

Spring Conference 2021

Put Recovery First - Manifesto Motion

Proposed by: Policy Development Committee

Conference notes:

1. The continued impact of both Brexit and COVID-19 on our economy, health and wellbeing, and our environment.
2. The contribution of key workers, volunteers, and communities throughout COVID - delivering above and beyond despite the huge strain and stress.
3. The success of the Welsh Liberal Democrats during this Senedd term in responding to the issues facing people across Wales, through the hard work and rapid responses of our Education Minister, Kirsty Williams MS.
4. Devolution is under threat, at all sides, from those that believe Wales should lose its freedoms, or parties seeking an unsettling and distracting independence referendum.

Conference believes:

- A. The main challenges for the next Welsh Government will be:
 - a. Rebuilding our communities after COVID-19, enabling the people of Wales to bounce back, quickly, from the biggest crisis we have seen in generations;
 - b. The impact and uncertainty of Brexit on our economy, industries, agriculture, creative world, travel and much, much more;
 - c. Halting climate and ecological breakdown, and putting the needs of our planet at the heart of every action.
- B. Our first priority must be to recover from COVID and create a better future for the people of Wales and our planet.
- C. Decisions about Wales must be made by the people of Wales. Wales will thrive in a new, federal United Kingdom - free to pursue its own destiny, in a Union of equals.

Conference further believes our recovery should focus on three key areas:

- i. **Recovery for our Economy** – in the face of both Coronavirus and Brexit the Welsh Lib Dems will support jobs, businesses, town centres and high streets so local people and our businesses can thrive.

*We'll do this by creating **a new Welsh Towns Fund, committing £500m** over the next 5 years to invest in the future of our town centres and high streets.*

- ii. **Recovery for our Planet** – the Coronavirus has been difficult on us all and it feels like all other big issues have been stopped in motion - but the clock is ticking on the future of our planet. We'll do everything in our power to protect our planet for future generations.

*We'll do this by investing **£1bn per year to face up to the climate emergency**. This investment will help us make homes warmer and more energy-efficient, cut household energy bills and tackle fuel poverty, invest in cleaner, greener transport, take action against biodiversity loss and flooding.*

- iii. **A Caring Recovery** – our Coronavirus response asked us all to make sacrifices and for many of us our mental health and wellbeing suffered. We'll create a more caring Wales by standing up for our carers and invest in keeping people well. We will build a caring society, and improve the lives of millions.

*We'll do this by taking a cross-government approach to mental health and wellbeing from schools to community services, and **increase spending on mental health services**.*

Conference further notes:

1. **People are worried about being left behind - losing jobs and livelihoods, stagnant wages, the rising cost of living, the lack of opportunity, feeling disconnected from the world around them.**

Conference calls for:

- a. Secure, well-paid jobs that allow everyone to meet their basic needs, to thrive and to grasp opportunity.
- b. Thriving, connected communities that give people access to services, work, opportunities, friends and family.
- c. A fair chance to get ahead and the support to rethink and reshape their aspirations when times change.

2. People are concerned about the irreversible damage we're doing to our planet, and the lack of action to protect our planet. Conference calls for:

- a. Radical action to stop climate breakdown and get Wales to carbon zero, create clean, green energy, and move away from fossil fuels, informed by a programme of Citizens' Assemblies across Wales.
- b. Tackle fuel poverty and create more energy efficient homes and buildings in towns and cities across Wales.
- c. Action to protect our natural environment and biodiversity, including action on flooding, habitat loss, and loss of open, public green space.

3. People have seen how unprepared our Governments were for COVID-19, but also how our incredible care and health staff responded. Conference calls for:

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- a. Health and social care systems where staff have the resources, the support, and paid at the Real Living Wage, so they feel able to do their absolute best.
- b. Parity of esteem for mental health services, including a wider focus on trauma-informed approaches how people can live healthily and well.
- c. The right care, in the right place, at the right time, with seamless access to services.

4. People are worried their families will be disadvantaged by disruption to learning, adults are worried about their jobs and the need to re-skill during a recession. Conference calls for:

- a. Our education system to get the basics right, so every learner has access to a great education with high standards where they can achieve their best.
- b. Wales to be a nation of opportunity, where each of us has the opportunity to thrive, through training opportunities and a genuine right to life-long learning.
- c. Equal opportunity for every child, ensuring that nobody is left behind, including tackling school exclusions, ending school holiday hunger, and tackling the attainment gap.

5. People have seen the true value of the home, and pressures of inadequate housing during COVID-19 - people on the streets without protection, poor-quality housing, and people without any chance of affording a home. Conference calls for:

- a. Everyone to have a safe and secure place to call home, ensuring we build enough social homes to improve home security, and to end homelessness
- b. Everyone to have a Right to Adequate Housing, where people are secure in their own homes, we route out malpractice like the cladding scandal, and that housing is affordable for all.
- c. Thriving communities where people can live, where services are accessible locally, with access to green spaces, and that developers contribute fairly to communities.

6. People have told us they feel less equal than ever before - that they struggle to make ends meet, and they feel like one small step in the wrong direction could leave them in grave financial situations.

Conference calls for:

- a. Government to take action to end the burden of bad debt that holds so many people back, stops them from getting ahead, and limits the opportunities available to them.
- b. A Universal Basic Income, ensuring everyone has the resources to meet their basic needs and a coherent, joined-up Welsh benefits system that means that everyone gets the help and financial support they're eligible for and a genuine safety net for when the going gets tough through.
- c. Fairer taxes, replacing council tax and business rates which hurt people and businesses, and Wales from thriving.

7. People have said that they feel increasingly at risk, with more and more people feeling that their voices are not being heard, particularly women, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, and people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. Conference calls for:

- a. Government to publish pay gaps, and ensure that recruitment at all levels of the civil service, and elsewhere in public services, is blind so that systemic inequality is tackled.

- b. Action to ensure systemic inequalities, and their impact on outcomes in life, are rigorously examined across Wales, so that our recovery is fair for all.
- c. Action and funding to support organisations that challenge the status quo, and make all of Wales better by voicing that challenge.

8. People in our rural communities all across Wales are feeling left behind, ignored by the betrayal of the Tory Government in Wales, and ignored by a Cardiff-centric Labour Party. Conference calls for:

- a. Thriving communities, where people feel connected to each other through reliable and affordable public transport, and broadband and mobile phone connection.
- b. A lifeline for agriculture and farming in the face of Brexit, ensuring that the backbone of rural Wales can thrive and provide opportunity to people and communities.
- c. Opportunity closer to home, where people of all ages can afford to buy homes, get good jobs, and access quality and reliable services.

9. People in our arts communities say their sector has been gutted by the lack of support from governments across the UK, and we're behind on our ambitions and targets for the Welsh language and culture. Conference calls for:

- a. A genuinely bilingual education system, where every child has the opportunity to be educated through the medium of Welsh, leave school able to speak Welsh, and able to enjoy the range of cultural opportunities available to them.
- b. A truly bilingual nation, where people can meaningfully work, start businesses, access services, access opportunities, and live through the medium of Welsh.
- c. A second chance for arts and culture - built on the amazing, grassroots talent we have in Wales, finding local, homegrown talent that doesn't rely on big, traditional structures in the arts sector.

10. People say their voices are lost in a broken system, where some votes mean more than others, and that local councils feel more and more distant from people. Conference calls for:

- a. Fair elections, where every vote matters and people's voices are heard, not just at the ballot box but every day by those in power, including through Citizens' Assemblies.

- b. A stronger, more effective and accountable Senedd and Welsh Government with the right powers to face and shape our future.
- c. A fairer, equal relationship with the other nations in the United Kingdom, where we are free to make our own decisions about what works for us here in Wales but face and tackle global challenges together.
- d. Communities to have more power over local services, local facilities, and the future of their communities.

Conference calls on the Welsh Liberal Democrats Policy Development Committee to produce a manifesto that sets out the aspirations outlined in this motion, and which puts recovery first.

Please note: This motion was a holding motion to which one amendment has been submitted by the Policy Development Committee. As it was submitted by the proposers of the motion, it now forms the substantive motion. No vote was needed on this amendment and it should be treated as if it is the original motion.