further legislative, regulatory and educational measures to keep moving towards a fairer Wales that works for everyone. A human rights-based approach to delivering services must be adopted and delivered across the public sector.

We have given consideration to equalities issues throughout this manifesto, as well as drawing out some specific priorities. Welsh Liberal Democrats will work to make sure that public services including health, education, housing and employment services are sensitive to the needs of everybody, including people with protected characteristics. This includes women and non-male individuals; LGBT+ individuals; Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals; and people with disabilities. We believe that nobody should be prevented from accessing key services because of their background.

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Welsh Liberal Democrats

A Wales that works for you

