

Welsh Liberal
Democrats

Democratiaid
Rhyddfrydol Cymru



Passed Motions

Spring Conference 2017

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Students and the Local Community

Submitted by IR Cymru

Conference notes:

1. The positive impact of students and universities on the local economy
2. The transient nature of student communities
3. The tensions that can arise between long-term residents and the changing student population

Conference believes:

4. Collaboration between groups leads to the most effective and sustainable solutions to the issues and challenges transient communities face
5. That it is the responsibility of students, landlords, and local authorities to keep the local areas tidy
6. More can and should be done to improve community relations between long-term and student residents

Conference calls for:

7. Local authorities to work with students unions and universities on a variety of projects including:
 - a. Creating an information pack for students and landlords detailing what resources are available to them within the community. This can include material and adverts from local businesses and groups, guidance on contacting the council, guidance around bin collection and local events.
 - b. Informing students of their rights as renters through online materials and workshops
 - c. Run community building projects such as Cardiff Digs and Love Bangor
 - d. Promote and work with Communities 1st and similar groups
 - e. To recognise work done by students in the local community through the use of Higher Education Achievement Report or other award schemes

Standing up for our local communities: 2017 Local Government Manifesto

National Policy Committee

Conference Notes:

- All council seats in Wales face election in May 2017.
- The financial pressures faced by local government and the challenge of maintaining and improving appropriate public services.
- The impact of Britain's departure from the EU on our economy.
- The widespread disconnection of the public from all levels of government, the unrepresentative demographic profile of councillors, low turnouts in elections, and the arrogant attitude of some councils in Wales towards transparency and accountability.
- The recent manifesto for the National Assembly for Wales elections 2016, which included many policies for and regarding local government.

Conference believes that Welsh Liberal Democrats should promote a flourishing system of democratic local government, which empowers communities and in which power should be exercised at the most viable local level compatible with effective action and democratic control.

Conference calls for a manifesto which:

Empowers people and communities by

- 1 Campaigning for the devolution of power from Cardiff Bay to the hands of local communities, giving local government responsibility for areas such as economic development and community regeneration.
- 2 Meaningfully devolving power and responsibility from local authorities to community councils, where appropriate, so communities can set their own destiny.
- 3 Rebuilding trust in our democracy by campaigning to introduce STV and votes at 16 for local government elections, and ending the era of excessive six-figure 'golden-goodbyes'.

Creates prosperous communities by

- 4 Regenerating town centres by introducing measures to support SMEs, including investing in digital infrastructure, town centre parking, and local transport.
- 5 Calling for the introduction of Regional Passenger Transport Authorities to localise decision making to ensure accessible, affordable and reliable transport.
- 6 Encouraging Local Councils to collaborate on delivering more coordinated public transport to better serve local communities.
- 7 Investing in the maintenance of our highways and pavements, including cycle routes.
- 8 Investing in the digital connectivity of our communities, including mobile phone signal and broadband to support homes, businesses, and tourism.

Values Homes by

- 9 Delivering 20,000 new affordable homes across Wales over the course of the Assembly term.
- 10 Introducing a Rent to Own model to give everyone an equal opportunity to own their own home.
- 11 Ensuring new social housing is built to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and that at least 10% are built to full wheelchair accessibility standards.
- 12 Ensuring all councils have an accessible housing register, so they know where their wheelchair accessible, adaptable and adapted homes are, and how many they have.
- 13 Improve the enforcement of standards in the Private Rented Sector to ensure better housing quality for renters.

Ensures dignity in care by

- 14 Introducing and supporting measures to bring frontline health and social care services together, to give patients the best possible care at the most appropriate time.
- 15 Ensuring that local authorities are no longer using fifteen minutes for care slots and fast-tracking applications for social care for terminally-ill people, their families and carers.
- 16 Developing social prescribing and 'insulation on prescription' to link up the NHS with the fuel poverty agenda and other schemes.

Promotes a national mission of education reform by

- 17 Extending the Welsh Pupil Premium to support our most disadvantaged pupils.
- 18 Reducing infant class sizes to give teachers the time to focus on a child's individual needs.
- 19 Supporting the introduction of a new education Leadership Academy to recognise and promote teaching excellence.
- 20 Introducing Wales' first ever rural and small schools policy to raise standards in all of our schools, no matter where they are based, and ensuring all schools get a fair hearing when their future is being considered.
- 21 Supporting the development of a new curriculum, made in Wales but shaped by the best from around the world.

Protects our environment by

- 22 Supporting co-operatives to develop renewable energy projects in or on suitable publicly owned buildings and land, where practicable.
- 23 Investing in and protecting recycling centres to enable Local Authorities to meet recycling targets.
- 24 Supporting the development of community-based energy efficiency advice and mentoring schemes, especially in areas of significant fuel poverty.
- 25 Upgrading all council-owned buildings to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy waste, and investing in low or zero carbon technologies in buildings.

Strengthens our communities by

- 26 Rolling out 20mph zones in residential areas where there is community demand.
- 27 Ensuring a more thorough assessment of community need in any planning decision.

- 28 Establishing an Asset Transfer Advisory Committee in each local council area to protect local community assets such as libraries and community centres.
- 29 Calling for the development of the Community Budgets model in Wales to combine services, encouraging the breaking down of boundaries between different services.

Promotes the Welsh language and culture by

- 30 Supporting affordable housing in rural Welsh-speaking areas, ensuring young people can stay and support their communities.
- 31 Supporting calls for language impact assessments for proposed developments a statutory requirement before planning permission is granted.
- 32 Protecting the cultural infrastructure and organisations, including sport, leisure provision and youth provision.
- 33 Campaign for VAT on tourism to be cut from 20% to 5% to boost local economies and create jobs.

Conference notes the key message of the Welsh Liberal Democrats' 2017 campaign will be;

- Growing local and regional economies for the benefit of all.
- Investing in our communities.
- Delivering our national mission of educational reform.
- Reforming and restoring trust in our democracy.
- Rejecting business as usual and the complacency, favouritism and lack of vision of many of Wales' councils and councillors.

Conference also calls on the National Policy Committee to work with local parties and council groups to support them in drafting local manifestos ahead of the local government elections in May 2017.

Right to Buy

Cardiff and the Vale Liberal Democrats

Conference notes:

- 1 The Welsh Labour manifesto commitment to remove the right of long term tenants to buy their homes
- 2 The dramatic reduction in Right to Buy applications over many years with only 638 homes sold in 2015-16
- 3 That in 2015/16 the number of social houses increased by 0.2% with 1,143 new homes built (a net increase of 374 when the house sales were taken into account)
- 4 That successive Welsh Governments have reduced the Right to Buy discount so that is now up to £8,000
- 5 Changes to the rules on Housing Revenue Accounts will make give local authorities far greater power to invest in new homes

Conferences believes:

- 6 That having the right to own your own home is a long standing liberal principle, but it should not come at the expense of society through huge subsidies
- 7 That the discounts introduced by the Thatcher government were excessive and saw thousands of homes sold at huge discounts with local authorities not able to build replacement homes
- 8 That 20,000 new affordable homes should be built during the current Assembly term
- 9 That Welsh Labour are focussing on Right to Buy to distract from low numbers of homes built by councils
- 10 That if a tenant buys their home then this creates a capital receipt that can be used to build a new home

Conference calls for:

- 11 The Welsh Government to scrap the remaining Right to Buy and Right to Acquire discount so that tenants looking to buy their homes pay 100% of the market value
- 12 The Welsh Government to abandon their plans to scrap the right to buy
- 13 Local authorities and housing associations to use right to buy proceeds to invest in more social housing

Community Banking in Wales

South Wales East Valleys LD

Conference Notes:

- 1 Between January 2015 and January 2017 1,046 bank branches closed across Great Britain. (Which?, 2016).
- 2 Between April 2011 and April 2016 131 bank branches had closed in Wales (BBC, 2016).
- 3 Although changing customer behaviours is often cited as a reason for bank branch closures, only 56% of bank account holders use Internet banking according to Government figures. (Which?, 2016).
- 4 Post Offices have taken a far greater role in providing banking facilities (both personal and business) to communities where banks have closed. However, even Post Offices are under threat of closure in smaller communities.
- 5 In January 2016 the Department for Work and Pensions wrote to claimants who used post office card accounts to encourage them to move their benefits payments to a bank, building society or credit union account.
- 6 The main banks are Public Limited Companies, and whilst they do provide an essential service to the public, this is not a public service.

Conference Believes:

- 7 It is essential that members of the public and businesses have easy access to basic banking facilities such as cash withdrawal, paying-in, and getting change.
- 8 Whilst regulation of financial services is essential to protect the consumer, it would not be appropriate for legislation to be imposed on banks to force them to keep bank branches open.
- 9 The number of consumers using their local branches has reduced significantly over the last 10 years due to the take up of Internet, telephone and mobile banking. However, there are still those that do not have such facilities available to them or unable to use the facilities and are therefore digitally excluded from banking.

Conference calls for:

- 10 Unitary Authorities such as councils to provide secure Internet banking facilities through libraries so as to help reduce digital exclusion from banking.
- 11 The Digital Communities Wales programme to be extended to include training on digital banking facilities. Local Authorities should be engaged to provide training through the programme.
- 12 Post Office franchisees to be able to claim a rebate on their business rates, the amount of the rebate being dependent on the turnover of the business, where Post Offices are franchised to small businesses and there are no banks within the local community.
- 13 Unitary Authorities to be allowed to take on the activities of the Post Office franchise through secure cash office facilities where there is neither a Post Office nor a bank within a community.

The UK's future relationship with the EU

National Policy Committee

Having regard to:

- 1 the narrow majority for 'Leave' in the EU referendum;
- 2 the need to respect that majority and the views which led up to it;
- 3 the multiplicity of beneficial outcomes from Brexit then suggested to the electorate;
- 4 the limited two-year negotiating period after Article 50 is triggered.

Notes with concern that:

- 5 the UK Government has ruled out membership of the Single Market or the Customs Union and ignored the statements by the leaders of major EU member states that the UK cannot 'pick and choose' among the benefits of membership while discarding the obligations;
- 6 Wales is a major beneficiary of EU funding, especially for capital investment, which it will lose when the UK leaves the EU;
- 7 Welsh industry, agriculture, universities and other sectors will lose the advantages of EU membership with no simultaneous counterbalancing growth of revenues and opportunities;
- 8 the people of Wales, notably our young people, will lose their rights as EU citizens to travel, study, live and work anywhere in the EU;
- 9 EU citizens living in and contributing to communities in Wales lack assurance of their right to remain after Brexit, as do UK citizens living in other member states;
- 10 the UK will lose its influential place at the EU's law-making tables but its businesses and people will be required to comply with much EU legislation in order to trade with or travel within the EU, adding cost and complication where today there is none.

Calls upon the UK Government:

- 11 to fully inform Parliament of its specific negotiating aims and keep it informed about the progress of negotiations;
- 12 to reconsider its 'hard Brexit' stance and seek to minimise the losses and risks to the UK economy, including the especially damaging impacts on Wales;
- 13 to follow the democratic logic of June's referendum, which asked voters to decide whether to negotiate terms of exit from the EU, by holding a referendum before leaving, so enabling people to decide whether to go ahead on the emerging terms or to retain the UK's position as one of the most influential members of the EU.

Calls upon the Welsh Government, at all stages in the negotiations, to present a well-informed case to the UK Government representing the specific interests of Wales, and to maximise the role of the Assembly in the decision-making process.

The Welsh Lib Dems Governance Review

National Executive Committee

Conference notes that:

- 1 Following the disappointing result of the 2016 Welsh Assembly elections, the Welsh Party has significantly changed its staffing arrangements leading to new ways of working.
- 2 In Autumn 2016, the Federal Party completed a Governance Review and implemented several changes to their organisational structure and ways of undertaking party business.
- 3 A discussion on the Federal Governance Review made at the Welsh Lib Dem Conference in Autumn 2016 began the process of consulting on constitutional review in the Welsh Party.
- 4 The Constitutional Review Panel (CRP) have taken several steps towards commencing changes to the constitution but progress has been slow. In particular, a governance review and change is a challenging and time consuming task.

Conference believes that:

- 5 The loss of party staff since the 2016 Welsh Assembly elections means that the Welsh Party has placed greater expectations on the contribution of members and volunteers, therefore the party's organisational and governance structure needs to change to reflect this.
- 6 It is a widely accepted view that the Welsh Party Constitution needs to be reviewed in its entirety, including arrangements for the governance of the party.
- 7 The Welsh Party's organisational structure needs to reflect and align with changes within the Federal Party after implementation of governance changes.
- 8 It is desirable that a dedicated and informed project team is established to undertake consultation with members, and others with a vested interest, and then recommend changes to the governance arrangements of the Welsh Party.

Conference resolves that:

- 9 A Governance Task Force (GTF) of no more than 8 members shall be established to undertake consultation, evaluate the findings and then make recommendations for changes to governance within the Welsh Party. The report will go to the CRP for consideration and subsequent implementation as amendments to the constitution.
- 10 The GTF shall draw upon relevant expertise and experience from the wider party membership, as appropriate.
- 11 Members of the GTF shall include at least one member of NEC and one member of FMC. A call for expressions of interest shall be made to the Welsh Party membership through the party website following acceptance of this motion, and such expressions of interest shall be directed to the party president. Responsibility for establishing the team and its terms of reference will reside with the NEC representative in collaboration with the party president.
- 12 The CRP shall, from time to time, indicate specific areas that it feels need to be addressed more urgently. These areas currently include:
 - a. The reporting and accountability of the committees and their relationship with NEC.
 - b. The disciplinary process.

- 13 The GTF shall provide regular progress reports to CRP (as well as NEC and FMC) and will bring a preliminary report to Welsh Party Conference in Autumn 2017.
- 14 A revised organisational structure shall be brought to Welsh Party conference for amendment and/or approval in Spring 2018 for subsequent transitional implementation.
- 15 The committees shall then have at least 6 months of transitional operation under a new structure before they are up for re-election in Autumn 2018.

The GTF shall concentrate on formation and undertaking its activities after May 2017 to allow party members to focus on Local Government elections in Wales.

Topical Motion – Local Government Voting Reform

Cardiff and the Vale

1. Conference notes the 'Reforming local government: Resilient and renewed' white paper recently published by the Welsh Government.
2. Conference regrets that an opportunity has been missed for a wider reform of local government in Wales.
3. Conference reaffirms its long-standing commitment to securing a proportional voting system for local government elections, and extending the franchise in these elections to those aged 16 and 17.
4. Conference welcomes the opportunity presented by this white paper to put those ideas into practice.
5. Conference resolves that our 2017 Welsh Local Government manifesto should include a commitment to implement both policies.
6. Conference calls on all Welsh Liberal Democrat local parties to commit to implementing both policies in their council election campaigns.

Topical Motion – Deposit Return System (DRS)

Carmarthenshire & Pembrokeshire Liberal Democrats.

Conference Notes:

1. Wales led the way with the minimum 5p charge on all single use carrier bags from 1st October 2011. Scotland followed in 2014 and England in 2015. The charge was introduced to dramatically reduce the number of such plastic bags being issued and resulted in a 71% drop.
2. Single use drinks containers made up over 10% of litter on beaches in the 2015 Marine Conservation Society Great British Beach Clean.
3. DRS are already in operation in over 40 countries around the world (including Australia, Germany and the US) and have been proven to reduce litter, increase recycling by creating a more certain supply of affordable, high quality materials, reduce costs for Local Authorities and create jobs.
4. Drinks containers are a blight on our beaches - MCS surveys show plastic drinks bottles are frequently among the top four litter items found on UK beaches and our surveys indicate that they have increased by over 43%, and metal drinks cans by almost 29%, since 2014. After a scheme was introduced in the US, the number of drinks containers found on beaches there went down by over 70%.
5. It works! The container return rates in European deposit systems are generally very high and collection rates of up to 90-95% of containers can be achieved. It also gives a value to an item often regarded as having no value and is often disposed of, irresponsibly. Changing such behaviour is a major step towards increased recycling and a circular economy.
6. A DRS would help to incentivise groups such as teens and young adults that are known to be reluctant recyclers that there would be a financial incentive involved, making it more beneficial to do the right thing.
7. Coca-Cola in the UK says it now supports the introduction of a DRS in Scotland. If they are prepared to support its implementation in Scotland, they can do likewise in Wales.
8. The Welsh Liberal Democrats' commitment to introducing a DRS in our 2016 Manifesto for the National Assembly for Wales.

Conference Believes:

9. Such a system can reduce littering, increase recycling, and change behaviour. Like the carrier bag charge, it's a simple idea that can have an immediate effect.
10. The Well Being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.
11. Support to be given to the Marine Conservation Society's petition to honour this legislation and to build on the excellent results achieved by the carrier bag charge by implementing 2 further actions that would help Wales to achieve a zero waste, circular economy.

Conference Calls For:

12. The Welsh Government to introduce a Deposit Return System (DRS) for all single use beverage containers such as glass and plastic bottles and cans.
13. The Welsh Government to legislate that all fast food containers and utensils as well as take away cups and lids, if not reusable to refillable or collected for recycling in store, are fully compostable.
14. Welsh Government support to call on the UK Government to take urgent measures to reduce the amount of plastic that finds its way into our oceans. Life on earth depends on our oceans, but the amount of plastic that is entering the oceans is causing significant harm to wildlife as plastics enter the food chain.

Emergency Motion - Ford Plant Bridgend

Conference notes with concern:

- A) In early March this year a report was leaked to the press by trade unions, revealing that up to 1160 jobs could be lost at Bridgend Ford plant.
- B) That the loss of 1160 jobs equates to a reduction of two thirds of the work force at the plant by 2021.
- C) That the likelihood of maintaining Bridgend Plant in operation after 2021 seems unlikely if the projected job losses becomes a reality.
- D) That Bridgend MP Madeleine Moon (Labour) stated she was 'blind-sided' and 'stunned' by this announcement.
- E) That First Minister Carwyn Jones AM (Labour) also constituency AM for Bridgend states that this is a 'worst case scenario'.
- F) Plans to take Wales and Britain out of the single market

Conference notes that:

- A) Bridgend Ford is the third largest manufacturing plant in Wales
- B) Bridgend Ford is part of a wider network of businesses and providers, and is supported by smaller firms in the area that are reliant on Bridgend Ford staying open
- C) The likely impact of Brexit on the Welsh economy and industries in the UK which will further affect the security and stability of Welsh and British jobs

Conference calls for:

- A) A reassurance from Welsh Government and the UK Government to protect jobs at Bridgend Ford plant
- B) The Welsh Government to support areas that suffer sudden economic shocks including by enabling the creation of Development Companies and developing crisis management approaches with local leaders.
- C) The Welsh Government to work proactively with the UK Government to secure Wales' future in the single market.