

Welsh Liberal Democrats

Youth Mini-Manifesto

**Our plan to put recovery first for all young
people in Wales.**

Foreword

I am honoured to be able to introduce this manifesto - the first year that 16 and 17 year olds vote in the Senedd elections. The Welsh Liberal Democrats are proud to be at the cutting edge of doing things for young people; cheaper bus travel, improved educational outcomes, the best funding arrangement for our students, more young people going in to apprenticeships, and our new Erasmus programme.

We want to put recovery first - the recovery for jobs, the recovery for mental health and carers and the recovery for our environment. The option to focus on anything else is foolhardy, and will mean we are distracted on rebuilding our future for our young people. We want to listen to you and be able to focus on some of our progressive policies such as Universal Basic Income and a debt bonfire. We want a vision that puts people and the planet at the forefront of everything they do.

The Welsh Liberal Democrats are at the forefront of making sure we increase powers to the Welsh Senedd, and making sure we have a more equitable tax system. We stand for equality and fairness, for community and compassion, and for a distinctive Welsh voice

Thankyou/Diolch

Jane Dodds

Leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats

Our Priorities

Recovery for our Economy - help our high streets, towns and city centres, and support small businesses to thrive and adapt.

In the face of both Covid-19 and Brexit we will support businesses towns, city centres and high streets across Wales so local people and our businesses can recover and thrive. We will make funding available to invest in digital connectivity, bring buildings back into use, to invest in infrastructure, and to create accessible and welcoming places to visit that support jobs, businesses and workers.

Recovery for our Planet - create a package of investment of £1bn per year to fight the climate emergency.

The pandemic has been difficult for us all and it feels like all other big issues have been set aside - 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 and in doing so we'll stimulate our economic recovery.

A Caring Recovery - we will provide 24/7 crisis mental health care.

Our Covid-19 response asked us to all make sacrifices and for many of us our mental health and wellbeing has suffered. We'll create a more caring Wales by standing up for our carers and investing in keeping people well. We will build a caring society and improve the lives of millions, helping people to recover from the trauma of the last year.

Health and Social Care

We will:

- Create a step change in our approach to mental health, increasing the share of funding to 13% of health spending by 2028, delivering:
 1. A 24/7 mental health crisis care system
 2. Improved access and choice in psychological therapies
 3. Reduced waiting times for services
- Ensure there is a minister responsible for mental health, ensuring collaboration and partnership working across government.
- Set targets to end the need for Out of Area placements that see children sent far from home, their family, and friends.
- Equalise pay and conditions across the social care sector, ensuring that all care workers are paid the Real Living Wage.
- Streamline social care services and practices, working towards the creation of a single National Care Service and the integration of health and care in Wales.
- Pass a Clean Air Act in the first 100 days to tackle dirty air and the poor health outcomes it causes.
- Ensure that Health Impact Assessments are embedded in planning decisions and wider decision making.

- Develop legislation that will protect transgender healthcare rights in law, using our devolved powers over health to protect Gillick competency for young people.
- Support efforts for full recognition and protection from discrimination for all gender identities under the law and, where possible, within devolved powers, continue to work towards reform of gender recognition certificates, ensuring Welsh services are fully accessible.
- Invest in access to services and develop telemedicine and remote consultations, including for abortion advice and the Welsh Gender Service.
- Commit to ending new transmissions of HIV by 2030, and tackle stigma and discrimination.

Education

We will:

- Provide free school meals throughout the school holidays and fund programmes that tackle hunger, isolation, and exclusion during the school holidays.
- Embed a right to lifelong learning: expanded Personal Learning Accounts will ensure that everyone, no matter their background, age or location in Wales, can benefit from free, flexible and accessible courses to gain new skills and qualifications.
- End digital exclusion at all levels of education, supporting the development of strong digital skills and access to digital resources.
- Continue funding to give our poorest pupils the same opportunities as their peers, from helping to cover the costs of school uniforms and sports kits, to supporting trips and IT equipment.
- Continue to support students through focusing support on living cost, working to close the gaps between social security and student finance, and prioritising a student mental health strategy.
- Expand degree apprenticeships, including at postgraduate level, diversifying the subject areas available, and creating more routes into employment.

The Economy and Jobs

We will:

- Create a £500m fund to help our high streets, towns and city centres, and support small businesses across Wales to thrive and adapt.
- Introduce a package of measures to boost incomes, create jobs - especially green jobs, and tackle poverty.
- Freeze business rates for the life of the next Senedd and in the long-term, replace business rates with a fairer, more supportive system.
- Introduce a Business Rate Investment Relief Fund - supporting businesses to invest, and targeting productivity and decarbonisation measures.
- Invest in broadband and mobile phone connectivity to enable businesses to better compete online, including providing training and support to enable businesses transition to a new 'virtual high street'.
- Establish a Job Creation Premium, offsetting the initial costs of recruitment and training for businesses looking to grow. This fund will explicitly include support for businesses that wish to invest in disabled employees.
- Work with the UK Government to trial a nation-wide Universal Basic Income.
- Create a package of investment of £1bn per year to fight the climate emergency, creating new jobs, stability for supply chains and businesses, and investing in new technology.

Housing

We will:

- End homelessness through a mixture of house building, funding for services, and new legislation to ensure nobody goes without the help they need to escape homelessness.
- Build 30,000 new social homes for rent, ensuring that people on low incomes or people who have had an experience of homelessness can access a safe and secure home.
- Invest record sums in retrofitting housing to be accessible, greener, and more efficient.
- Continue the Rent to Own scheme that has helped people to own their own home for the first time.

Poor quality housing in Wales currently costs the NHS in Wales around £67m per year - money spent treating specific problems rather than preventing them in the first place.

Under our plans the average household could save over £600 a year if homes were designed to generate, store and release their own solar energy and heat pump technology.

Our plans would:

1. Create 10,000 full time equivalent jobs across Wales over 15 years
2. Generate around £2.2bn for the Welsh economy
3. Reduce energy consumption and energy bills for households

The Environment and Climate Change

We will:

- Invest in the infrastructure required to increase the capacity for renewable energy production. This would include the implementation of a grid system upgrade, informed by the National Infrastructure Commission tasked with carrying out a strategic review.
- Roll out electric vehicle charging and electric heat pump technology in Mid-Wales, alongside additional onshore wind capacity built to take advantage of significant untapped wind resource in Mid-Wales, utilising the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) estate to secure a return for Welsh taxpayers.
- Work with the UK Government to ensure that it only enters into trade agreements under which imported goods meet the high environmental, food quality and animal welfare standards expected of home-produced food.
- Make every town in Wales a Tree Town, with every council preparing a long term Tree and Woodland Strategy to deliver and sustain a minimum of 20% tree cover in urban areas and 30% tree cover for all new developments.
- Pass a Wildlife Act for Wales, creating clarity and consistency on the policy and legislation that protects wildlife.
- Pass a Green Homes Act to help cut average household energy bills by £500 per year and build smarter, more energy efficient homes.

Transport

We will:

- Make sure public transport works for everyone. Our Bus Bill will ensure that routes meet community needs, ticket fares are affordable and flexible, timetables meet different needs, and bus stops and train stations are accessible.
- By 2025, introduce free public transport for young people up to the age of 25, as part of our plan to give the next generation the best opportunities.
- Spend at least 10% of the transport budget on active travel, ensuring that local decision making prioritises safer and accessible walking and cycling routes.

Language and Culture

We will:

- Pass a Welsh Language Education for All Act, normalising the Welsh language in education including for life-long learning and in post-16 education.
- Support and enable the growth of rural, Welsh-speaking communities through a package of policies and funding.
- Ensure that public services and health and care services are available to all through the medium of Welsh, by providing improved workforce planning, access to training and funding.
- Establish a Rural Economy Taskforce to examine the long-term needs of our rural economy, including the tourism industry.
- Continue to campaign for the devolution of powers over S4C and other public service broadcasting matters.

Rights and Equality

We will:

- Make a national, cross-government commitment to strengthen the voices of care-experienced young people in shaping their care and futures.
- Ensure that a children and young people's rights approach is adopted across all public services.
- Introduce a requirement for health and education services to commission advocacy services for children and young people, so all children and young people have support to understand their rights.
- Take action against hate crime and race inequality in Wales through measures dealing with workplace inequality, access to services, and data monitoring.
- Establish a Commission to investigate what services can do to prevent violence against women and girls and to support victims of abuse.
- Adopt a multi-agency and holistic strategy to tackle hate crime, including educational interventions.
- Deprioritise pursuing convictions for drug possession offences and divert resources towards targeting trafficking.
- Incorporate UN Conventions, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCPRD), the UN Convention on Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) into Welsh law.

Democracy

We will:

- Work towards a stronger Wales as part of a federal United Kingdom, with an immediate transfer of financial and other powers to the Welsh Government to support our recovery.
- Introduce a proportional voting system, for Senedd elections and all local authority elections.
- Increase the number of Members of the Senedd to between 80-90.
- Introduce a programme of Citizens' Assemblies, tasked with understanding, agreeing, and shaping recommendations and actions to tackle the big issues facing our country in the years ahead. This could include social care funding, the climate emergency, and public spending.