



# AUTUMN CONFERENCE 2015



## SWANSEA - 14 NOVEMBER

## MOTIONS PASSED



# **POLICY MOTIONS**

## **PM1: A Better Deal for Renters in Wales**

*IR Cymru*

### Original Motion

#### **Conference Notes:**

1. Over the last decade, the private rented sector has expanded rapidly, and currently houses as many people as the social rented sector.
2. The Welsh Government's Housing Act (Wales) 2014 will include a new licensing and registration scheme for all landlords in Wales from September 2015.
3. Plans were introduced under the Coalition Government to require letting agents to publish full details of the fees they charge.
4. The Citizen's Advice Bureau has revealed that tenants are frequently charged fees on average of around £337, often hidden by letting agents.
5. Evidence by Shelter Scotland demonstrates that after abolishing letting agency fees that landlords in Scotland were no more likely to have increased rents since 2012 than landlords elsewhere in the UK.
6. There are varying planning and licensing arrangements for HMOs across Wales and the UK, with Local Authorities in England being given additional powers to manage Houses in Multiple Occupation and that powers include the use of Article 4 Directives, which removes permitted development rights in specific geographical areas, and requires planning permission for all new development and any renovations to existing buildings.
7. That some tenants in Wales have access to representation and redress through:
  - a. The Residential Property Tribunal Wales, established in 2004, as an independent tribunal set up to resolve disputes relating to private rented and leasehold property, and
  - b. Welsh Tenants which exists to provide a representative voice for tenants in social housing in Wales.
8. The Welsh Government's Renting Homes Bill which seeks to reform the legal basis for renting a home from a private landlord or community landlord, including local authorities and registered landlords.
9. Liberal Democrat plans to reduce carbon emissions emitted by UK households through the Green Deal, the Green Buildings Act, and improving the standard of private rented and social housing, requiring these homes to be upgraded to Band C by 2027.

#### **Conference Supports:**

1. Opposition to Welsh Labour Government plans within the Renting Homes Bill to weaken tenants' rights by removing the six-month moratorium on evictions.
2. Plans to clamp down on retaliatory evictions by giving Courts the discretion to refuse to make a possession order.
3. Amendments to add definitions of disrepair to the Renting Homes Bill to ensure the maintenance of standards.

#### **Conference Believes:**

1. The Private Rented Sector (PRS) is an important part of a modern housing market and provides homes to a wide variety of households.
2. Tenants should not expect poor-standards, poor-maintenance, and weaker rights than homeowners.

3. Steps taken by the Welsh Government to better regulate the sector are welcome but must go further to achieve real change.
4. Unclear letting agency fees are unfair, and that the Advertising Standards Agency's ruling that advertisers must include all compulsory fees and charges upfront is a first step in the right direction.
5. More must be done to protect tenants from unfair practices.
6. Ensuring energy efficiency in the PRS is key in achieving a reduction in carbon emissions emitted by the UK's households by 80% by 2020.
7. Article 4 Directions have the ability to displace certain groups of 'undesirable' tenants, dividing communities, and does not address many of the issues caused by the overdevelopment of HMOs.

#### **Conference Calls For:**

1. The introduction of a Business Rate category for Houses in Multiple Occupation and landlords who own more than 3 properties, subject to Valuation Office Agency regulations, while ensuring:
  - a. Properties where its Energy Performance Certificate achieves at least a C rating will be exempt; and
  - b. The scheme would allow Local Authorities to offer funding to landlords to improve the safety standards and energy efficiency of their properties.
2. All letting agency fees to be capped in Wales, in addition to requiring total transparency.
3. Capping rent increases in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to ensure that the sector is an affordable and flexible option for all.
4. Planning regulations to be amended to reduce the threshold at which properties require planning permission to be an HMO to five persons or above.
5. The Welsh Liberal Democrats to oppose the use of Article 4 directions, or similar policies, whereby HMOs would only be permitted in specific geographical areas.
6. A review of supplementary Planning Guidance and Best Planning Guidance for HMOs to ensure the maintenance and consistency of standards, and to limit the size of developments.
7. A charter to be introduced setting out obligations for landlords and letting agents under the new registration and licensing process.
8. An independent online resource be developed for tenants and homeowners acting as a one stop advice and information portal, signposting sector agencies.
9. The Residential Property Tribunal to be given the power to;
  - a. Review rents in the Private Rented Sector
  - b. Act as a housing court dealing with challenges to rent increases; and
  - c. Adjudicate in disputes, fitness for human habitation, succession rights, failure to supply contracts, discrimination and mediation.
10. A requirement on local councils to monitor equality issues on exclusions.
11. A Wales Housing Survey for all private rented sector tenants and landlords.
12. The Welsh Government to expand the remit of the Welsh Tenants Federation to include representation for private rented sector tenants and to fund the organisation accordingly.

## Amendments to Motion

**NB** Amendments 1 to 13 have been accepted into the substantive motion as drafting amendments by the movers of the motion. The Substantive motion as revised by these drafting amendments is reproduced below.

### **Amendment 1**

*National Policy Committee and Cardiff & the Vale Local Party*

Insert new Conference Notes 1 and renumber accordingly:

1. That the 2015 Welsh Liberal Democrat policy paper *Building a Fairer Society and Opportunity for All* included commitments to:
  - a. improve enforcement of standards and training of landlords to ensure better housing quality;
  - b. establish a system of redress for private sector tenants;
  - c. tackle fuel poverty by incentivising private sector landlords to insulate homes.

### **Amendment 2**

*IR Cymru and Cardiff & the Vale Local Party*

In Conference Notes 2:

Replace 'September' with 'November'

### **Amendment 3**

*National Policy Committee and Cardiff & the Vale Local Party*

In Conference Notes 3:

Replace 'Plans were' with 'Legislation was'

Replace 'to require' with 'that required'

### **Amendment 4**

*National Policy Committee and Cardiff & the Vale Local Party*

In Conference Notes 4:

After "has revealed" insert 'in 2015'

### **Amendment 5**

*National Policy Committee and Cardiff & the Vale Local Party*

In Conference Notes 5:

After 'abolishing letting agency fees' insert 'for tenants'

### **Amendment 6**

*IR Cymru*

Delete Conference Notes 6 and replace with:

6. There are varying planning and licensing arrangements for HMOs across Wales and the UK, with Local Authorities in England being given additional powers to manage Houses in Multiple Occupation.
7. Additional powers include the use of Article 4 Directives, which removes permitted development rights in specific geographical areas, and requires planning permission for all new development and any renovations to existing buildings.

### **Amendment 7**

*National Policy Committee and Cardiff & the Vale Local Party*

In Conference Notes 9:

Before 'to Band C by 2027' insert 'to Band E by 2018 and'

## **Amendment 8**

*National Policy Committee*

Delete Conference Supports 1 and replace with:

1. Welsh Liberal Democrat actions forcing the Welsh Labour Government to maintain tenants' rights by keeping six month moratorium in the Renting Homes Bill.

## **Amendment 9**

*IR Cymru*

Replace Conference Calls For 1.a with:

- a. Properties where its Energy Performance Certificate achieves at least a 'C' rating will be identified as exempt through Councils' existing Business Relief Schemes.

## **Amendment 10**

*IR Cymru*

Replace Conference Calls For 1.b with:

- b. The scheme would allow Local Authorities to use additional income to offer funding to landlords to improve the safety standards and the energy efficiency of their properties.

## **Amendment 11**

*IR Cymru*

Replace Conference Calls For 3 with:

3. The Welsh Liberal Democrats to adopt Shelter's Stable Rent Contract that would ensure, among other interventions, that for the duration of a tenant's contract, rent increases can only increase in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to ensure that the sector is an affordable and flexible option for all.

## **Amendment 12**

*IR Cymru*

Delete Conference Calls for 9.a - c and replace with:

9. The Residential Property Tribunal to be given the power to act as a housing court dealing with challenges to rent increases and adjudicate and mediate disputes on fitness for human habitation, succession rights, failure to supply contracts, and discrimination.

## **Amendment 13**

*IR Cymru*

Delete Conference Calls for 10 and replace with:

10. A requirement on local councils to monitor equality issues on evictions.

## **PM1: A Better Deal for Renters in Wales**

**(as amended by **Drafting Amendments #1-#13**)**

*IR Cymru*

### **Conference Notes:**

1. That the 2015 Welsh Liberal Democrat policy paper, *Building a Fairer Society and Opportunity for All* included commitments to:
  - a. Improve enforcement of standards and training of landlords to ensure better housing quality;
  - b. Establish a system of redress for private sector tenants; and
  - c. Tackle fuel poverty by incentivising private sector landlords to insulate homes.
2. Over the last decade, the private rented sector has expanded rapidly, and currently houses as many people as the social rented sector.
3. The Welsh Government's Housing Act (Wales) 2014 will include a new licensing and registration scheme for all landlords in Wales from **November** 2015.
4. **Legislation was** introduced under the Coalition Government **that required** letting agents to publish full details of the fees they charge.

5. The Citizen's Advice Bureau has revealed in 2015 that tenants are frequently charged fees on average of around £337, often hidden by letting agents.
6. Evidence by Shelter Scotland demonstrates that after abolishing letting agency fees for tenants that landlords in Scotland were no more likely to have increased rents since 2012 than landlords elsewhere in the UK.
7. There are varying planning and licensing arrangements for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across Wales and the UK, with Local Authorities in England being given additional powers to manage HMOs.
8. Additional Powers include the use of Article 4 Directives, which removes permitted development rights in specific geographical areas and requires planning permission for all new development and any renovations to existing buildings.
9. That some tenants in Wales have access to representation and redress through:
  - a. The Residential Property Tribunal Wales, established in 2004, as an independent tribunal set up to resolve disputes relating to private rented and leasehold property, and
  - b. Welsh Tenants which exists to provide a representative voice for tenants in social housing in Wales.
10. The Welsh Government's Renting Homes Bill which seeks to reform the legal basis for renting a home from a private landlord or community landlord, including local authorities and registered landlords.
11. Liberal Democrat plans to reduce carbon emissions emitted by UK households through the Green Deal, the Green Buildings Act, and improving the standard of private rented and social housing, requiring these homes to be upgraded to Band E by 2018 and Band C by 2027.

### Conference Supports:

1. Welsh Liberal Democrat actions forcing the Welsh Labour Government to maintain tenants' rights by keeping a six-month moratorium in the Renting Homes Bill.
2. Plans to clamp down on retaliatory evictions by giving Courts the discretion to refuse to make a possession order.
3. Amendments to add definitions of disrepair to the Renting Homes Bill to ensure the maintenance of standards.

### Conference Believes:

1. The Private Rented Sector (PRS) is an important part of a modern housing market and provides homes to a wide variety of households.
2. Tenants should not expect poor-standards, poor-maintenance, and weaker rights than homeowners.
3. Steps taken by the Welsh Government to better regulate the sector are welcome but must go further to achieve real change.
4. Unclear letting agency fees are unfair, and that the Advertising Standards Agency's ruling that advertisers must include all compulsory fees and charges up front is a first step in the right direction.
5. More must be done to protect tenants from unfair practices.
6. Ensuring energy efficiency in the PRS is key in achieving a reduction in carbon emissions emitted by the UK's households by 80% by 2020.
7. Article 4 Directions have the ability to displace certain groups of 'undesirable' tenants, dividing communities, and does not address many of the issues caused by the over development of HMOs.

### Conference Calls For:

1. The introduction of a Business Rate category for HMOs and landlords who own more than 3 properties, subject to Valuation Office Agency regulations, while ensuring:
  - a. Properties where its Energy Performance Certificate achieves at least a rating will be identified as exempt through Councils' existing Business Relief Schemes; and

- b. The scheme would allow Local Authorities to use additional income to offer funding to landlords to improve the safety standards and the energy efficiency of their properties.
- 2. All letting agency fees to be capped in Wales, in addition to requiring total transparency.
- 3. The Welsh Liberal Democrats to adopt Shelter's Stable Rent Contract that would ensure, among their interventions, that for the duration of a tenant's contract, rent increases can only increase in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to ensure that the sector is an affordable and flexible option for all.
- 4. Planning regulations to be amended to reduce the threshold at which properties require planning permission to be an HMO to five persons or above.
- 5. The Welsh Liberal Democrats to oppose the use of Article 4 directions, or similar policies, whereby HMOs would only be permitted in specific geographical areas.
- 6. A review of supplementary Planning Guidance and Best Planning Guidance for HMOs to ensure the maintenance and consistency of standards, and to limit the size of developments.
- 7. A charter to be introduced setting out obligations for landlords and letting agents under the new registration and licensing process.
- 8. An independent online resource be developed for tenants and homeowners acting as a one stop advice and information portal, signposting sector agencies.
- 9. The Residential Property Tribunal to be given the power to act as a housing court dealing with challenges to rent increases and adjudicate and mediate disputes on fitness for human habitation, succession rights, failure to supply contracts, and discrimination.
- 10. A requirement on local councils to monitor equality issues on evictions.
- 11. A Wales Housing Survey for all private rented sector tenants and landlords.
- 12. The Welsh Government to expand the remit of the Welsh Tenants Federation to include representation for private rented sector tenants and to fund the organisation accordingly.

#### **Amendment 14**

*National Policy Committee*

At the end of Conference Believes 5:

Insert 'and protecting vulnerable individuals seeking tenancies.'

#### **Amendment 15**

*Cardiff & the Vale Local Party*

##### **Business rates on HMOs**

In Conference Calls For 1:

Insert at the start 'The National Policy Committee to commission modelling on the impact of' and replace "ensuring" with "exploring".

#### **Amendment 16**

*Cardiff & the Vale Local Party*

##### **Letting Agency Fees**

Replace Conference Calls For 2 with:

- 2. Letting agency fees on tenants to be prohibited and replaced with a schedule of set charges for specified services to ensure cost transparency.

#### **Amendment 17**

*Cardiff & the Vale Local Party*

##### **Rent controls**

Delete Conference Calls For 3.

## **Amendment 18**

*Cardiff & the Vale Local Party*

### **Article 4 Directions**

Delete Conference Believes 7

Delete Conference Calls For 5 and replace with:

5. The Welsh Liberal Democrats to conduct a review to evaluate the use and impact of Article 4 Directions, or similar policies in England and Wales.

## **Amendment 19**

*Cardiff & the Vale Local Party*

### **Duties on Local Authorities**

Insert at the end of Conference Calls For 10:

‘, work with landlords to ensure energy rating targets are met, and work with students’ unions and tenants groups to ensure tenants know their rights.’

### Decisions of Conference

Amendments 1-13 were accepted into the draft by the proposers of the motion.

Amendments 14, 15, 16, 18 and 19 were passed by Conference.

Amendment 17 was rejected by Conference.

The motion as amended by amendments 1-16, 18 and 19 was passed by Conference.

### Motion as Passed

## **PM1: A Better Deal for Renters in Wales** *IR Cymru*

### **Conference Notes:**

1. That the 2015 Welsh Liberal Democrat policy paper, *Building a Fairer Society and Opportunity for All* included commitments to:
  - a. Improve enforcement of standards and training of landlords to ensure better housing quality;
  - b. Establish a system of redress for private sector tenants; and
  - c. Tackle fuel poverty by incentivising private sector landlords to insulate homes.
2. Over the last decade, the private rented sector has expanded rapidly, and currently houses as many people as the social rented sector.
3. The Welsh Government’s Housing Act (Wales) 2014 will include a new licensing and registration scheme for all landlords in Wales from November 2015.
4. Legislation was introduced under the Coalition Government that required letting agents to publish full details of the fees they charge.
5. The Citizen’s Advice Bureau has revealed in 2015 that tenants are frequently charged fees on average of around £337, often hidden by letting agents.
6. Evidence by Shelter Scotland demonstrates that after abolishing letting agency fees for tenants that landlords in Scotland were no more likely to have increased rents since 2012 than landlords elsewhere in the UK.
7. There are varying planning and licensing arrangements for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across Wales and the UK, with Local Authorities in England being given additional powers to manage HMOs.
8. Additional Powers include the use of Article 4 Directives, which removes permitted development rights in specific geographical areas and requires planning permission for all new development and any renovations to existing buildings.

9. That some tenants in Wales have access to representation and redress through:
  - a. The Residential Property Tribunal Wales, established in 2004, as an independent tribunal set up to resolve disputes relating to private rented and leasehold property, and
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10. The Welsh Government's Renting Homes Bill which seeks to reform the legal basis for renting a home from a private landlord or community landlord, including local authorities and registered landlords.
11. Liberal Democrat plans to reduce carbon emissions emitted by UK households through the Green Deal, the Green Buildings Act, and improving the standard of private rented and social housing, requiring these homes to be upgraded to Band E by 2018 and Band C by 2027.

### **Conference Supports:**

1. Welsh Liberal Democrat actions forcing the Welsh Labour Government to maintain tenants' rights by keeping a six-month moratorium in the Renting Homes Bill.
2. Plans to clamp down on retaliatory evictions by giving Courts the discretion to refuse to make a possession order.
3. Amendments to add definitions of disrepair to the Renting Homes Bill to ensure the maintenance of standards.

### **Conference Believes:**

1. The Private Rented Sector (PRS) is an important part of a modern housing market and provides homes to a wide variety of households.
2. Tenants should not expect poor-standards, poor-maintenance, and weaker rights than homeowners.
3. Steps taken by the Welsh Government to better regulate the sector are welcome but must go further to achieve real change.
4. Unclear letting agency fees are unfair, and that the Advertising Standards Agency's ruling that advertisers must include all compulsory fees and charges up front is a first step in the right direction.
5. More must be done to protect tenants from unfair practices and to protect vulnerable individuals seeking tenancies.
6. Ensuring energy efficiency in the PRS is key in achieving a reduction in carbon emissions emitted by the UK's households by 80% by 2020.

### **Conference Calls For:**

1. The National Policy Committee to commission modelling on the impact of the introduction of a Business Rate category for HMOs and landlords who own more than 3 properties, subject to Valuation Office Agency regulations, while exploring:
  - a. Properties where its Energy Performance Certificate achieves at least a rating will be identified as exempt through Councils' existing Business Relief Schemes; and
  - b. The scheme would allow Local Authorities to use additional income to offer funding to landlords to improve the safety standards and the energy efficiency of their properties.
2. Letting agency fees on tenants to be prohibited and replaced with a schedule of set charged for specified services to ensure cost transparency.
3. The Welsh Liberal Democrats to adopt Shelter's Stable Rent Contract that would ensure, among their interventions, that for the duration of a tenant's contract, rent increases can only increase in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to ensure that the sector is an affordable and flexible option for all.
4. Planning regulations to be amended to reduce the threshold at which properties require planning permission to be an HMO to five persons or above.
5. The Welsh Liberal Democrats to conduct a review to evaluate the use and impact of Article 4 Directions, or similar policies in England and Wales.

6. A review of supplementary Planning Guidance and Best Planning Guidance for HMOs to ensure the maintenance and consistency of standards, and to limit the size of developments.
7. A charter to be introduced setting out obligations for landlords and letting agents under the new registration and licensing process.
8. An independent online resource be developed for tenants and homeowners acting as a one stop advice and information portal, signposting sector agencies.
9. The Residential Property Tribunal to be given the power to act as a housing court dealing with challenges to rent increases and adjudicate and mediate disputes on fitness for human habitation, succession rights, failure to supply contracts, and discrimination.
10. A requirement on local councils to monitor 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. .
11. A Wales Housing Survey for all private rented sector tenants and landlords.
12. The Welsh Government to expand the remit of the Welsh Tenants Federation to include representation for private rented sector tenants and to fund the organisation accordingly.

# **PM2: A Roadmap for 2016: Manifesto Motion**

## *National Policy Committee*

### **Conference Notes:**

1. Elections to the National Assembly for Wales will be held on the 5th of May, 2016.
2. Welsh Liberal Democrats have the deepest roots of any Welsh political party, having been in the front line of progressive and radical reform for over 150 years.
3. The main tasks facing the next Welsh Government will be:
  - a. Building effective and people-centred public services during budget pressures,
  - b. Growing our economy for the benefit of all, and
  - c. Giving everyone in society the opportunity to get on in life, for themselves and their families.

### **Conference Believes:**

1. Wales can only reach its potential by making the most of Wales' strengths such as our culture, our resources, and most of all, our people, and by good governance by a government that values transparency and scrutiny.
2. In a time of further tightening of budgets, Wales needs innovative thinking to improve public services to meet the needs of patients, pupils and parents and achieve social justice.
3. People everywhere in Wales need more say over how they are governed, particularly in their own local areas.

**Conference Resolves** to present the Welsh electorate with policies which represent our liberal values and vision to revitalise Wales and calls on the Policy Committee to develop a radical and innovative manifesto to:

1. Strengthen our economy and encourage entrepreneurship and growth including;
  - a. Delivering a balanced, integrated, export-led economic strategy;
  - b. Devolving more powers to local areas;
  - c. Stimulating the high street;
  - d. Expanding apprenticeships; and
  - e. Significantly cut burdensome red tape to allow businesses the opportunity to thrive.
2. Ensure the NHS centres care on the dignity, compassion, and choice for individuals within a clean, safe and well-managed environment by;
  - a. Ensuring safe levels of nurse staffing on Welsh wards;
  - b. Guaranteeing patients the best treatment, in the right place, at the right time, including improving access to your GP;
  - c. Ending mental health discrimination and improving support for people with additional learning needs.
3. Develop an education system which helps children flourish and empowers pupils and parents by:
  - a. Helping children develop and supports parents with effective childcare provision;
  - b. Promoting early years delivering lower class sizes;
  - c. Providing flexibility and freedom for teachers to lead, and granting high performing schools extra flexibility and powers;
  - d. Increasing funding through the Welsh Pupil Premium;
  - e. Ensuring fair access to further and higher education.
4. Support rural communities, particularly ensuring stability of the farming industry.

5. Ensure that everybody has access to good quality housing at an affordable price.
6. Protect our natural environment and enhance our renewable energy resources.
7. Ensuring public transport across Wales is efficient and accessible, particularly in rural areas.
8. Reform the way we do politics, emphasising devolution of power to the lowest practical level, empowering communities, and ensuring accountability at all levels.
9. Ensure everyone has the right speak Welsh in their daily life and can access good quality Welsh education and public services.
10. Spread a uniting vision of a self-confident nation, standing on its own two feet, in the United Kingdom and in Europe.

**Conference Notes** papers endorsed by Conference since 2011, work undertaken by parliamentarians, and European and General election manifestos, and calls on Policy Committee to use these in developing our Assembly manifesto.

**Conference Affirms** Policy Committee should prioritise spending to ensure effective public services, including dropping or delaying existing proposals, and endorses the aim of a costed manifesto.

Decisions of Conference

The motion was passed by Conference, unamended.

### **PM3: Mental Health Bus Pass Equality** *Cardiff and the Vale Local Party*

**Conference Believes** it is unfair that some people in Wales with mental disabilities are unable to qualify for a concessionary bus pass even when their disability would qualify them for a Disabled Persons Railcard.

**Conference Calls For** the eligibility rules for concessionary bus passes in Wales to be changed to enable those with mental disabilities who can qualify for a Disabled Persons Railcard – due to their entitlement to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) – to be similarly able to qualify for a concessionary bus pass in order to increase parity in the treatment of those with mental disabilities compared to those with physical disabilities.

Decisions of Conference

The motion was passed by Conference, unamended.

### **PM4: A Future for Agriculture in Wales** *Montgomeryshire Local Party*

**Conference Notes that:**

1. Agriculture and its ancillary industries make a major contribution to the Welsh economy, with a gross value added of agriculture to the Welsh economy in 2014 of £374 million.
2. Agriculture provides the backbone for rural communities, around which other sources of income can be created.
3. Average Farm Business Income in Wales is forecast to fall to £22,200 in 2014-15, representing a decline of 24 per cent from £29,300 in 2013-14.
4. The average age of Welsh farmers continues to rise from 60.26 in 2013, compared to 59.58 in 2010 and 58.47 in 2007, and that young entrants face particular challenges.

5. The Common Agricultural Policy is, and always has been since its inception, a subsidy on food production which benefits the retailer and consumer at least as much as the primary producer, and that its relationship to farm incomes is complex.
6. Food production is one of very few industries necessary for the most basic of human needs.
7. There is an increasing disconnect between rural and urban communities resulting in a fundamental lack of knowledge around food production and that initiatives such as 'Cows on Tour' introduced by farming unions can help to address this.
8. 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.
9. Global food markets are increasingly volatile and that the importance of food security is as great as it has been at any time since 1945, with UK food self-sufficiency at around 60%; a decrease from around 75% in 1991.

#### **Conference Believes That:**

1. It is important to maintain agricultural production throughout rural Wales, including both lowland and upland production, for the sake of Welsh rural communities as well as farmers.
2. The natural environment is best cared for by a continuation of farming tailored to the needs of individual areas, including their environmental needs.
3. Both large modern units and smaller scale units able to benefit from niche marketing will be necessary and beneficial to Wales and its agriculture.
4. Farmers should be supported in finding the best route to profitability and sustainable production depending on their individual situation.
5. Support for farmers should continue to be given to all farmers in an equitable way so as to maintain the balance between small and large, upland and lowland.
6. We must recognise that Common Agricultural Policy funding will continue to reduce and that it should be used as effectively as possible with an emphasis on maintaining appropriate food production.
7. The maintenance of food security should be central to any agricultural decisions made in Wales and that such decisions should always consider their long term impact on Wales' ability to continue to feed itself.
8. Planning processes should be improved to avoid unnecessary complications and delays and favour maintaining sound businesses of all sorts to support jobs and living standards, whilst remaining sufficiently rigorous to protect communities from inappropriate development.
9. The Welsh people would benefit from knowledge of food production being made more widespread, especially from an early age.

#### **Conference Calls For:**

1. The Welsh Government to implement policy initiatives to safeguard agriculture and food production across Wales and especially to embed food production using suitable systems into all environmental decision making in rural Wales.
2. The Farming Connect network to help farmers and landowners to find the best route to both profitability and sustainability according to their situation, in particular to recognise the importance of Field Officers and the harnessing of local knowledge in building confidence and resilience in the farming sector, whilst minimising the level of generic consultancy services funded through Farming Connect.

3. The Welsh Government to work with local authorities to improve the planning process for all Welsh businesses, to ensure minimal delays and long term support for the sustainability of entire communities.
4. A fundamental review of TAN 6 guidance on 'Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities' so as to achieve real progress in the delivery of affordable rural housing across Wales, important both for younger entrants as well as providing appropriate accommodation for farmers wishing to handover to the next generation.
5. The Welsh Government to work with the National Farmers Union, the Farmers Union of Wales and Wales Young Farmers Clubs to support YFC activity in urban areas and to take farming and food production into schools across Wales and beyond, to show children from primary level, both rural and urban, how animals are reared and food is produced and what contribution this makes to the nation.
6. The Welsh Government to maintain its support to farming across Wales in an equitable manner, bearing in mind the needs of communities for a strong farming sector in all areas, as CAP funding tapers down.
7. A full review of agri-environment schemes to ensure that they achieve sustainable farming and environmental management and to ensure that they are fully funded so that farmers are properly rewarded for the conservation work they carry out.
8. The Welsh Government to further develop support for young farming entrants in Wales with an emphasis on the potential contribution of share farming and the significance of local authority owned agricultural holdings across Wales to provide access to the land.

#### Decisions of Conference

The motion was passed by Conference, unamended.

# PM5: Fairness, Growth and Accountability

## *National Policy Committee*

### Original Motion

#### **Conference Notes:**

1. It was the Liberal Democrats who ensured that the Welsh Government can be held to account for their decisions by bringing tax powers to Wales and being the main driver behind the Silk Commission.
2. Wales will be able to control taxes to benefit the country for the first time in 800 years through the Wales Act 2014.
3. A taxation policy should shift the tax burden to aim to:
  - a. provide a stable financial base for funding excellent public services;
  - b. create jobs and help businesses;
  - c. raise standards of living and improve prospects for our families and children;
  - d. help people own their own home;
  - e. ensure environmental sustainability.
4. It was the Liberal Democrats in the UK Government who achieved a fairer tax system by:
  - a. Delivering an £820 tax cut for low and middle income earners by ensuring people could earn £10,600 tax free
  - b. Reforming stamp duty land tax to help first time buyers and make it easier for people to move house. As a result the stamp duty paid on the average house price is about £4,500 lower.
  - c. Encouraging green levies to safeguard our environment
5. Wales needs a taxation policy which re-energises the economy so that entrepreneurs, innovation and ideas flourish.
6. Wales has 4.9% of the UK population yet its income tax receipts are just 3.1% of the UK total.
7. The Autumn 2014 Welsh Liberal Democrats paper, Building a Stronger Economy, included important policy commitments regarding business rates.

#### **Conference Believes:**

1. Power and authority derive and flow upwards from the people and power must be exercised at the most appropriate local level.
2. The priority of our society should be to combine economic efficiency, social justice and individual liberty. There should be a stronger economy and fairer society.
3. Tax powers in Wales should be based on the principles of effectiveness, accountability, ease of operation and fairness.

#### **Conference Calls For:**

1. Land Transaction Tax (formerly Stamp Duty Tax) policies which will help to lower the cost of buying a house in Wales for the majority of people. Major progressive reforms have already been made to the tax by the Liberal Democrats in the UK Government.
2. Approval to introduce an incineration tax to further encourage recycling.
3. Approval to increase penalties for fly-tipping and make it easier to penalise fly-tippers through on the spot fines in order to clean up our streets and countryside.
4. Income Tax varying powers to be devolved to Wales so that the Welsh Government is more responsible and accountable for its actions.

5. The Policy Committee to be commissioned to provide costed proposals to reduce the basic rate of income tax from 20% to 19% to relieve the tax burden on lower earners.
6. A Council Tax reduction of at least £100 for 10 years, when the resident's home undergoes an energy saving improvement of at least two bands.
7. Commencement as soon as possible of provisions in The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 that enable local authorities to levy up to 200% Council Tax on second homes where they judge this to be appropriate.
8. Councils to have greater scope to keep the revenue from their regulatory activities.
9. Piloting of Tax Increment Finance schemes in Wales so as to help local councils fund regeneration schemes.
10. An in depth review of the Council Tax regime to make it fairer and more equitable.
11. Future business rate multiplier increases to follow the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than the Retail Price Index (RPI). This should reduce increases in business rates.
12. Help for companies to expand by removing plant and machinery from the rateable value of commercial premises.
13. Local authorities to have scope to designate town centres and district centres as local footfall business rate zones and alter the business rates in these areas in response to changing trading conditions.
14. Business rates to be applied to out of town retail unit car parks larger than 1,000m<sup>2</sup> and with spaces for more than 45 vehicles.
15. 50% relief on business rates bills for new occupants of retail premises that have been empty for a year or more.
16. The necessary statistical data to be available on a Wales level to ensure effective financial and tax modelling.

## Amendments to Motion

### **Amendment 1**

*20 members*

Add new Conference Notes 4.d:

- d. Cutting Corporation Tax levels to the lowest levels in the G7, resulting in an increased tax take for HM Treasury.

Delete Conference Notes 3 and re-number accordingly

### **Amendment 2**

*20 members*

Delete Conference Believes 1-3 and replace with:

1. Fair taxes are a vital part of funding the public services that are necessary for a functioning society.
2. Simple tax systems are the most effective at combating tax avoidance and tax evasion.
3. Any proposed new tax should be subject to significant modelling before being introduced.

### **Amendment 3**

*20 members*

Delete Conference Calls For 1 and replace with:

1. The scrapping of Land Transaction Tax (formerly Stamp Duty), which is a tax on people seeking to move to an appropriately sized home, and people moving as part of a mobile labour market.

Delete Conference Calls for 2 and 3 and re-number accordingly

#### **Amendment 4**

20 members

Delete Conference Calls for 4 and 5 and replace with:

4. Income Tax varying powers to be devolved to Wales and for Welsh Liberal Democrats to commission further research on:
  - a. the impact to Welsh public finances of cutting the Basic Rate of Income Tax to 19p from 20p
  - b. the impact to Welsh public finances of cutting the Higher Rate of Income Tax to 35p from 40p

and re-number accordingly

#### **Amendment 5**

20 members

Replace Conference Calls for 10 with

10. An in-depth review of the Council Tax system to make it fairer and more equitable, including the potential for a shift to a Land Value Tax.

Decision of Conference

All amendments (1-5) were rejected by Conference.

Motion unanimously passed as unamended.

## **PM6: Save Hardship Funding for Students in Wales** *IR Cymru*

Original Motion

### **Conference Notes:**

1. Widening access, inclusion, progression and success in higher education is a key part of the Welsh Government's strategy for higher education.
2. That a critical factor in deterring and prohibiting participation in Higher Education and impact on student outcomes is associated with the cost of living for students.
3. That guaranteed financial assistance for those students most in need is essential for ensuring that students can remain and succeed in education.
4. That the Welsh Government provided £2.1m to Welsh Higher Education Institutions, the Financial Contingency Fund, to allocate to students most in need of financial support, until the 2015/16 academic year.
5. The FCF was introduced in 1991 to support further and higher education students facing financial difficulties and who, without support, would be likely to leave their education.
6. NUS Wales' study, Pound in Your Pocket, found that more than 50% of students regularly worried about meeting basic living costs, which affected their studies.
7. NUS Wales' study, Pound in Your Pocket, also found that nearly 40% of students did not understand what financial support was available to them.
8. Students returning to education, accessing part-time education, or from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to access funding and financial support.
9. That the Welsh Government announced in 2014 that the Fund would not be available for institutions for the 2014/15 academic year, before overturning its decision.
10. That this decision comes at a time when the UK Government plans to scrap the Disabled Students' Allowance, worth up to £144m to institutions.
11. That the Welsh Government intends on scrapping the Fund from 2015/16.

**Conference Supports** the principles outlined in the Fairness and Freedom in Higher Education policy paper, adopted in 2013.

**Conference Believes:**

1. That education is the best way to give people the opportunity to reach their full potential, wherever they live and whatever their background.
2. That access to higher education should be based solely on merit and academic ability and not ability to pay.
3. That access to higher education free at the point of use is not enough to ensure fair and equal access for all students from all socio-economic backgrounds.
4. That the debate on Higher Education funding has remained largely focused upon the value to the individual, rather than the public value of higher education.

**Conference Calls For:**

1. A Fund that enables Higher Education Institutions to provide hardship funding to the most vulnerable students, and that funding be protected throughout the entirety of the next Assembly.
2. Improved information for prospective students and current students on the financial support available to them during their studies.
3. An investment and prioritisation in the levels of grants and bursaries available to students in Wales, in particular for part-time and mature students and student parents.

**Decisions of Conference**

The motion was passed by Conference, unamended.

# **PM7: Freedom for Schools**

## *Assembly Group*

### **Conference Notes That:**

1. Wales has fallen significantly behind the rest of the United Kingdom in reading, maths and science, according to the OECD's PISA rankings;
2. The Welsh Government does not set minimum standards for schools in Wales;
3. Headteachers and teachers deliver the best results when they are given flexibility and support, not smothered by centralising red tape;
4. It is often better to improve accountability and performance through managing risk, not increasing control;
5. The positive impact of the Welsh Pupil Premium, which according to independent analysis has led to "a significant amount of new activity" aimed at supporting disadvantaged pupils.

### **Conference Believes That:**

1. We must be the party of opportunity, enabling people across Wales to make progress in their lives.
2. There is nothing progressive about poor public services, and we must find new and innovative ways to deliver public services that take the side of parents, pupils and patients.
3. In freeing up individuals from restrictive government and empowering leaders to lead, while ensuring that minimum standards are met and accountability is strong and transparent.
4. Head teachers should be given the autonomy to make the right decisions for their pupils.
5. Professionals and experts know better than politicians what should be included in the school curriculum and how schools should be run.
6. Schools should not be run for profit, or operated by private companies.

### **Conference Calls For:**

1. The introduction of individual pupil monitoring, and for schools which do not adequately support the development of all pupils to be automatically placed into special measures.
2. Ensuring children get the individual attention they need by introducing a maximum class size of 25 for Early Years and Key Stage 1 (Reception, Year 1, and Year 2).
3. Expanding the Pupil Premium to our target of £2,500 per pupil per year aged 5 - 15 and to £1000 per pupil, per year under 5.
4. Establishing a single authority to set the curriculum content in Wales independent of government interference, while maintaining Ministerial powers to set the broad overall direction.
5. Direction to endorse Personal, Social and Health Education – a curriculum for life – being included in the curriculum, including financial literacy, first aid and emergency lifesaving skills, political education, citizenship, and age appropriate sex and relationship education.
6. Establishing a Welsh Academy of Leadership to promote high quality leadership and help the best leaders to work in the most challenging schools.

7. Allowing 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.
8. Accountability to be strengthened by giving school governors extra powers to caution, discipline or dismiss head teachers who do not meet mutually agreed targets;
9. Introducing a Talented Head Teachers programme to draw top leaders to the schools where they are most needed.
10. Requiring Local Authorities to establish Head Teacher Boards within their areas to help schools to improve and to advise the Local Authority on intervention and support options.
11. Enabling greater control for head teachers over their school's budget.
12. Reviewing the role of regional educational consortia in light of local government reorganisation.
13. Ensuring elected representation of peers from the teaching profession to the Education Workforce Council to ensure it is properly accountable.

## Amendments to Motion

### **Amendment 1**

*20 members*

Add new Conference Notes 6:

6. That the existence of English-medium and Welsh-medium schools has provided parents in Wales with an element of choice in where to send their children to school, although full choice is still limited to those parents able to afford to move to the catchment areas of good schools.

### **Amendment 2**

*20 members*

Delete Conference Believes That 6 and replace with:

6. Non-state sector operators have a valuable role to play in the education sector, but state-funded schools must not charge for tuition and should not select pupils on academic ability or faith.

### **Amendment 3**

*20 members*

Delete Conference Calls for 4 and replace with with:

4. A reduction in the size of the curriculum, enabling schools freedom to focus on particular areas of speciality, in particular those that are crucial to the local economy, with a body independent of government created to set curriculum content under Ministerial direction.

### **Amendment 4**

*20 members*

Delete Conference Calls For 7 and Conference Calls For 11 and replace with:

7. Schools in Wales to be given the ability to apply to receive funding directly from Welsh Government, providing them with the freedom to act independently of Local Government interference, giving Head Teachers full control over their budget and gain new powers and autonomy from local and central government.

And re-number accordingly

### **Amendment 5**

*Cardiff & the Vale Liberal Democrats*

Insert at the end of Conference Calls For 7:

This should be done in a way which does not diminish the ability of democratically-elected local authorities to fairly and effectively manage the provision of school places across the areas they serve, or to intervene where necessary to ensure the provision of appropriate educational standards.

## **Amendment 6**

20 members

Delete Conference Calls For 12 and replace with:

12. Regional Consortia to be abolished.

## **Amendment 7**

20 members

Delete Conference Calls For 10 and replace with:

10. Giving schools greater freedom over term dates, but setting the month of July (from the first Monday in July) as compulsory holiday between school years, enabling Welsh families to book more affordable holidays at home and abroad.

## **Amendment 8**

20 members

In Conference Calls, insert new:

14. Parents to be given a broader choice as to where to send their children to school and the Welsh Government to ensure that surplus places are maintained within the education system, allowing a greater number of children to be taught at their chosen school.
15. New powers for communities to open new schools within the state sector, provided they do not select pupils on academic ability or faith.
16. A review of the teaching of English and Welsh within schools in Wales, designed to ascertain whether both languages should be used as first languages in all schools.

## Decisions of Conference

Amendments 1, 5, 6 and 7 were passed by Conference.

Amendments 2, 3, 4 and 8 were rejected by Conference.

The motion as amended by amendments 1, 5, 6 and 7 was passed by Conference.

## Motion as Passed

### **PM7: Freedom for Schools**

#### *Assembly Group*

#### **Conference Notes That:**

1. Wales has fallen significantly behind the rest of the United Kingdom in reading, maths and science, according to the OECD's PISA rankings;
2. The Welsh Government does not set minimum standards for schools in Wales;
3. Headteachers and teachers deliver the best results when they are given flexibility and support, not smothered by centralising red tape;
4. It is often better to improve accountability and performance through managing risk, not increasing control;
5. The positive impact of the Welsh Pupil Premium, which according to independent analysis has led to "a significant amount of new activity" aimed at supporting disadvantaged pupils.
6. That the existence of English-medium and Welsh-medium schools has provided parents in Wales with an element of choice in where to send their children to school, although full choice is still limited to those parents able to afford to move to the catchment areas of good schools.

### **Conference Believes That:**

1. We must be the party of opportunity, enabling people across Wales to make progress in their lives.
2. There is nothing progressive about poor public services, and we must find new and innovative ways to deliver public services that take the side of parents, pupils and patients.
3. In freeing up individuals from restrictive government and empowering leaders to lead, while ensuring that minimum standards are met and accountability is strong and transparent.
4. Head teachers should be given the autonomy to make the right decisions for their pupils.
5. Professionals and experts know better than politicians what should be included in the school curriculum and how schools should be run.
6. Schools should not be run for profit, or operated by private companies.

### **Conference Calls For:**

1. The introduction of individual pupil monitoring, and for schools which do not adequately support the development of all pupils to be automatically placed into special measures.
2. Ensuring children get the individual attention they need by introducing a maximum class size of 25 for Early Years and Key Stage 1 (Reception, Year 1, and Year 2).
3. Expanding the Pupil Premium to our target of £2,500 per pupil per year aged 5 - 15 and to £1000 per pupil, per year under 5.
4. Establishing a single authority to set the curriculum content in Wales independent of government interference, while maintaining Ministerial powers to set the broad overall direction.
5. Direction to endorse Personal, Social and Health Education – a curriculum for life – being included in the curriculum, including financial literacy, first aid and emergency lifesaving skills, political education, citizenship, and age appropriate sex and relationship education.
6. Establishing a Welsh Academy of Leadership to promote high quality leadership and help the best leaders to work in the most challenging schools.
7. Allowing 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. This should be done in a way which does not diminish the ability of democratically-elected local authorities to fairly and effectively manage the provision of school places across the areas they serve, or to intervene where necessary to ensure the provision of appropriate educational standards.
8. Accountability to be strengthened by giving school governors extra powers to caution, discipline or dismiss head teachers who do not meet mutually agreed targets;
9. Introducing a Talented Head Teachers programme to draw top leaders to the schools where they are most needed.
10. Giving schools greater freedom over term dates, but setting the month of July (from the first Monday in July) as compulsory holiday between school years, enabling Welsh families to book more affordable holidays at home and abroad.
11. Enabling greater control for head teachers over their school's budget.
12. Regional Consortia to be abolished.
13. Ensuring elected representation of peers from the teaching profession to the Education Workforce Council to ensure it is properly accountable.

# Topical Motion

## TM1: Rough Sleeping

*Newport Local Party*

### Conference Notes:

1. Newport City Council proposed banning rough sleepers through the use of a Public Space Protection Order which successfully passed through the Council's Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2015.
2. The Welsh Government stopped recording the estimated number of rough sleepers in 2009.
3. Police around Wales have used the Vagrancy Act of 1824 to criminalise rough sleepers.
4. The issues affecting rough sleepers are complex and can include a number of factors not limited to but including mental health issues, addictions, confidence issues, & arrears.
5. That there have been great strides in reducing the number of rough sleepers in certain parts of the world and applauds Utah's reduction in rough sleeping by 93% and Mountain Hat Alberta's ending of rough sleeping earlier this year.

### Conference Believes That:

1. It is disappointing that in 2015 there are still people rough sleeping on the streets of Wales' towns and cities.
2. Without knowing the full extent of the rough sleeping problem in Wales, it is hard to fully measure of progress is being made towards ending rough sleeping.
3. Criminalising rough sleepers is dehumanising and does nothing to help get rough sleepers the support they need and back into proper housing.
4. With the right political will Wales can end the need for people to sleep rough within 10 years.
5. Arrears and Finances shouldn't be a barrier to people getting off the streets.

### Conference Calls For:

1. The Welsh Government to start recording the number of people sleeping rough in Wales.
2. Police and Councils around Wales to do all they can to support rough sleepers and to avoid using measures and outdated laws to criminalise people.
3. The banning of using arrears as a reason not to support or house rough sleepers.
4. National Policy Committee to help bring forward a plan to end rough sleeping in Wales in 10 years, including looking at the Housing First model used so successfully in the state of Utah and in Mountain Hat, Alberta.

## Amendments to Motion

### Amendment 1

*National Policy Committee*

Replace all instances of 'Mountain Hat' with 'Medicine Hat'.

Accepted as a drafting amendment by the proposers of the motion.

Decision of Conference

Amendment 1 was accepted as a drafting amendment.

The motion as amended was passed by Conference

# Motion as Passed

## **Conference Notes:**

1. Newport City Council proposed banning rough sleepers through the use of a Public Space Protection Order which successfully passed through the Council's Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2015.
2. The Welsh Government stopped recording the estimated number of rough sleepers in 2009.
3. Police around Wales have used the Vagrancy Act of 1824 to criminalise rough sleepers.
4. The issues affecting rough sleepers are complex and can include a number of factors not limited to but including mental health issues, addictions, confidence issues, & arrears.
5. That there have been great strides in reducing the number of rough sleepers in certain parts of the world and applauds Utah's reduction in rough sleeping by 93% and Medicine Hat Alberta's ending of rough sleeping earlier this year.

## **Conference Believes That:**

1. It is disappointing that in 2015 there are still people rough sleeping on the streets of Wales' towns and cities.
2. Without knowing the full extent of the rough sleeping problem in Wales, it is hard to fully measure of progress is being made towards ending rough sleeping.
3. Criminalising rough sleepers is dehumanising and does nothing to help get rough sleepers the support they need and back into proper housing.
4. With the right political will Wales can end the need for people to sleep rough within 10 years.
5. Arrears and Finances shouldn't be a barrier to people getting off the streets.

## **Conference Calls For:**

1. The Welsh Government to start recording the number of people sleeping rough in Wales.
2. Police and Councils around Wales to do all they can to support rough sleepers and to avoid using measures and outdated laws to criminalise people.
3. The banning of using arrears as a reason not to support or house rough sleepers.
4. National Policy Committee to help bring forward a plan to end rough sleeping in Wales in 10 years, including looking at the Housing First model used so successfully in the state of Utah and in Medicine Hat, Alberta.