

**A Manifesto for
Welsh Labour
Part 2**

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September 2023

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Introduction

This pamphlet looks at the following five policy areas: Education, Transportation, Environment, Animal welfare and biodiversity.

In Education it discusses the importance of flying start, that Education is for life and how Further Education colleges support that, and the role of higher Education.

On communications in Wales, it discusses the importance of electronic transportation via superfast broadband, the importance of the proposed metro systems and the road system.

On the Environment it looks at Carbon dioxide emissions causing global warming, water, and air pollution.

Biodiversity deals with the need for equilibrium in nature and the importance of top end predators.

It finally looks at animal welfare including the need to respect them as sentient beings and the importance of the welfare of animals.

Education

This article highlights the importance of education to individuals, society, and the economy it concentrates on flying start, further and higher Education.

As someone brought up on a Council estate I knew, short of sporting prowess that I did not possess, the way to progress was via Education. I am also aware that having a highly educated and skilled workforce benefits the economy. Examples exist throughout the World from Palo Alto in California to Cambridge in England where a highly educated and skilled workforce attracts not only startup companies but also inward investment without the need to bribe them to come.

One of the great successes of the Labour government in Wales is flying start. This has had a major benefit for children entering nursery at the age of three. Flying start is a programme to create positive outcomes for children. When some children start nursery school at three can be two years behind others in terms of development then something needs to be done. It is incredibly difficult to reduce this gap over the eight years children are in primary education, these needs addressing before they start nursery school. The key is providing an opportunity for children to develop between 2 and 3 in such a way that they start school with development consistent with their chronological age.

The challenge is ensuring all those in need of flying start are provided with it. We owe it to our children to ensure that they all have an equal opportunity.

I have heard from parents and carers about the positive impact Flying Start has had on their families. I fully support the commitment to expanding early years provision and this excellent programme is the best way of delivering this. We know children who attend quality early years settings benefit from spending time in a happy, nurturing environment with their peers and are better prepared for primary education.

Most Education takes place in schools between the age of 3 and 16 or 18. It is imperative that quality education is provided to all children and that individual needs are met. Dr Mark Lang's research for Colegau Cymru ["Can you get there from here?"](#) looked into the issue of social mobility and whether the current education provision in Wales adequately enables young

people to secure a life of well-being particularly those from deprived communities and disadvantaged personal backgrounds.

Stats Wales show pre-pandemic data from 2019 that a mere 28% of learners eligible for Free School Meals achieved level 2, equivalent to 5 GCSE passes, in comparison to 61% of learners who are not eligible. There has been improvement in closing the gap here in Wales since devolution, but it is clear to see that more needs to be done.

Education, therefore, is a key policy area for governments across the world in addressing inequalities within society. The Pupil Development Grant (PDG), one of Welsh Government's flagship policies with the direct aim of tackling the impact of deprivation and disadvantage on educational outcomes provides extra money to schools based on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals on their roll, seeking to try and weaken that link between relative deprivation and low attainment.

Further education colleges offer a second chance to those who did not fulfil their potential in school and trains the trades people of the future. Further education can be at any level from entry to higher level qualifications through awarding organisations including City and Guilds, Edexcel (BTEC) and OCR. Also Access to higher education courses are available and I know of one medical consultant who started his education journey through an access to higher education course.

Further education offers opportunities for gaining qualifications through study either via full time or part time education throughout life. It allows people to upskill or train in an entirely different field. Like university, you can choose between full and part-time study for most courses. While some will require you to spend a significant amount of time in the classroom, colleges often use a blended learning approach, with online distance learning complementing the traditional face-to-face teaching.

Online college courses, for qualifications such as A-levels and BTECs, are popular because you get the opportunity to study and achieve a qualification using your computer and Internet from home, without the need to visit the college in person.

Higher Level Apprenticeships currently offer you qualifications from Level 4 to Level 7 but need expanding to cover more subject areas.

The importance of Further Education in providing lifelong learning, the opportunity to learn a trade, training technicians and providing an alternative route to university must be valued.

People being equipped with the skills employers need, as well as with motivation and opportunity to work including a culture of lifelong learning enables the fulfilment of potential and maximising employment opportunities.

Higher education is the pinnacle of the education pyramid. Wales has outstanding universities comparable with the best in the world and we have approximately one third of Welsh educated 18-year-olds going on to higher education.

With the loss of EU structural funds, it is more important than ever that the Welsh Government invests in Welsh universities to ensure a boost in output and productivity in our economy. I welcome that Wales has rejoined the Horizon programme and the benefits that will bring.

There is a need for the Welsh Government to prioritise R&D for economic growth and sustainability. University research can act a substantial driver to the Welsh economy generating highly paid employment.

The higher education sector, the government and employers all need to think about how they create opportunities for all young people in the future, not only at universities but through apprenticeship schemes which offer sufficient breadth and quality across a range of industries.

Education offers an opportunity for a better life for individuals whilst also creating a more successful knowledge-based economy.

Communications in Wales

Traditionally communication consisted of road, rail, and bus links but since the development of the Internet and the covid pandemic a good broadband connection has become the most important communication tool.

Fast Broadband is needed, for homes and businesses to receive the connectivity they need to engage in digital activities. Working from home, which since Covid, has been more common with many engaging in hybrid working which includes some working in the office but most work being carried out at home needs fast fibre broadband.

While the vast majority of homes and businesses across Wales have access to good quality digital connectivity, we need a range of solutions to help those without access to fast and reliable broadband.

One of these solutions is to build more fibre broadband to homes and businesses using public funding. Properties need to have access to a future proofed 'fibre to the premises' broadband service, also known as 'full fibre.' This type of technology allows very fast broadband speeds to be achieved.

On transport we need to give people an alternative mode of transport to the car by reopening railway stations, creating bus rail interchanges, having bus services linking residential areas with work and leisure areas and providing safe cycle routes without gaps.

This is what the North Wales, Cardiff capital region and Swansea Bay city region are planning to achieve. Transport developments planned in Wales include the North Wales metro, Cardiff city region metro and the Swansea Bay city region metro. These are important to both move journeys out of cars and to reliably allow people to travel within their region. I am an enthusiastic supporter of the metro concept.

The North Wales metro was originally the North East Wales metro and is a rail and bus transport improvement programme in north Wales. Styled as a "Metro", it is conceptually a multi-modal system with a combination of bus, heavy rail, and light rail services. It was initially focused on linking major settlements and employment areas of the north-east of Wales with the North West of England, with its hubs located

in Wrexham, Chester and Deeside, the programme has since expanded, with proposals extending to Anglesey and the north-west of Wales.

The existing Borderlands line forms the spine of the network, and projects are planned to increase connections, integrated access, and service frequency in North Wales and linking to the North west of England.

The Cardiff city Metro is a transport system that will transform the way we travel around the Cardiff Capital Region. It will provide faster, more frequent, and joined-up services using trains, buses, and light rail. The Metro will bring benefits to passengers, link communities together and help transform the economy. It will have a positive social, economic, and environmental effect. It will also shape the identity of the region.

The intention is that the Metro will run at least four services an hour across the entire network when needed, and even more at the network core. The Metro will also deliver a network where interchange is easy, using vehicles designed for speed and capacity.

A vital part of the Metro vision is that the network can grow to make it even more accessible. New stations, new routes, greater frequencies so that in the future, the network can expand to bring better public transport to more communities and economic centres. The danger is that it will be an “into Cardiff in the morning out of Cardiff in the evening service.”

The Swansea Bay Metro will improve the existing rail network and services by increasing the frequency of services to and from mainline and local stations and developing a range of new railway stations and services to enable greater access across the network. We expect to bring railway connections to communities with no rail access, opening new sustainable links to employment and key services across the region.

The first phase of new services will be at the Carmarthenshire town of St. Clears where a new station is planned to be opened in 2024, with further improvements in the Swansea Bay area in the following years.

There will be work across bus, rail, and active travel modes to improve the integration of journeys using active travel and local journeys. This will include improved cycle parking at rail and bus stations, demand-responsive public transport services, and integrated ticketing which can be used across bus and rail service.

Success is a system where bus stops state when the next bus is arriving and signs indicating where traffic jams are. Where it is possible to quickly reach your proposed destination via public transport. Where travel in the region is fast and efficient.

Which leads us on to the road system. There are too many bottlenecks in Wales with major roads going through villages across Wales whilst some such as the A470 going through Blaenau Ffestiniog would be very difficult and expensive to rectify others such as by passing Machynlleth are more easily achieved.

Environment

This short article looks at global warming, water quality and air quality and the need for action on all three. We only have one planet, but we often act as if nothing we do will affect it. We currently have global warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions, problems with water quality and, air quality. We have seen the devastating effect of the planet heating up with floods, fires and places reaching record temperatures.

Environment Minister Lesley Griffiths declared a climate emergency in Wales in 2019. The report a Low Carbon Wales has a plan containing one hundred policies and proposals for tackling climate change. The cause of the planet warming is undoubtedly due to the burning of fossil fuels causing an increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere creating the “greenhouse effect.”

In the nineteenth century, there was a belief that you could put anything into the seas and rivers, and it would dissipate, no problem at all, it would just dilute down to nothing. In the second half of the twentieth century, we came to realise that this was not true and started to clean up our rivers. Unfortunately, we appear to be now reverting back to the nineteenth century policy.

We have untreated sewage discharging into rivers such as the Tawe by the Trebanos treatment works; phosphorous pollution is leading to eutrophication in the river Wye; microplastic has ended up in the water everywhere. We then drink this water, after water treatment has taken place. If people saw what the water looked like before it got treated, they probably would not drink it.

Concern has been raised over raw sewage and other pollutants in Swansea's River Tawe and questions asked over what Welsh Government is doing to tackle problems affecting Wales waterways. River pollution is a problem across Wales for example in the river Tawe we have raw sewage discharge, agricultural pollution and microplastics. We need action to stop water run-off mixing with sewerage. Things I believe that could help include the planting of trees and bushes, making it a planning condition on new developments that impervious

coverings are not allowed, except for a driveway with limited width, to have greater control over the use of fertiliser on farmland, and to completely ban microplastic use in commonly used materials such as cosmetics.

I welcome Welsh Government investment in flood defences both on rivers and on the coast. It seems to me that many of these defences just involve building higher flood walls; the better solution is to divert the water on to land where it can flood but cause no harm to properties. Such a scheme opened on the river Tawe and has been successful in retaining flood water on land away from businesses and houses. I have urged the Welsh Government to replicate this scheme in similar areas. You are not going to solve the problem by just spending money and putting up higher and higher walls; the solution has got to be to find places for the water to go.

Action is needed on energy in terms of both production and cost. Some immediate action that could be taken is to abolish the gas and electric standing charge which means people pay for energy to be provided when they cannot afford to use it and it eats up money from the token inserted before any energy is received.

Medium term action that could be taken include increasing offshore and on shore windfarms, improving energy efficiency in houses and creating solar farms and placing solar panels on more houses.

We need to improve home energy efficiency including roof insulation, switching to LED lights, not leaving things on standby, insulating walls, getting a smart meter with an in-home display, draught proofing windows, updating old boilers and installing solar panels.

Working on the assumption we want to stop global warming and reduce energy costs then in the long term a number of developments are necessary. These are using tidal energy via tidal lagoons starting with the Swansea tidal lagoon. Improvements in battery storage technology are awaited, substantial research is going on, but we still await a big breakthrough like the invention of rechargeable batteries.

Improve solar panels efficiency as we know that using concentrated photo voltaic cells (CPV) to focus sunlight onto an extremely high-efficiency solar cell that would be otherwise too expensive to use directly increases efficiency. The best traditional solar panels peak at 22% efficiency, whereas the cells used in CPV panels can reach 46% efficiency. Keeping them clean and checking they are working efficiently also improves efficiency. Sustained and continual action is necessary. The price of gas may come down but the effect on the environment of burning it will continue to be a problem.

The most basic solution for air pollution is to move away from fossil fuels, replacing them with alternative energies like solar, wind and geothermal. Producing clean energy is crucial. Equally important is to reduce our consumption of energy by adopting responsible habits and using more efficient devices.

I have campaigned for cleaner air legislation since getting elected in 2011 and have campaigned against waste incinerators which cause significant pollution. Low levels of nitrogen oxides in the air can irritate your eyes, nose, throat, and lungs, possibly causing you to cough and experience shortness of breath, tiredness, and nausea. Exposure to low levels can also result in fluid build-up in the lungs 1 or 2 days after exposure.

The main health effect of nitrogen dioxide is on the respiratory system. Inhalation of nitrogen dioxide by children increases their risk of respiratory infection and may lead to poorer lung function in later life. There is also an association between nitrogen dioxide concentrations in the air and increases in mortality and hospital admissions for respiratory disease. Nitrogen dioxide can decrease the lungs' defences against bacteria making them more susceptible to infection and can also aggravate asthma.

We need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, Nitrogen oxides emissions and clean our rivers and sea. We need to look after the planet for future generations.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse is a leading threat to humanity. The restoration of our natural world is essential for the services the complex ecosystems provide such as fresh water to drink and healthy soils for our food to grow.

In Wales, the loss of forests, the plundering of seas, and the pollution of land and rivers caused by human activity has led to the vanishing of around half of Wales animal and plant life.

An expert led 'Biodiversity Deep Dive' commissioned by Welsh Government to assess how nature recovery across land and sea can best be accelerated has set out its recommendations. In response, Welsh Government tripled its peatland restoration targets while promising further action to restore Wales's wildlife and plants.

To further address this problem, the recommendations centre around the United Nation's '30 by 30' goal, which aims to protect and effectively manage 30% of the planet's marine and 30% of the planet's land environment by 2030.

The Minister also announced the establishment of an independent expert working group to monitor Wales's progress against the targets.

The Biodiversity Deep Dive sets the following recommendations:

- Transform Wales's protected sites portfolio so that it is better, bigger, and more effectively connected so that plants and wildlife can travel and adapt to climate change.

- Create a network of Nature Recovery Exemplar Areas across a range of different semi-natural habitats and identify opportunities for Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures.
- Increase the footprint of the Marine Protected Areas network.
- Unlock the potential of designated landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) so they deliver more for nature.
- Ensure land and marine planning decisions consider biodiversity and that good decisions are incentivized.
- Build a solid foundation for future delivery through capacity building, behaviour change, awareness raising and skills development.
- Develop and adapt monitoring and evidence frameworks to measure progress against thirty by thirty.

The Biodiversity Deep Dive is aimed to help us to urgently rethink our relationship with the natural world and how to make the best choices which benefit us now and more importantly future generations.

I am pleased, we are tripling our peatlands restoration targets to boost our insect and bird life and bring security to our fresh water supply.

The United Nations has said that urgent action taken over the next decade will determine the seriousness of the climate and nature emergencies.

We cannot continue to lose species and certainly not at the rate we currently are. In Wales, 1 in 3 species are threatened with extinction and 51% of mammal species need urgent support. Formerly widespread in Wales, red squirrel and water vole are assessed as endangered and the hedgehog as vulnerable. Fifty-one percent of mammal species in Wales need urgent action for their survival.

For biodiversity we need equilibrium. We cannot afford to lose top end predators. If we lose top end predators, then animals lower down the food chain multiply massively as we have seen with rats. This also puts additional pressure on animals further down the food chain. We need to support top end predators to ensure equilibrium is maintained.

On rivers and the sea, we cannot continue to flood with untreated sewerage and agricultural pollution.

We have seen the growth of algae in the river Wye caused by agricultural pollution. The NRW undertook research prompted by excessive growth of algae, often caused by high phosphate levels in the water. Parts of the river turned green during sunny weather and when water flow was low, causing potential damage to ecosystems and biodiversity.

There is a need to clean up our rivers and fine polluters. The only way you are going to stop people polluting is when it starts hitting them in their pockets; otherwise, if polluters do not pay anything, and it does them no harm why would they stop.

Animal welfare

How we treat animals is a sign of the type of society we are and want to be. If we allow animals to be mistreated either via ignorance or cruelty, then it reflects badly on us as a society. We must remember that evidence from multiple scientific studies has helped us to understand that a wide range of animals are sentient beings. This means they have the capacity to experience positive and negative feelings such as pleasure, joy, pain, and distress.

Progress has been made in recent years, we have passed a law on wild animals in circuses, one on banning snares and it is now illegal for a commercial seller to sell a puppy or kitten they have not bred themselves at their own premises and they must ensure the mother is present. Puppies and kittens can only be purchased from where they were bred or from a rescue or rehoming centre.

Following a consultation, the Welsh Government has now confirmed that it will move forward by developing new regulations on CCTV in abattoirs. Making CCTV compulsory in abattoirs across Wales will help to protect and safeguard the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter.

Cats are roaming animals; that is why it is important to ensure that cats are microchipped in case they get lost or killed. Cats can be microchipped by most vets for between £20 and £30, and for those on lower incomes and means-tested benefits, additional support is available from charities such as the [Royal Society](#) for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and [Cats Protection](#), but still not all cats are being microchipped. The Welsh Government needs to act on compulsory microchipping of cats as a matter of urgency.

In June 2023, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain released its annual injury and retirement data. These new statistics show that 4,354 injuries were sustained at licensed tracks across England, while 244 racing greyhounds died in 2022 for reasons including the

cost of veterinary treatment, euthanasia at tracksides or after being designated unsuitable for rehoming. Wales only has one licensed greyhound track and I support the RSPCA call that greyhound racing should be phased out entirely, as the risk of death and injury posed to racing greyhounds has no place in a modern and compassionate Wales.

I want to highlight other issues relating to animal welfare and the need for codes of practice to be embedded in law and additional laws brought in to protect animals in Wales. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (“the Act”), if you own or are responsible for an animal, you have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to ensure its welfare needs are met.

Horses

I do not believe that horse owners set out to mistreat their horse but unfortunately ignorance can lead to suffering. It is important that horses are not left tethered for long periods of time.

The Welsh Government’s Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses notes that tethering is ‘not a suitable method of management of an animal,’ explicitly stating that ‘tethering should never be used as a long-term measure to control horses as this can lead to a failure to meet a horse’s basic welfare needs. However, in many instances, such statements are not acting as a deterrent to horses being tethered for long periods of time on areas with little grass, no shelter and little or no water which affects their welfare.

The prevalence of poor tethering practices in Wales suggests that the Code of Practice’s reference to this issue is not effective, and I have asked the Welsh Government to conduct a project to examine more stringent guidance, change in enforcement practices and a change in legislation to better discourage and deter long-term tethering of horses.

Rabbits

I believe before anyone is sold a rabbit, they should undertake a short online course on how to look after the rabbit culminating in an online test.

The law requires that you must take reasonable steps to ensure that it: has a suitable environment to live in; has a healthy diet; is able to behave normally; has appropriate company; and is protected from pain, suffering, injury, and disease.

Owning and caring for a rabbit is great fun and very rewarding, but it is also a big responsibility and a long-term caring and financial commitment, it is your responsibility to make sure that its needs are met, whatever the circumstances. The law requires that you must take reasonable steps to ensure that it: has a suitable environment to live in; has a healthy diet; is able to behave normally; has appropriate company; and is protected from pain, suffering, injury, and disease.

Primates

I am opposed to individuals keeping primates such as monkeys as pets but as a minimum I supports the creation of specific rules regarding the keeping of primates. Estimates suggest 120 primates are currently kept as pets in Wales. RSPCA Cymru has welcomed an announcement from the Welsh Government which could pave the way for major restrictions being placed on the keeping of primates as pets in Wales.

Under the new UK Government plans, primates may not be kept in England unless specifically authorised under licence - and owners will need to meet certain standards set by the Secretary of State in regulations, including the animals' environment, diet, accommodation, and meeting behavioural needs.

We need the Welsh Government implement a legally enforceable code, if we cannot ban their private ownership then we need a statutory code with tough penalties to protect monkeys that are kept as pets.

Conclusion

The Education section concludes that we need an expanded flying start and high-quality education throughout life through Further Education colleges and the importance of higher Education. Education offers an opportunity for a better life for individuals whilst also creating a more successful knowledge-based economy.

Regarding communications in Wales, it highlights the importance of electronic transportation via superfast broadband, the importance of the proposed metro systems and need to improve where feasible the A roads.

On the Environment it concludes there is an urgent need to cut Carbon dioxide emissions causing global warming. It further describes the importance of dealing with water, and air pollution. We need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, Nitrogen oxides emissions and clean our rivers and sea. We need to look after the planet for future generations.

With biodiversity it outlines the need for equilibrium in nature and the importance of top end predators. It further concludes that Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse is a leading threat to humanity. The restoration of our natural world is essential for the services the complex ecosystems provide such as fresh water to drink and healthy soils for our food to grow.

On animal welfare there is the need to respect them as sentient beings and highlights the importance of animal welfare. It calls for the microchipping of cats, further action on tethering horses' provision of training prior to purchasing a rabbit and strong legally enforceable code on the ownership of primates prior to the banning of individual ownership.