

Protecting, Preserving and Promoting Rural Wales

O B LA I D
CYMRU
V O T E F O R
W A L E S



Plaid Cymru
Party of Wales

Wales' rural communities are integral to our identity as a nation.

Plaid Cymru is committed to creating sustainable rural communities where people can live, work and enjoy access to the services they need.

Our manifesto for rural Wales outlines the key policies that a Plaid Cymru Government after 6th May would introduce in pursuit of the better future our rural communities deserve.

Plaid Cymru recognises the immense contribution that the agricultural sector makes to Wales economically, environmentally, socially and culturally. We are committed to working with Welsh farmers in their aim to be one of the most sustainable farming sectors globally. We will do this through cooperation and collaboration, so that changes are for the benefit, not to the detriment, of our wider rural communities.

We are also determined to support rural communities in all their vibrancy and diversity. This will entail a package of initiatives and policies that reach beyond the farming sector, varying from improving access to services to better connectivity, greater access to affordable housing and giving rural Wales a stronger voice.

We are excited to share some key commitments a Plaid Cymru Government will make to our rural localities as part of our vision of Wales as a community of communities.



www.partyof.wales



post@plaid.cymru



02920 472 272



SUPPORTING WELSH FARMERS

The current Government has ignored the voice of farmers.

From its consultations on future farm support to the recent NVZ regulations Labour isn't listening to rural Wales.

This will change under a Plaid Cymru government.

Plaid Cymru recognises the immense contribution that the agricultural sector makes to Wales. The multiple challenges facing society and the sector means that it's time to forge a new context for agriculture in Wales and to secure a more prosperous future for farming. That has to happen in a way that puts the resilience of our family farms at the heart of the industry's renaissance.

Re-casting our farm support system for a post-covid, post-Brexit era gives us an opportunity to make the decisive changes needed to focus on long-term sustainability over short-term support, on provenance over commodity production and on co-operation over competition.

We support Welsh farmers in their aim to be one of the most environmentally sustainable farming sectors globally. We also recognise that in order for farms to be environmentally sustainable they must be economically sustainable.

The next Welsh Government will need to introduce a Welsh Agriculture Bill to reform agricultural support following our departure from the European Union. Plaid Cymru supports placing a greater emphasis on payment for public goods, but unlike the other parties our CAP replacement scheme will include a baseline support payment to farmers. This will offer the industry greater economic stability at this challenging time.

We will also support the sector by targeting support at active farmers and develop a strategy to bring new and young entrants into the industry. Local authority farms will play a key role and we will work with public bodies and other partners to identify ways of protecting and enhancing the public farm estate as an important foothold for new entrants in the future.



A Plaid Cymru Government will commit to the full use of the EU 2014-20 Rural Development Programme funding by 2023. We will also retain a commitment to our share of domestic funding towards what would have been the successor 2021-27 Rural Development Programme.

We will also commission an independent review of the effectiveness and value for money of Rural Development Programme projects thus far, which will inform our proposals for future rural support.

We will utilise wider investment to support the transition to more sustainable and diverse forms of land use, including organic farming, regenerative agriculture, agroforestry and mixed farming.

Horticulture is a particular sector that should make a greater contribution to our domestically sourced supply of food. Plaid Cymru will provide targeted support to help the sector develop and our procurement policies will be key in growing new markets for horticultural produce in Wales.

Plaid Cymru will regulate on dairy contract terms in order to address the relative market weakness of our milk producers in the food supply chain. Too often they have been exposed to unequal bargaining power leading to unfair treatment. The voluntary dairy code is not having the desired effect on improving supply-chain relations and we will consider adopting a mandatory approach.

We will make full use of the UK Government's Agriculture Act to ensure Wales gets its rightful share of the Red Meat Levy funds.

We commit to using the most effective measures to control and eradicate TB utilising lessons from elsewhere in the UK and beyond. We will also support work to tackle other animal health challenges such as Bovine Viral Diarrhoea and Sheep Scab.





NVZ REGULATIONS

Plaid Cymru will annul the Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) regulations introduced by the Welsh Labour Government just weeks ahead of the election.

Enforcing an all-Wales NVZ is disproportionate and contrary to the advice of the Welsh Government's statutory advisor, Natural Resources Wales. The 'farming by calendar' approach is not the best approach as it risks causing new pollution issues at certain times of the year.

The capital investment required to meet the new regulations (estimated at up to £360 million by the Government) is nearly £100 million more than the total income from farming in Wales in 2019.

This risks forcing many farms out of business.

Instead, we will work with the industry, Natural Resources Wales and other stakeholders to introduce more sophisticated and better targeted regulations within our first six months in Government.

This will be complemented by a robust voluntary approach elsewhere, based on schemes that have clearly demonstrated success in reducing levels of nitrates.

We will also look closely at plans in England to use new weather and GPS technology as a basis for the introduction of a "risk matrix" which has the potential to provide farmers with real-time advice on slurry spreading instead of depending on crude calendar dates.



RURAL TOURISM

Plaid Cymru recognises the importance of the tourism industry across rural Wales as an employer and in attracting investment into the countryside.

We will encourage tourist enterprises which provide maximum benefit to local communities rather than extractive tourism that sees Wales as a resource to be exploited by outside interests. Bearing this in mind we will explore ways of increasing local ownership and control of the industry.

We want to promote Wales as a top quality, sustainable tourism destination with activities and experiences based on our natural resources, our produce, our unique coast and landscape, and our language, culture, and heritage.

We will provide financial support to grow the sector with a particular focus on cultural tourism and food tourism – both of which are particularly relevant to rural Wales.

Food tourism is a key opportunity to promote both the agricultural and hospitality sectors. It offers an alternative means of local and regional development, with the ability to strengthen identities, enhance the tourist and local appreciation of the surrounding environment and encourage the regeneration of local heritage.



WELSH FOOD PRODUCTION

The impact of the pandemic and our departure from the EU has exposed huge weaknesses in our food supply system. Many Welsh food producers and processors lost their markets overnight and it has become clearer than ever that the current food system isn't working in the interests of our family farms or our local producers and processors.

Wales needs to become more self-sufficient. We need shorter food supply chains and greater capacity to grow, process, distribute and sell our own produce. We need to better insulate ourselves from the economic crosswinds of global markets, ensuring that we add value and retain wealth locally.

We can do this by increasing Welsh processing capacity across the board. Reversing the loss of

local processing capacity will be a positive move for those who live and work in rural areas, for animal welfare, for tackling climate change and for the rural economy.

Plaid Cymru wants to see a Wales where everyone has dignified access to nutritious and sustainably produced food, in a way that secures a fair income for farmers and all food sector workers. Our agricultural sector will play a key part in developing the increasingly localised food system Plaid Cymru wants to see.

To pursue this, we will establish a cross-sector Food System Commission tasked with developing a roadmap towards a food system that's fit for future generations.

LOCAL PROCUREMENT

Under a Plaid Cymru government all public procurement of food should prioritise the purchase of Welsh-produced food. Local and regional public procurement – for example in schools, hospitals and council offices – can help create new markets for local food businesses.

Our public procurement policy will play a key role in supporting Welsh farmers. We will encourage public bodies to adopt progressive procurement practices and use local supply chains to enable the agricultural industry, businesses and social enterprises to create jobs and retain wealth in the local economy.

A great example of this is our intention to provide all primary school children with free school meals by the end of our first term with a particular emphasis on local supply chains. Contracts will be procured locally wherever possible providing nutritious, locally produced meals for our children. This will simultaneously benefit public health and the environment, whilst also supporting the Welsh farming sector.



MADE IN WALES

We have a wealth of skills, talent and creativity that we should be proud of here in Wales. We need to elevate the status of Welsh produce and better support farmers and businesses in their efforts to promote Wales' brand value.

The 'Welsh brand' is a significant asset representing a premium product of high quality and sustainability with a strong backstory rooted in Welsh landscape and culture. Utilising this strength can set us apart from our competitors, helping to grow both domestic and export markets for our produce.

We will create and promote a 'Made in Wales' official brand that will be carried by any product or service where 50 per cent of the value is created in Wales. This will be complemented by an online sales platform for Welsh food for domestic consumption and the launching of 'buy Welsh' and 'buy local' campaigns to raise levels of Welsh consumption of Welsh produced goods and services.

We will also support the Welsh wool industry by encouraging the use of our wool in public buildings, housing construction and renovation projects through carpets, insulation and other products, as well as supporting efforts to increase Welsh Wool research and processing capacity.

Plaid Cymru will also collaborate with the National Parks to investigate and develop proposals to create a special brand for products produced within our National Parks.



RURAL CRIME

Working with Plaid Cymru Police and Crime Commissioners we will demand greater powers to tackle rural crime, particularly farm theft and the protection of livestock from dog attacks.

Under the guidance of Plaid Commissioners in North Wales and Dyfed-Powys these police forces already have a dedicated Rural Crime Team. We will increase the capacity of our rural crime teams to deal with the increased demands they face.

The cost of dog attacks on livestock has risen significantly in recent years. However, the legislation with regards to livestock attacks is insufficient and restrictive. We will push for new legislation to:

- Make dog attacks an offence not only on agricultural land, but also to include private premises and all public places.
- Require all police forces to formally record livestock attacks, so there is a uniform picture of the true scale of the economic loss to the rural community and the impact on our food supply.
- Make it a responsibility under law for a dog owner to report an attack.
- Give police officers the power to obtain DNA

from a dog that is suspected of carrying out an attack on livestock.

- Give police the powers to ban a dog owner from future possession due to livestock attacks.

EMPOWERING RURAL COMMUNITIES

Empowering rural communities will be a priority for Plaid Cymru as part of our aim to reset the relationship between the farming community, rural Wales and the Welsh Government.

A consultative Rural Senedd, similar in form to Citizens Assemblies, will strengthen the voice of rural communities and be a consultative space to help influence the decisions that affect them.

Our commitment to the empowerment of rural communities is also reflected in our intention to work with the Wales Federation of Young Farmers Clubs.

We recognise the important wider social contribution made by YFCs across Wales and we are very keen to work with them to develop and grow the key role they have to play in our rural communities.





RURAL HOUSING

Another key part of our commitment to rural communities will be the provision of homes for local people.

We will launch the biggest public house building programme for fifty years. We will build or convert 50,000 public homes over the next five years – 30,000 council houses or other social housing, 5,000 cost-rental homes at intermediate rent, and 15,000 genuinely affordable homes to buy.

We will also foster community ownership by empowering local authorities and housing associations to purchase empty homes for development in order to meet the local need for social housing.

Additionally, we aim to make it affordable again for young people in all parts of Wales to buy their own home. Our definition of affordable homes will mirror the mortgage lending rule of 4.5 times the average local household income or around £125,000.

The second homes crisis is a particular challenge for many rural areas across Wales, causing young people especially to be driven out of their local communities. To reverse this damaging pattern, we

will change the planning laws to allow councils to impose a cap on the number of second homes and to refuse permission for changing a dwelling from being a primary to a secondary residence.

We will allow councils to charge council tax premiums of up to 200 per cent on second homes and close the loophole that allows second homeowners to register their property as “businesses” in order to avoid paying the council tax premium.

We’ll also bring forward regulations to treble the Land Transaction Tax charge on the purchase of second properties.

Plaid Cymru will also fund a pilot scheme to bring significant numbers of holiday homes into community ownership through public intervention in the existing housing market so that profits generated can be diverted to local developments such as the provision of social housing.



LIVING RURAL COMMUNITIES

We want to see a connected Wales, both physically and digitally, where no community feels left behind or isolated. We want communities in every part of our country to be sustainable and well-connected, where individuals have access to key amenities and services closer to home.

We will achieve both physical and digital connectivity by developing a national connectivity strategy, combining our plans for integrated green public transport with those for broadband and mobile phone connectivity improvement.

To achieve digital connectivity, we are determined to deliver ultra-fast gigabit broadband to all Welsh homes and businesses by 2026. The digital world has been a lifeline for so many individuals and communities who have suffered loneliness and isolation during the pandemic.

Plaid Cymru will work to ensure that no community is left behind and that everyone can reap the benefits of feeling connected in the digital world.

We will work to transform our public transport and active travel infrastructure whilst also recognising the more challenging context of reducing car usage

in rural communities.

Our plan for improved connectivity will be paired with a commitment to making rural communities viable for our young people. We want our young people to feel able and empowered to live and thrive in their local communities.

A key part of this will be our provision of free bus travel for 16- to 24-year-olds. This will help young people access training and employment, contribute to our environmental goals, support the sustainability of local bus routes and help strengthen the viability of rural communities at the same time.

Finally, too many rural communities have lost their local bank branches in recent years. Restoring banking services would not only bring an essential service closer to home, it would also help boost footfall in market towns and high streets in rural communities.

This is why Plaid Cymru will invest in a new Community Bank, to help small businesses and return local banking services to customers in these localities.



HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

The covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance and value of healthcare services, making us more determined than ever to protect, or in some cases restore, services to ensure access closer to home.

As part of our goal to create the best National Health and Care Service, we will recruit and train 1,000 new doctors, 4,000 new nurses, and 1,000 allied health professionals. This will help address the GP crisis faced by some rural communities and provide our NHS with the greater capacity it needs to deliver its wider services across rural Wales.

This will be complimented by Plaid Cymru's ambition to make the Bangor University Medical School a world leader in rural medicine.

Many people have missed routine and preventative dentistry services during the coronavirus crisis, a problem exacerbated by the current fall in NHS dentists in rural areas. We will restore mobile dentist units for rural Wales - bringing dentist services to communities that have had trouble accessing them in the past.

Improving access will also be a priority in primary care. We will explore incentives for GPs to practice in areas experiencing shortages.

Mental health has become an increasingly prominent issue for our rural communities. Isolation, long working hours and difficult economic conditions have taken their toll on the farming sector particularly. This has created greater demand for services in those communities that very often find it hardest to access the support they need.



Plaid Cymru commits to working with rural mental health charities, farming unions, Wales YFC and others to ensure that support and advice is available and accessible to those who need it.



WELSH AS A LIVING LANGUAGE

There is a strong connection between the future of our rural communities and the future of the Welsh language.

A greater percentage of workers in the agricultural industry speak Welsh than in any other sector, with the proportion of Welsh speakers in the industry (43%) significantly higher than that of the population as a whole (19%).

We want to enable people to use the language at every stage of their lives. As part of our national, free early years education and childcare service, we will work with childcare providers, such as Mudiad Meithrin, to make Welsh language childcare available in all parts of Wales.

We also commit to ensuring primary education in Wales becomes properly bilingual so that every child emerges at eleven years old being able to understand and communicate in both Welsh and English.

This will be strengthened by a new Welsh Education Act establishing clear and properly incentivised statutory targets to normalise and expand Welsh-medium education.

We want to multiply the opportunities people have to use the language in their day-to-day lives, both physically and digitally. A key part of this goal will be setting a target to create 1,000 new Welsh-language spaces, including cultural spaces and workplaces by the end of the next Senedd term.

This will be complemented by the establishment of a new 'Menter Ddigidol Gymraeg' as part of a new digital strategy for the language.

Welsh language provision will also be extended to health and social care. We recognise that for many, seeking help is significantly eased by the ability to do so in one's first language. We will therefore work to increase the number of Welsh speakers in healthcare and make Welsh-language skills a key qualification within the NHS.

Finally, we are determined to protect Welsh language place names in built and natural environments, most notably within rural communities. To achieve this, we will introduce legislation to safeguard such names and ensure that they are protected for future generations.



Promoted & Published by M Phillips on behalf of Plaid Cymru - The Party of Wales. All at Ty Gwynfor, Marine Chambers, Anson Court, Cardiff, CF10 4AL. Printed by Minuteman Press, Fulmar House, Beignon Cl, Ocean Way, Cardiff CF24 5PB