

Spring Conference 2021

Put Recovery First – Economic recovery for Wales

Proposed by: Policy Development Committee

Conference Notes:

1. That for too many people, things aren't working as they should. Too many live in poverty and inequality, trapped by low wages, gaps in social security and rising living costs, or are held back because of who they are or where they live.
2. That the Coronavirus outbreak has deepened these inequalities as well as creating new ones which will be felt for years to come.
3. That the Coronavirus pandemic, and the impact of our departure from the European Union will cause ongoing uncertainty for businesses, including the loss of significant financial support for Welsh communities.
4. That the decades-long and deep-seated weaknesses and underperformance of the Welsh economy will be exacerbated by the Coronavirus crisis and Brexit.

Conference Believes:

- A. That this should be a moment to reset the dial on growing levels of inequality, poverty, isolation, climate, and ecological breakdown. We must rethink our approach to creating a fairer, greener economy that ensures that nobody goes without the basic essentials needed to get ahead in life, and supports a thriving, habitable planet.
- B. That by harnessing technological advances and focusing on environmental and economic sustainability, Wales can develop a stronger, more resilient, and more inclusive economy.
- C. That our new economy must value the role of the key workers who helped maintain our standard of living during the pandemic, including taking steps to provide improved employment rights and terms where necessary.
- D. That the current devolution settlement is insufficient and not fit for purpose.
- E. That GDP and GVA no longer represent adequate measures of prosperity in its broader sense, and that as a society we need to move to more meaningful measures of wellbeing.

Conference calls for, in the face of the Coronavirus pandemic and Brexit, a recovery that:

1. **Support businesses, entrepreneurs, and workers through:**

- a. Support for highstreets, towns, and city centres to thrive, including a new Welsh Towns Fund of £500m over 5 years to invest in the future of our town centres and high streets.
- b. An Economic Development Bill, creating and re-shaping the infrastructure and support businesses need to thrive, promoting high-value enterprise and employment.
- c. A framework that gives priority to local businesses and contractors to drive local investment and job creation, including opportunities for young people.
- d. A Job Creation Premium, offsetting the initial costs of recruitment and training through a public sector grant for businesses looking to grow.
- e. The Scrapping of Business Rates which act as a disincentive against innovation and investment and replace them with a Land Value Tax.
- f. A Rural Economy Taskforce to examine the long-term needs and future of our rural economy, including the tourism industry.
- g. Stronger rights for workers to request flexible working and home working from day one of employment.

2. Support for families and households to get ahead through:

- a. A Debt Bonfire, writing off the debt of the 200,000 poorest households who face the burden and consequences of debt.
- b. Seeking the devolution of some elements of Social security, complete with the necessary funding of some elements of Social Security, as in Scotland, to create a coherent Welsh Benefits System ensuring families in Wales are not at risk of poverty and inequality.
- c. Creating a Living Wage and Living Hours nation, boosting incomes and giving greater security and certainty to workers, especially those on zero-hour contracts.
- d. An overhaul of Council Tax, creating a fairer, more equitable system that is fair for households and provides fair funding for councils.
- e. Working with the UK Government to roll out a Universal Basic Income, an unconditional payment to all citizens, regardless of income, to ensure nobody goes without the resources to meet their basic needs.

3. A Greener, more resilient economy through:

- a. A large-scale programme of investment in renewable energy and climate mitigation measures such as green homes and retrofitting homes.
- b. A focus on green growth, decarbonising the economy and creating new, high-quality and sustainable employment.

- c. creating long-term stability for green industries through financial support to promote new, green jobs and innovation and ensuring Government support for business meets strict sustainability criteria.

4. Create a more connected Wales through:

- a. Ensuring that all communities have access to superfast broadband and mobile phone signal, eradicating not-spots.
- b. Using the trend towards more remote working to breathe opportunity into areas which have struggled since the decline of heavy industry.
- c. Refocusing public spending to green projects, public transport and active travel to keep people connected to each other, to work, to services and opportunities.
- d. A next-generation investment in technology, supporting public services, business, schools, and communities to access the best digital technology to help stimulate economic recovery.

5. Creating an economy fit for the 21st Century through:

- a. Greater integration with our universities and colleges to support efforts to up-skill workers, drive innovation and research.
- b. Proposals for a programme of Recovery Rewards, providing cash prizes to those who invent outstanding solutions to challenges that we refuse to tolerate in our 'new normal'.
- c. Abolishing Section 106 developer community contributions and replace it with a Development Levy, payable at the point where planning permission is granted.
- d. An SME-led international strategy to build a strong global brand for Wales, providing businesses with access to international trade networks, export opportunities and investment.

6. Greater power for the Welsh Government and councils to act through:

- a. Greater fiscal devolution to Wales, including greater powers for Government to borrow and greater control of long-term fiscal planning, so that strategic decisions about the future of the Welsh economy are taken in Wales, not in London.
- b. Passing a People's Procurement Act, creating more flexible rules which give local authorities greater scope to invest in longer-term contracts, providing certainty for themselves and for commissioned providers. We will create a Partnership Fund to support the new arrangements, which local authorities can draw down.

Amendments:

Amendment 1 - Welsh Young Liberals

Insert new conference calls for 1d and renumber accordingly

“Delivering high quality apprenticeships, in which time for formal training is protected, in a range of areas including the green economy.”

Amendment 2 - Welsh Young Liberals

Insert new Conference calls for 5e and renumber accordingly

“A new Creative Strategy for Wales, including a long-term strategy for live music, which enables the arts and creative industries to play a central role in the healing and recovery of the nation”