

Spring Conference 2024

POLICY MOTION

A Fair Deal For Wales

AGREED BY THE WELSH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS CONFERENCE

Conference believes that years of Conservative neglect have shattered the social contract - or fair deal - between people, communities and government and that it is time for change.

Conference condemns the out-of-touch UK Conservative Government for letting our communities down and taking them for granted, and in particular for:

- A. Failing to help struggling families, individuals and pensioners in the face of the biggest cost-of-living crisis since the 1950s, and instead making it worse by badly mismanaging the economy and recklessly damaging the public finances.
- B. Damaging our natural environment, failing to bring forward credible plans to tackle climate change, and allowing water companies to pump raw sewage into rivers, lakes and coastal areas.
- C. Failing even to get the basics right on crime and policing, allowing far too many people to feel unsafe in their own communities.
- D. Failing to stand up to hatred and prejudice or tackle entrenched inequalities, and repeatedly undermining our fundamental rights and freedoms.
- E. Creating a crisis for democracy with their cronyism, rule-breaking and constant sleaze scandals.
- F. Damaging our communities and businesses through their botched deal with Europe, and undermining the UK's international reputation by threatening to break international law, slashing the international development budget and trashing our relations with our allies.
- G. Scrapping or delaying of key net zero policies, which will accelerate global heating, undermine business confidence and investment and increase the cost of living.

Conference also condemns the Labour Party for failing to offer an ambitious vision for the country or long-term solutions to the challenges we face, and the Welsh Labour Government for its record of failure to:

- I. Address the crisis in the NHS and social care with people struggling to see a GP or dentist, and unacceptable waiting times for tests, treatment and ambulances.
- II. Failing to grow a modern, innovative economy and support small and medium enterprises to grow, especially in the arts, culture, and tourism sectors.
- III. Combat the high levels of child poverty faced in many communities across Wales, with over 1 in 4 children living in relative poverty, and set out a specific and measurable delivery plan.
- IV. Support those affected by the cladding crisis and tackle the housing crisis falling short of the targets to build 20,000 social homes.
- V. Ensure support for farmers and those living in rural communities who are suffering from declining farm incomes, uncertainty around the Sustainable Farming Scheme, and inadequate rural infrastructure support.
- VI. Protect our natural environment, in particular by failing to intervene to stop open-cast coal mining and to hold accountable those responsible for the pollution of our natural environment, as well as preventing the discharge of sewage into our rivers, lakes and coastal areas.

Conference reaffirms that the Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, welcomes the enormous strides that Britain has taken towards that goal over the centuries, and celebrates the role that Liberals and Liberal Democrats have played in leading that change.

Conference calls upon the Welsh Policy Committee to set out the case for a fair deal in the 2024 Welsh General Election Manifesto, and welcomes measures to deliver:

1. A fair, prosperous and innovative economy that promotes opportunity and wellbeing, and supports vibrant communities in which people can live and work. In particular:

- a. Establishing a comprehensive industrial strategy, in partnership with business, civil society, trade unions, and academia, focused on key economic and societal challenges.
 - b. Ensuring that our farmers and food manufacturers are not put at an unfair disadvantage by renegotiating the Australia and New Zealand trade agreements and guaranteeing that all future trade deals will maintain high health, environmental and animal welfare standards for food production.
 - c. Ensuring that all parents can access childcare that is flexible, affordable and fair, including by reviewing the rates paid to providers for free hours to ensure they cover the actual costs of delivering high-quality childcare and early years education.
 - d. Lifting the ban on asylum seekers working if they have been waiting for a decision for more than three months, enabling them to support themselves, integrate in their communities and contribute through taxation.
2. Fair access to good public services and a strong social safety net by:
 - a. Investing in public services and ensuring fair funding and investment for Wales and our communities
 - b. Repairing the broken safety net by reversing the Conservatives' £20-a-week cut to Universal Credit, raising legacy benefits, and replacing the sanctions regime with an incentive-based scheme to help people into work.
 - c. Ending deep poverty within a decade, and establishing an independent commission to recommend annual increases in Universal Credit to achieve it.
3. A sustainable and flourishing global and national environment, with fair access to nature for all by:
 - a. Ending sewage discharges by strengthening regulations, replacing Ofwat with a tough new regulator with new powers to prevent sewage dumps, and banning bonuses for water bosses until discharges and leaks end.
 - b. Placing the climate emergency at the heart of our agenda, including investing in renewable power to drive a strong economic recovery,

bring down energy bills, create clean, secure, well-paid new jobs, and lead international efforts to address the emergency globally.

4. A strong United Kingdom and a fair international order, by immediately fixing our broken relationship with Europe and moving towards a long-term objective of EU membership, by forging a new partnership built on cooperation, not confrontation, removing as many barriers to trade as possible and moving to a more formal and stable footing by seeking to join the Single Market and Customs Union.
5. A truly fair democracy, where everyone's rights are respected and individuals and communities are empowered, putting power in the hands of our communities through fair votes and moving towards a strong Wales in a federal UK through the further devolution of financial powers, broadcasting, rail, justice, and policing.