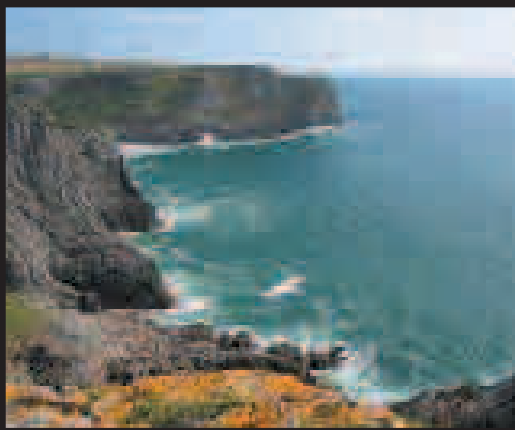




Welsh Liberal Democrats
Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE



**The Welsh Liberal Democrat manifesto
for the Welsh General Election 2007**

www.welshlibdems.org.uk

The Welsh Liberal Democrat manifesto for the Welsh General Election 2007



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2007 Welsh Liberal Democrats

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A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Our Principles

At this year's Welsh General Election the Welsh Liberal Democrats are putting the focus on the issues that matter to the people of Wales. We have a radical and achievable programme for government. A programme for a fair, green future.

Our policies will deliver healthcare where and when it's needed – putting the patient first. A better learning environment for our children and more life-long learning chances for all. Ambitious and much needed plans to make the green switch for Wales, making it easier for families and communities to go green.

As the original party of Wales we are fully committed to Welsh solutions to Welsh needs. That is why we took pride in the establishment of our National Assembly and that is why we continue to advocate home rule for Wales. A proud nation should be taking its own decisions here in Wales, and working with our closest neighbours to our mutual benefit out in the wider world.

Right across the country we are the growing party. At the council elections in 2004, Welsh Liberal Democrats won 50% more seats. Welsh Liberal Democrats lead Cardiff, Swansea, Wrexham and Bridgend councils. At the General Election in 2005, Welsh Liberal Democrats doubled the number of our MPs. Winning seats from Labour and Plaid Cymru shows that we can win in all parts of Wales, against any party.

Our experience of government in the Assembly and in leading major councils across Wales means that we know what it takes to put positive policies into action. Wales has the potential for a great future. We want to give communities, families and individuals the power and tools to make that better future a reality. To be a growing economy, to be a clever country, to be a healthier country. We believe in freedom for every individual to fulfil his or her potential and for every community to have the freedom to reach its potential. Because that is the only way that Wales can reach its potential.

We are ambitious for young people right across the nation. Our values are their values. Action to protect the environment, opposition to the war in Iraq and ensuring that no one is denied the opportunity of education because of the fear of debt.

Our fight for a fair, green future for everyone runs through this manifesto.

A future that is fair for all – free from poverty, free from unnecessary government meddling, free from discrimination.

A future that is green – no new nuclear power, energy efficient buildings, more recycling.

A party for the future, with the ideas, experience and energy to serve Wales.

Wales deserves better. Wales deserves a fair, green future.



Health and Social Services

The Welsh Liberal Democrats believe in a health service that puts patients first. That means quality healthcare closer to the home and services that work together to deliver healthcare when it's needed. Back to front re-organisation and micro-management of the NHS has resulted in millions of pounds being wasted and local needs being ignored. We should trust the professionals to use their judgement and expertise to raise the standard and deliver quality services locally, when patients need it.

We propose clear and distinct policies to improve our NHS and our general health. Prevention is as important as cure and we will prioritise the delivery of measures that promote healthy living, across all aspects of life in Wales. A healthier Wales is a Wales that is fit to tackle poverty, eager to learn and prepared for future opportunities and challenges.

Our key priorities are:

- A guaranteed standard of service in the NHS
- Improved access to dental services
- Health hubs, walk-in centres and the investment needed in the ambulance service



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Health and Social Services

Healthcare When You Need It

We recognise that services across the NHS need to work together to ensure that patients receive the best healthcare, when they need it. **We will:**

Bring healthcare and well-being services together through Health Hubs. These will encompass a whole range of patient services in the community, including direct health services such as GPs, physiotherapists, pharmacies as well as well-being services such as housing and social services, or CABs.

Remain committed to a network of District General Hospitals providing A&E and Maternity Services as close as possible to the patient's home. Alongside this we aim to develop the role of community hospitals in providing diagnostic, recuperative and rehabilitation care.

Where it is necessary and appropriate to re-organise hospital services, first set out in detail the alternative primary and community provision to replace them, and ensure that the funding is available to provide these services.

Protect services in rural areas, where closures would lead to excessive and potentially dangerous travelling times.

Guarantee stability for healthcare providers and patients by ruling out another expensive and unsettling NHS re-organisation. Instead, we will encourage greater collaboration and co-operation to make the NHS work for patients. We will require Local Health Boards (LHBs) to work together on secondary commissioning and will encourage the merging of LHBs where they wish to. We expect to see real, effective regional commissioning for secondary care being achieved before 2009.

Promote collaboration between health organisations to provide a single pathway of care for patients. Where appropriate we will provide financial incentives for organisations to work more closely together.

Introduce a shared budget between NHS and Social Services to deal with delayed transfers of care.

Simplify and stabilise the funding process for Charitable and Voluntary Organisations working with the NHS to provide services, such as Palliative Care. Many of them currently have to negotiate annually with 22 separate Local Health Boards, when a more regional approach would be appropriate. We will seek to provide a 3 year funding approach for such organisations.

Develop the use of new-technology, such as access to telemedicine, SMS and e-mail notifications and on-line information services, in the NHS.

Support elective surgery schedules that run on a 24-hour cycle, where staffing levels and trust capacity allows.

Ensure that the Children's Hospital is completed within the shortest possible time-span.

Healthcare in the Community

Community level health services, including GPs surgeries, clinics and community hospitals, are the front-line of the NHS. We need to ensure that such facilities are properly resourced and work efficiently to guarantee that healthcare is available when we need it. **We will:**

Expand the range of treatments and services available in the community. We will encourage more GPs to become specialist GPs equipped to diagnose and treat more patients and increase and promote the use of extended prescribing so that appropriately trained nurses and pharmacists are able to prescribe a wide range of drugs.

Make it easier for patients to know how long their treatment will take by introducing a single waiting list to encompass the time between GP referral and treatment.

Health and Social Services

Introduce nurse-led walk-in centres, working alongside larger A&E Departments and GP out-of-hours services – open seven days a week and offering simple and straightforward access to treatment and NHS services for those who might otherwise go to A&E units.

Review hospital charges for services such as parking, telephone and television. We will make it easier for patients who have to attend hospital regularly to access schemes that assist with parking and travel costs, with free parking for those who have to attend regularly. Our proposals for community and public transport will improve links with hospitals.

Develop thoracic teams serving communities across Wales to undertake the oxygen assessments, which were originally intended to be part of the new oxygen contract, and which should be available to all patients.

Take forward the review of hospice and palliative care services once it is published. We will improve funding, commissioning specific services and make greater use of specialist district nurses.

Develop a single team approach to district nursing, ensuring that district nurses employed by Trusts work much more closely with GP practices.

Ambulance and Emergency Services

The Wales Ambulance Service has been undermined by lack of investment, putting lives at risk. Wales needs a modern ambulance service working in partnership with other health and emergency services and using the professional skills of its personnel to the full.



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Health and Social Services



We will:

Provide the investment required over the next decade to resource a fit-for-purpose ambulance service. We are keen to examine the potential for greater resource sharing and co-operation within the NHS and with other blue-light services and aim to roll-out in-cab technology such as route navigation that allows pre-arrival information about patients to be transmitted to hospital.

Give paramedics the power to triage patients, so that those who do not need A&E services are directed to the most appropriate source of treatment and encourage extended use of 'See and Treat' practice, avoiding the need for unnecessary hospital admission.

Support the air ambulance and lifeboat services in accessing all funding available. We will utilise all available funding streams, including lottery funding, that should be available to them.

Dentistry

Large parts of Wales have become 'dental deserts' leaving thousands of residents without regular dental care. We need to invest in dental training and find new ways of supporting dentistry services to ensure that good dental care is available across Wales. **We will:**

Focus on increasing the use of mobile dentists to serve the most rural areas and more salaried dentists to serve areas of particular shortage. Alongside this we will expand the use of dental hygienists and therapists, who are trained to do much of the routine work currently done by dentists, increasing the number of training places.

Reform the Welsh Dental Initiative to provide capital grants for dentists wishing to set up practices in rural areas. We will also employ salaried dentists to do school check-ups and focus on dental health and prevention at primary school level and at playgroups and nurseries, building on the Community Dental Service.

Give every child aged 4-5 years a toothbrush and toothpaste and include oral healthcare with early years' education. We will examine piloting a scheme providing a weekly fluoride rinse to school children, based on the Canadian model.

Health and Social Services

Investment in Personnel, Training and Research

The professionalism of NHS staff is at the heart of our health service. We need to respect and reward NHS personnel, and we need to invest in sectors where we have a shortage of trained personnel. **We will:**

Provide bursaries to newly qualified health professionals to work in areas where there is a shortage of such skills. In return, we will impose a limited contractual commitment to the NHS in Wales.

Employ more physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech & language therapists and will integrate them fully into health teams dealing with patients suffering from stroke and other chronic conditions. In the case of occupational therapists and physiotherapists, in particular, more of them need to be employed in Social Services, rather than in the NHS.

Encourage excellence in clinical training and improve our medical research base as part of our aim to increase research and development in Wales. We would expect to see collaboration between the universities, the independent Chief Scientific Advisor, the business community and the NHS.

Adopt a zero-tolerance approach to aggression or violence against NHS staff, requiring all LHBs and Trusts to have robust procedures in place to deal with those who intimidate staff and to support staff after such incidents.

Putting Patients First

When the NHS is taking care of you, you should be entitled to a certain standard of service that puts the patient first. We are committed to working hard to improve the quality of healthcare in Wales, developing an NHS that involves the patient at every stage in their pathway through the service, creating a more informed and healthier population. **We will:**

Introduce a guaranteed standard of service that would include what can be expected at hospital and patient access to information.

Develop targeted health MOTs with appropriate screening tests based on age, family and other risk factors.

Ensure that hospital patients are treated with dignity and place an emphasis on patient safety. We want to see more emphasis on single rooms, which will also help to tackle MRSA. We will work with health professionals and patient groups to adopt a Health Improvement Plan identifying simple steps to be taken by hospitals to reduce infections and avoid accidents. Our Clean and Green action group will take this forward and promote these issues.

Extend and promote the use of nurses and pharmacists in testing, screening and monitoring for a range of conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol testing.

Aim to provide clearer and better representation for patients in the NHS decision-making process. We will work towards developing more mutual arrangements, improving community engagement in NHS management. As part of this we will review the public consultation process, with the aim of ensuring clearer lines of accountability, better public information and response to patients' views.

Instigate a review of all targets, with the intention of reducing the number, so that local health services can truly put the patient first and ensure that clinical priorities are not distorted.

Work with LHBs to ensure that patients are fully informed about the problems caused by missed appointments, such as increased waiting times. We will encourage a "rights and responsibilities" approach.

Work more closely with the private and voluntary sector to improve the standard of care for older people.

Tackle the low provision of stroke units and care in Wales. We will encourage stroke to be treated as a medical emergency, increase availability of testing and screening for related conditions to improve prevention and work to establish more dedicated stroke units, as well as increase Wales-specific stroke research.

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Aim to introduce a “self-referral” pilot scheme for patients wishing to see a physiotherapist, along the lines of the successful scheme in Scotland, which is aimed at reducing hospital admissions.

Take forward the recommendations of the Assembly health committee’s review of cancer services, in order to produce a holistic Cancer Plan for Wales. In particular our proposals for greater organisational collaboration will be a priority, strengthening the Cancer Networks through extra powers and resources, develop the cancer patient IT record system so that it is extended to palliative care and ensure greater provision of MRI scanners.

Examine the potential for speeding-up the drug approval process in Wales, including further developing the links with the Scottish drugs approval process.

Support, in principle, the abolition of charging for non-residential services. Over the next decade we will work to the goal of providing free care for the elderly and disabled. We do not believe that within the Assembly’s budget it can feasibly be delivered in the next term. We will establish an independent commission, drawn up of health finance experts, service users and care groups, to examine the work already done and set out the steps to achieving this in Wales. We will immediately seek to improve the support available to disabled people.

Support for Carers

The health service in Wales could not survive without the selfless voluntary care provided by thousands of people across the country for relatives, friends and neighbours. Carers are the unsung heroes of our nation and deserve a better deal. **We will:**

Legislate to improve carers’ rights, placing a duty on the NHS to consider the welfare of carers and give more recognition to their role, giving carers the right to receive information and the provision of respite care.

Provide support for those families and children who are affected by deafness. This would include developing a full support package when a new-born child is identified as having hearing loss and teachers of the deaf to provide support to the youngest children.

Support and strengthen services which promote opportunities for independent living. Many of our housing policies are designed to help people remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

Health and Social Services

Healthy Living

We are committed to a comprehensive range of policies to promote healthy living. **We will:**

Examine the need for an annual 'Health of the Nation' report, to be debated in the Senedd, which would focus on all factors to ensure a healthier population. This may help target investment at the root causes of ill-health.

Seek the powers to legislate on mental health so that we enshrine guiding principles that put human rights at the forefront of the legislation, as has been done in Scotland. These principles would underpin treatment and admission to hospital and the right to independent advocacy for all patients.

Expect to see a dedicated mental health advocacy service by 2009, and through more cooperation on the commissioning of services ensure that specialist help is available across the country.

Prioritise increasing the capacity of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services, by examining ways of recruiting more staff, reviewing funding arrangements and establishing easier means of referral. We aim to increase capacity within Wales for the treatment of those with eating disorders.

Encourage healthy eating by supporting the sourcing and promotion of local healthy food, as detailed in our agriculture policies. This includes local food strategies, more public procurement of food from Wales and seeking to extend eligibility for the healthy start scheme.

Ensure a healthier start for our children by introducing new regulations on nutritional standards for school meals and ensuring stricter control on the marketing of food and drinks in schools, eliminating the most unhealthy and non-nutritious options.

Raise the nutritional standards for hospital food, encouraging local procurement, and encourage the use of assistants to help elderly and disabled hospital patients at meal-times, to ensure that they receive the healthy, balanced diet that aids recovery.

Use the ban on smoking in public places as an opportunity to increase the availability of schemes for smoking cessation and use as an opportunity to further promote awareness of the dangers of smoking.

Develop greater accessibility to exercise schemes, targeted at those recovering from heart and lung disease.

Work with health organisations to develop a kite-marking scheme for health information websites.

Work to reduce alcohol and drug dependency, as detailed in our 'Crime and Substance Misuse' policies.

Continue to raise public awareness on the dangers of STIs and protection measures against spreading infections, based on initiatives that are known to work.

Welsh Language Action

We will:

Ensure that individuals have the right to correspond with local health boards and NHS trusts in Welsh, by legislating to establish specific rights to Welsh service from public bodies.

Work with health training providers to ensure courses include modules for Welsh speakers to teach them the vocabulary they require to work in the Welsh language and work to increase the number of posts for Welsh speaking speech therapists.

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Education and life-long learning

Giving all our citizens every possible chance to fulfil their potential is the true mark of a government that wants the best for the people it serves. For Welsh Liberal Democrats it's by giving everyone the opportunity to access quality education that we can raise the standard across our communities. Creating the best learning environment, starting with our youngest children, is where it all starts. The conditions in which our children learn, in which they get to school and what they eat when they're there are all crucial to delivering the best learning experience possible.

Learning starts at home and continues in school but it must be life-long if we are to reap the full potential of education. It was the Welsh Liberal Democrats who re-introduced student grants, helped block top-up fees for Welsh students and delivered dedicated support for small and rural schools. That's because we believe that education is the greatest gift we can give to this and future generations. Nothing does more to free people from ignorance, poverty and conformity.

Our key priorities are:

- Primary class sizes on average fewer than 25 and proper investment in school buildings
- Guarantee the present financial support to Welsh students
- New healthier meals for all pupils



Education and life-long learning

Early Years

To begin at the beginning means getting it right in early years education. It's the building block for all future learning. **We will:**

Extend the availability of free part-time care for two-year olds to many more communities across Wales. We support the Flying Start initiative as a means of incorporating health, care and education for our youngest children and families and will provide increased investment for it so that there is a greater supply of childcare centres and professionals.

Develop, seeking extra powers, financial incentives for businesses that develop childcare facilities and contribute to training opportunities in the childcare sector.



Recognise the need to develop the childcare workforce, provide more opportunities for training and update the information available on the sector. Working with local authorities, Estyn and the business community we will ensure more regular workforce surveys so that there is improved detailed data available on the childcare sector.

Support active and informal learning as the best means of improving child development at early years in primary school.

Raising the Standard

Cutting class sizes so that teachers can give pupils more attention, learning that's more centred on the students and using our schools as the centre of community activity is how we propose to raise the standard in our schools. **We will:**

Guarantee average primary class sizes of fewer than 25, and we will work to 25 as the maximum class size for all primary classes by the end of the Assembly term.

Prioritise support for specialist secondary teachers and peripatetic teachers to teach specialised lessons such as maths, languages and science in their primary cluster. This means that as standards and expectations rise, we can have some pupils undertaking studies at an earlier age rather than having to wait until they reach secondary school and make primary to secondary transition easier.

Support teachers locating to areas of need through our proposal to introduce a key-workers housing scheme based on the homebuy scheme. In addition we will continue to support the vital role of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) in the classroom and work towards further recognition of their role through appropriate salary and career structures.

Reject the English reforms in education that promote selection in the school system. We propose a different approach which encourages greater school co-operation.

Promote a clustering approach in primary schools centred on the appropriate local secondary school, improved co-working between schools and with colleges such as loose federations co-ordinating time-tables and ICT networking. Where there is interest we will support closer federations where schools jointly-manage budgets, staff, resources and facilities.

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Education and life-long learning

Continue to provide dedicated support to small and rural schools, allowing them to deliver the best education possible for their areas, making maximum use of new technology, federation and shared facilities.

Encourage broadband links between all schools, thereby increasing the potential for shared best practice and a more efficient use of school resources, recognising the need to ensure that our children have world-class ICT skills.

Work with the Electoral Commission to provide more core materials to increase the learning of political literacy and citizenship in schools.

Support the roll-out of the Welsh Baccalaureate and eventually want to see all students having access to the Bac and A-levels. In rolling it out we will examine the potential for further development along the lines of the International Baccalaureate, ensuring access to vocational and academic study. Broadening education and opportunity for 14-19 year olds instead of a simple emphasis on GCSE and A-levels is key to delivering a truly learner-centred flexible education system.

Work with teachers, further and higher education and industry to examine how we can move to a less-prescriptive curriculum over time, focusing on core skills whilst allowing students every opportunity to reach their potential and equip them for future employment and enable them to become rounded citizens. Baccalaureate roll-out and expansion will facilitate this work.

Develop schools as hubs for the whole community ensuring that pupils, families, local sports and culture groups get access to facilities throughout the week.

Introduce new regulations on nutritional standards for school meals, and ensure that schools have more freedom to choose how they spend money allocated for food. Our aim is that children get at least a third of their nutritional needs from school lunches. We will ensure stricter control on the marketing of food and drinks in schools, eliminating the most unhealthy and non-nutritious options.

Develop twinning programmes between local sports clubs and local schools. This will create new coaching opportunities as well as better use of facilities, and will assist in widening participation in learning for those of all ages. We will encourage our highest-profile clubs to lead on this and provide models of best practice.

Develop a requirement for primary schools initially, and then secondary schools, to provide at least two hours of curricular physical education per week within school hours. We also expect schools to promote accessible opportunities for pupils to participate in sport after-hours.

Develop a national gateway scheme for youth volunteering to promote and co-ordinate opportunities for volunteer, charity and community work by young people across the country.

Invest in science at all levels of education, starting at school and building up to world-class research-led university departments, producing high-quality engineers and scientists who can compete with the best in the world.

Introduce 3-year budgets for schools as a priority, and where appropriate, encourage the employment of school bursars to take charge of administration, budgets and buildings in schools, to take pressure off headteachers, and where appropriate working across schools federations and networks.

Instigate an urgent review of the weight given to factors such as transportation, sparsity and deprivation in allocating education resources within the local government settlement, to ensure that weightings are based on objective need. As part of that review we will look at the education element of local government funding and how to switch the emphasis to the current and future costs of providing education services rather than on historic costs.

Seek to establish and publish minimum common basic funding requirements for school staffing, accommodation and equipment. This information should be used to benchmark and inform decision-making at national and local levels on school funding.

Education and life-long learning

Take forward the Assembly review of Special Educational Needs assessments with the aim of delivering learner-centred education. This would include early identification and intervention when children have problems, proper support for parents and teachers and clear records of children's needs. We expect to see collaboration at a regional level to provide specialist services and we will legislate if necessary on statements of need.



A Safe Environment

The conditions in which our children learn, in which they get to school and how they interact when they're there are all crucial to delivering the best learning experience possible. **We will:**

Fix crumbling classrooms across Wales by ensuring, in partnership with local authorities, that the funding provided for school building work is fully used for that purpose. Working with local authorities we will provide the appropriate level of resources so as to set a realistic timetable for all schools to be made fit for purpose following a proper national condition assessment, making it clear to pupils, families and teachers what is being delivered. Where appropriate we will encourage the fitting of sprinkler systems in all school buildings, beginning with new and refurbished schools.

Develop the national anti-bullying guidance, making it a role for the Assembly Government to give a stronger lead in tackling bullying of children and young people. We will consult on the feasibility of local authorities formally assessing individual schools' anti-bullying measures, helping to ensure that best practice can be rolled-out. We will encourage greater use of specially trained youth workers to help pupils who have been identified as needing extra targeted behavioural support.

Encourage the use of Positive Behaviour Plans as a measure to tackle the root cause of bullying. Agreed between schools, pupils and parents these plans help ensure that all parties are involved in addressing bad behaviour. We will ensure that these are externally-monitored by an appropriate body. When all else fails, and the terms of agreed behaviour plans are consistently broken, we guarantee that head teachers will have local education authority support for 'managed transfer' to other schools or special units for pupils whose behaviour remains unacceptable.

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Education and life-long learning

Aim to ensure that inspections of schools include feedback from children and parents about the effectiveness of anti-bullying policies and measures. This is crucial in further understanding and developing effective methods to deal with bullying of all kinds, whether it is based on race, sexual-orientation, disability or any other factor.

Develop a public education campaign to promote positive parenting and ensure that parents can access parental support when they need it. This should go hand-in-hand with greater parental involvement in children's formal education.

Continue to advocate the introduction of a schools counselling service, promoting self-referral. Through greater co-operation in clusters and networks each pupil will have access to a school counsellor and best practice will be shared. We will seek to integrate school counselling with a wider independent gateway counselling service for all children and young people.

Develop greater awareness of the convention on the rights of the child amongst children in school. Working with children's organisations, the Children's Commissioner and local authorities we seek to develop innovative methods of delivering this such as a children's passport on rights.

Ensure that our children get to school in the safest possible way. We will take forward measures to ensure that there are seat-belts on all school buses, seek the powers to abolish the three-for-two rule and improve supervision on school buses.

Support the introductions of 20 mph speed limits on all school roads, where there is a call for such action. We will work with local authorities to develop appropriate road management measures for all vehicles during school drop-off and pick-up times.

Beyond Compulsory Education

Re-training and re-skilling are necessities in ensuring a sustainable economy, and responding to technological change we are committed to equality of opportunity in accessing further and higher education and widening participation of all forms of education beyond compulsory schooling. **We will:**

Guarantee at least the present financial support to Welsh students in Welsh HEIs up to 2011. If in 2009 the UK Government lifts the cap on top up fees we will do everything we can afford to mitigate the impact on Welsh students.

Encourage increased partnership working between further education providers and 6th forms. Greater collaboration will widen student choice in the post 16 curriculum and ensure more learner-centred options and equip students for future employment.

Support better professional profile and status for FE staff. This includes supporting the registration of FE lecturers with the General Teaching Council for Wales, alongside appropriate FE representation on the Council.

Develop guidance to include the inspection of student representation on college governing bodies in the Estyn inspection framework.

Develop a targeted entitlement for first steps into further education. Our aim is to provide free to the learner low-credit courses in specified skill subjects, using European funding where appropriate, offering part-time students especially an opportunity to experience some further and higher-education study.

Study the recommendations of the Webb Review of further education with care, also taking into account the recently published Leitch Review of Skills. We will await the Webb Review in considering how far structural reform is required within the FE sector.

Develop a system of further education in which institutions are more rapidly able to respond to the needs of employers

Education and life-long learning



and the local and regional economy, building on the good practice and quality provision which already exists across much of the sector. We recognise that this is best achieved by a partnership approach between employers, colleges and other training providers, and government.

Develop accountable partnerships at regional level which will be able to commission learning provision to meet regional and local need. These partnerships to include local authorities and the voluntary sector, as well as colleges of further education and a strong voice for Sector Skills Councils, building their capacity to be the all-Wales voice of employers.

Protect and enhance the role of the Workers' Education Association (WEA) in any new system for FE, following the Webb Review, recognising its unique role in providing adult learning in some of the most difficult to reach communities.

Promote the library network and encourage the use of library facilities as learning centres. We continue to support greater ICT provision to make libraries more viable and facilitate remote learning and will examine how to extend or incorporate libraries into greater community facilities, such as one-stop shop council information points or as hosts of community parent and pensioner groups.

Enhance the role of museums and the cultural sector more widely in promoting learning opportunities for young people and adults.

Extend the full duty of care to the age of 21 for looked-after young people, regardless of whether they continue in education, and we aim to ensure that young people from looked-after backgrounds who do go into further education are given further assistance up until the age of 25 and through to the completion of the course.

Require the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and higher education institutions to place greater emphasis on their initiatives and strategies to attract those from low-income backgrounds, including mature students, and via part-time and community-based provision. We will promote the role of further and higher education institutions in regenerating local economies and community development.

Support initiatives to develop collaboration between HE institutions to enhance student opportunities.

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Education and life-long learning

Supporting Research Excellence

Universities and research centres in Wales are home to world-class researchers with international reputations. Maintaining research excellence in Wales is crucial to supporting innovation in the economy and equipping skilled and knowledgeable graduates. Our policies will support researchers and research centres and help them compete with effectively on the world stage. **We will:**

Work, year-on-year, to ensure that the funding for higher education institutions in Wales is comparable to other parts of the UK.

Maintain and develop world-class research in Wales through the strategic use of higher education funding to support university departments and centres with records of research excellence across the Welsh HE sector.

Encourage increased collaboration so that our research capacity is enhanced, developing our brand as an innovative, green and enterprising country that is business and tourist friendly. We expect to see the HE sector playing a full part in developing and implementing our green jobs strategy, making Wales a world-leader in eco-technology and research.

Develop trigger funding for university departments to enable more success in drawing down Research Council grants.

Encourage the more strategic use of reconfiguration and collaboration funds to support broader cooperation between higher education institutions and the branding of multi-institutions networks of excellence, such as a Welsh Institute of Design.

Welsh Language Action

We will:

Work with organisations such as Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin to ensure greater early years Welsh medium provision as part of our increased investment in that sector.

Extend the provision and marketing of Welsh medium education and provide additional funding for bilingual education in schools where parents want it. We will explore ways to establish Welsh medium schools more easily, including the potential of setting a duty on local authorities to assess the demand for Welsh-medium education and further promote or plan for it in future school organisational plans.

Develop a strategy to ensure continuity between Welsh medium primary and secondary education and improve incentives to attract more Welsh medium teachers.

Improve Welsh 2nd language learning by prioritising support for specialist secondary teachers and peripatetic teachers to teach lessons in their primary cluster. Where this innovative scheme is operating at the moment some pupils who are confident in their use of Welsh transfer to a class in the secondary schools where they study some subjects bilingually.

Increase the provision of Welsh medium courses in the HE sector, using new technology and partnership working, leading to a Coleg Cymraeg throughout Wales's HE sector.

Incentivise Welsh-speaking post-graduates to become lecturers, prioritise the training and retention of Welsh-speaking staff and encourage Welsh-speaking lecturers to return to Wales.

Making the Green Switch

Concern for the planet has always been a core Liberal Democrat value – that is why we're putting forward bold but achievable proposals for Wales to make the green switch. Tackling climate change is the biggest challenge this generation faces. At one time Wales was at the forefront of the industrial revolution, now we have the opportunity to lead the green revolution.

A green thread runs through our proposals for government. We want to see 100% of our electricity coming from renewable sources by 2050 – creating new jobs, exporting technology and a secure source of energy. We say no to new nuclear power, an unsafe toxic treasure trove for the future. We want all new buildings to be carbon-neutral by 2015, with public buildings having to generate more of their own energy and our homes being properly insulated meaning cheaper bills for everyone. We are committed to tackling climate change by reducing carbon emissions and energy use right across Wales – saving the planet, saving energy and saving some money on the way is the number one challenge for us. Working together we can make the green switch for Wales.

Our key priorities are:

- 100% renewable electricity by 2050
- Grants and free advice for families to go green
- No to new nuclear power



A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Making the Green Switch

Sustainable Learning

We will:

Prioritise the provision of Safe Routes to School through continued support, ensuring that walking to school is promoted as a safe and environmentally-friendly alternative to the car.

Encourage, where possible, the provision of biomass burners in all new schools and actively support eco-schemes in schools, drawing on best practice such as carbon off-setting of school transport and the implementation of the sustainability agenda across all school activities. As part of this we support out-of-classroom learning that promotes sustainable development and global citizenship.



In contrast to the current opt-in system, undertake to ensure all schools participate in paper collection and recycling schemes in their areas.

Through the new “Climate Connect”, enable schools to access grants for feasibility studies and for installation of on-site renewable micro-generation.

Make Wales a world leader in environmental research and teaching by establishing a virtual ‘Wales Institute for the Earth’, bringing together and investing in expertise in the Welsh higher education, private and not-for-profit sectors. This will form a strong part of our Green Jobs Strategy.

Establish an action group to Clean & Green the NHS. Our ‘Clean & Green’ strategy will cover issues such as increasing energy efficiency, promoting recycling opportunities, tackling MRSA and on-site renewable micro-generation. We want to see more emphasis on single rooms, which will also help to tackle MRSA. We will work with health professionals and patient groups to adopt a Health Improvement Plan identifying simple steps to be taken by hospitals to reduce infections and avoid accidents.

The Green Economy

We will:

Aim for renewable energy to supply 100% of Wales’s electricity by 2050. As a milestone target, our aim is 30% of our electricity supply coming from renewable energy by 2020.

Seek the powers to introduce a rate-relief for businesses that reach environmental standards. The Green Dragon system is already in place to support this move.

Make Wales a world-leader in the new green economy by creating jobs and businesses that help the environment. We will establish a Green Jobs Strategy facilitating a joined-up approach to new businesses and diversification into renewables, waste management, recycling and eco-tourism. We will make full use of organisations such as Construction Skills and Energy and Utility Skills, business groups, the education sector and green groups to draw up and deliver the strategy.

Making the Green Switch

Reject new nuclear power in Wales. The risk of nuclear waste being dumped across Wales is a toxic treasure trove future generations can do without. We will ask for the power to decide on energy developments over 50MW to be devolved to Wales.

Deliver a fully resourced communication campaign about climate change, using all available public information media, through “Climate Connect”. This will prioritise the need to reduce energy consumption, highlighting ways of becoming more energy efficient, as part of the Sustainable Energy Network.

Develop a revised measurement of sustainable economic welfare that compliments GVA figures, to show progress towards sustainable development, measuring our ecological footprint.

Lobby the UK government for a minimum price guarantee for all householders and businesses that export excess renewable energy to the National Grid.

Revise the planning policy on out-of-town centre supermarkets so that their retail impact on town centres is fully considered and environmental assessments are undertaken as a matter of course. Where the planning application is accepted we would like to see the supermarkets commit to investment in local environmental and energy projects and facilities.

Seek to amend planning rules so that it is less easy to get retrospective permission, for example by penalising such applications. We will consult with local authorities on the best way to deliver this.

Continue to support the appropriate use of wind power, with a preference for off-shore wind. We will develop improvements to the grid cabling structure as too much energy is wasted in poor transmission. We will consult with planning authorities, the National Grid and other stakeholders to prioritise the necessary improvements.



A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Making the Green Switch

Support research into, and generation of tidal power. Our aim is that lagoon pools and wave machine projects will be up and running by the end of this Assembly, and powering Wales's future. The economic benefits of this will be huge and allow us to be a technology exporter. By 2020 they should be playing a huge part in powering Wales.

Encourage Welsh producers to engage more in establishing energy projects in order to increase the amount of revenue generated in Wales. We will also encourage communities to take shares in energy projects sited in their area.

Seek the powers to amend building regulations to ensure new developments in Wales are built to the highest possible environmental standards. This means that once we have the powers we can take forward proposals for all new-builds to have energy efficiency measures as standard such as proper insulation, smart meters and combined heat and power units as part of a sustainable buildings code.

Commit to, at the least, delivering the Welsh carbon-equivalent reduction target of 20% by 2020. We want to see a 1% reduction each year and by 2011 we aim to be achieving a 3% annual carbon-equivalent reduction target for greenhouse gases, to be achieved by means of an Assembly Government-led programme, which incorporates targets for each of the energy generation, industry, business, residential and transport sectors.

Promote Wales's commitment to sustainable development and our leading environmental policies as tourism drivers so that Wales is seen as the "clean and green" country world-wide.

Sustainable Communities

We will:

Establish "Climate Connect" to provide a one-stop shop for advice, grants and loans for households and communities to generate their own renewable energy as a key part of the Sustainable Energy Network.

Encourage local authorities to identify Environmental Action Zones for deep cleaning of roads and gullies, developing a zero tolerance approach to fly-tipping and abandoned cars, with the aim of reducing the fear of crime created by environmental disorder.

Ensure that significant planning decisions made by local authorities are assessed on their contribution to climate change. All local authority development plans should be sustainable. They should incorporate targets for carbon reduction and increased provision for renewable energy and recycling facilities, as well as increased cycle infrastructure.

Reform planning guidance so that there is a presumption of a minimum 500 metre residential buffer zone on opencast developments.

Ensure that by 2015 all new local authority, Assembly Government and publicly funded buildings are built to carbon neutral standards. To facilitate this we will introduce a planning condition on all publicly funded buildings, where possible, to generate at least 15% of their energy on site through appropriate renewable micro-generation technology before 2010 and increase this condition as costs come down and more technology is available. Once we have started on this route, the same should be demanded from existing buildings. As part of a sustainable buildings code all new-builds will have energy efficiency measures as standard, such as proper insulation, smart meters and combined heat and power units. The devolution of building regulations will facilitate this.

Develop the National Waste Strategy, ensuring co-operation between local authorities on waste minimisation and serious innovative work on developing energy from waste, for example developing town and community heating systems. We will aim for the long-term goal of zero waste, through minimisation, recycling and re-use. We will make it a role for the Assembly Government to develop the market for recycled goods and materials.

Aim for 60% of all household waste to be recycled by the end of the Assembly term. Every home should be offered regular kerbside recycling collection.

Making the Green Switch

Sustainable Buildings

We will:

Seek the powers over building regulations, to deliver energy efficient and environmentally friendly homes. Our aim is that all new housing build, in the private and social sector, is carbon neutral by 2015. We will take forward proposals for all new-build to have energy efficiency measures as standard such as proper insulation, smart meters and combined heat and power units as part of a sustainable buildings code. The devolution of building regulations will facilitate this.

Establish "Climate Connect" to provide a one-stop shop for advice, grants and loans for households and communities to generate their own renewable energy.

Work with the Energy Saving Trust to publish and promote an energy efficiency advisory document. That would inform people about the technology available, where it is available, how much it costs and how much it would save them. We would promote measures such as insulation, draught-proofing, window, heating and lighting replacement.

Ensure that houses in Wales have energy ratings. This would allow prospective house buyers to know how energy efficient a house is, as well as encourage home owners to implement energy efficiency measures in their own home. We will require energy efficiency measures in any accreditation of private landlords.

Get rid of the need for planning permission for installing small-scale home-based renewable micro-generation devices or combined heat and power units.

Take forward our good work that forced the Assembly Government to provide additional cash for the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme over the last two years. We will look at expanding this and further promoting the use of renewable energy as part of it.

Review planning guidelines to help protect residential gardens from speculative developments.

Sustainable Countryside

We will:

Target the Rural Development Plan towards net carbon reduction. All agricultural policies and initiatives will be joined-up in reducing carbon, for example the use of biomass in heating systems and soil management.

Ensure that agri-environment schemes will be targeted towards the halting of biodiversity loss by 2010 and ensuring the delivery of SSSI and Natura 2000 obligations, water framework directive targets and combating climate change. Alongside this we will play a full role in delivering action 32 of the Environment Strategy for Wales.

Work to ensure that agri-environment schemes prioritise delivery of benefits to the environment, wildlife, landscape and access to the countryside. Where appropriate we want to see targeted funding leading to outcomes and benefits for priority species, habitats, water catchments and landscapes.

Promote the need to protect soils that have high carbon content, through agricultural and land management policies, ensuring processes such as carbon sequestration.

Maintain the most restrictive policy possible under EU law on GM crop development. We will also campaign for the threshold for labelling products which contain a GM ingredient or derivative to be reduced to 0.1%, the lowest level of reliable detection.

Encourage local authorities to establish recycling centres for farm plastic, ensuring that farmers are able to ensure the re-use of this material.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Making the Green Switch



Introduce a duty for all public bodies to further bio-diversity, as is the case in Scotland. We will consult with stakeholders on how best to do this.

Encourage Local Biodiversity Partnerships to be consulted at an early stage in the preparation of Local Development Plans in particular relating to matters concerning natural habitats, flora and fauna.

Promote robust eco-systems that can withstand the environmental challenges posed by climate change and promote the maintenance of biodiversity and geological diversity through protection and enhancement of both wildlife habitats and species.

Making the Green Switch

Ensure that all views and policies affecting the landscape are better integrated across the strategies of stakeholders in those areas, such as Woodlands for Wales, Farming for the Future and Bio-diversity partnerships.

Develop an integrated, single strategy for the landscape which better identifies and deals with the environmental impacts of climate change. We will work to develop a similar integrated strategy for marine planning which compliments landscape management.

Support Marine Spatial Planning, to ensure sustainable development and a strong eco-system approach in Welsh territorial seas.

Demand the powers over offshore oil and gas licensing and offshore planning, including planning for offshore renewable energy projects, and the development of Welsh Marine Protected Areas that are adaptable to changes in the conservation interest, particularly with regard to climate change.

Ensure 100% of surface waters at Good Ecological Status by 2015 and require the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) to prioritise the delivery of favourable condition status to SSSIs across Wales.

Make use of the unspent farming funds available to invest in an energy-crops scheme, helping power Wales's future and generating wealth in the rural economy. We believe that Wales can generate 10% of its energy from biomass by 2020.

Encourage the use of publicly owned buildings, monuments and sites in the historic environment, including those owned by Cadw, as venues for cultural events and festivals.

Green Government

We will:

Maintain and develop the statutory commitment to sustainable development across the Assembly Government's work. We will ensure that the Assembly Government leads on reducing demand for electricity in the public sector through measures such as low energy lighting, smart meters and energy efficient appliances.

Ensure that the Assembly Government and National Assembly lead on conditions in public procurement contracts regarding less packaging on purchased goods. We will go on to introduce this policy for the whole of the public sector in Wales, ensuring that the public sector is doing the utmost to protect the environment.

Promote an annual Wales "Green Switch" day, ensuring a national focus on tackling climate change. In the Senedd the First Minister would lead on a day of climate change debates, reporting to the Senedd on carbon reduction targets, progress towards renewable energy targets and Government action to make the green switch. All ministers would provide updates on their department. Across the country, in schools, town centres and media, 'green switch' events will be supported and promoted.

Ensure a labelling system for public buildings according to how energy efficient or wasteful they are, on an easy to understand A-G scale, as is good practice in the EU.

Ensure that there is a net carbon off-set of all ministerial car and air journeys.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Crime and Substance Misuse

Pride in our communities is at the heart of the Welsh Liberal Democrat approach to politics. Making sure that we have safe, secure communities is a vital part of that. Public fears about crime and anti-social behaviour remain very high. Even in low crime areas people have grown more fearful of crime and for their safety. It's time we took real action to cut crime. Our policies aren't about tough talk; they're about delivering practical, realistic and commonsense action to make our streets safer.

We propose honest, clear and straightforward answers to the problems in the criminal justice and prison systems. Effective policies are worth many times more than empty posturing. We are committed to tackling the causes and effects of substance misuse. We are determined to draw upon the advice of experts in the field and research into drug addiction to help individuals play their full part in society. Tackling substance misuse will reduce crime, promote opportunity and create safer communities.

Cutting Crime

We can cut crime and make our communities safer and more pleasant places in which to live. We propose common-sense solutions to the problems of crime and anti-social behaviour that can often plague our communities. **We will:**

Seek to devolve powers and funding on policing and prisons, with appropriate transfer of funds, to Wales. In line with our wish for a Welsh Parliament with comparable powers to the Scottish Parliament we would also like to see many more criminal justice issues devolved to Wales, so that we can develop a sentencing and justice system that is responsive to the Welsh context.

Oppose the expensive and illiberal ID cards scheme that already costs almost £100,000 a day. That money should instead be spent on putting more police on the beat in Wales and across Britain.

Ensure funding for an extra 500 police community support officers across Wales when and where communities and the police want them.

Promote community-based policing, including the identification of named officers for each community and the development of part-time community police offices in community halls. We also support a reduction in the burden of paperwork that keeps police officers off patrol, by encouraging greater use of the latest IT systems and communications technology, and by using civilian auxiliary staff in the police station.

Tackle anti-social behaviour through Acceptable Behaviour Contracts agreed between the individual, their family, the police, local authority and housing association, specifying behaviour they will not engage in. A breach of this contract can be used to apply for an anti-social behaviour order on the individual.

Improve the provision of all youth services by putting them on a statutory basis. Local authorities will then be obliged to meet the demand amongst young people for leisure and education-based facilities that can get them off the streets and into constructive engagement with each other and with their communities.

Enable children and young people to participate within community safety partnerships. This would help deal with community based bullying and aggression experienced by children.

Cut down on the inconsiderate, aggressive and dangerous driving that blights many of our communities. We will encourage measures such as confiscation of motor vehicles from persistent joy-riders, promote the use of mobile speed-cameras to enforce speed limits and promote events that raise awareness of the dangers of joy-riding, speeding and drink driving amongst young people.

Our key priorities are:

- More police on patrol – don't waste billions on ID cards
- Making offenders work for the community
- Making sentences mean what they say

Crime and Substance Misuse



Support the development of community justice panels to give local people a say in the punishment offenders carry out in their community, putting right the harm caused to victims, property and community, as an alternative to jail for non-violent offenders like shoplifters or petty vandals. Where appropriate we will promote youth conference where families and victims are involved in deciding on what can be done as reparation in the community, alongside an apology and repayment to the victim.

Encourage the establishment of Home Zones so that more areas of the community can be safely used by all members of a street or neighbourhood. We also want to see local authorities undertaking surveys of people's concerns with regard to fear of crime. For example if environmental crime came top of the list, resources should be invested in bulk waste collection, to prevent fly-tipping and improving response times for graffiti removal.

Encourage the establishment of one-stop local non-emergency helplines such as the successful '101' service in Cardiff which allows people to report problems that affect the place in which they live.

Oppose any further closures of Magistrates, County and Civil Courts in rural areas, and consider options for increasing accessibility to the criminal justice system in rural Wales, such as the use of video-links and of temporary courtrooms, with appropriate and secure facilities.

Support the protection of shopkeepers from harassment by promoting measures such as CCTV, challenge 21 and ensuring a voice for them on community safety partnerships.

Continue to support the national helpline for victims of domestic abuse and ensure that the funding is there for it to remain a bilingual 24-hour service, 365 days a year – we also seek to expand the availability of the service in other languages. We are committed to tackling domestic abuse and providing support for sufferers, working to reduce the barriers to funding and support services. We are concerned that the proposals for an ID card may make it difficult for those who seek to escape abusive relationships and find sanctuary.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Crime and Substance Misuse

Prisons

Liberal Democrats across Britain are putting forward common-sense answers to the problems in the prison and criminal justice systems. We propose honest, clear and straightforward answers. **We will:**

Focus on crime prevention and appropriate community sentences. Our extensive proposals to cut crime would ease the burden on the prison system. We will assess the need to increase specific prison capacity in Wales, such as addressing the lack of a women's unit and the possible need for a North Wales prison.

Support measures to make sentences mean what they say and improve public confidence in the system. The most serious offenders should serve life imprisonment, where the judge considered the offender should never be released. Very serious offenders should receive a Public Safety Sentence of indefinite imprisonment with a minimum term – similar to the current “life” sentence. After serving the minimum term set out by the judge, release would only be agreed after a hearing by a Parole Board. For other offenders sent to prison they should serve Fixed Term Sentences with the minimum and maximum term announced by the judge in open court. Offenders would be eligible for parole after the minimum term, and granted release on the say-so of a parole board.

Support measures to improve the compensation paid to victims, including contributions funded from a common fund paid into from prisoners' earnings, based on pilot schemes. Putting in a working day whilst in prison equips prisoners with skills that will help them find work after their release and cut re-offending rates.

Substance Misuse

Tackling substance misuse will reduce crime, promote opportunity and create safer communities. **We will:**

Establish a National Treatment Taskforce, linking universities in Wales with NHS and voluntary sector providers in the drug field. Through the taskforce we expect to see improved collaboration on research, national guidance on service and standards, support for agencies committed to Wales, advice on developing the rehabilitation infrastructure and better partnership working between public bodies, business and the voluntary sector.

Work with the Home Office, local authorities and the voluntary sector, with the aim of increasing the number of drug and alcohol rehabilitation places, especially in prison.

Examine, with the support of the National Treatment Taskforce, extending support for the use of innovative schemes such as 'Big Brother' style rehabilitation; dedicated doctors working in community detoxification services and needle-exchange services.

Highlight the dangers of excessive drinking, through public awareness promotions and targeted campaigns, and make sure that support is there before the abuse leads to crime and violence. We will discourage irresponsible drink promotions that promote binge drinking, which often lead to violence and anti-social behaviour and we support proof-of-age schemes such as Challenge 21 and 'Prove it' cards in order to tackle under-age drinking. We will ensure that big late night venues contribute to the extra cost of late night policing.

Welsh Language Action

We will:

Encourage the recruitment of more Welsh speaking police officers and police community support officers, especially in Language Action Areas.

Ensure that individuals have the right to correspond with police authorities in Welsh, by legislating to establish specific rights to Welsh service from public bodies.

Economic Development

Wales was once at the forefront of a changing economic landscape. As one of the first nations to industrialise, we were the engine room for development across the world. Welsh Liberal Democrats believe that Wales can lead the way again. The green switch we want to see for Wales will offer opportunities for all, will allow us to be a leading exporter and will ensure that we harness our natural resources to make our economy thrive.

The building blocks for a more confident and prosperous Wales, free from poverty, is a more educated workforce and a transport system that puts the needs of passengers first. To enable enterprise we must avoid any unnecessary time or money pressure on businesses, big or small, and cultivate a culture where an enterprising spirit flows through the nation. A Wales where everyone values the ambition and determination needed to build business. We will work towards a Wales that is a beacon for enterprise and leads the world in developing ideas, brands and entrepreneurs.

Our key priorities are:

- Free business from the unnecessary red-tape that holds it back
- Make it easier for small businesses to win public contracts
- Develop Wales as a world-leader in the new green economy creating jobs and businesses

Growing our Businesses

The health of the Welsh economy is dependent on the success of our home-grown businesses. We will make best use of simple mechanisms to aid the sustainable growth of Welsh businesses and SMEs in particular. **We will:**

Assess the effects of the recent government mergers so that business support and advice can be simplified and streamlined. We will make best use of the merged structure to ensure that government support, advice and jobs are situated across the country, and not centred solely in Cardiff.

Deliver an extended rate-relief to businesses with low rateable values on a nationwide basis. We are keen to develop a family-friendly business environment in Wales and will develop, seeking extra powers, financial incentives for businesses that develop childcare facilities and contribute to training opportunities in the childcare sector.



Develop a small-business friendly culture within the Assembly Government, including making advice and support available to social enterprises and community-based mutual organisations.

Support the development of techniums, including in rural areas, that would be magnets for innovation, business set-ups and growth companies. These would be built to the highest energy-efficiency and environmental standards, highlighting our commitment to a green economy.

Make the Assembly Government and National Assembly world-leaders in making it easier for small businesses to apply for public contracts. This includes measures such as better placed advertising, more user-friendly contracts, promoting environmental and skills conditions and easier pre-qualification procedures.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Economic Development

Make better use of the property powers at the Assembly Government's disposal so that we can develop financial support through rent concessions and deferred payments on land and buildings owned by the Assembly Government.

Develop economic opportunity areas which could re-generate towns that have lost industry and promote sector-based company clusters. We will maximise the powers available, and seek more, so that we can support businesses through start-up tax credits, capital allowance on commercial buildings, deferred property payments, wireless internet connections and employment cost reductions. This will be a key part in our use of European convergence funding. We will encourage local authorities to use their planning powers to develop economic centres around rail stations in rural areas.

Use European funding to deliver our policy objectives of improved lifelong learning opportunities and better conditions for innovative, job-creating business growth. We oppose a rigid solely government-centred top-down approach to the allocation of funds, and we will ensure more engagement from business, local authorities and the voluntary sector.

Take Wales to the centre of the European debate on the use of corporation tax in member regions and states to stimulate investment. We will push the case for the powers to vary corporation tax or to keep it a specified level for a set-time, targeting a region if necessary.

Develop high-profile opportunities to lever in extra investment in start-up and expanding Welsh businesses with high growth potential. We want to maximise the potential for new ventures to be the iconic, new-technology, job-creating Welsh brands of the future.

Support a sustainable future for the manufacturing industry in Wales, encouraging partnership and collaboration across sectors, diversification into new and green technology and maximising skills development at the workplace and in schools and colleges.

Develop a Welsh brand that is confident, enterprising and innovative. This will attract inward investment; encourage home-grown and foreign entrepreneurs, international students and tourism.

Promote modern language learning at school and life-long learning level, enhancing our ability to compete in the international market.

Promote the role of managers, entrepreneurs and business leaders in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination in the workplace; and leading Welsh business into the economy's growth sectors.

Freeing our Businesses

It is our aim to ease the burden on our entrepreneurs, setting Welsh business free in the process. It is only then that we can develop the investment and entrepreneurial culture that is needed. **We will:**

Fully scrutinise any new legislation that impacts on business when it comes before the Assembly. Where appropriate any new regulation that impacts on business introduced by the Assembly Government would be subject to a sunset clause.

Review all new regulations and guarantee a vote in the Assembly after a certain time has elapsed to ensure that they are absolutely necessary. This will give sufficient time for the impact of the regulation to be monitored and allow the Assembly Government to take up the case with the Westminster Government and Europe, before another vote is taken in the Assembly.

Work with inspection bodies and local authorities to establish ways of safely cutting the number of inspections, through co-ordination and collaboration. Our aim is that inspections should be focused on those businesses that regularly break or bend the rules and at areas of greater risk. We aim to develop a single point of regulatory contact for SMEs that will facilitate joined-up inspections.

Economic Development

An Educated Workforce

We believe that improving the skills levels of the Welsh workforce is essential if Wales is to become a more prosperous economy. Delivering the skills needed for business and increasing accessibility to learning opportunities is essential to a growing economy. **We will:**

Ensure a strong voice for Sector Skills Councils in the development of accountable regional partnerships that will commission learning provision. This will facilitate more employer demand-led training to ensure that we are developing the skills needed for a world-class workforce.

Support innovative ways of making learning and training opportunities more accessible to the workforce and wider community. For example we are keen to see more learning and training centres at office blocks, industrial parks and other major employment sites linked to the wider education sector, as well as libraries and other publicly owned facilities that can support workforce development. Alongside this we support the development of life-long learning champions in the workplace to encourage skills development. The Union Learning Fund is in place to contribute to this development.

Aim for the percentage of Welsh GDP invested in research and development to reach European levels in the next 15 years.

Work towards greater high quality research and development by seeking to develop long-term funding to encourage the higher education sector and business community to work together. We won't limit ourselves to research undertaken in Wales but will develop relationships with commercial research done elsewhere that is targeted towards new business development. To facilitate this we seek to appoint a Chief Scientific Advisor with a track record in research.

Ensure that labour market information is utilised fully in Assembly Government policy planning. Every strategy should take into account the skilled labour available to deliver the objectives and the capacity available to increase those necessary skills amongst the workforce, in order to fully deliver that strategy.

Promote schemes, run through colleges, schools and business forums which encourage and promote business skills amongst young people. We will introduce all-Wales competitions that recognise, promote and celebrate entrepreneurship and innovation amongst our young people and promote opportunities for businesspeople to go into schools to enthuse pupils about becoming entrepreneurs.

Encourage buddy schemes for higher education students to allow them to get practical experience and increase links between business and education.

Seek to pilot new business incubators in colleges and universities which can attract and develop people, especially young people, who are not in formal education or training.

Welsh Language Action

We will:

Ensure that the plans for Language Action Areas include promoting local entrepreneurship and social enterprise.

Support Menter a Busnes to encourage entrepreneurship in Welsh-speaking communities.

Promote opportunities for Welsh-speaking businesspeople to go into Welsh-medium schools to enthuse pupils about becoming entrepreneurs.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Transport

The key element of our approach to transport policies is providing individuals with the freedom and opportunity to travel. It's about linking communities, whether it's the next valley over, down to the city or to another country – effective transport connections are vital to our economic development, to tackle poverty and to raise the standard across the nation. Without it we can't grow as a country.

Cycling and walking have proven health benefits and also cut carbon emissions – but many people wish government would make it easier. We will get to grips with this challenge. All our transport policies are designed to encourage more environmentally friendly transport options, reduce carbon-emissions and boost public transport. If we are to get Wales moving forward, first we have to get Wales moving.

Our key priorities are:

- Transport to get Wales moving and make the green switch
- Bus and train services more responsive to passenger needs
- Proper support for safe and convenient cycling opportunities

Public Transport

An efficient and extensive public transport system is essential to changing travelling habits and tackling climate change, yet bus and rail services in Wales are too often patchy, uncomfortable and unreliable. Our policies aim to rebuild trust in public transport and ensure clean, green, safe and reliable public transport services. **We will:**

Produce a Wales Transport Strategy, as required in the Transport (Wales) Act 2006, implementing our policies for transport and putting environmentally-friendly options at its heart.

Encourage better integration of bus and rail services, promoting measures such as co-ordinated time-tables and through-ticketing and maximum use of new technology to keep passengers better informed. Building on the good work of the regional transport consortia we are committed to promoting, facilitating and planning transport links on a regional level. This is vital in encouraging business start-ups and investments.

Continue to promote the plus-bus scheme and will examine ways of increasing commuter take-up of it. For example promoting specific journeys, destinations and attractions that can be reached, which will bring added tourism benefits.

Establish a Public Transport Users' Committee for Wales, ensuring that passengers play a key role in developing ways of improving our transport system.

Develop the transport funding given to local authorities by the Assembly Government so that it is driven towards environmentally-friendly and sustainable forms of transport. Our aim is to incentivise local authorities to commit to public transport and sustainable planning. We will play a full part in supporting project management that delivers this.

Make it easier for local authorities and the Assembly Government to adopt and introduce bus contracts that are more responsive to what the public need and want. We expect to see a local authority or a partnership of local authorities have the power to plan and develop routes, set the framework for fare levels and the design of vehicles to ensure accessibility. To facilitate this we will repeal sections of the 1985 Transport Act which restrict co-operation in the provision of public transport services.

Develop a mechanism whereby the Assembly Government can directly support and franchise a bus route, or routes, in parts of Wales where alternative regulation has failed or doesn't meet passenger needs.

Reform the complexities and barriers in providing and accessing community transport so that it's easier for operators to provide these essential services. Where appropriate we expect to see larger vehicles being used, reform of permit regimes so there is a wider pool of drivers available and routes that can be used by the wider public to combat social exclusion and open up opportunities to reach places of work.

Transport

Develop an extended community rail strategy which helps extend business and tourism links into smaller communities and more remote areas, examining the re-opening of disused local lines, connections with the network and improved facilities at small stations.

Protect and promote the rail links between the regions of Wales and key regions of England. These are vital for business in Wales. We will continue to oppose any plans to provide a less-regular service from West Wales to Cardiff and London, and will promote continued service improvements in North and Mid Wales and between these regions and Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and London.

Support better quality rolling stock for the rail network in Wales. We commit to examining all possible ways in which the Assembly Government can provide a better travel experience for rail passengers in Wales. This includes the possibility of the Assembly Government becoming a full owner or partner in a rolling stock leasing company and encouraging the purchase of newer stock where available.

Press for safe and friendly train and bus stations. We will do this by prioritising safety and disabled access, better lighting, CCTV and electronic information. We will promote rail stations' role as community gateways, providing information on local attractions, activities and facilities and we will promote the use of rail stations as transport hubs, facilitating better transport transfer with connected bus services and improved car-parking facilities where appropriate.

Road Transport

Improvement to public transport is our priority for transport, but we will focus on reducing road congestion and emissions, and improving safety on our roads. **We will:**

Aim to reduce the levels of road traffic through our Transport Strategy by enhancing the availability, accessibility and quality of public transport alternatives. We support park and ride schemes, such as those in Swansea and Cardiff, which help reduce congestion and emissions in our town centres, providing convenient public transport provision for workers, shoppers and tourists.

Require all major land use developments to publish and implement a 'travel plan' as a condition of planning permission.

Support innovative schemes such as community based car-sharing which help reduce congestion and carbon-emissions.

Monitor plans to introduce congestion charging and road user pricing schemes in parts of Wales, supporting them as a means of road traffic reduction if the provision of public transport improves and increases as we propose. In addition, if such schemes are to go ahead we would encourage local authorities to use exemptions for the lowest carbon vehicles.

Promote the use of bio-fuels and their availability at petrol stations across Wales, working with supermarkets and developing supply routes and support for producers through our Green Jobs Strategy.

Support the transfer of freight from road onto rail and sea, promoting greater use of our network of ports that can facilitate rail-connection for further transportation.

Consider specific local improvements to trunk roads linking regions of Wales, where there are significant road safety and community safety demands.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Transport

Cycling and Walking

Cycling and walking have proven health benefits and also cut carbon emissions – but many people wish government would make it easier. **We will:**

Promote cycling by establishing a pilot cycling demonstration town and invite bids from across the country to host it, with the aim of rolling it out at a later date. This area would then receive increased funding to complete missing links in the existing cycle network, improve signage and parking, improve training and extensive promotion of cycling as a transport mode.

Encourage local authorities to include proposals in their transport and development policies for increased cycle infrastructure and the development of safer residential and school areas. To facilitate this we will develop planning guidance encouraging the sustainable development of ‘multi-functional communities’ requiring accessibility by foot, cycle path and public transport to be considered in all applications for new commercial and residential developments.

Require that all new, non-motorway, roads of more than 1km funded by the Assembly Government contain a planning measure to increase local cycle provision.

Work to ensure that the rail system is cyclist-friendly by promoting cycle spaces on trains and at stations.

Promote Safe Routes to School to reduce the reliance on cars for the ‘school-run’ and increase the number of children walking and cycling to schools, including encouraging ‘walking-buses’.

Progress the all-Wales coastal path project and the development of recreational walking routes and facilities across Wales.

Air Travel

Air travel can help connect us to the rest of the world, but it must be balanced with positive environmental action. **We will:**

Scrap government subsidy for the proposed North-South air link and instead divert that money towards sustainable and more environmentally-friendly forms of public transport.

Work to make the link between Cardiff city centre and Cardiff International Airport an exemplar of our commitment to sustainable development by using a regular high-speed rail-link and an environmentally friendly hybrid or hydrogen fuel-cell bus. We will continue to examine the availability and applicability of new clean and green technology to power transport links to the airport as a showcase for the ‘green and clean’ country. We will also work to increase links between the airport and other parts of Wales as well as links from North Wales to closer airports across the border.

Welsh Language Action

We will:

Ensure that individuals have the right to correspond with the new Public Transport Users’ Committee in Welsh, by legislating to establish specific rights to Welsh service from public bodies.

Develop an improved public transport service across the country that ensure that all communities, including predominately Welsh speaking ones, are accessible and have strong links for business.

Housing

Everyone has the right to housing adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their family. The lack of affordable housing affects all parts of the country and has led to an explosion in homelessness in recent years. The Welsh Liberal Democrats are determined to raise the standard in housing the length and breadth of Wales. Better quality housing helps improve health, reduce poverty and enhances educational and life opportunities.

Domestic properties contribute a large proportion of Wales's carbon emissions – tackling climate change requires immediate action in the housing sector through more energy efficient homes and making it easier for families to go green. We will deliver that green switch and work with housing providers to ensure that our policies tackle social exclusion and raise the standard.

Our key priorities are:

- A massive financial injection into the social housing grant
- More new affordable homes across the country
- All new housing to be carbon-neutral by 2015

Quality Homes and Landlords

The current insufficient social housing grant, combined with the regulations that strangle Housing Associations' ability to invest more money in their stock, prevents the step change that is needed to increase the supply of affordable housing. **We will:**

Increase the housing budget by at least £150 million over the next term, which will enable the Assembly Government, local authorities, housing associations, developers and community bodies to deliver the action that is needed to tackle the affordable housing crisis.

Develop a lighter touch approach to regulations that currently prevent registered social landlords from maximising their potential to invest in improving housing stock and new developments. This will make our increased investment in housing go further and provide the funds needed in our communities.

Expect to see Registered Social Landlords using their expertise to deliver necessary projects in the community such as improving school buildings, housing-related improvements, hosting learning centres and incubators for social enterprises, when we have opened up the investment in social housing. Maximising these revenue streams means that money will go back into improving the quality of stock and service for tenants.

Encourage councils to devolve responsibility where appropriate, and after a ballot, by passing control of social housing to community based housing associations and tenants' co-operatives.

Support the modernisation and reform of tenure law, so that there is greater clarity and less confusion regarding tenants' contracts alongside ensuring secure tenancy.

Ensure that this passing of control means that the investment is there to improve the quality of social housing, meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, eradicating fuel poverty and increasing supply.

Support the development of guaranteed tenants' rights when transfer of control occurs, ensuring tenant participation, quality of stock and level of rent. We will go further and encourage Housing Associations to play an active role in identifying and helping tenants in need of greater financial literacy and uplifting.

Promote schemes, run between local authorities, housing associations, developers and education providers that offer practical training and skills development for tenants and the wider community.

Review the powers available to local authorities with the aim of dealing with disrepair at an early stage. At present powers to deal with poorly maintained buildings are focused on serious disrepair. This means taking action against home

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Housing



owners and landlords who consistently refuse to undertake repairs and consequently lower the environmental quality of our communities.

Examine the case for following the example of Scotland and establish a Private Renting Housing panel to adjudicate where a tenant considers the landlord is failing to meet the standard of repair required.

Ensure that housing advice services are adequately funded and build up existing housing advocacy services into an independent national service to assist tenants and home-owners to resolve disputes and access information on their rights. This is part of our cross-cutting commitment to promote rights and the knowledge of citizens' rights.

Eradicating Homelessness

Homelessness is the main barrier to getting all in society involved in the community. To eradicate it we must increase the supply of houses, tackle the causes of people being without a home and ensure that we work together at a community, regional and national level to deliver the best solutions. **We will:**

Work with voluntary organisations and other key stakeholders to review the National Homelessness Strategy. We would ensure sufficient funding is available at national level and set targets for the reduction of homelessness.

Housing

Aim to provide housing-related support funding on a three-year basis to ensure better planning and budgeting. We will also consider ways to develop this funding so that it promotes regional and partnership working.

Ensure that our proposals for increased investment, and greater opportunities for housing associations to lever more funding, will help tackle homelessness by increasing housing supply.

Encourage the promotion of leasing deals with private landlords for families with a homelessness claim. Rent deposit and bond schemes can secure private properties in areas where landlords would otherwise be unwilling to help.

Promote regional projects to ensure that each area is able to provide adequate facilities to shelter, house and support people who have been accepted as homeless. Currently not every local authority area has facilities to deal with homeless people.

Work with local authorities and housing associations to introduce performance indicators for all social landlords, on the number of tenants evicted for rent arrears along with targets for its reduction.

Develop a joint statement of practice for the recovery of rent arrears by social landlords. This will ensure standards are even across the country and ensure better knowledge of tenants' rights. We would expect this to include practice such as social landlords not taking possession for rent arrears resulting from delays in the payment of housing benefit, liaison between social landlords and housing benefit departments to prevent possession actions against tenants with high rent arrears by prioritising those tenants' benefit claims.

Affordable and Accessible Homes

We are committed to addressing the lack of affordable and accessible housing because this can lead to community decline. Families have to leave the community they wish to work and live in, because they can't afford a home, or find one suited to their needs. **We will:**

Promote and simplify the successful Homebuy scheme. Our increased investment means that, working with housing associations and local authorities, we can get on with the work of doing this. We aim to separate out the funding for Homebuy from the overall budget for homes-to-rent.

Encourage the policy of housing associations retaining an option to repurchase Homebuy properties when individuals and families wish to sell them, thereby ensuring a supply of affordable housing. Where appropriate and affordable we would encourage the buying back of former social housing stock that was sold under right-to-buy when they are offered for sale.

Use Homebuy as the basis for a key workers housing scheme in high demand urban areas so as to assist low paid people buy their own homes in partnership with housing associations. This will build on best practice such as the Low Cost Home Ownership scheme operated by Welsh Liberal Democrat-led Cardiff council, which helps first time buyers through the council or housing association contributing 30% of the purchase price and retaining equity. Working with private sector house-builders, the scheme offers newly built properties on housing developments.

Give local authorities the power to suspend the Right-to-buy. We would expect this to happen initially in areas where the affordable housing crisis is at its worst, and for a specified period of time. Where local authorities are reluctant to do this, we would encourage the withdrawal of discounts on the Right-to-buy to allow local authorities to impose local occupancy conditions on sales as well as consideration of buying back when the properties are offered for sale.

Give local authorities the power to require a change of use application for a property bought as a second home so that more properties will be accessible to the local market.

Promote the development of Community Land Trusts in both Rural and Urban parts of Wales. We will examine the need for a dedicated division in the WAG housing department to support and promote Community Land Trusts.

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Housing

Work with local planning authorities to identify sites for affordable housing within their Local Development frameworks and improve the supply of land by picking out suitable sites for affordable housing owned by the Assembly Government across the country. Wherever possible these would be brownfield sites in line with our commitment to making Wales a greener country.

Develop an affordable threshold on new developments. This means that projects over a certain size would trigger a planning condition forcing developers to provide a specified proportion of affordable homes for low-cost renting or low-cost ownership.

Work with local authorities and housing associations to set targets for affordability. These targets should take into account issues such as average house income and population trends. This approach will ensure that long-term planning is in place to ensure that the supply of affordable housing, to rent and to buy, can meet demand.

Where appropriate, recommend the consideration of compulsory purchase orders, in order to acquire appropriate land at affordable housing value for social housing development.

Support the role of Rural Housing Enablers. Determining the levels of need for affordable and accessible housing, both private and social, is key to developing plans to increase the stock available. RHEs, working with councils, housing associations and communities, can develop schemes that meet those needs.

In line with the Beecham agenda, encourage greater regional co-operation between local authorities and housing associations to support and promote projects that deliver warmer homes, affordable homes and homes that support independent living. As an Assembly Government we will play a central role in facilitating this.

Work with planning authorities, developers and housing associations to ensure that more new housing is built to life-time home standards. Our ambition is that we work to a situation where all new build is built to these standards in order to support independent living.

Examine the need and powers available to establish a Welsh version of Scotland's Ownership Options which enables disabled people in unsuitable housing to access home ownership through the use of the benefit Income Support Mortgage Interest relief (ISMI).

Work with local authorities, developers and housing associations to develop a database of all adapted homes in Wales. This will facilitate the market for individuals and families who need help because of impairment.

Work with local authorities to conduct annual local surveys of empty properties, making it easier to target action at bringing them in to use.

Give local authorities the power to impose higher council tax on all unfurnished properties that have remained empty for 24 months or longer.

Welsh Language Action

We will:

Support Welsh-speaking teachers locating to areas of need through our proposal to introduce a key-workers housing scheme based on the Homebuy scheme.

Ensure that there are more opportunities for Welsh speaking individuals and families to remain in their local communities through our wide-ranging policies to promote affordable housing.

Social Justice

For Welsh Liberal Democrats social justice means improving community safety, tackling poverty and combating social exclusion for all people, in all areas of Wales. We aim to increase the numbers of social enterprises in Wales, giving more freedom to community organisations and increasing lifelong learning opportunities that give individuals, families and communities the tools they need.

Ensuring equality of opportunity is essential in building stronger communities and social cohesion. We are committed to initiatives and policies that promote equal citizenship, accessibility to services, equal learning opportunities and equal access to employment opportunities. The commitment to equality of opportunity is intrinsic to our approach to public policy, and building a fairer, better-educated, inclusive and prosperous Wales. We stand against discrimination in all forms and are committed to delivering public services in Wales that are linked to the individual needs of the public.

Our key priorities are:

- Better and free access to our own money at ATMs and Post Offices
- Re-introduction of the Post Office Development Fund
- A cross-cutting commitment to equality of opportunity and tackling poverty

Financial Uplifting

Making it easier for people to maximise the money that is available to them would be a big step forward in tackling poverty and increasing income levels across Wales. Our policies aim to give all, especially our more deprived communities, the tools to be financially literate and prosperous. **We will:**

Work with local authorities to ensure that there is access to free-to-use ATMs, especially in deprived communities. In developing guidance on siting free machines we will work with local authorities to map the location of fee-charging ATMs alongside areas of deprivation and establish the ease of access to free ATMs.

Establish a protocol for responsible practices by local planning authorities regarding giving planning permission for fee-charging ATMs, and work with local authorities to develop and implement rules for using the planning system to increase provision of free ATMs.

Advocate that charging cash machines improve their warning signs so that it is clear that using a particular machine will cost money.

Aim to develop confident consumers by working with bodies such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB), learning providers and local authorities to fund and promote best practice in increasing financial literacy. We support financial literacy workshops run through accessible community groups such as pensioners clubs and parents groups.

Encourage Housing Associations to play an active role in identifying and helping tenants needing greater financial literacy and uplifting.

Develop school-based courses that make young people better informed about financial issues such as credit cards, mortgage rates, credit unions and the causes of debt.

Work with the Department of Work and Pensions to promote and increase co-ordination of income maximisation initiatives across Wales, such as those that make people aware of the benefits that they are entitled to receive.

Support the establishment of community banks, credit unions and LETS schemes, in particular the potential of post offices to be hubs for credit union transactions and activities.

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Social Justice

Protecting Post Offices

Post Offices provide a valuable and essential service to communities across Wales. Government moves, both in Cardiff Bay and Westminster, to undermine the network are moves that undermine community life. We are committed to a Post Office network that is thriving and provides a diverse range of services. **We will:**

Re-introduce the Post Office Development Fund abolished by Labour, which will help branches in our most deprived areas and isolated communities stay open and become more accessible.

Continue to oppose the abolition of the Post Office Account Card as well as any restructuring that causes hardship for communities and individuals through isolation from branches.

Work with the UK government to promote the case to maintain the obligation on Royal Mail to provide universal same-price delivery of letters throughout Wales, and the UK.

Give preference to free ATMs being located at Post Offices through our policies to increase the number of free-to-use ATMs in communities.

Work with the UK Government to investigate providing more services at Post Office counters, and build on the successful Police and Post Office Partnership pilot in mid Wales. We will give consideration to administering livestock movement through local Post Offices.

Equal Opportunities

A nation where true equality of opportunity exists is a nation free from prejudice and poverty and is a nation whose people can fulfil their full potential. **We will:**

Encourage a concerted effort across the private and public sector in Wales to ensure that each citizen has a right to enforce their rights when things go wrong at work or when individuals' legal rights and entitlements are not met. This includes enforcing the rights of migrant workers, particularly in employment and housing. We will lobby the UK Government to address the huge gaps in legal advocacy support in Wales.

Encourage and support volunteering amongst under-represented groups and encourage the police to gain a better understanding and intervene in local safety issues that make under-represented groups feel vulnerable or at risk in their own home.

Improve the data on school pupils, including minority groups and their performance, so that effective measures can be taken to close the gaps in achievement.

Ensure that the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights in Wales takes account of the devolved context in which it will operate.

Promote the need to get more women and people from the BME community into public life. Wales can be proud of the gender balance that was achieved in the last Assembly. However women and the BME community in Wales are under-represented in the corridors of power.

Ensure that data on gender, disability, race, religion age and sexual orientation and how it affects those living in poverty in Wales and their ability to get out of it, is fully utilised in developing Government policies to promote social justice and economic development.

Develop targeted initiatives to offset isolation and promote mental well-being amongst groups including new mothers, recent widows and older people who have ceased driving. We will look at best practice including special transport arrangements and more voluntary help schemes with the aim of making them more available.

Social Justice

Encourage health authorities to reach out to lesbian, gay and bisexual populations to reassure them that they can and should disclose sexual orientation when it's relevant to their care.

Aim to ensure progress in closing the gender pay gap across the public sector in Wales and promote the economic and business case for equal pay in the private sector.

We will promote a Wales-wide initiative to support and welcome migrant workers and encourage integration with the local community, based on the successful model of the 'One Wrexham' initiative introduced by the Welsh Liberal Democrat-led council in Wrexham.

Continue to develop health and disability awareness training for all those working in the public sector and work to further develop good practice for the private sector, making the business case for equality knowledge across the workforce.

Work to introduce a Digital Resource for Books to be provided by the Welsh Books Council. It would be able to enable blind and partially-sighted people to buy books transcribed into the format of their choice.

Guarantee that ID cards will not be needed to access Welsh public services. We will ensure that people continue to receive health treatment based on their needs, not on whether they have a piece of plastic in their wallets or purses.

Justice for All Ages

People of all ages deserve respect and support, yet too often the elderly and the very young are discriminated against and compelled to live in conditions of poverty that they are ill-placed to change. **We will:**

Work to ensure the commitment in the National Service Framework for Older People to remove all forms of age discrimination from the health service.

Work to remove arbitrary age limits on volunteering, and work towards extending age discrimination legislation to cover all volunteers and unpaid workers. We will also make representations on the need to extend the new Age Discrimination legislation to cover goods and services, and lobby the Westminster Government to make the change once presented with the clear need to do so.

Lobby for Children's and Older Peoples' Commissioners to have powers to represent on non-devolved issues so that we reduce the confusion for children and older people regarding which commissioners deal with which issues.

Encourage local authorities to work together to negotiate block-purchasing contracts with foster agencies and increase the pool of foster parents by investing in dedicated foster care support services and tackling any discrimination that prevents the widest range of foster parents being available.

Promote the rights of the child in the Assembly Government's work across all portfolios.

Work towards eradicating child poverty. Our policies for education, social justice, health and housing will help those families on lower-incomes. However many of the levers to tackle child poverty lie with the UK Government, but working with them we will promote actions to improve income-maximisation such as benefit take-up.

Welsh Language Action

We will:

Ensure that the greater resources allocated to improving financial literacy improve the availability of information and courses in Welsh.

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Communities

For too long there's been a sense of impotence in our communities because there's been the belief that they have no real power. With that sense of impotence there follows the inability to free the potential of the community, the inability to influence what happens in the community and the acceptance that it's others that control what happens. For too long our communities have been the victims of decisions made by others. We want them be the decision makers. That is the basis of our belief in devolution, not just from London to Cardiff but from Cardiff to communities right across Wales.

Wales is a small country where it's easy to share new and better ways of delivering services – let's use that to our advantage by working together across the public, private and 'not-for-profit' sectors. The tools to change Wales for the better belong to individuals, families and communities. It's the job of Government to make sure that all of us have the opportunity to fulfil that potential, to break free from poverty, to live healthier lives. When all our communities reach their potential – Wales will reach its potential.

Our key priorities are:

- Develop devolution by giving communities more power
- Get the powers to give 16 year olds the vote
- Reward our community champions as ambassadors for their work



Communities

Empowering Communities

We want to re-invigorate communities. A vital step towards this is giving communities more say over what happens in their areas – trusting communities to make their own decisions. **We will:**

Extend the powers of town and community councils to give them a strengthened role in the provision of local services and where appropriate encourage the delegation of responsibility for selected local government services from unitary authorities to town and community councils, with appropriate financial resources.

Introduce measures to allow clusters of community councils to form federations with an agreed set of single-purpose or multi-purpose responsibilities and encourage the formation of community councils in those parts of Wales where they currently do not exist, and the formation of neighbourhood committees in areas where there is not sufficient support for full councils.

Improve co-operation between the unitary authorities and town and community councils by promoting the adoption of 'Charter Agreements' between the two tiers of local government.

Introduce a 'Community Right to Buy' which would enable community organizations to register an interest in land or buildings that were designed for public use so that if the property comes up for sale they have first refusal, subject to a community ballot. Property purchased could be useful for community facilities, affordable housing or small-scale employment units, subject to planning permission.

Encourage communities, or clusters of communities, to produce 'Community Plans' outlining their view of the community's future, including not only development issues but also economic regeneration, local service provision, transport, environmental issues and social and cultural needs.

Develop measures to ensure that local authorities and other public bodies proposing to close facilities or cease providing services in a community consult with local residents and community organizations that would be affected, as well as proper social and environmental impact assessments that include the impact on travelling distances to equivalent facilities and associated vehicle emissions.

Community Facilities

Communities should be places in which people are able to work, live and play. Effective functioning communities need places in which residents can meet, access information and work together. **We will:**

Support the creation of 'community hubs', which can perform a range of functions, such as grocery store, post office and library, from a single facility.

Promote the establishment of one-stop shops and joint local information points to make local government more accessible to communities.

Develop planning guidance encouraging the sustainable development of 'multi-functional communities' combining residential, employment and service land uses, and requiring accessibility by foot, cycle path and public transport to be considered in all applications for new commercial developments.

Promote opportunities for local people to manage local amenities such as libraries, parks or leisure facilities. These community management trusts would run these amenities on a day-to-day basis, responding to the needs of the local community, but within the strategic framework of the local authority. We will also promote the establishment of community trusts to enable communities to assume ownership of basic services such as shops, pubs and petrol stations.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Communities

Local Government

We believe that reconnecting local government with the local communities it serves is an essential part of re-energisation. We want to improve the effectiveness of local government and increase the accountability and engagement of local government with communities. **We will:**

Give local authorities and town and community councils a specific power of promoting community integration and inclusion.

Permit community and town councils to co-opt up to two non-voting representatives from residents of the community aged between 16 and 25. This would enable all councils to increase youth representation, help give young people a direct say in the governance of their communities, and promote civic participation among young people.

Introduce the changes of the voting system for local government as recommended by the Sunderland Commission – delivering fair votes for communities by introducing the STV system for local government elections.

Give local authorities the right to change their own organisational structures, subject to a two thirds vote of their members, and consultation with their public, following changes to the voting systems.

Make the case for the voting age for Assembly and Local Government elections to be reduced to 16 and push for the powers to do so.

Make progress towards replacing the unfair council tax with a local tax based on the individual's ability to pay, campaigning at a UK level and examining ways of delivering this in Wales.

Assist the implementation of changes recommended by the Beecham review that promote co-operation between public bodies across Wales. We do not propose the amalgamation of local authorities as they presently exist. However, if by the end of the Assembly term, the present structure is preventing real partnership working that enables capability and collaboration, we will review the need for re-organisation.

Develop a model of Partnership Action Contracts, where key local delivery organisations across sectors in an area negotiate with the Assembly Government to agree joint priorities.

Work with local authorities to ensure that the joint provision of front-line services becomes far more widespread through models of shared directorates, lead providers, joint appointments, pooled budgets and joint operational vehicles. We aim to incentivise this collaboration through financial and other forms of support.

Expand the provision of public service training for those wishing to serve in a Welsh public service through a training structure that would build on the Public Services Management Wales arrangement.

Review the prudential borrowing powers of local government with the aim of making them less restrictive, particularly in the ability to borrow against future business rate revenue and the ability to borrow on the market.

Work towards reforming the Revenue Support Grant formula so that locally collected business rates can be used in the area in which they are collected.

Develop a single regulatory and inspection body for local government so that a more holistic approach to inspection is developed, resulting in savings that should be used to incentivise good performance and better management.

Where appropriate, continue to use specific grants for local authorities to deliver certain local improvements. When new grant schemes are implemented, we will prepare a report on each scheme's sustainability and on an exit strategy for each scheme as part of the guidance to authorities on the continuation of schemes.

Communities

The Voluntary Sector and Community Champions

The voluntary sector makes a major contribution to all aspects of Welsh life, and will play a key role in the community-centred Wales we wish to promote and develop. **We will:**

Ensure that sufficient funds are allocated when government initiatives rely on voluntary and community involvement, and count volunteer time as match funding in all public-sector grants.

Ensure that business advice and support funded by the Welsh Assembly Government is available to social entrepreneurs aiming to develop community-based initiatives, including not-for-profit schemes.

Establish annual high-profile national awards to celebrate and reward the champions in our communities whose work allows others to reach their potential.

Work towards providing a stream-lined and easy to access source of support for community initiatives in all parts of Wales that promotes social enterprise and community regeneration. This would include assessing the need for a Community Support Bureau to provide advice and support for community groups seeking to take action to improve their community.

Welsh Language Action

We will:

Ensure that individuals have the right to correspond with local authorities in Welsh, by legislating to establish specific rights to Welsh service from public bodies.

Develop and expand Language Action Areas, to help reverse the trend towards de-population and ensure the welcome and integration of individuals moving into Welsh-speaking communities.



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Countryside and Farming

Promoting Welsh agriculture and exploiting new opportunities in the farming industry is vital for a healthier economy, a healthier population and a healthier environment. For the Welsh Liberal Democrats, social justice does not end at the heads of the valleys. Our rural communities are facing up to the challenges of globalisation, social exclusion and changing needs. A vital cog in keeping the wheels of rural Wales turning is making sure that our farmers and consumers get an honest and fair deal.

An enterprising and blooming rural economy is essential to our aims for greater economic prosperity and tackling poverty right across the country. For Welsh farming and rural Wales to prosper it needs the backing of a sensible and sensitive government. Positive and dynamic government action is needed to further develop agriculture and food production here. Our policies to promote food quality, more local procurement, furthering biodiversity and fair prices are the best kind of medicine for a healthier Wales. As the guardians of the countryside farmers can do more than many to tackle the problem of climate change. We want to see the agricultural industry playing a big part in the green switch for Wales.

Our key priorities are:

- An independent investigation into the food trade industry
- Restoring Tir Mynydd funding
- Ensuring that over half of publicly procured food is sourced from Wales by 2015



Countryside and Farming

The Taste of Wales

The promotion of produce from Wales involves developing external markets, developing innovative processing and product bases, strengthening public procurement actions, and encouraging more local consumption of local produce.

We will:

Encourage diversification, quality branded local produce and healthy competition in order to develop an enterprising and economically viable farming industry.

Establish an independent Food Trade Commission to investigate and report to the Assembly Government on the industry in Wales. It would examine and report on the supermarket code of practice and whether it needs to be strengthened and further regulated, the future of the dairy industry, the processing and development sectors, the public procurement process for Welsh produce, the supply chain from farm to fork and the price we pay in markets and shops.

Further develop the marketing and support for Welsh branded produce with its reputation for quality, promoting an identifiable brand and support for a reinvigorated Farming Connect that promotes knowledge transfer.

Encourage and support greater use of new media in promoting Welsh produce.

Support farmers markets and food fairs throughout Wales, promoting more products for sale and purchase.

Promote farmers co-operatives that can bring farmers and retailers in rural towns together, to identify market opportunities and formulate guarantees of product supply from producers. This will mean that stronger links are established amongst farmers and with retailers.

Support the coordinated development of growers groups working on a rotational basis to ensure a steady and continuous supply of produce.

Promote the consumption of locally produced food by encouraging local authorities to adopt 'local food strategies'.

Support the campaign for sustainable supermarkets, encouraging greater procurement, promotion and labelling of locally produced and sourced food. Alongside this we support measures such as local food and fair trade "proofing" on receipts and developing national awards for supermarkets which stock, sell and procure more local food.

Promote greater links between the tourism industry and farms, improving communication between the two industries and in particular developing 'food tourism'.

Protection from Disease and Mistreatment

Over recent years the capacity of the Welsh countryside to recover from the Foot and Mouth outbreak and BSE has been fantastic. But we must work harder to ensure that the preventative measures are in place to ensure, as far as possible, that we can avoid such diseases again and be ready to deal with them should the need arise. **We will:**

Develop a national strategy, co-ordinating the agricultural industry, the veterinary and emergency services, to respond to, and tackle animal diseases.

Ensure that issues such as safe rendering sites are identified in advance of any further outbreaks.

Aim to eradicate TB in Wales by intensifying the testing programme. Consideration must be given to the immediate slaughter of all animals which are test reactors; and the testing of contiguous farms where TB is confirmed. We will ensure that wildlife on infected farms is subject to full scrutiny and investigation.

Continue to make the case for tight controls on the import of foreign and illegal meat in order to prevent diseases arriving here and infecting indigenous livestock and produce.

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Countryside and Farming



Use the Assembly's new powers on animal welfare for the benefit of domestic and captive wild animals. We will examine support for outlawing all animals other than horses and dogs in circuses, improve licensing for events where animals are put on display, outlaw harmful and cruel aids such as electric shock training collars for race dogs and strengthen regulation of the greyhound industry such as veterinary presence at tracks and a proper licensing system for race dogs.

Address concerns about the fallen stock scheme by working with local authorities and the National Fallen Stock Company to provide more local options for the disposal of fallen stock. This includes re-examining measures such as biodigesters, local incinerators and using kennels as collection centres.

Seek derogation from the EU regulations which prohibit the burying of fallen stock on farmers' land and allow some on-site burial.

Seek approval for more local sites for example using an agreed central farm for disposal of fallen stock and providing ingestors to break down the stock.

Healthy Living

Most people nowadays are convinced of the need to eat and live healthier. But without our agricultural industry growing that fresh, healthy food and playing their part in protecting the environment we will not be able to fight obesity and ill-health. **We will:**

Support organic farming, helping to meet the demand for organic produce.

Countryside and Farming

Seek to use the Assembly's new powers to extend eligibility for the healthy start scheme, which helps the poorest in society access healthy local foods, for children up to age of five. In addition we will work with farmers' groups and councils to support and link schemes across the country that provide fresh, locally produced and reasonably priced foods, especially in areas of greatest health need.

Encourage local sourcing of food for the healthier and more nutritious school meals that our new regulations will introduce.

Examine ways of providing greater support to food co-operatives, including the potential for free use of publicly owned facilities.

Progress the all-Wales coastal path project. We are aware that implementation will require agreements, co-operation and determination on the part of many organisations, public and private, across the country. In government we will play a leading role in taking this project forward.

Sensitive and Sensible Government

We know that positive and dynamic government action is needed to further develop agriculture and rural Wales. We will take that action in government. **We will:**

Restore the Tir Mynydd budget for the next year to the level it was before cuts were made in the last Assembly budget

Increase the use of local food in all public services through strengthened procurement policies and encourage local authorities to engage in bolder approaches to the promotion of local food suppliers.

Reduce red tape and bureaucracy with the aim of delivering unified on farm audit inspections.

Ensure Wales's new legislative status gives us greater leverage on European Union decision-making affecting our farming industry by strengthening our presence at European Agriculture Council meetings, and the discussions which lead up to them.

Ensure that the Rural Development Plan supports farming families to remain and prosper in rural areas.

Make it easier for small enterprises to apply for public contracts, meaning that there is more support for farmers and producers in their bids to supply schools, hospitals and other public services. Our target is that at least half of publicly procured food which is available in our country to be sourced from Wales by 2015.

Fully review how current flood defence and risk management regulations and advice from the government is working, paying particular attention to the accuracy of advice maps and the need for them to be updated more regularly, the need to reduce current and future risk by restricting developments and increasing public awareness of how to deal with flooding.

Welsh Language Action

We will:

Ensure that individuals have the right to correspond with and give evidence to the Food Trade Commission in Welsh, by legislating to establish specific rights to Welsh service from public bodies.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Culture, Language and Sport

The Welsh Liberal Democrats can take pride in the creation of the Assembly Government's first culture ministry and the adoption of its first cultural strategy – Creative Future. Much yet remains to be done to implement that strategy and to put the arts and culture at the heart of a qualitative improvement in the lives of all Welsh people in ways that will define us as a nation.

The achievement of this goal requires the involvement of all arms of government, not just the culture ministry. Just as the cross-cutting approach is necessary to embed the concept of sustainable development, so it is necessary to achieve the cultural development that we seek both for individuals and communities. Community based cultural initiatives, such as radio stations, reflects and promotes what is best about the Welsh passion for social enterprise and cultural chances for all. A parallel commitment to sustainable development and to cultural development is the route to marking out Wales as a civilised, creative and caring community. We propose an outward-looking cultural policy, allowing Wales to take its rightful place on the European and global stage as a culturally-diverse and talented nation.

Our key priorities are:

- New rights to use the Welsh language
- Promoting Wales as the home of the summer season of festivals and events
- Supporting young talent through an Arts Development Fund

The Arts of Wales

We are committed to supporting the arts and artists of Wales to ensure that they are at the heart of our cultural life. We are also committed to ensuring the fullest access to and participation in their work. **We will:**

Implement the recommendations of the Welsh Arts Review, chaired by Elan Closs Stephens, making the arts and culture a cross-cutting theme across government at all levels.

Prioritise the development of a joint strategy with the education ministry to define cultural entitlements for young people, to extend the role of the arts in the school curriculum and to reverse the decline in cultural provision and participation, and introducing a new Arts Development Fund for schools.

Develop a joint strategy with the health ministry to extend the contribution of arts and culture to health and well-being.

Develop a 'duty of care' towards cultural provision as a legal responsibility of local authorities, as is the case in Scotland, to ensure that cultural opportunities are available to all in our communities.

Reaffirm the independence of the Arts Council of Wales, making clear the ministerial role of defining high-level policy objectives and the Arts Council's role in fostering the development of the arts and in funding allocations to artists and arts organisations.

Ensure that the arts and culture play a more prominent role in projecting the country's international role and image, securing greater overseas awareness of and opportunities for Welsh artists, companies and producers.

Require each local authority to undertake a review of arts and cultural facilities and provision, as well as production capacity, in its area, leading to a cross-cutting strategy for cultural development within each authority that takes account of national strategies and the need for coordination with government and ASPBs.

Require local authorities to take cultural factors and needs into account when planning local transport, housing and education schemes.

Investigate the potential for a privately funded scheme, similar to the Arts Council's highly successful Collectorplan art purchase scheme, to encourage the purchase of musical instruments by young people, schools and community groups.

Culture, Language and Sport



Set up an independent review of pay, rewards and career paths in the cultural sector with a view to ensuring it is possible for top flight artists, musicians, designers and other cultural professionals, to make a serious career within Wales.

Aim to improve the business support for small creative enterprises, focusing more on co-ordinating funding opportunities and professional services.

Work with the Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs), broadcasters and local authorities to make more effective use of the Eisteddfod and the network of festivals, creating local business communities around them.

Develop a digital resource for books to be provided by the Welsh Books Council, enabling blind and partially-sighted people to buy books transcribed into the format of their choice.

Ensure that books and literature are an integral part of initiatives to raise the profile of Wales overseas and develop World Book Day in Wales as a focus for literacy promotion with a leading role for the National Poet.

Museums and Galleries

By illuminating our past, museums and galleries can provide educational, tourism and cultural opportunities for the future. They are a resource for reflecting our identity and history as a nation, but also as tools for enhancing our collective knowledge. **We will:**

Support the establishment of a National Gallery of Contemporary Art and Centre for Contemporary Practice.

Support the accessibility to national collections in all parts of Wales through local museums, galleries and a “virtual museum” online.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Culture, Language and Sport

Develop a modern and ambitious programme of exhibitions in Wales, in return for loans of world-class collections from Wales going to other places in order to enhance Wales's profile.

Increase the presence of the National Museums and Library online to improve their role as an educational resource and key-players in Wales's international profile.

Encourage a new relationship between the National Museum and universities in Wales, getting the best out of their resources with the aim of developing a co-ordinated centre for research excellence.

Demand the powers to make St David's Day a public bank holiday so that we can celebrate our national day and make it a global festival of all things Welsh and a showcase for investment and tourism.

The Welsh Language

Wales's two main languages are a rich part of our heritage. We must treasure and nurture them – side by side. Our modern revival of the Welsh language in the face of global Anglo-Americanisation is the envy of many European nations and regions. It is a core part of who we are, and of our reputation for cultural excellence.

The Welsh language is a treasure that we can all be proud of, it enriches Welsh life and makes Wales special. We will support, facilitate and promote the use of the Welsh Language across all aspects of Welsh life and government. Throughout our manifesto we set-out policies for the Welsh language. Here are just some specific proposals. **We will:**

Legislate to enshrine the right to service in Welsh. By establishing specific rights it would be clear to individuals what they can expect in relation to a Welsh service from public bodies and those that have migrated from the public sector since the current Language Act was passed.

Make Welsh and English the official languages of Wales.

Reaffirm the independence of the Welsh Language Board. We will ensure that the Board has Commissioner-style powers to investigate complaints made after the new rights are introduced.

Encourage the Welsh Language Board to prioritise schemes to promote the opportunities for Welsh to be used by and within companies and organisations.

Develop and expand Language Action Areas, to help reverse the trend towards de-population and ensure the welcome and integration of individuals moving into Welsh-speaking communities.

Ensure that the plans for Language Action Areas will include encouragement of intergenerational transmission of Welsh and promotion as a community language; encourage co-operation between local bodies and organisations to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh in communities; promote the full community use of Welsh in all tiers of education from nurseries to adult education.

Ensure that every strategy developed by the Assembly Government takes into account the likely demand for documentation in languages other than Welsh and English.

Broadcasting

Broadcasting and new technologies have made the world smaller – and allowed smaller countries to make a mark on the world. New developments offer a golden opportunity for individuals, communities and the nation as a whole to exploit our talents and create social, cultural and economic prosperity. **We will:**

Press for the infrastructure to be in place to ensure that all of Wales can have access to Welsh digital channels by the time of switchover.

Culture, Language and Sport

Support effective UK schemes aimed at ensuring that the most vulnerable in society are not left behind during switchover.

Examine the opportunities created by digital switchover and greater spectrum availability for more community and regional television stations, including increased Welsh language provision.

Remain supportive of the new arrangements between S4C and BBC Wales, but encourage plurality of news, entertainment and sports provision in both languages across all media in Wales. In particular we support the continuing dedicated provision of news, sport, politics and cultural broadcasting at a Welsh level by ITV Wales.

Build on the good work and reputation of Dr Who and other recent productions, seeking to ensure that all public service broadcasters continue to increase their levels of commissioning and production from Wales-based producers.

Strengthen the Creative Industries Fund and ensure that the creative industries, including film, benefit from the coming round of EU convergence funding.

Ensure closer collaboration between the creative industries unit of the economic development ministry, the Arts Council and other cultural agencies.

Support the campaign to designate an internet Top Level Domain (TLD) to Wales.

Support the principle of a daily Welsh language newspaper and examine all possible roles that we can play in further supporting its establishment. For example, the potential for public sector recruitment advertising, the development of a greater on-line presence and the role of the Welsh Language Board.

Community Media

Community media can reach out to people and communities at risk of exclusion and disadvantage and provide vital training opportunities. To support this sector **We will:**

Guarantee government support and expertise, through the Community Radio Fund, to guide communities through the often complicated process of applying for, and securing, licences.

Push the Assembly's powers so that we can break down the barriers that prevent community media from reaching its full potential. This means working with Ofcom and the DCMS to reform the limits on revenue streams, sponsorship and advertising that holds back community media in Wales.

Support campaigns to get community radio and television on the spectrum space that is becoming available as the digital switchover takes place.

Sport

Investing in community facilities, in our coaches and our potential, not only creates a healthier and fitter nation, but generates the heroes and ambassadors of tomorrow.

To increase grass-roots participation **We will:**

Develop a twinning programme between local sports clubs and local schools. This will create new coaching opportunities as well as better use of facilities. We will encourage our highest-profile clubs to lead on this and provide models of best practice.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Culture, Language and Sport

Develop a requirement for primary schools initially, and then secondary schools, to provide at least two hours of curricular physical education per week within school hours. We also expect schools to promote accessible opportunities for pupils to participate in sport after-hours.

Encourage closer co-operation between schools so that, for example, primary school children have taster sports sessions at their local secondary schools.

Work to establish an entitlement to a certain amount of out-of hours activity, through our policies to promote youth volunteering and making schools community hubs.

Increase investment in top-quality coaching for children. Working with local authorities, the Sports Council and governing bodies, this extra money will develop a network of local coaches to co-ordinate training opportunities for schools, colleges and community groups.

Exploit the high-profile of the Ashes test in Cardiff 2009 and the Ryder Cup 2010 to promote both cricket and golf at a grass-roots level and promote Wales's international profile in both sports.

Seek to increase access to sporting activities in or on rivers and lakes. We will examine the need for statutory rights of access for everyone as is the case in Scotland.

Empower community bodies to take over leisure and sports facilities that are otherwise due to be closed.

Promote the build up to the 2012 Paralympics as an opportunity to improve and encourage disabled access to facilities and disability sports across Wales.

To promote Women's sport **We will:**

Encourage leisure facilities to run regular "women only" sessions staffed by female coaches.

Review the lack of continuity in women's sports participation at a post-16 level so that we can encourage and target initiatives to get more women across Wales taking part in sport once they have left school.

Promote Wales as a venue for major Women's sports events, as part of a new Events Strategy.

To promote World class sport in Wales **We will:**

Aggressively promote Wales as a venue for training ahead of the 2012 Olympics, especially overseas athletes and teams, who can then increase Wales's international profile and reputation.

Re-double our efforts to attract major sporting events, as English football finals leave the Millennium Stadium. We will develop a new Events Strategy that will examine our potential to host, for example, European club football finals, a stage of the Tour de France and major Women's events.

Encourage moves towards a joint-bid with Scotland to host the 2016 Euro Football Finals.

Oppose any international threats to Wales's status as a national football team in its own right.

Promote and facilitate mutual and democratic structures that allow supporters to get involved in the running of clubs in Wales.

Culture, Language and Sport

Develop partnerships with our HE/FE institutions, the Sports Council and our professional rugby and football clubs to improve regional access to top-class training and coaching opportunities for athletes with the potential to reach the top. The regional spread of our universities and professional sports clubs offers an opportunity to tackle the exclusion many of our budding champions currently have to face.

Encourage the presence of elite Welsh teams at the top level of UK and European sport. For example a Super League franchise in Wales, the continuing existence of a Welsh team in the Netball Super League and women and men's domestic and national cricket teams at the highest level possible.

Tourism

From a night at the opera to hiking in the hills we have the agenda for adventure in Wales. Tourism has a vital role in growing Wales's economy, our policies maximise that potential. **We will:**

Use our big towns and cities as gateways to their wider region. They are tourist attractions in themselves but by promoting effective regional tourism partnerships that utilise regional capitals such as Cardiff and Swansea, we will see a multiplier tourist effect across the country.

Encourage local authorities to work together on marketing and promotion, helping define the Welsh tourist experience. For example, heads of the valleys authorities providing a "walking in the footsteps of the industrial revolution" combined experience.

Promote Wales's commitment to sustainable development and our leading environmental policies as tourism drivers so that Wales is seen as the "clean and green" country world-wide, with higher standards of urban design.

Maximize the potential of the Ryder Cup 2010, promoting Wales as a tourist destination for cultural and sporting activities, encouraging those of Welsh heritage (particularly in the US) to visit and invest in Wales and enhance South Wales's role as the UK capital for sport.

Prioritise Wales as a venue for sports activity tourism. From mountain-biking to wind-surfing to mountaineering, Wales has some of the best natural resources in the world.

Encourage a more joined-up approach between the National Museums and Library and tourism. This means not just getting people visiting museums but promoting and encouraging visits to the areas represented in the collections and exhibitions.

Encourage the National Eisteddfod to do more to attract non-Welsh speaking visitors. We expect to see greater use of multi-lingual stewards and designated tours of the Maes available in many languages.

Promote Wales as the home of the summer season of festivals and events. We will make it a role for the Assembly Government to co-ordinate international promotion and accessibility to our extensive range of summer events.

Highlight our developing industry of producers, breweries, restaurants and markets as a strong part of our tourism strategy, exploiting and promoting Wales's increased reputation for good quality food and drink.

Support networks between the tourism industry and farms, as well as ensuring the two industries communicate effectively. Tourism plays a vital role in the economy of rural Wales and the potential exists for more. By providing facilities such as accommodation and catering, farms will be able to increase their profits and boost the local economy.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

The National Assembly and Better Governance

The Welsh Liberal Democrats will stretch the Assembly's new powers to the maximum. However the new procedures mean that before we can introduce any new laws we'll have to get permission from the Secretary of State in London, through what will be called 'Orders in Council'. This leaves Wales with a second-class Assembly whilst in Scotland they already have a proper parliament that does what is best for Scotland without having to first ask London for permission on what it can and cannot do.

Nevertheless from May onwards, when our Assembly is in a position to ask London for powers, the Welsh Liberal Democrats will be committed to getting the broadest range of powers for Wales. That way we can get on with the job of improving the economy, health, education, housing and infrastructure of Wales. We will be ambitious when we demand an 'Order in Council', we have a lot to do for Wales and we need all the tools to do the job well. We can't have London holding us back. We will also press the Westminster Government to ensure that all relevant bills presented in London schedule the transfer of powers in that area to Wales.

We still want to see a proper parliament for Wales, and the Welsh Liberal Democrats remain committed to that goal. Wales can only have the full range of tools to do the job when it has a full Parliament with real powers. Allowing a Welsh Parliament to create and implement laws on behalf of the country will allow Wales to do what's best for itself. We would use the Single Transferable Vote method of electing representatives to a Welsh Parliament, a fairer way to vote and encourage a more diverse and representative democracy in Wales.

Our key priorities are:

- To stretch the new Assembly's new powers to the maximum
- To connect government and the country through new technology
- An independent annual report and citizens surveys to ensure accountable government

Towards a Welsh Parliament

We are committed to stretching the new powers of the National Assembly for Wales to the full, working to help the Assembly develop into a mature and effective body as the next step towards a proper Welsh Parliament. **We will:**

Use the Orders in Council process to acquire the broadest possible range of powers for Wales – to simplify the process for later legislation.

In government, require each minister, soon after taking office, to set out how their department would promote the Welsh economy by tackling economic inactivity, make the green switch and mainstream the Welsh language. We would ensure that each UK Government department was made aware of these commitments and request that they consider these aspects in relation to policy affecting Wales.

Develop and press for more Wales-specific statistics and research, so as to better inform policy and funding for Assembly Government initiatives.

Expand the provision of public service training for those wishing to serve in a Welsh public service through a training structure that would build on the Public Services Management Wales arrangements and develop a fast-track system for outstanding graduates and others to enter public service in Wales.

Press for a new funding formula that takes account of Wales's needs and scrap the out-moded 'Barnett Formula' which fails Wales. Wales should have the power, as they do in Northern Ireland, to borrow funds to pay for specific needs and projects.

Give a Welsh Parliament the power to vary income taxes to suit our own circumstances, as they have in Scotland, subject to the support of the people of Wales in a referendum.

Review the remaining Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs) to see whether greater efficiencies could be achieved by mergers or even abolition but we do not envisage major changes since we value expertise and independence of thought.

The National Assembly and Better Governance

Review the tendering and negotiations process concerning public finance initiatives (PFI) and public private partnerships. In some instances PFI has allowed private sector knowledge and best practice into public sector provision. It is not the best option in many cases, despite UK Government instructions to that effect. We would like to see a level playing field for all providers – traditional public sector, private sector and public benefit organisations.

Accountability and Public Engagement

The Assembly needs to have the trust of the people of Wales. Our policies will help to make the Assembly more clearly accountable to the Welsh electorate and to broaden participation in the Welsh political process. **We will:**

Establish a Welsh version of the 'Queen's Speech' to open the Senedd's term each year with the Government outlining its programme for the year ahead, listing new legislation, new measures and what further transfer of functions it wants.

Transform the Assembly Government's annual report into an independent annual report of facts and figures comparing the Assembly Government's programme and targets with its delivery and outcomes. The report would be debated in the Senedd and enable the people of Wales to make informed judgments.

Work towards a citizens' index of satisfaction with services. This would be an easy to gauge survey of people's satisfaction with service performance and decisions. As part of this we will work towards publishing an annual statement on the performance of, and satisfaction with, all local government services in Wales to strengthen public debate and scrutiny.

Bring Ministers on-line to the people of Wales, through a monthly ministerial answering session and a weekly video podcast by the First Minister. We support the campaign to designate an internet Top Level Domain to Wales and will examine the case for the Assembly Government to use a Wales-specific address.

Involve voluntary and non-governmental organisations more in the governmental process. From May the Welsh Assembly Government will have new powers but it will also need people with fresh ideas and the drive to see them through.

Make the case for the voting age for Assembly and Local Government elections to be reduced to 16 and push for the powers to do so.

Wales and the World

Wales has much to offer the world. The Welsh Assembly Government needs to be outward looking as well as inward looking, working with others to promote democracy and social and environmental justice across the globe. **We will:**

Expand the constructive role of Wales within the European Union through collaboration with other legislative regions and nations, and also by seeking more opportunities for secondments to EU institutions. We aim to build on the interest generated by the establishment of the Assembly, reinforced by its new powers, to forge links with new EU member states and develop those with regions and nations having common interests.

Make a full contribution to promoting sustainable development, human rights and democracy in the world, working with and through the European Union, central government departments including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development, and non-governmental organisations such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Cymru-Lesotho link, Oxfam and others.

Support the campaign for Wales to become a Fair Trade nation.

Welsh Language Action

We will:

Ensure that individuals have the right to correspond with the Assembly Government and National Assembly in Welsh, by legislating to establish specific rights to Welsh service from public bodies.

Put Welsh language considerations at the heart of Assembly Government work across departments, making sure that all departments take into account the impact of their policies on the language.

A FAIR, GREEN FUTURE

Funding a Fair, Green Future

Welsh Liberal Democrats have a long history of issuing fully costed manifestos for government. This manifesto is no exception.

We, cautiously, estimate that there will be at least £600m available in the next Assembly term for new spending initiatives.

That's money after existing services have been given inflationary increases. And it's taken from a baseline of 2007-8 budgets, so it's not pretending that existing spend is new spend.

As detailed analysis from the Chancellors budget comes through, and its implications for Wales, it may be that more is available.

Many of our pledges will save money, by delivering services more efficiently, aiming money where it will be best spent. But we are consciously not counting these towards savings just to make our manifesto stack up.

Among our main spending pledges within this manifesto are:

A £50m package to improve the dental health of Wales – Introducing more dental therapists and salaried dentists, toothpaste and tooth brushes for school children and support for dentists to serve areas of particular shortage.

£46m to improve the quality of our children's learning environment – With smaller class sizes and more nutritious school meals.

And £150m to really tackle the issue of affordable housing in Wales – Not tampering with the costs from the side lines but dealing with the problem at source with a radical overhaul of the Social Housing Grant and the rules governing Housing Associations.

More detailed costings of our programme are available in a separate document.

This is a manifesto full of ideas that works practically and financially. Unlike the present government, uncosted promises won't lead to broken promises.



The Welsh Liberal Democrat manifesto for the Welsh General Election 2007

