

Foreword

I would like to thank the entire Welsh Conservative Party for the positive way it has responded to the most thorough consultation exercise ever carried out by a Party for its national Manifesto.

I am immensely grateful for the support that the Party has given to my team in the Assembly, and fiercely proud of the contribution that they have made to our work in Wales, and to keeping the flag flying for Welsh Conservatism.

This partnership has helped produce clear, relevant and rational policies for Wales designed to reverse the sad decline in our public services that we have seen over the last four years, and to ensure that money is invested in our public services and not frittered away on worthless schemes like a costly new Assembly building.

The Welsh Conservative Party is a strong unionist Party, but no Party has worked harder to make devolution a success for the people of Wales.

We are the only Party that has provided opposition to the nonsensical and damaging policies of the Labour/Liberal coalition in Cardiff Bay. We have been the voice of reason in Welsh politics.

The key themes of this Manifesto are the need to invest in our public services, to provide help to create Welsh jobs, to support rural Wales, to halt wasteful projects like the new Assembly building proposal and invest the savings in public services, and to create an Assembly for the whole of Wales.

These are the right policies for Wales.

NICK BOURNE AM





A Healthy



Wales

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A Healthy Wales

The Conservative Party is proud of the part it has played in establishing and developing the NHS. The success of the NHS can be seen in the strong commitment the people of Wales have to a health service that is:

- Universal*
- Comprehensive and*
- Free at the point of use*

Of course all of the major political parties in Wales fully subscribe to these principles. However, the Welsh Conservative Party believes that this consensus is no longer enough to deliver a modern health service that patients can fully rely upon. A vital fourth principle must be added:

- Effective: a service capable of meeting the requirements of patients*

The approach of the Labour/Liberal coalition government has been sadly lacking in vision and enterprise. They seem fixed to the nostrum that extra spending will automatically become effective investment. The Welsh Conservative Party, in contrast, believes that great skill, enterprise and commitment is needed to make the most of increased public spending on the NHS. Perhaps the starkest illustration of the Labour/Liberal coalition's failure is that the health budget in Wales is to be frozen from 2004 unless a programme of effective spending reforms is agreed.

The Welsh Conservative Party is committed to an NHS Cymru that is:

Universal, comprehensive, free and effective. A modern NHS Cymru, fit for the 21st century and meeting the requirements of patients without long delays.

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Turning Spending into Investment

Patients want NHS Cymru to succeed so that it can deliver timely, high quality care. No one doubts that significant increases in health spending have occurred since 1997, but patients want to know where the money is going. So far it has not led to any increase in patient treatments. In 1999, NHS Cymru treated 585,427 hospital patients, in 2002 the figure was 567,885 – a fall of 3%. This fall in patient treatments came despite additional health spending of some 40%. Clearly, the Labour/Liberal coalition has let Wales down badly. No wonder waiting lists have soared.

The Welsh Conservative Party believes that to turn extra spending into effective investment we must concentrate on reducing bureaucracy, recruiting more frontline staff, and giving hospital Trusts the freedom to succeed. We believe in trusting patients, doctors, nurses, carers and others to transform the NHS. To create a more flexible, enterprising and innovative NHS Cymru we would:

- *Establish an independent all-Wales Health Organisation free of political interference. The National Assembly would concentrate on setting strategic objectives for the NHS;*
- *Target health expenditure on recruiting extra doctors, nurses, and therapists. By 2007, NHS Cymru would employ:*
 - 500 more doctors*
 - 4,000 more nurses and*
 - 1,300 more therapists*
- *Introduce a bursary for medical undergraduates in Wales who commit to a 3 year post in NHS Cymru once qualified;*
- *Establish foundation hospitals throughout Wales;*



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- *Move to a system where spending follows the patient. Patients would be free to seek NHS funded care elsewhere if they are kept waiting for treatment beyond set limits;*
- *Create an independent organisation to monitor NHS and Social Care statistics and report on the National Assembly's policies;*
- *Support the development of Clinical Schools at Swansea and Bangor.*

Primary Care: Building on Success

It is probably in the delivery of primary care that the NHS has had its most outstanding success over the last 55 years. The World Health Organisation consistently rates primary care in Britain as amongst the best in the world. However, great care must be taken to ensure that primary care in Wales is properly supported and modernised to meet the demands of the 21st century. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- *Invest in more frontline staff. Progress must be made to establish an average 15 minute GP consultation time;*
- *Limit the functions of Local Health Boards so that they can concentrate on the delivery of primary care;*
- *Acknowledge the part played by pharmacists in the delivery of primary care and in the provision of information to promote healthy living. We would look at the case for a new contract to recognise the range of services now delivered by pharmacists;*
- *Invest in a school health and well-being service. The school nursing service is in need of reform and the potential for health gain in this area is considerable;*
- *Improve the commissioning of mental health services.*

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Improving our Hospitals

Hospital services are under great strain. Although the quality of hospital care is excellent once received, far too many patients are subjected to long delays for treatment. Unless the situation is improved, many people will seek treatment outside the NHS, which will reduce the NHS's claim to be a comprehensive service. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would invest in frontline staff and create a system where spending follows the patient. Foundation hospitals would breathe new life into NHS Cymru and reverse the disastrous decline in productivity and effectiveness suffered under the Labour/Liberal coalition government. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Reduce waiting times by investing in more frontline staff to treat patients. Waiting time targets would start from the time of the GP referral;*
- Establish 3 centres for elective surgery in Wales;*
- Fully fund a children's hospital for Wales and invest in healthcare services throughout Wales, e.g. by improving children's services in North Wales;*
- Expand the hospital building programme and utilise PFI as a funding option;*
- Invest in acute mental health services.*



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Much of palliative medicine has been pioneered in Britain. To a large extent, palliative care has been delivered by the independent sector as an 'add on' service. However, it is time to recognise that palliative care is a core NHS service and one greatly appreciated by patients and carers. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Ensure that hospices in the independent sector receive a level of public funding that reflects their value to the NHS. This should be in the order of 50% of running and capital costs;*
- Invest in pain clinics so that all patients in Wales suffering chronic pain have access to an effective service.*

Patients First

In our efforts to modernise the management and organisation of the NHS we will not lose sight of the fact that patients are the first priority of the service. The part played by Community Health Councils will be key to ensuring that patients really are put first. Patients appreciate the professionalism of NHS staff and are appreciative of the care they receive once they get treatment. It is not the quality of NHS care that is undermining patient confidence but the inordinate and growing waiting lists.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- By 2007 guarantee a routine waiting time of no more than 6 months for patients. This waiting time guarantee would start from the time of the GP referral;*
- Set a maximum waiting time for cardiac treatment of 3 months;*
- Raise the standard of cancer care to amongst the best in Europe;*

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- *Ensure that patients have access to modern medicines;*
- *Following a full consultation process, rename and strengthen Community Health Councils to reflect their status as the champion of patients. CHCs would be given the power to refer major proposed changes to local NHS services to the National Assembly for approval;*
- *Require the all-Wales Community Health Council organisation to publish an annual report on the patients' view of the NHS, which would be considered by the National Assembly;*
- *Ensure that hospitals provide a pleasant and clean environment in which to receive care;*
- *Recognise the right patients have to choice.*

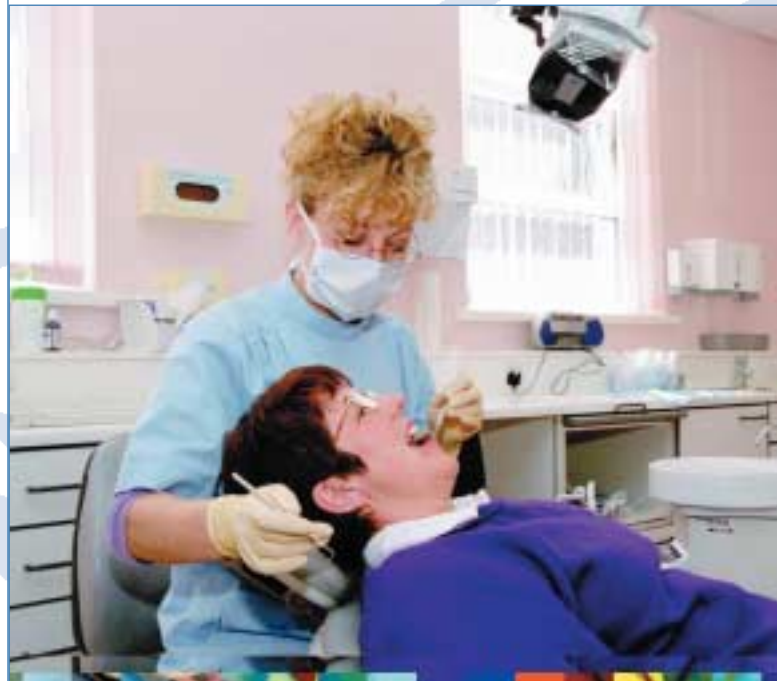


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Health Care in Rural Areas

The NHS must be fully accessible to all patients. There is growing concern that patients in rural areas receive a lower level of service particularly in the provision of acute care. Generally speaking, it requires greater expenditure to deliver NHS services in rural areas. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Oppose any change to the NHS allocation formula that disadvantages rural areas;*
- Commission a full independent review of NHS care in rural Wales;*
- Invest in intermediate and community hospital services in rural areas so that acute and step-down care can be delivered locally whenever possible;*
- Ensure that ambulance and first responder services are improved;*
- In co-operation with the voluntary sector, ensure that an air ambulance service extends to the whole of Wales with particular emphasis on rural areas.*



A Healthy Wales

A Healthy Wales

To promote health and well-being in Wales, the NHS must succeed as a modern and effective service. But this is not enough. Each individual patient must accept responsibility for helping to maintain their own health and well-being. Similarly, local communities, private and public organisations, and all levels of government must acknowledge the powerful socio-economic forces that influence the health and well-being of the people of Wales. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Require the all-Wales Health Organisation to have a directorate of health promotion;*
- Invest in specific measures to address health inequalities, such as salaried GPs in deprived areas like the South Wales Valleys and parts of rural Wales;*
- Continue to support local authorities, government agencies and private and voluntary organisations in addressing the wider socio-economic determinants of health and well-being.*



A Learning



g *W a l e s*

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A Learning Wales

It is by backing teachers, parents and pupils that full faith will be restored in our education service. Good practice is found in schools and colleges throughout Wales, but bureaucratic and centralist policies have limited the potential for success. The Welsh Conservative Party would promote choice, diversity and enterprise within our education service in Wales. We would give thriving schools the freedom to expand, assist less successful schools to flourish, and help the further and higher education sectors to become beacons of excellence.

Promoting Choice

Conservatives believe in freedom and choice for individuals, organisations, and communities. We would promote choice throughout the education system and reject the dull monochrome vision of our opponents. To succeed in the 21st century an education system needs to be vibrant and innovative. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would promote freedom and choice by:

- Expanding parental choice throughout the education service, particularly in enabling parents to select the right school for their child;*
- Utilising PFI as a funding option and supporting a healthy mix of public and private investment;*
- Supporting the work of faith based schools and encouraging an increase in the number of secondary schools that are faith based;*
- Protecting small schools from closure unless they are failing to deliver the national curriculum;*
- Supporting rural schools, especially in areas where the school is the focus of community life;*

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- *Involving the business sector more widely in the planning and delivery of education services, and by expanding the use of Education Business Partnerships;*
- *Recognising and supporting the role of the voluntary sector;*
- *Encouraging the establishment of specialist schools in Wales.*



Backing the Professionals

Headteachers, staff and governors know what is best for their school. The last Conservative government strongly promoted the local management of schools, but far too much regulation and governmental interference persists. Education in Wales is going backwards with the Labour/Liberal coalition insisting on centralised control mechanisms.

The Welsh Conservative Party believes that our schools are being stifled. We would put schools back on track and allow them the freedom to manage their own affairs. We would:

- *Ring-fence school budgets to ensure that the resources the people of Wales want to put into education actually gets to schools;*
- *Fund school budgets on a 3 year cycle to allow schools to plan for the future;*
- *Cut governmental interference in schools by placing greater emphasis on mainstream funding rather than special grant schemes;*

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- *Abolish the bureaucratic and unnecessary Community Consortia for Education and Training to free up headteachers' time.*

The confidence of teachers, parents and pupils is based on a safe school environment. Staff must be wholeheartedly supported when they implement measures to improve behaviour and educational performance.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- *Not impose pupil exclusion targets, but give power to headteachers to deal with pupil behaviour;*
- *Allow home school contracts to be a condition of pupil admission;*
- *Invest in Pupil Referral Units so that pupils with behavioural problems receive appropriate tuition and are helped to develop more positive attitudes.*



Higher Standards

During the past four years under the Labour/Liberal coalition considerable changes have been made to the National Curriculum, especially for post-16 education. The change from A level to AS/A level was done in haste and with inadequate planning. The speed of change has undermined the faith that teachers have in government. We would promote stability and avoid change for change's sake. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

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- *Scrap the costly Welsh Baccalaureate scheme and review the curriculum/examination framework for post-14 education;*
- *Promote greater flexibility in schools to allow them to specialise in certain academic or vocational areas according to local needs;*
- *Provide greater options for vocational education at age 14 and improve links with business and industry.*

The Welsh Conservative Party believes that schools have a vital role to play in securing a truly bilingual Wales. Since the 1988 Education Act, introduced by a Conservative government, Welsh language teaching has received a much higher priority. This must continue, but a degree of targeting, flexibility and diversity must also be accommodated. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- *Target resources at pre-school and primary school teaching of Welsh through bodies like Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin;*
- *Allow individual schools to determine whether the teaching of Welsh should be compulsory at Key Stage IV.*



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Parents must be assured that the best possible standards are being achieved in our schools. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Retain testing at Key Stage II and Key Stage III and review the nature and scope of the tests;*
- Review the examinations framework;*
- Restore the practice of publishing school performance information, focussing on academic and value added indicators.*

Supporting Pupils

Pupils have a right to learn in a safe and welcoming environment that encourages them to achieve the highest standards possible. A successful time at school can help give children the confidence to attain their full potential in life. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would put pupils first and:

- Acknowledge the consistent improvement that has taken place in GCSE and A level results;*
- Ensure that all pupils are allowed to acquire the key skills needed for life and work;*
- Require LEAs to conduct pupil satisfaction surveys in secondary schools and to publish a report on the findings;*
- Encourage schools to consult with pupils via school councils and other means;*

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- *Recognise that most pupils with special needs want to attend mainstream schools, but require the necessary support to do so;*
- *Improve the school nursing service, so that the health and well-being of pupils is protected and enhanced.*

Supporting Teachers

The decline of morale in the teaching profession is a sad reflection on the Labour/Liberal coalition's failure to properly support staff in schools. One consequence of this failure is the difficulty many schools face in recruiting and retaining staff. The Welsh Conservative Party believes that teachers make an enormous contribution to society and aspire to the highest standards of professionalism. Teaching is a valued profession; a Welsh Conservative Party administration would recognise this fact and:

- *Reduce the clerical burdens and red tape faced by teachers;*
- *Protect and increase the non-contact time given to teachers;*
- *Build on the work of the General Teaching Council for Wales on continuing professional development by extending bursaries and sabbaticals*



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Supporting Students

The Labour Party delivered a most damaging blow to students by introducing tuition fees and abolishing the grant. We fear that many Welsh students have been deterred from entering higher education as a result. The Welsh Conservative Party will continue to seek to persuade the UK government to view higher education as an investment in the future economic and social well-being of Wales and urge the abolition of tuition fees and the introduction of a system of support for students. Meanwhile, a Welsh Conservative Party administration would:



- Lobby the UK government to devolve the power to determine policy on tuition fees to the National Assembly and ensure that Welsh universities are not disadvantaged financially;*
- Replace the Assembly Learning Grant with a non-means tested grant to all higher education students, thereby abolishing tuition fees for Welsh students;*
- Retain the current system of support for further education students and increase the amount available to colleges to alleviate hardship.*

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Lifelong Learning

The Welsh Conservative Party believes that lifelong learning is well served through the network of further and higher education colleges in Wales. We recognise the huge economic and academic contribution made by the further and higher education sectors. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Support the development of modern apprenticeships and strengthen links between education institutions and business and industry;*
- Work with Fforwm and further education colleges to strengthen their links with industry and the community;*
- Publish a workforce strategy for the recruitment and retention of further education professionals;*
- Further develop the University of Wales brand which serves Wales so well;*
- Build upon the review of higher education conducted by the Assembly's Education Committee.*



A Caring



Wales

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A Caring Wales

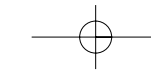
Social Care has not received the political priority it deserves. Although there have been some welcome developments in recent years, such as the creation of a Children's Commissioner for Wales, the most vulnerable in society do not receive a fair deal. The Joint Reviews of Social Services in Wales have been very poor and considerably worse than those in England. Politicians in both the National Assembly and local authorities must accept responsibility for this failure. It is time to make a serious and sustained political investment in social care because vulnerable people have a right to the highest quality care possible.

A simple start would be for politicians to recognise the professionalism and commitment of social workers and others involved in care. A more positive approach to social care is also needed to recruit and retain a committed workforce.

Standards are unlikely to improve unless local authorities improve the quality of their commissioning of services. The Labour/Liberal coalition has not harnessed the potential of the voluntary and independent sectors. Indeed, in some areas a 'mixed economy' in the provision of care services is absent and local authorities see themselves as monopoly providers of services.

The Welsh Conservative Party is committed to a vibrant and innovative social care sector that:

- Meets the real needs of vulnerable people;*
- Delivers high standards of care;*
- Recognises the professionalism and commitment of the workforce;*
- Develops a 'mixed economy' of care services with thriving voluntary and independent sectors.*

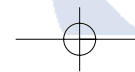
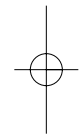


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Children's Services

It is shaming to reflect on the fact that some of the worst findings of the Joint Reviews have related to children's services. The position of vulnerable children and young people, such as care leavers, remains fragile and often poorly supported. It is time to promote a child centred approach and demand effective action. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- *Publish an annual report on the 'Well-being of Children in Wales'. This report would take as its benchmark the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We would ask for a joint audit of the report from the Audit Commission and the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales;*
- *Produce a workforce strategy to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers, particularly for key areas such as children's services;*
- *Mainstream children's services and a child centred approach across a range of government programmes;*
- *Commission more family support services from the voluntary and independent sectors;*
- *Request the Children's Commissioner to report on the progress of the Assembly's measures to support care leavers.*

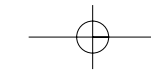


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A significant proportion of children are vulnerable because they live in poverty or have some form of special need that is not adequately met. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Publish a strategy to tackle child poverty. The strategy would set key targets and be subject to independent audit;*
- Require local authorities to keep a register of disabled children, which would help sustain a system of continuous support;*
- Produce an action plan to implement the Health and Social Services Committee's report Children with Special Health Needs. We regard the following to be particularly important priorities:*
 - The recruitment of key workers to support children with special needs and their families;*
 - The provision of pre-school education for children with special needs;*
 - The provision of a strengthened school nursing service;*
 - The delivery of more effective joint working between health, social services and education;*
 - The provision of adequate therapy services.*





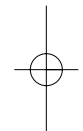
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Better Standards of Care

The Welsh Conservative Party broadly supported the Care Standards Act, which established the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales and the Care Council for Wales. We welcome the fact that local authorities no longer inspect their own residential homes and that a common standard is now applied to all sectors. It is clear that those who receive social care want flexible and high quality services that are relevant to their needs.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Maintain the robust and operationally independent system of Joint Reviews of Social Services and place it on a five year inspection cycle;*
- Require local authorities to concentrate on their role as commissioners of high quality care rather than the direct providers of services;*
- Ensure that more social care services are commissioned from the voluntary and independent sectors;*
- Improve the quality of data collected on social services and publish 'league' tables on vital performance indicators;*
- Revise the physical standards that apply to existing residential and nursing homes.*



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The division between health care and social care has been called the 'Berlin Wall' which separates care services. Despite efforts to encourage joint working between social services and health organisations, a 'silo' mentality on budgets and services often persists. To address this difficulty, a Welsh Conservative Party administration would pilot a unified care trust which would:

- Allow one agency to deliver adult social services and primary health care;*
- Leave children's services with the local authority;*
- Receive oversight from the local authority.*

The Cost of Care

Unless higher standards are paid for, many service providers will be forced out of the care sector. There is growing evidence to suggest that residential and nursing home fees in the independent sector are not at viable levels. Since 1997 over 10% of places in nursing homes have been lost. This loss has not been accompanied by a compensatory increase in domiciliary care where people are supported at home. In fact the number of people in Wales receiving domiciliary care has also fallen. This has created a crisis in the care sector with the knock-on effect of 'bed blocking' in hospitals. The financial penalty is huge because nursing care in hospitals costs considerably more than care at home or in a residential setting. The human cost on patients waiting for treatment is also intolerable.

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A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- *Increase the fee levels for residential and nursing homes. Local authorities would no longer be allowed to pay the independent sector lower fee rates than council owned homes;*
- *Encourage the take-up of Direct Payments to those receiving social care services. The Direct Payments scheme would be modified to more effectively cover those with learning disabilities. All local authorities in Wales would be required to provide a Direct Payments scheme.*

The Royal Commission on the Long Term Care of the Elderly (Cmd:4192-1) recommended that all nursing care and personal care should be paid for out of general taxation. The UK government accepted the first of these recommendations but rejected the Commission's call for free personal care. The Welsh Conservative Party supports the principle of free nursing care. However, we are not convinced that the National Assembly's call for the UK government to reverse its decision on free personal care is at all realistic. Instead, the Welsh Conservative Party believes that the Assembly's Health and Social Services Committee should undertake a comprehensive review of the funding of personal care. Such a review would consider:

- *The extra costs faced by people who are disabled or unwell;*
- *Whether personal care should be free of charge;*
- *How charging, if applied, should operate in a fairer and more consistent manner.*

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Disabled People

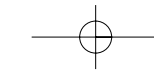
The Welsh Conservative Party supports the social model of disability. It is important that all sections of society, and particularly organisations providing services to the public, appreciate the barriers placed in the way of disabled people. The Disability Rights Commission has a key role to play in securing full access to services for disabled people. Firm action is also required from the National Assembly. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Publish a strategy to implement the social model of disability. This would contain a range of key targets to measure progress on issues such as access to education and employment;*
- Extend Direct Payments.*

Carers

Without the voluntary support given by carers to family and friends in need of care, social services in Wales would grind to a halt. It is important that carers are supported by society to undertake their caring role in a safe and sustainable manner. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

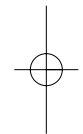
- Review and strengthen the Carers Strategy. Particular attention would be paid to flexible respite care services and how they can be increased;*
- Record the number of carer assessments completed by each local authority;*
- Continue to 'ring-fence' the Carers Support Grant.*



A Caring Wales

Older People

Many policies in the field of social care have a direct impact on older people. A disproportionate number of older people are users of services, carers or disabled. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would recognise the right older people have to access public services. Discrimination against older people is unacceptable and we believe that the National Assembly must promote equality in this area. We would establish targets and a monitoring mechanism for the Strategy for Older People in Wales.





A Fairer Wales



Wales

The Civil Society

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A Fairer Wales

A Fairer Wales

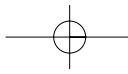
The Government of Wales Act 1998 placed a duty on the National Assembly to further the principle of equality of opportunity. The Welsh Conservative Party has worked assiduously on the Assembly's Committee on Equality of Opportunity. In the Welsh Conservative Party, we believe that the right to access services and to be treated without discrimination is fundamental to human dignity. We value the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality, and the Disability Rights Commission. The Conservative Party has played a significant part in the transformation of social views that has occurred since the 1960s. For instance, in the development of policy and the delivery of services, the position of the individual as a citizen and consumer is rightly recognised. We celebrate the fact that in today's Wales other sources of discrimination are now more readily acknowledged, including those based on age, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation.

To promote the principle of equality of opportunity, a Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Ensure that the Assembly promotes best practice in its own procedures and those of Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs). We would continue the work to implement the report Lifting Every Voice and further develop the Equal Pay Campaign;*
- Call for the UK government to recognise the importance of each element of the equality agenda should any reform of the equality commissions be advanced;*
- Oppose the UK government's policy to establish long-term open accommodation centres for asylum seekers, as previously proposed for Sully Hospital;*
- Offer AMs and their support staff a comprehensive training scheme, which would include equal opportunities training.*

The Labour/Liberal coalition has made progress in establishing a fairer public appointments process. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would take this process further and:

- Establish an independent Public Appointments Board for Wales. All public appointments would be free of political interference;*



A Fairer Wales

- Address the issue of the lack of Welsh speaking members of ASPBs. Public bodies would have to demonstrate that Welsh language considerations are adequately addressed at board level.

The Civil Society

The voluntary sector is at the heart of a healthy civil society. Although the voluntary sector ranges in size from small neighbourhood groups to large and complex national bodies, all voluntary organisations seek to serve the community interest. The Welsh Conservative Party welcomes the progress made in the Assembly to promote a flourishing voluntary sector. We have participated with enthusiasm in the Assembly's Voluntary Sector Partnership Council. The Welsh Conservative Party wants this partnership to continue and deepen. We would:

- Review the funding arrangements for voluntary organisations, particularly those that work across the whole of Wales and face a fragmented commissioning process;
- Deliver more public services through the voluntary sector which acts in a sensitive and responsive way;
- Commission advocacy services through the voluntary sector;
- Uphold the principle of additionality in the distribution of lottery grants;
- Seek to transfer public assets to community control;
- Set national standards for Local Authorities and ASPBs for the involvement of the voluntary sector in policy development and to increase the participation of users and carers;
- Create bursaries to fund the secondment of voluntary sector employees to work in the National Assembly and ASPBs to develop policy.





A Enterprisi



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A Enterprising Wales

The Welsh Conservative Party has an ambitious economic vision for Wales. We want Wales to lead the way and create the most business friendly environment in the UK. Conservatives believe in enterprise. And enterprise is visible in the skills of businessmen and women, not politicians or bureaucrats. From leading industrialists to community entrepreneurs, the business sector in Wales needs one thing above all to succeed: freedom from unnecessary red tape. To make our vision a reality in Wales we would put in place the essential foundations for an enterprising economy. If Wales is to succeed we must see:

- Business costs kept low;*
- Taxes limited;*
- The road and rail infrastructure improved;*
- An excellent skills base, and*
- A first class telecommunications network.*

An enterprising Wales would ensure that economic success is spread to communities blighted by long-term industrial decline. Many of our most deprived communities were once at the heart of the industrial revolution and produced the wealth to forge a modern society. We believe that such communities can prosper again. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would ensure that the Objective One programme is more responsive to their enterprising spirit.

While the Welsh Conservative Party backs local entrepreneurs, our opponents regard governmental interference as the elixir of economic youth. This leaden view is entirely mistaken. The Welsh economy is now poorer in comparison to England than it has been for generations.

A Enterprising Wales

Data from the Office of National Statistics puts Welsh GDP per head at 80% of the overall UK figure. The wealth gap between Wales and England has widened significantly since Labour came to government in 1997. Unfortunately, this decline is predicted to continue. Under the Labour/Liberal coalition the economic future looks bleak.

Backing Business

Both the UK and National Assembly governments have increased business taxes. This has to stop. And the way business taxes are levied must change. By taxing businesses on their basic costs, Labour has hung a millstone around the neck of entrepreneurs. It would be fairer to change the approach and tax profits not basic costs. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Limit any increases in business rates to the rate of inflation or less;*
- Develop business rate relief schemes to support small businesses;*
- Lobby the UK government to lower the tax burden on businesses and to reduce basic costs;*
- Introduce 'operating aids' in Objective One areas to give tax advantages to our most deprived areas;*
- Establish a standard charging structure for services provided to Welsh businesses by public sector agencies.*



A Enterprising Wales

The administrative structure of the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) has ballooned in recent years. There are now more than 90 different business support initiatives – each with its own brand. While the Welsh Conservative Party values the work of the WDA and recognises the professionalism of its staff, some streamlining would benefit the organisation. We would:

- Cut waste and duplication by consolidating the number of business support schemes, so that more resources reach the businesses themselves;*
- Ensure that schemes are ‘demand-led’ and responsive to the needs of local businesses;*
- Create broader based schemes that would release more funding for businesses.*

Finance Wales was established as an economic development bank two years ago. The Labour/Liberal coalition promised great things for this initiative but the Bank’s progress has been limited. We do not believe that the public sector should be responsible for ‘picking winners’. It would be better to encourage more commercial lenders to Wales to provide venture capital. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Review the role of Finance Wales and set exacting targets for its future work;*
- Ensure that the commercial lending sector and the business community are represented in greater numbers on the board of Finance Wales.*

European Structural Funding has given Wales a one-off opportunity to regenerate some of the poorest parts of the economy. While we acknowledge the achievement of the Labour government in gaining Objective One status for Wales, the Labour/Liberal coalition has implemented the scheme in a shoddy and ineffective manner. At the end of its first phase, Objective One had not created a significant number of private sector jobs.

A Enterprising Wales

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would do much better and:

- Streamline the structural funding process and ensure easier access for the private sector;*
- Take the opportunity of the Midterm Review to reassess the priorities of Objective One to ensure that the real needs of the Welsh economy are being met;*
- Seek to increase the level of funding for road building and other business infrastructure networks;*
- Emphasise the key themes of reducing business costs, improving the economic infrastructure, and expanding the skills base;*
- Focus on ways to improve the productivity of the Welsh economy.*

The Welsh economy must be innovative if it is to succeed in a highly competitive global market. It is by ensuring that modern and efficient transport and IT networks are in place that government can provide a key component of success. Wales must demonstrate that it is connected to the global business network if it is to attract investment from abroad and provide markets for indigenous businesses. This is the reason for our commitment to build a modern access road to Cardiff International Airport. Further details on our proposals for the road and rail networks appear on page 58.

Access to broadband telecommunications can greatly increase economic productivity. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Combine public sector usage to create a demand for fibre networks throughout Wales;*
- Use the public sector network to reduce connection and running costs for the business community;*
- Establish a wireless broadband network to meet the needs of rural Wales.*



A Enterprising Wales

Expanding the Skills Base

Wales has not been seen as a centre for research and development. This must change. To reach its full potential, the Welsh economy needs a larger research and development sector. Our universities and colleges have a key role to play in a science strategy that is closely linked to the needs of business and industry. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Introduce operating aids to give tax credits to companies conducting research and development work in Wales;*
- Reduce the costs of research and development for indigenous Welsh firms;*
- Encourage UK and international firms to base research and development operations in Wales;*
- Fund links between higher education institutions and international centres of research in areas relevant to the Welsh economy.*

New Opportunities

The economic landscape has changed dramatically in the space of a couple of generations. Like many other western economies, Wales has seen the dominance of heavy industry recede significantly. While this has caused major economic upheaval, it has also given Wales the chance to pursue other economic opportunities. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Launch a strategy to attract high quality service sector jobs to Wales;*
- Recognise the potential of the social economy in regenerating deprived communities.*
- Promote Wales as a location for countryside pursuits;*

A Enterprising Wales

Tourism

Tourism is essential to Wales in accounting for around 6,000 businesses, mostly small family-run enterprises employing fewer than 10 people.

With this in mind, and particularly since the Foot and Mouth epidemic, we understand just how vital it is that we continue to consult and listen to operators at the 'sharp end' so that tourism in Wales has an effective voice.

We are pleased that the proposal to bring in a Compulsory Registration Scheme for Bed and Breakfast operators in Wales did not come into being and the Welsh Conservative Group in the Assembly will continue to oppose attempts to re-introduce such a scheme.

The Welsh Conservative Party would ensure that funding offered through the Wales Tourist Board is put to effective use and is spent on professional and effective marketing as well as on wider and more relevant skills-based training for the industry.

Tourist Information Centres remain important gateways for visitors to Wales, and we intend to encourage the opening of more of them, and with longer opening hours.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would also:

- Focus on the high value tourism sector, taking full advantage of initiatives such as the Ryder Cup in 2010;*
- Establish Cardiff as one of the top short-break city visits in Europe.*





Strengthening Rural



Rural Wales

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Strengthening Rural Wales

Rural Wales is under threat from a Labour/Liberal coalition that shows little respect for the values and freedoms of country life. Welsh agriculture has experienced very difficult times recently with animal diseases like BSE, the world's worst Foot and Mouth outbreak and the increasing problem of bovine TB. Disease control measures have greatly increased costs and contributed to the collapse of farming incomes.

Agriculture

To set about reversing the fortunes of farming, a Welsh Conservative Party administration would form a partnership with the whole agricultural sector. At the heart of our strategy would be a 'Rural Charter'. The Charter would be drawn up within 6 months of a Conservative administration taking office and involve full consultation with farming representatives. Our 'Rural Charter' would be updated annually to ensure that government policies respond appropriately to emerging challenges. We would introduce effective working relationships between the National Assembly, DEFRA and the European Commission in order to better co-ordinate rural policies.

Severe control measures to limit the spread of animal diseases have inflicted avoidable distress on the farming industry. The 'beef-on-the-bone' ban and the unfair 20-day rule were examples of government panic rather than responsible protective measures. However, every farmer accepts that robust public health controls are necessary to sustain a growing and confident market. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would support strict new controls to prevent infected meat entering the country and minimise the risk of further outbreaks of animal diseases.

Strengthening Rural Wales

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would also:

- Seek to ensure that all produce is honestly labelled to provide full traceability and a fair deal for both producer and consumer;*
- Establish an inquiry into the shambles of late payments which has discriminated against Welsh farmers;*
- Ease the regulatory burden that has increased rapidly under Labour, and offer support for small abattoirs and livestock markets;*
- Work with supermarkets to ensure fair prices for farmers;*
- End the practice of modulating (top slicing) support payments to farmers unless the money raised is re-invested in farming;*
- Broaden access to agri-environmental schemes so that all farmers in Wales can participate and share in the benefits;*
- Make agricultural training the norm to provide a rich skills base on which the industry can draw and encourage young people into agriculture.*



Strengthening Rural Wales



The European Union has an extensive influence on farming policies in member states. The Welsh Conservative Party would ensure that the Minister for Rural Development attends all of the Mid Term Review meetings.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would also:

- Fight not just for free trade, but fair trade, and ensure that new regulations are not introduced into Wales faster than other regions of the EU;*
- Provide a strong Welsh input into key issues such as the disposal of fallen stock and double tagging of sheep.*

Rural Affairs

To protect and regenerate our rural communities, a Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Protect small schools from closure unless they are failing to deliver the national curriculum;*

Strengthening Rural Wales

- *Attract more doctors and dentists to rural areas ensuring that quality healthcare is readily accessible (for a full account of the Welsh Conservative Party's policies on healthcare in rural areas see page 10);*
- *Call for the future of hunting in England and Wales to be determined by English and Welsh MPs only;*
- *Protect the rural post service and ensure that the system of universal delivery at a uniform price continues to be available;*
- *Oppose any plans for the compulsory registration of Bed and Breakfasts and protect our small tourist operators from further governmental interference;*
- *Extend the rural rate relief scheme;*
- *Ensure that the Rate Support Grant is based on the likely cost of providing services.*





Building Stronger Comm



Communities in Wales

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Building Stronger Communities in Wales

Wales needs strong, accountable and effective local government. The Welsh Conservative Party believes that civic pride is at the heart of a successful community. Councils are responsible for the delivery of many public services essential to the quality of life. It is time to recognise the key role played by councillors all over Wales. The National Assembly must support local government so that Councils can deliver effective public services.

Accountability

The culture of centralisation which has stymied local government must end. More responsibility should be devolved to Councils so that decision-making can take place at the community level whenever possible. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Ensure that the decision-making process in local government is transparent and accessible;*
- Grant Councils a bigger role in economic regeneration and social inclusion initiatives;*
- Maintain the first-past-the-post system for local government elections;*
- Review the office of the Local Government Commissioner so that Wales has a powerful Ombudsman overseeing all public services;*
- Review procedures to protect 'whistleblowers' who expose abusive practices.*

Building Stronger Communities in Wales

We believe that Councils should be allowed to determine the organisational structure most likely to meet local needs. In some Councils this might involve directly electing a mayor, in others a cabinet system. We also believe that Councils should be allowed to retain a traditional Committee structure if they wish. We would add a further option. Councils would be permitted to hold a referendum to propose the establishment of a fully professional Council. In this model, councillors would be paid a full-time salary. The number of councillors would be reduced to about 20. Such an authority would typically have 8 cabinet members and 12 non-executive councillors.

Finance

The Labour/Liberal coalition has meddled with the Rate Support Grant (RSG) for political purposes. Across Wales the council tax has increased by a rate far in excess of inflation through the antics of the Labour/Liberal coalition. Consequently, taxes continue to be raised by stealth. We believe that the RSG should be based on a fair formula that calculates the likely cost of providing services. At the moment rural areas are particularly disadvantaged because sparsity is not taken into account. It is wrong to tackle socio-economic factors like deprivation via the RSG. Programmes funded by central government should be used instead (and these can be delivered via local government). This would be better because taxpayers in general would fund such important initiatives, not just council taxpayers who happen to live in rural Wales or less deprived areas.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- *Alter the formula for the RSG so that it is based on the likely cost of providing services;*



Building Stronger Communities in Wales

- *Match pound for pound council tax receipts over 95% of the potential yield;*
- *Oppose the Labour Party's suggested Supplementary Business Rate and any other scheme to increase business taxation.*

Housing

A secure home is one of life's most basic necessities. Whether we own our own home or rent a property, good quality housing is essential for health and well-being.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- *Extend the 'Right to Buy' scheme to include Housing Association properties and restore the level of discount (cut by Labour and the Liberal Democrats) to 70% maximum;*
- *Encourage the transfer of Council housing to landlords in the voluntary and independent sectors;*
- *Allow Councils to borrow for capital projects if they manage their housing stock effectively;*
- *Limit greenfield development and promote the use of brownfield sites.*

Building Stronger Communities in Wales

Communities

The individual can only flourish if society is strong and stable. Thriving communities are naturally enterprising and encourage people to reach their full potential. Local communities are the foundation on which national life is built. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Review the role and powers of Community and Town Councils so that they can have greater influence on the development of public policies;*
- Subject to approval in a local referendum, allow Councils to borrow to fund capital projects such as the building of community halls;*
- Reduce the level of business rates levied on rural shops, post offices and village pubs;*
- Ensure that community development programmes are focused on creating employment opportunities.*





A Regenerated



Wales

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A Regenerated Wales

A Regenerated Wales

The Welsh Conservative Party believes that an effective transport network and a clean environment are essential for the future success of Wales. These quality of life markers can quickly fade if communities are subject to unsustainable development or poor planning. Social and economic regeneration requires careful choices to be made which focus on the long-term development of our communities.

Transport

A modern economy needs a good road network. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would make the following schemes a priority:

- Improvements to the A470, including bypasses such as Builth Wells, Rhayader and Llanrwst;*
- An M4 relief road from Castleton to Magor funded either by European funds or by a PFI scheme;*
- A modern access road to Cardiff International Airport funded as part of the trunk road programme.*

We would also seek to persuade the UK government to fund improvements to the A55-M56 link.

We believe that the National Assembly should appoint a representative to the Strategic Rail Authority. With more effective representation on the SRA, the following rail services could be improved:

*Shrewsbury - Aberystwyth
Holyhead - Crewe
Heart of Wales line
Cardiff - North and West Wales
Cambrian Coast line*

A Regenerated Wales

The Welsh Conservative Party fully supports the re-opening of passenger services to Ebbw Vale. We further believe that this rail link ought to be restored to Cardiff and Newport simultaneously.

We are committed to supporting the growth of Cardiff International Airport (CIA) by providing a modern access road. The recent success in increasing the number of scheduled flights demonstrates the great potential CIA has to become the premier airport in western Britain. However, BA's decision to withdraw operations from Cardiff was damaging and unacceptable. Wales is now one of the few regions of the EU without an air link to Brussels.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Implement a strategy to promote air travel in Wales concentrating on the role of Cardiff International Airport;*
- Build on the success of companies like Air Wales at Swansea Airport and strengthen the network of regional airports in Wales;*
- Work to re-establish a scheduled air link between Cardiff International Airport and Brussels.*

Public transport provides a much needed service to many people, and those who have access to a car can be encouraged to use public transport for certain journeys. We would:

- Encourage innovative public transport schemes such as post office buses in rural areas;*



A Regenerated Wales

- Explore ways to increase the availability of community transport schemes for disabled people who are often unable to take advantage of the free bus pass policy;
- Regulate the use of bus lanes by requiring major schemes to be approved by the National Assembly;
- Prohibit the introduction of town centre car taxes;
- Scrap plans to support any ultra monorail system in Cardiff Bay.

Planning

While sensitive development can regenerate communities, all too often in the past poor planning decisions have blighted the lives of many people. One example of poor practice is developments on floodplains. Stricter guidelines are needed to ensure that such errors are not repeated.



A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Avoid greenfield development and encourage the use of brownfield sites;
- Ensure that brownfield sites are safe for development by requiring Councils to carry out and publish full health impact studies on such sites;
- Refer any planning decision in which a local authority has an interest to the National Assembly;

A Regenerated Wales

- *Protect the Welsh landscape;*
- *Grant residents who live in National Parks the right to elect a proportion of National Park members and grant residents a say on how National Parks operate;*
- *Review the planning permission system to examine whether the rights of objectors to planning applications are properly respected.*

The Environment

There is a growing awareness of our influence on the environment. In recent years concern has been expressed about the increase in adverse weather events such as flooding. There is a growing consensus that global warming is occurring at least in part as a consequence of industrialisation and the consumption of fossil fuels. Whatever may occur in the future, it makes sense to use resources efficiently and cut down on waste and promote the use of renewable energy and materials. We would:

- *Review the National Assembly's flood defence policy. A hundred year criteria needs to be established for flood defences;*
- *Limit the use of landfill sites;*
- *Promote the use of renewable energy and materials;*
- *Encourage local authorities to work together on waste and energy strategies;*
- *Further improve bathing water quality;*
- *Support the work of CADW in safeguarding the built environment.*



A Safer Wales



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A Safer Wales

The Labour/Liberal coalition has failed to tackle crime or the causes of crime: so much for the promises. Despite the coalition's rhetoric, crime in Wales is an all too common reality. Many communities are blighted by anti-social behaviour, which impacts heavily on vulnerable groups like the elderly and young parents.

After six years of Labour government, Wales is faced with a worrying increase in violent crime. In some inner city neighbourhoods a rapidly growing gun and gang culture, fed by drugs, has taken root. Labour has let Wales down.

Under Labour just 1% of police officers' time is spent on foot patrol and since 1999 the number of Special Constables has dropped by 25%. The result has been a less visible police presence. We need visible policing – more bobbies on the beat. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would seek to:

- Ensure that the National Assembly and its agencies, including local government and the NHS, have fully developed plans to deal with the consequences of a terrorist attack;*
- Increase the number of police officers on our streets which would speed up response times and act as a serious deterrent to crime;*
- Restore the number of Special Constables;*
- Reduce the bureaucratic burden on police officers so that they can get on with policing;*
- Increase the level of CCTV coverage;*
- Support Neighbourhood Watch schemes.*

We would seek to engage young people in their local communities. This would help combat feelings of despair and exclusion that sometimes arise: We would:

- Devolve more power to community councils;*
- Back locally developed projects and ensure that grant schemes like Communities First respond to local need;*
- Involve the voluntary sector more extensively in the delivery of government programmes.*

A Safer Wales

Tackling the Drugs Menace

It is not just the growing violent crime rate that concerns us, but the changing nature of offences. Violent crime is now more likely to be gang-related, involve the use of a firearm, and be fuelled by drugs. We must break the link between crime and drugs. This will clean up our communities and get young offenders off the conveyor belt to crime by giving them the opportunity to rescue their own lives. The Welsh Conservative Party believes:

- Hard drug users should face a choice between rehabilitation or prison. This requires an increase in the number of residential treatment places for drug users;*
- Greater investment should be made in the voluntary sector to boost the crime prevention and victim support groups that operate throughout Wales;*
- Stiffer prison sentences should be given to drug dealers, especially those that sell drugs to children and young people.*

Asylum

The United Kingdom has always provided a haven for those in fear of life and limb and this is a proud tradition that Welsh Conservatives support. However, asylum policy in the UK has lacked rigour since Labour came to office. This has undermined public confidence, to the detriment of genuine asylum seekers. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would call for an asylum policy that:

- Reduces the number of economic migrants seeking to apply for political asylum;*
- Returns asylum seekers to their first safe country of passage;*
- Retains asylum seekers in secure accommodation until they have been assessed for any potential security threat;*
- Refuses to grant asylum to anyone who has taken up arms against the UK;*
- Disperses genuine asylum seekers across the UK.*



The Cultural Heritage



Stage of Wales

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The Cultural Heritage of Wales

Wales is especially blessed to have an outstanding cultural tradition and a record of sporting achievement. The arts are deeply rooted in popular culture. In towns and villages across Wales cultural events flourish. Our cities compete with the best in Britain and Europe to host major events. Cardiff is currently bidding to be the European Capital of Culture in 2008. Wales can build on great cultural achievements: we have a world renowned opera company; the largest cultural event in Europe in the National Eisteddfod; and a growing film and broadcasting industry. Above all, Wales nurtures the oldest indigenous language in the UK. The Welsh Conservative Party is proud of its record of support for the Welsh language. It demonstrates our commitment to a genuinely bilingual Wales.

The Welsh Language

The 2001 Census will be seen as a watershed. For the first time in generations, Welsh is gaining ground in terms of the percentage of people who speak the language. This is wonderful news for Wales. The Welsh Conservative Party is committed to the principle of a genuinely bilingual society. We would build upon the excellent record of previous Conservative governments in promoting the Welsh language and ensuring that the language remains at the heart of Welsh life.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Develop an inclusive Welsh language policy which emphasises the importance of the language to everyone in Wales and remains sensitive to those who cannot speak Welsh;*
- Promote the benefits of Welsh medium education;*
- Continue to support the work of the Welsh Language Board;*
- Ensure that resources are spent on the most effective means to promote bilingualism and not wasted on unnecessary translation costs;*
- Identify areas where the Welsh language remains the language of the community and where distinctive policies should apply.*

The Cultural Heritage of Wales

Culture

Welsh men and women have achieved great success in music, literature, broadcasting and drama. Less recognised is the renaissance in Welsh painting that occurred in the second half of the 20th century. Artists like Sir Kyffin Williams, Will Roberts and Nicholas Evans have drawn inspiration from their local communities and provided a vivid depiction of the nuances of Welsh life.

The Welsh Conservative Party believes that the visual arts should be celebrated in a National Art Gallery. We recognise the achievement of the National Museums and Galleries of Wales. But we need to go much further. A National Art Gallery would hold a comprehensive collection of Welsh art. The gallery would also illustrate the pioneering role Wales played in the development of photography and hold a collection of work from the 1840s to the present day.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Establish a National Art Gallery for Wales. We would seek to place it in City Hall, Cardiff and it would be managed by a single organisation comprising the National Museum and the National Art Gallery;*
- Establish annual National Assembly medals for art, including awards for: figurative art, contemporary art, portraiture, photography and sculpture;*
- Connect both the National Museums and the National Art Gallery to a network of museums and galleries around Wales;*
- Review the structure of County Records Offices. We want to see access to Welsh archives improved;*
- Examine the feasibility of establishing a National Public Records Office for Wales within our excellent National Library in Aberystwyth;*
- Launch an arts strategy to ensure that the success of the Wales Millennium Centre leads to investment in the arts in other parts of Wales;*

The Cultural Heritage of Wales

- *Promote Cardiff's bid for European Capital of Culture 2008;*
- *Encourage the private and public sectors to commission public art including statues to national figures.*

When Iolo Morganwg called for the first modern Eisteddfod, he rekindled a powerful tradition. His act of genius stands out as one of the greatest achievements of the Romantic Movement in Britain. It led to a national revival, the benefits of which are still felt strongly today. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- *Support the National Eisteddfod, the International Eisteddfod and the Urdd Eisteddfod;*
- *Encourage the further development of eisteddfodau throughout Wales.*

The Welsh Conservative Party believes that even more potential for growth exists in the arts. We want to build on the strong community based cultural tradition of Wales. More financial support should be distributed directly to the arts and individual artists.

The Media

The Welsh Conservative Party is proud of its role in establishing S4C which was led by Lord Roberts of Conwy. We would encourage S4C to seek new ways of attracting viewers and advertisers to Welsh language programmes. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- *Ensure a strong voice for Wales in the new broadcasting arrangements;*
- *Support a meaningful Ofcom presence in Wales and ensure that Wales is represented on the new Contents Board of Ofcom;*
- *Launch a film strategy to support the developments that have started in recent years.*

The Cultural Heritage of Wales

Sport

Wales has an excellent record of sporting achievement. The Welsh Conservative Party recognises the benefits sport brings, from building a healthier nation to raising the profile of Wales around the world. However the role of the National Assembly administration should be to support sporting bodies and not meddle in their internal affairs. It is not right for Rhodri Morgan to lecture the WRU on organisational reform, for instance.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Examine ways to develop or replace the National Sports Centre;*
- Seek to enable Welsh local voluntary sports clubs to apply for charitable status;*
- Require the Sports Council for Wales to raise participation rates amongst people of all backgrounds, especially women and retired people;*
- Ensure that local education authorities produce 'Sport for All' plans for every school in Wales, and allow their sporting facilities to be made available to the whole community whenever possible;*
- Encourage equality and opportunity in sport by improving access;*
- Support the Sports Council for Wales initiatives 'Dragon Sport' and 'Clwb Cymru' as important measures to involve young people in sporting activities;*
- Encourage team sports at grassroots level;*
- Support the development of the Welsh Premier Football league and work with the Welsh Rugby Union during its construction of a new structure for domestic rugby.*



The National A



Assembly

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The National Assembly

The Welsh Conservative Party has worked constructively in the National Assembly. It is the Labour/Liberal coalition government that has failed the people of Wales, not the National Assembly as an institution. The Welsh Conservative Party wishes to see the Assembly succeed for all of the people of Wales. A great deal of time, effort and money has been expended on the Assembly. We want to see a National Assembly that promotes effective policies which have a direct and positive impact on people's lives. A Welsh Conservative administration would seek to make the National Assembly more effective and secure for it a more positive and relevant role in the life of the nation. This requires an administration that would encourage enterprise and innovation in the economy and effectiveness and choice in public services. We want to see the National Assembly working efficiently within a model of executive devolution.

A More Effective Assembly

The National Assembly is presently a corporate body with a clumsy internal division between its legislative and executive functions. The Welsh Conservative Party believes that the Assembly's legislative role has been diluted as a consequence. It is time to establish the Assembly as an influential body that can scrutinise the National Assembly government properly and represent the people of Wales effectively.

A Welsh Conservative Party administration would seek to:

- Amend the Government of Wales Act 1998 to allow for a separation between the Assembly's legislative and executive functions;*
- Establish the National Assembly government as a Department of State to be known as the 'Welsh Executive'.*

The National Assembly

An Efficient Legislature

The Labour/Liberal coalition government has not attempted to develop the Assembly's role as a secondary legislature. Prior to the devolution referendum in 1997, much stress was placed on the need to 'democratise' the vast volume of secondary legislation going through the then Welsh Office. Only a tiny amount of the Assembly's secondary legislation has been fully scrutinised. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Publish a scheme of work for Acts of Parliament that generate secondary legislation;*
- Advise the National Assembly's subject committees on which items of secondary legislation have significant leverage on the development of policy.*



The National Assembly

Wales and Westminster

The Welsh Conservative Party believes that devolution must be used as a means to unite, not divide, the people of Britain. The UK has an outstanding record of achievement and has secured for Wales and the other home nations a stable and prosperous democracy. Closer links and working arrangements must be developed between the National Assembly and Westminster. The Assembly should be integrated more closely into the procedures of Parliament to the mutual benefit of both institutions. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Enable the Assembly to submit a report to the Secretary of State for Wales on Parliamentary Bills affecting Wales.*

The publication of more Wales-only Bills would allow the National Assembly to develop closer working arrangements with Westminster. It is in the paucity of Wales-only Bills that executive devolution is most deficient. The Welsh Conservative Party believes that Wales-only Bills on major policy issues must become routine. And Wales-only Bills should be published in draft to allow for a meaningful input from the National Assembly. Perversely, there is now often less legislative scrutiny of primary legislation affecting Wales than before the commencement of devolution. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would seek to negotiate a concordat with the UK government to regulate the handling of primary legislation affecting Wales.

The main elements of such a concordat would be:

- Agreement that major Bills that relate to policy areas devolved to the National Assembly should be published as Wales-only Bills;*
- That the relevant subject committee in the National Assembly seeks to meet in joint session with the Welsh Grand Committee to discuss a Wales-only Bill before the second reading of that Bill in Parliament;*

The National Assembly

- *Seek to allow miscellaneous matters recommended by the National Assembly for primary legislation to be consolidated into a single General Provisions Bill. Such a Bill would be suitable for limited and contained items that do not have major ramifications for public policy, but nevertheless merit attention.*

The Welsh Conservative Party believes that a concordat as outlined above would allow the National Assembly to influence primary legislation relating to devolved policy areas, while recognising Parliament to be the single source of primary legislation for Wales.

To date the working relationship between the National Assembly and Parliament has been at best underdeveloped and at worst poor. A Welsh Conservative administration would start to rectify this situation by encouraging the Secretary of State for Wales and his deputy to attend the National Assembly's proceedings regularly.

We would:

- *Allow the Secretary of State for Wales to be questioned once a month in the Assembly;*
- *Ensure that under a future Conservative government in Westminster, the Secretary of State for Wales would attend the National Assembly regularly to answer questions and participate in major debates.*

Better Scrutiny of the Executive

The role of the National Assembly's subject committees needs to be revised. Too much time has been wasted on the cursory discussion of a vast volume of policy items. The Labour/Liberal coalition government has encouraged this fragmented approach because it inhibits the development of powerful and strategic subject committees. The executive's presence on the Assembly's subject committees has curtailed the examination of secondary legislation and limited the potential for effective scrutiny. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would seek to:

The National Assembly

- *Exclude members of the executive from membership of subject committees. Ministers would attend subject committees to deliver a monthly report on the work of the executive;*
- *Encourage subject committees to spend more time on the examination of secondary legislation;*
- *Grant subject committees a set amount of time in Plenary for the discussion of subject committee reports or other business;*
- *Re-constitute regional committees to be co-terminus with the Assembly's electoral regions. Regional committees would also be granted a set amount of protected time in Plenary.*

Fair Funding

The Barnett Formula was introduced at Westminster in the 1970s. It formerly applied to the Welsh Office budget, and now applies to the National Assembly for Wales budget. The formula does not determine the overall size of the budget, but provides that changes to programmes in England result in an automatic change in the budget of the National Assembly, calculated on the basis of population share.

The formula is broadly an equitable one, which has served the needs of Wales well. The Welsh Conservative Party recognises that the formula, whilst appropriate for some areas of spending, like health and education, is inappropriate in some instances. One example would be government monies to help combat flooding. Clearly such problems should be dealt with at a Westminster level on a basis of the precise needs of Wales.

The National Assembly

Furthermore, in relation to funding for Objective One programmes for Wales, the Welsh Conservative Party has been highly critical of the Labour Party's failure to provide fully additional monies in order that all of the money in Europe earmarked as Welsh money could be drawn down.

It is our belief, therefore, that the formula should be retained for the major programmes of devolved government, but that where spending has no reference at all to population then a needs based assessment is appropriate.

Further Responsibilities

In its submission to the Richard Commission, the Welsh Conservative Party stated that the National Assembly should remain an institution with secondary legislative powers. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would make a full response to the recommendations of the Richard Commission and allocate time in the National Assembly for a full debate. Should any future UK government propose to grant primary law making and/or tax raising powers to the National Assembly, the Welsh Conservative Party would call for the people of Wales to be consulted by means of a referendum.

The Welsh Conservative Party does not support the granting of primary law making and/or tax raising powers to the National Assembly.

The National Assembly

An Assembly for the Whole of Wales

North Wales in particular – from Holyhead and Caernarfon to Wrexham and Connaught Quay - feels isolated from Cardiff. Under a Welsh Conservative Party administration, the National Assembly would annually convene in North Wales and the Cabinet would also be required to hold an 'open microphone' session with the public. In principle, we believe that the Assembly should also meet in Mid Wales and in West Wales. A Welsh Conservative Party cabinet would reflect all of the geographical regions of Wales.

We do not believe that the people of Wales want a new palace for politicians to be built in Cardiff Bay. A Welsh Conservative Party administration would:

- Scrap plans for a new Assembly building saving at least £50million;*
- Invest the savings by fully funding the Children's Hospital for Wales and in healthcare throughout Wales, e.g. by improving children's services for North Wales;*
- Make the Assembly work harder for the people of Wales by extending plenary time to 7 p.m. creating the equivalent of 30 extra days for Assembly sessions.*
- Scrap plans for so called Assembly 'embassies' around the world.*