Cyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru | Wales Environment Link

Manifesto | May 2021 Summary







Introduction

We live in a different Wales to the one where the Fifth Assembly started in May 2016. Brexit and the Covid-19 outbreak have created new challenges, as well as shining a spotlight on the urgent issues that we have yet to resolve. Now, more than ever, Wales needs to lead the way in taking bold action to restore nature and tackle climate change for the benefit of our people, our environment and our future resilience.

There will be no future government in Wales which will not experience some form of emergency event due to our changing climate. Prior to the Covid pandemic, the UK saw record-breaking rainfall and peak river flows which led to flooding and many people losing their homes and businesses. Historical 'hundred-year' floods are now predicted to occur every one to thirty years. In tandem with floods, global temperatures rising and plants and wildlife going extinct will create an insurmountable crisis that society will not be able to overcome.

The next Welsh Government needs to see this as an opportunity to enact transformational change, which is supported and encouraged by Welsh citizens. **We need a green and blue recovery, of our land and our seas, and this can only happen as a cross-government and cross-societal change**. We need to invest adequate funding into directly tackling environmental challenges, whilst ensuring that nature's needs and the health of our planet are fully considered in policy decisions across all government areas.

In line with this, we call on the Welsh Government to deliver the following:

- A sustainable land management system that helps restore nature and the environment, based on the principle of paying farmers and other land managers public money for public goods.
- Recovering our oceans to deliver resilient seas rich in wildlife, which in turn will support coastal communities and businesses.
- Create an environmental governance body and embed principles from EU Directives, alongside statutory nature targets.
- End plastic pollution by creating a circular economy.
- Embed eco-literacy in our education settings and promote green prescriptions in the NHS, whilst encouraging greater public access to nature-rich spaces in both urban and rural areas.

A more detailed version of our manifesto is available online here at www.waleslink.org/Manifesto2021

We need a green and blue recovery, of our land and our seas, and this can only happen as a cross-government and cross-societal change

Front cover image
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Sustainable land management system that helps restore nature and the environment

Key asks

1 | Sustainable Farming and Land Management Bill

Mounting evidence shows that both nature and the wider environment are being negatively impacted by unsustainable farming practices across Wales.
Our departure from the EU provides us with an unique opportunity to put in place new policies that will use public money to help farmers and other land managers to restore biodiversity and the ecosystems nature creates, mitigate climate change and maintain our capacity to produce food and other commodities for this and future generations.

We want the next Welsh Government to:

- Introduce a Sustainable Farming and Land Management Bill for Wales based on a Sustainable Land Management Vision.
- Take urgent action to protect the environment from agricultural pollution.
- Invest adequate funding to deliver the Nature Recovery Action Plan.
- Maintain and strengthen environmental, animal welfare and food safety standards for Wales, which in turn will ensure future trade deals address and respond to the ecological crisis.

2 | Ambitious recovery of Welsh seas

Wales' seas are a third larger than the land area of Wales and over 60% of Wales' population lives and works on the coast. Yet, despite this, the Welsh Government's own assessments show that Welsh seas are not in a good state and legislative targets to protect our marine ecosystems have been missed. We urge the incoming Welsh Government to reinvigorate the work on Sustainable Marine Management and commit to enhancing its own and Natural Resources Wales' capacity, technical expertise and funding in this area, which has been repeatedly under-resourced.

We need to:

- Deliver an ambitious network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), with at least 10% of Welsh waters in fully-protected MPAs by 2030 at the latest. Investment needs to be focused on ensuring MPA management is effective and fully implemented.
- In recognising the deadline has been missed, **prioritise achieving of Good Environmental Status in Welsh seas** and expand the Welsh Government's capacity on marine biodiversity.

We need to prioritise achieving Good Environmental Status of our seas





Blue carbon habitats should be part of our climate change strategy

- Future fisheries legislation and policies should take an **ecosystem-based approach**. This should include recognising and minimising the impact of all fisheries within the Welsh Zone.
- **Future fisheries must be fully documented** to inform effective management, requiring remote electronic monitoring (REM) with cameras on all over 10m vessels, and fish stocks must be restored to biomass levels to achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield.
- The establishment of a **marine climate team** in Welsh Government to ensure marine considerations are part of all climate change strategies and plans. This should include protecting blue carbon habitats.
- We want to see marine renewables tested and deployed in Wales **in a sensitive approach that is in harmony with wildlife**. Testing of new developments needs to take place at an appropriate scale and over an appropriate timeframe to enable learning, monitoring and swift responses to any adverse effects. A marine development plan would ensure this is done strategically.

3 | Post-transition environmental governance and principles

Leaving the European Union has had significant consequences for environmental governance in Wales. While we previously utilised a world-leading pan-European governance regime, we now need to take steps to deliver our own checks and balances to ensure environmental principles and protections are strengthened.

After the election, the Welsh Government needs to:

- Take immediate action to embed new Environmental Governance & Principles into legislation to avoid a serious regression in our governance system and citizens' rights at the end of the Transition Period.
- Create a new and independent Environmental Governance body for Wales, to be fully operational in the first 12 months of the next Senedd, which ensures the appropriate replacement of citizen's rights to legally redress breaches of environmental regulations.
- Ensure that 'polluter pays' and 'rectification at source' principle are integrated into Welsh primary legislation.
- Introduce statutory nature targets to restore biodiversity.



We must fill the gap in environmental governance


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4 | Prevent waste and end pollution

We want to see Wales taking a world-leading role in achieving zero-waste and realising the ambition to create a circular economy. Wales can and should be leading on these initiatives, building on previous successes of the single-use carrier bag charge and household recycling targets. Prevention, above all, must be at the heart of the new focus and we want to see waste reduction targets put in place to this end.

We want the next Welsh Government to:

- Adopt an 'all in' Deposit Return Scheme that works for Wales.
- Introduce levies on single-use products or materials that are hard to recycle.
- Ban materials and items that cannot be recycled at all.
- Introduce a national statutory plan for a standardised and consistent approach to waste collection across Wales.
- Adopt and enforce robust extended producer responsibility that works for Wales.
- Lead the way on repair and reuse incentives.
- Take urgent action to address air and water pollution.

Wales should be a zero-waste nation


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5 | Prioritise eco-literacy and embed green prescriptions in the NHS, for current and future generations

To build a future generation equipped to deal with the challenges in the coming decades, we need to ensure that eco-literacy – education on the biodiversity crisis and tackling climate change, in a citizenship-led approach – is embedded into the new Welsh curriculum and Areas of Learning.

Wales Environment Link wants to see a Green NHS that will work in partnership with Welsh NGOs to roll-out prescriptions to exercise, nature reserves, community groups, and volunteer work. Particularly when it comes to the nature crisis, having as many people as possible both in and looking after our environment will be an asset to the public's wellbeing.

We want to see commitments to:

- Include the climate emergency and ecological crisis in teacher training, involving communities, parents and public sector leaders.
- Introduce professional accreditation for eco-literacy teaching in schools and FE colleges.
- Invest in resources to enable young people to action ideas to include initiatives such as Youth Parliament, youth groups and initiatives like Teach the Future and Keep Wales Tidy's Eco-Schools programme.
- Formally recognise and facilitate the link between the environment and nature and ill-health prevention through green prescriptions and a Green NHS; a partnership between health boards and environmental NGOs.
- Increase access to nature through all public sector institutions, especially schools and health settings.


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We want green schools and a green NHS

Wales Environment Link (WEL) is a network of environmental, countryside and heritage non-governmental organisations in Wales.
WEL is a respected intermediary body connecting the government and the environmental NGO sector.
Our vision is a thriving Welsh environment for future generations.

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