

2021 MANIFESTO ENGAGEMENT

Welsh Liberal
Democrats
Democratiaid
Rhyddfrydol Cymru



Thank you for taking the time to engage with our manifesto development ahead of the 2021 Senedd election.

Below you will find a consultation document setting out our values and objectives across a range of sectors, and a set of key questions and challenges.

What are we looking for:

- Comments on the narrative and how to achieve the Wales we want to see
- How your ideas meet the values of the party and are liberal
- Answers to how we approach the issues set out in the questions
- How much these policies cost or save

Please return submissions, with organisation manifestos if you have them and haven't already sent them, to Chloe Hutchinson at chloe.hutchinson@libdems.wales by the **14th December**

CONTENTS

Our Vision for a Liberal Wales	2
Overarching Questions	3
Education	4
Economy and Taxation	6
Health, Social Care and Public Health	7
Housing and Homelessness	9
Environment and Energy	10
Agriculture	11
Public Services, Local Government, and Communities	12
Justice and Policing	13
Welsh Language, Culture, and Sport	14
Political Reform	15



OUR VISION FOR A LIBERAL WALES

The Welsh Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.

We have the deepest roots of any political party and have played a major role in creating a modern democratic Wales. For more than a century Welsh Liberalism has combined ambition for Wales with a commitment to social justice that is rooted in, and speaks with, our communities.

The contribution of the Welsh Lib Dems was crucial to establishing the Senedd, and subsequently in securing legislative and tax-varying powers for the institution. Welsh Liberalism blends an international outlook with a Welsh identity that are adaptable and open. Wales is changing and we face significant challenges at home and abroad that ask for our politics to stand up to meet those challenges. Our nation and its communities already face an underperforming economy, and levels of poverty and deprivation that are stubborn and deep-seated. The over-centralised UK union is creaking at the seams. Populist politics threatens the future of our democracy.

We champion the freedom, dignity, and well-being of individuals, and acknowledge and respect their right to freedom of conscience and their right to develop their talents to the full. We aim to disperse power, to foster diversity and to nurture creativity. We believe that the role of the state is to enable all citizens to attain these ideals, to contribute fully to their communities and to take part in the decisions which affect their lives.

However, for too many people, things aren't working the way they should. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only shone a spotlight on this, it has made things worse, especially for the most vulnerable in our society. **We need bold solutions to these challenges, for both dealing with the current crisis, in how we rebuild, and how we create a brighter future for the next generation.**

As Liberals we are optimistic, hopeful and look to the future.

A Liberal society is one where every one of us has the opportunity to achieve our potential and realise our ambitions, where no one is held back by where they were born or who they are. We share your priorities for Wales; where we all have access to a good education, good jobs, good public services, good homes, and a thriving planet.

This is the Wales we believe in.



OVERARCHING QUESTIONS

In approaching the 2021 Senedd Cymru elections we recognise that the decisions and actions of the next Welsh Government and Senedd in response to COVID-19, to Brexit, and to climate breakdown will last a generation. It is our view that we must ask more fundamental questions of what we are trying to achieve, and how we achieve it, in gearing our politics, our communities, and the people of Wales to meet those challenges head on.

Those questions ask about our *approach* to future challenges, rather than what set of policies or what specific spending should be. We would welcome your insight on how we can answer these questions as part of your priorities for the next Senedd and Welsh Government.

- 1. How do we build a “Doughnut Economy” that supports a thriving economy, ensures that nobody goes without the basic essentials needed to get ahead in life, and supports and maintains a thriving, habitable planet?**
- 2. What does a new Social Contract for the 21st Century look like? What does a social floor, hope for the future, and access to opportunity mean in practice? How do we ensure that every person has their basic needs met so they can take control of their lives?**
- 3. How do we create an ‘enabling state’ where government and society looks to and supports people's capacity to act and to lead change, rather than their deficits? What does this mean for economic priorities and our economic model?**



EDUCATION

Education has the potential to transform an individual's chances in life - that is why it has always been a priority for us. In Government, we are proud to have worked with the teachers, with parents, with pupils, and the wider education family to deliver wide reaching and radical reforms to drive up standards, deliver fairness, and give children the best start in life.

Over the Fifth Assembly, with Kirsty Williams MS in Government, we have:

- ❖ Invested in the teaching profession
- ❖ Protected small and rural schools
- ❖ Invested in the 21st Century schools project
- ❖ Developed the first ever 'made in Wales' curriculum
- ❖ Raised standards, achieving our best ever PISA performance
- ❖ Reduced infant class sizes across Wales
- ❖ Invested in the Pupil Development Grant, including support for school uniforms
- ❖ Improved digital access and literacy - ensuring that 100% of Welsh schools can now access super-fast broadband and distributing thousands of MiFi devices to support digitally excluded learners during the pandemic.
- ❖ Introduced a Personal Learning Account pilot to enable lifelong learning
- ❖ Implemented the Diamond Reforms in Higher Education, ensuring that Welsh students receive adequate support with living costs.

However, there is still a lot more to be done. **We want to see a system where everyone can access high quality education enabling them to get on in life and reach their potential.** We will continue to invest in schools and teachers and put the necessary resources in place to deliver the new curriculum.

Our Colleges and universities are also an essential part of the education landscape here in Wales, however they face huge challenges with both Brexit and COVID-19. The Diamond Reforms to HE have seen access grow, widening participation, and providing more Welsh students the opportunity to move on to postgraduate study. Both universities and colleges contribute hugely to the economy, through developing skills and training, and through research and development. This has become even more important in the need to respond to COVID-19. We want to see a system that centres partnership and collaboration, with learners, communities, and business. A system that not only promises lifelong learning but delivers it.



Schools and Teaching

- 1. The last few months have shown how central a role schools play in providing support for learners, families, and communities. How can schools better support the communities they are in? What more can be done during school holidays?**
- 2. Digital access is essential to learning. With significant investment in superfast broadband, Hwb, and other resources, what are the next steps Welsh Government need to take to ensure no-one is left behind?**
- 3. Spending per learner differs across local authorities, how do we move to a more sustainable and efficient system of school funding?**
- 4. Delivering an excellent education system relies on supporting and investing in teachers. How can we better recruit and retain teachers in Wales? What further support is needed in professional learning?**

Post-16 Education

- 1. What are the impacts of Brexit on the sector and how can we mitigate them?**
- 2. How do we ensure that everyone has a right to lifelong learning and can access meaningful opportunities no matter where they live?**
- 3. How should we respond to the changing needs of business and the economy with regards to skills, training, and post-16 learning?**
- 4. What role should universities and colleges play in our economy? What role should research and development play?**
- 5. How do we build a post-16 education and training sector that empowers people and gives them the tools they need to get into their desired career?**



ECONOMY AND TAXATION

We want to see a Welsh economy that balances the fundamental needs of people with the limited resources of our planet. We want an economy which supports businesses and entrepreneurs to create a stronger, fairer, more sustainable economy post COVID-19 and Brexit that supports communities and Wales to recover and thrive.

Our economy must support secure, well-paid work and good public services. It must recognise that work is not a guaranteed route out of poverty. We want to see an economy that ensures that work pays and that there is meaningful support for those that are unable to work, working with the UK Government to create a genuine social security system based on values of dignity and compassion. We will work with the UK Government to pilot a Universal Basic Income here in Wales.

We want to see an economy that works better for everyone, and our planet, embedding a green foundation to our economy and ensuring that working families have access to childcare to give families and children the support they need.

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will not shy away from, where appropriate, reforming taxes, introducing new taxes, or increasing taxes in the next Senedd term, if they enable us to create a fairer, greener and more caring Wales.

How do we build a “Doughnut Economy” that ensures that nobody goes without the basic essentials needed to get ahead in life, and supports and enables a thriving, habitable planet?

- 1. How do we create and maintain a supportive environment for business and entrepreneurs to thrive?**
- 2. How do we ensure that our economy and businesses can meet our climate obligations and our declaration of a climate emergency?**
- 3. How do we create and nurture economically and socially vibrant communities, across rural and urban areas of Wales?**
- 4. What does a fair deal for work look like that ensures that nobody goes without the basic essentials needed to get ahead in life?**
- 5. How does Wales respond to the impact of Brexit?**
- 6. How should we respond to the changing needs of business and the economy with regards to skills, training, and post-16 learning?**
- 7. What role should universities and colleges play in our economy? Is there a greater role that they can play?**
- 8. How do we prevent diversity in the workplace taking a step backwards as we prepare for Brexit and rebuild from the pandemic?**
- 9. What should our taxation priorities be if we want to support excellent public services, a thriving planet, a thriving economy, and tackle poverty and deprivation?**



HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE, AND PUBLIC HEALTH

In a fair and Liberal Wales individuals will enjoy seamless access to a range of health and social care services, available in the right place and at the right time according to that person's needs. Our health and social care systems should enable people to live healthily and live independently with control over their lives for as long as possible. Our social care system should provide individuals with support and equal access for all, regardless of their background and regardless of ability to pay. It will not discriminate on sexuality, gender, ethnicity, income, or geography; ensuring everyone has an equal right to live a long, healthy life.

We should seek to harness technological developments to create a truly accessible and empowering system of care where collaboration between services is encouraged, patients and professionals work together to co-produce care, and health and social care professionals are supported to provide the quality care they want to provide.

Our vision is of a truly cradle to grave health and social care system that empowers people to achieve and maintain good health and take control of their health. A system where mental health provision is prioritised and not stigmatised or ignored. Ours will be a truly compassionate, properly funded, and inclusive care system that supports healthy lives and excellence in our workforces. Supporting healthy lives will drive wider priorities and developments, from the homes we build, to the environment we build and maintain, and changing behaviours so we all lead healthier lives.

What is needed to create a healthier Wales where your health and access to health are not services selected according to your postcode or income?

- 1. How to create a social care service that is free at the point of use, promotes independence, and works in partnership with others to promote good health and wellbeing?**
- 2. How to get the best out of our health and social care workforce so that they have the resources and the support they need to provide care and assistance to those that need it?**
- 3. How to ensure people are supported to sustain good health and where your postcode does not determine your health outcomes? What can we do to prevent poor health?**
- 4. Few results have been achieved through our existing approach to mental health. How can we better reflect the social model of mental health in policy and the delivery of services?**
- 5. How can we improve access to essential services at a local level and ensure that investment is targeted at building capacity within frontline and preventative services? How does this differ between rural and urban geographies?**
- 6. How should we ensure that our workforces and patients have access to the latest technology and the latest medicines?**



7. **What needs to change about our approach to health, wellbeing, and mental health as a result of the pandemic? What can we also learn about our readiness and response to the pandemic in relation to workforces and services?**



HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

In a fair and Liberal Wales everyone will have access to affordable good quality housing which supports stable, healthy lives. Everyone will have a place to call home and the support they need to maintain it. Children and families across Wales should have access to the care and support they need when family and support networks break down.

We will ensure that services and workforces get the help they need to deliver on our vision of a social floor, preventing people from falling through the cracks in support services. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown just how many people are balancing the rising costs of living, rising costs of renting and stagnant wages, threatening to push people into homelessness. But it has also shown us that we can provide safe shelter for all and help end everyone's homelessness.

A housing market should provide choice and security for everyone, across a range of tenures. This will be a central component of ensuring that Wales is a healthy, connected nation; tackling loneliness, creating inclusive and accessible communities, and ensuring that all homes in Wales are habitable. Young people and families should be able to access good-quality, affordable homes in their communities.

Everyone will live in clean communities which support a healthy environment and healthy lives. All communities will have access to accessible, welcoming, and green public spaces that maintain healthy lives and reduce isolation.

- 1. How do we ensure sufficient housing supply, across all tenures, in communities across Wales? What can be done to ensure young people can afford a home in their community?**
- 2. How can we improve the quality of housing and eliminate fuel poverty? What role does housebuilding have in meeting our climate mitigation targets?**
- 3. How can we reduce isolation and loneliness, improve access to services, and create environmentally resilient communities?**
- 4. What more can be done to improve the standards and security in the Private Rented Sector?**
- 5. What steps do we need to take to prevent people from sleeping rough and in the long-term end homelessness in Wales? What powers does the Welsh Government need to achieve this?**
- 6. What role do wider public services and the public sector have in ending homelessness, ensuring sufficient housing supply, and in managing the quality and standards in the private rented sector?**
- 7. How do we tackle the challenges of second homes and holiday homes, and how do we balance that response with the role that tourism plays in supporting our economy?**



ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Our planet is in crisis. From the flooding across our communities to pollution, climate and ecological breakdown is affecting us all, and we need to act now. We can put the environment at the heart of rebuilding our economy from COVID-19, creating a fairer, more resilient economy that works for people and planet.

Despite the extensive economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, global emissions of greenhouse gases are projected to fall by only four to seven per cent during 2020. A future Welsh Liberal Democrat government would put the climate and our planet at the heart of its agenda for Wales, leaving a planet fit for the future.

The Welsh Liberal Democrats would introduce an emergency package of measures to kick-start a green economic recovery, cut household bills, and stop climate breakdown.

The party would deliver an investment - public and private - of **£1bn per annum on measures to stop the climate breakdown and decline in biodiversity, create new green jobs, and cut household bills.**

- 1. What steps could a Welsh Liberal Democrat government take within its first year to bring about meaningful change in relation to biodiversity and climate change mitigation?**
- 2. How can our commitment to maintaining a thriving planet for future generations support our economic priorities and support thriving local economies?**
- 3. What role can green investment play in our response to COVID-19 and Brexit, in relation to supporting new jobs and new businesses?**
- 4. How do we balance our commitment and declaration of a climate emergency with the nature of large-scale employment in Wales, such as Tata Steel, AirBus and GE Manufacturing, and the agricultural sectors?**
- 5. What should our priorities for tax reform be in relation to our climate, and how can this support wider social and economic objectives?**
- 6. What new infrastructure do we need to support a growth in green energy? What, if any, additional powers are needed to achieve this?**



AGRICULTURE

Welsh Liberal Democrats have always been passionate about protecting Wales' farming tradition in order to protect the land and natural environment, safeguard food security and sustain flourishing rural communities.

We believe that it is imperative farmers are incentivised for environmentally sensitive farming. Now that Welsh agriculture no longer benefits from European Union farm support, such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Rural Development Plan (RDP) and access to tariff free export markets, we must strive to create a custom-made policy that replicates the best practice of the earlier regime, while driving down red tape wherever possible. The Internal Market Bill and Trade Bill, currently before Parliament, make this much more challenging.

Agriculture for many is a way of life, a culture, and a community - so much more than just a means of making a living. Farmers put food on our table, providing food security for the nation, whilst enhancing the natural environment. But farm incomes are fragile, and the twin challenges of Brexit and COVID-19 foster a climate of uncertainty. In this context, it is regrettable that farmers wishing to modernise and diversify still find themselves facing planning obstacles, which can unfairly extend the process and reduce the cost-effectiveness of their business plan.

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 to ensure that all structures of farm support make farming more competitive and resilient, acknowledging the role of farmers as custodians of land and of our natural environment.

In the face of Brexit, COVID-19, and the Internal Market Bill, how do we build a thriving agricultural sector which supports communities and helps to meet our obligation to create a thriving planet?

- 1. What can Welsh Government do to support Welsh farms in the face of high tariffs? What should a replacement to CAP and the RDP look like?**
- 2. How can we better support upland farming?**
- 3. How can we best support farmers to diversify, reduce carbon emissions, improve resilience and competitiveness?**
- 4. How do we best support the farmers of the future, ensuring the next generation have the opportunities to be successful?**
- 5. What are the barriers to delivering mental health services and support in rural communities and how can we support charities and existing infrastructure to grow with demand?**



PUBLIC SERVICES, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AND COMMUNITIES

Coronavirus has shown just how much our communities and connection with others are important to us, as well as the crucial role that local government plays. Restrictions on how far we can travel has drawn attention to how crucial local services and our highstreets are.

Despite some reforms in recent years to drive collaboration between public services, we believe we can go much further in creating seamless access to public services, where resources are maximised to deliver the best outcomes for individuals. This includes revisiting our approach to commissioning of services, of funding, of democratic accountability and wider reform of public service delivery.

Local government and public services have faced huge cuts to spending in recent years, which now threaten the efficacy of services. Our view is that Council Tax and Business Rates are no longer fit for purpose. We would invite responses that set out proposals for tax reform.

Public transport has been the Cinderella of the transport debate for too long, with the COVID-19 pandemic highlighting how fragile our public transport networks are. A properly funded, accessible, efficient, and green public transport network is essential to ensure communities are connected, people can access services, and to cut air pollution. What reform is necessary to achieve this ideal?

COVID-19 has tested our public services and local government to the limit, what can we learn and what should our priorities for public services be?

- 1. What has COVID-19 told us about the difference joined-up, integrated and collaborative public services can make to outcomes for people and communities? What can we learn from this for future reform?**
- 2. Local government income has been pushed during the outbreak, with national rebalancing mechanisms making up for lost income or additional expenditure. What should be our priorities for local government funding in the future, and what should our approach be to empowering local government and communities to innovate and drive positive outcomes?**
- 3. How do we get the best for and best from our public sector workforces, and what more can be done to build capacity, support innovation and excellence, and ensure dignity for workforces and those accessing public services?**
- 4. How do we make the planning system work for local communities, and how do we ensure that house building supports sustainable, connected, and vibrant communities?**
- 5. How do we ensure that local communities and local services have the scope, capacity, and resources to shape services in response to need and local priorities? Is reform and devolution of power necessary to achieve this?**
- 6. How do we ensure that those with lived experience of accessing services are able to shape change and priorities for services and service delivery? How may we achieve this?**



JUSTICE AND POLICING

In too many areas our policing policies have been driven by politicians' desire to appear 'tough on crime' with little regard for what works or for those affected by those policies. We reject this approach and will always stand up for effective, evidence-based policies over those built on prejudice and dogma.

Police and Crime Commissioners have failed to make a significant impact on the lives of the people they serve. This is not entirely their fault, as the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner is deeply flawed. We were deeply sceptical about the creation of PCCs. We still believe the roles should be abolished and replaced with accountable Police Boards made up of local councillors.

However, with the Police and Crime Commissioner elections currently scheduled to take place alongside the Senedd elections, we believe they are an opportunity to create fairer, freer, and safer communities across Wales.

- 1. What improvements could be made through the devolution of Criminal Justice in our response to homelessness, youth justice, poverty, and taking a health and care approach to addiction?**
- 2. What should our priorities be for Community Policing?**
- 3. What should a more compassionate and health-focused approach to drugs, homelessness, and mental health crisis look like?**
- 4. How do we prevent and tackle rural crime?**
- 5. How can public services, the third sector, and the criminal justice sector work together more effectively to protect and support sex workers?**
- 6. How can we ensure a more holistic approach to tackling domestic abuse?**



WELSH LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND SPORT

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

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. However, the Welsh language faces significant challenges, from young Welsh speakers moving out of the community, the impact of planning, to the growing pressures on Welsh-speaking communities, family farms, and the arts and cultural sector.

Through the creation of the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, we have made significant progress, however we need further reform and a revisiting of our aspirations to ensure that we can create a truly bilingual Wales that cherishes its history and culture as part of a modern, forward looking, and inclusive Wales.

- 1. Does Cymraeg 2050 remain relevant, and what revisions are needed to achieve or go further than Cymraeg 2050 offers?**
- 2. How do we ensure that people in all parts of Wales have access to Welsh language services and opportunities, including across all public services?**
- 3. What measures are needed to support an accessible and thriving Welsh-language arts and cultural sector - not including the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol or Eisteddfod yr Urdd and Royal Welsh Agricultural Show - across Wales?**
- 4. What role should house-building and placemaking play in supporting the growth of the Welsh language?**

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. Playing an important role in the tourism industry that is vital to so many parts of Wales, as well as enriching our lives and providing opportunities to learn from our histories, the cultural industries do so much for Wales. **Tourism and the cultural sector have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, how do we ensure not just that they survive, but thrive?**



POLITICAL REFORM

Politics should deliver for people, however it is clear that isn't currently always the case. With a lack of respect between governments, unfair voting systems, intimidation and abuse, and a Parliament and council chambers that do not reflect the diverse backgrounds and experiences across Wales, it is clear that something needs to change.

The Liberals Democrats are proud to have championed political reform and constitutional change at all levels. From arguing for votes at 16 and proportional representation to ensure that every vote matters, to delivering more powers to the Senedd whilst in government at Westminster.

Brexit and COVID-19 have highlighted just how broken our constitutional arrangement is and that the status quo is not good enough. From COVID-19 and the economic, social, and political fallout from Brexit, devolution is no longer a suitable approach to managing the relationships between the nations of the UK and Westminster. We believe in a federal UK and will forge a new relationship between the nations of the United Kingdom; a relationship founded on mutual respect, trust, and responsibility to each other.

- 1. What should be our priorities for further devolution of powers, and for what purpose? What should the future of our relationship with the other nations of the UK be?**
- 2. How do we ensure that every vote counts at both a Senedd and local government level?**
- 3. What measures should the Welsh Government take to increase diversity and representation in public and political life?**
- 4. What reforms need to be made in the Senedd to deliver effective scrutiny?**
- 5. What needs to change to improve intergovernmental relationships, despite political differences?**
- 6. What reform is needed in local government to ensure that local governments have the capacity, the resources, and economies of scale to deliver effective, efficient, and sustainable public services? What roles do town and community councils play in achieving better outcomes for people and communities?**