

Your Local Party

Local Government Manifesto

2012



Plaid
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2012 Plaid Cymru Local Government Manifesto Your Local Party

“Plaid Cymru is the only party committed to fighting for the future of Wales.”

We believe that through the collective strength and talents of our people we can achieve a prosperous, sustainable and just Wales. We will not stand back and let our communities be devastated by consecutive reckless UK governments and by the inaction of a do nothing Government in Wales.

Together we will fight for the **future of jobs in Wales**, through ensuring that councils:

Pump £1 billion extra into the Welsh economy by improving local procurement.

Provide grants and loans to fund business start-ups.

Provide paid apprenticeship, skills and training schemes – to support our young people.

Together, we will fight for the **future of our communities**, through ensuring that councils:

Campaign to save vital local services currently under threat from closure and centralisation.

Introduce schemes to allow local communities to benefit from the ownership and control of our natural resources.

Ensure that the housing needs of our communities are met by bringing empty properties back into use, investing in affordable housing and campaigning against over-development.

Together, we will fight for a **future for our young people**, through ensuring that councils:

Work tirelessly to ensure that all our children have the basic skills of literacy and numeracy so that they can reach their full potential.

Identify and support young carers to ensure their needs are met.

Support young families everywhere in Wales through parenting programmes which help to give children the best start in life.



Introduction

Plaid Cymru Councillors are community leaders who are elected to serve the interests of the people they represent, they are proud of their towns, villages and communities. They place this duty higher than any other consideration. This is what sets Plaid Cymru Councillors and candidates apart from the others.

Plaid Cymru is ambitious for Wales. Together we can make Wales more successful, and Plaid believes that independence is key to unlocking the potential of the nation. To achieve this aim we realise that each community in Wales needs the strength and sustainability to take us forward as a nation.

We know that people are facing difficult times, whether it's in trying to find a job, in struggling to pay the bills, or in seeking support services for vulnerable family members. Our communities are suffering due to the irresponsible actions of a small, greedy minority. Only Plaid Cymru is working hard to make Wales better for the majority.

Plaid Cymru will always be there for the people of Wales. Our Councillors are always there for the people they represent. Whether in government or opposition our Councillors work tirelessly to represent you and your family.

We also understand that your community is infinitely more important to you than any councillor or political party which is why Plaid believes in putting people first.

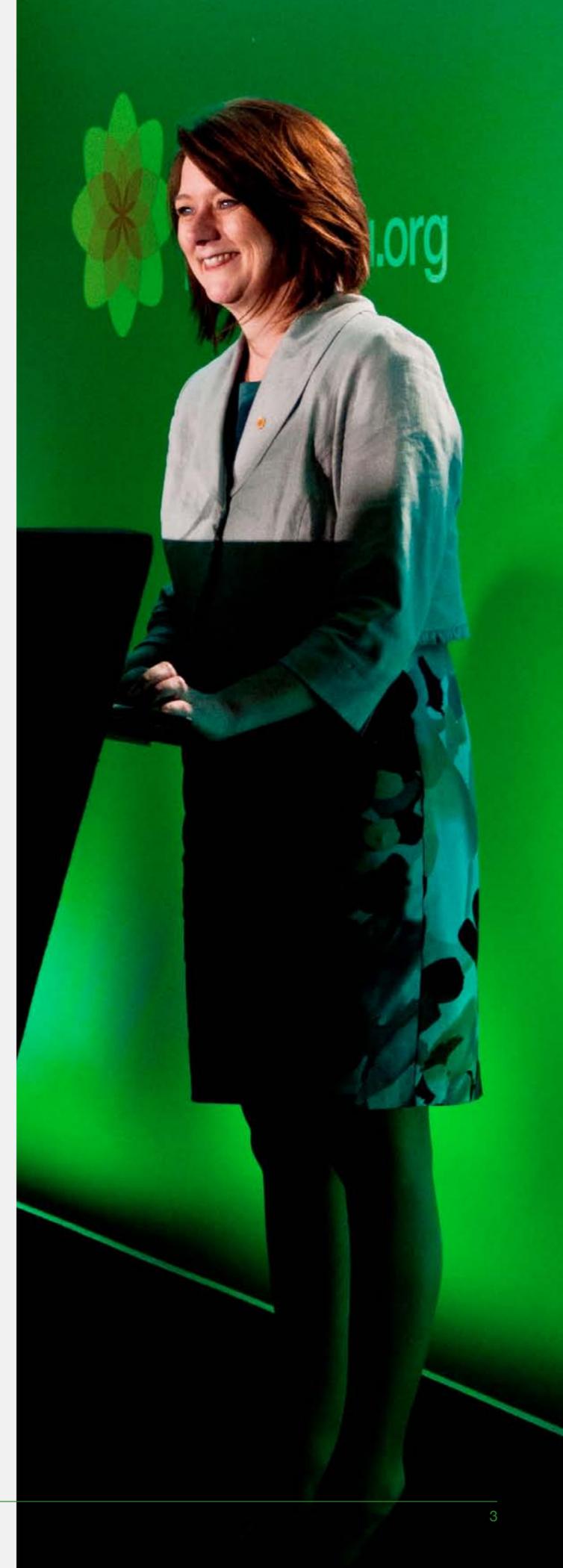
Plaid Cymru-run councils have led the way in supporting local economies. We have dealt with the Westminster-imposed cuts wisely to protect the most vulnerable. We are also doing everything in our power to make sure that our communities can move beyond "managing the cuts" and thrive in the future.

We are under no illusion about the challenges we face, but just as the goal of empowering our nation to stand on its own two feet is an ambitious one, we are also ambitious for the future of our local communities. We are proud that, thanks to our role in the Welsh Government, cuts to your council services are around half the size of those that are being made to services in England.

As a party we believe in local democracy – local leadership, local decision making, and community empowerment. For Plaid Cymru devolution does not end in Cardiff Bay, we believe our communities should be empowered to take responsibility for their own destinies.

This Manifesto provides an outline of the principles behind the decisions that we will implement on your behalf in local government. It also demonstrates our record – what we have been doing on your behalf throughout Wales and what we will continue to do for the sake of Welsh communities.

Our local Plaid Cymru teams will also share with you their vision, their record and introduce their local champions when they produce manifestos for your local community.



Our Local Economies: Just the Job for today and tomorrow's generation

Plaid Cymru's priority for the immediate future is the regeneration of the Welsh economy, put simply - to create jobs and to provide the necessary skills to rebuild our communities. For Wales to be able to stand on its own two feet we know that jobs must be created and protected – we must strengthen the economy and create prosperity.

We understand your frustration that so little is being done about this by governments in Wales and Westminster. This is why Plaid Cymru is pressing hard for both governments to take the problems facing the Welsh economy seriously. We believe that despite these tough financial times, so much more could be done in order to safeguard and support jobs in Wales if the money was spent properly.

When faced with the scale of the cuts imposed on Wales by the Westminster government we have a choice – either to do something to protect our society as Plaid advocates, or do nothing, which is what we've experienced from others. The evidence is clear to us that the approach of the others is flawed and they are allowing the cuts in public spending to have a negative impact on employment in both the public and private sector in Wales.

Small businesses are the backbone of our communities and of the wider Welsh economy. During Plaid Cymru's time in the Welsh Government we ensured that 50% of public sector contracts went to Welsh companies – companies on your doorstep who employ people in your local area. We want to increase that figure to 75% over the next four years. Plaid Cymru

will introduce procurement models that are accessible to smaller businesses, and provide social and environmental clauses to promote the sustainable development of our economy. Through this we will make local businesses work for local councils and local councils to work for you.

Public service bodies in Wales spend over £4bn each year on buying goods and services from suppliers, increasing the amount which goes to Welsh companies to 75% would equate to an additional £1bn per year staying in the Welsh economy. That is the equivalent of an extra £45 million investment in each and every local authority.

When it comes to doing business, Plaid understands that helping our small and medium sized firms now will make a real difference for the future. This is why Plaid in government ensured that around half of small businesses didn't pay business rates at all while many others had theirs significantly reduced. We know that our businesses are worried that under Labour this scheme will be scrapped. Plaid is pressing hard for business rate relief not only to be continued but to be extended to more firms over the next few years.

Plaid Cymru-run councils will support the regeneration of our Town Centres. Plaid Cymru has invested in town centres to help our towns compete with out of town developments in places such as Caernarfon, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Bargoed. Our Councils will also conduct "Shop Local" campaigns to encourage people to use local businesses.

Plaid Cymru-run councils will support the establishment of development trusts, social enterprises which regenerate out of use buildings in our towns and turn them into attractive business premises for local companies. Developments such as these have had a positive impact in Gwynedd, through the work of Cwmni Tref Caernarfon (now Galeri Caernarfon Cyf) an award winning social enterprise which the Plaid Cymru-run council helped found, and can have a positive impact throughout the whole of Wales.

Plaid Cymru-run Gwynedd Council has supported people in setting-up their own companies and social enterprises through the Get on in Gwynedd scheme. They have also introduced the first local loans fund in Wales to support local small and medium sized businesses who are unable to secure the necessary credit to grow. Gwynedd has also taken action to identify and support specific communities which face long-term employment problems through schemes such as the Meirionnydd Employment Plan which aims to support the rural economy with a comprehensive plan following the decommissioning of Trawsfynydd, a major employer in the area.

In Cardiff, Plaid Cymru has established "Capital Cardiff" - Wales's first venture capital fund. In our capital we are also developing the city through investing in key sectors and in the transport infrastructure in order to bring about economic growth.

In Caerphilly we've invested in creating new paid training schemes for young people, giving them the skills and confidence to enter the world of work. This scheme rolled-out across Wales

could help over 3,000 young people over the next three years. It is this kind of creative thinking and commitment to local economies that Plaid Cymru councillors bring to councils across the whole of Wales.

Plaid Cymru will continue to campaign for a wholesale reform of the Welsh planning system to encourage the development of a low carbon economy and new business growth, respond to local needs, and create sustainable and modern communities.

Plaid Cymru will also continue to campaign for the continuation of the business rates policy which we implemented during our time in the One Wales Government.

We will press the Welsh Government to review the current system to develop a business rates model which exempts crime-prevention measures and environmentally beneficial changes taken by small businesses from rateable value calculation, and we will introduce seasonality for businesses which rely on tourism. We will create a Welsh Valuation Office Agency. Rateable value assessments must be undertaken fairly to provide a level playing field for small businesses, rather than favouring the larger out-of-town developments as they do at present.



Our Children and Young People: Ambition and investment for a better future

Plaid wants to create new opportunities for people in all parts of our nation. We particularly want to give young people in Wales a fair chance to realise their potential rather than seeing their opportunities written off by others as a result of this recession. After all, the success of Wales will be built on the talent and skills of our people.

We know that you agree with us that youth unemployment in Wales is scandalously high, and the number of young people not in education, employment or training is simply unacceptable.

The measures we have outlined above – youth training schemes, grants for business start-ups, credit schemes for small businesses – when implemented by Plaid Cymru-run councils in other areas of Wales will help contribute to increasing employment opportunities for our young people.

Plaid Cymru-led Councils have been doing everything within their power to support our young people into the workplace or to provide the right training to make them ready for the world of work. It is also true that for too long our most talented young people have had to leave Wales in order to fulfil their potential.

Plaid Cymru in local government, and on a national level, supports young people to stay in their home communities if they wish to do so and create prosperity throughout Wales.

Plaid Cymru-run Councils are providing, and will continue to provide, opportunities for young people to succeed in their working life. For example, Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd ensure that all their main suppliers take on trainees or

upskill the workforce ensuring 30 apprenticeships already in the 1st year of the scheme.

Plaid Cymru wants to make the Welsh education system the success story of the next decade. We want more people to be able to fulfil their ambitions, to develop new skills and to nurture their talents. In our efforts to create a strong Wales, economically, socially, environmentally and culturally, our young people deserve the best education. The cause of securing independence will only be held back if our young people are not provided with the education they deserve to reach their full potential.

Plaid's priority will be to focus on improving poor education standards. Plaid wants to see illiteracy and innumeracy virtually eradicated in Wales, our aim is to halve illiteracy and innumeracy rates for children leaving primary school by 2016 and virtually eradicate the problem by 2020. We want to reverse the decline in education performance in Wales as highlighted by national and international surveys and research. Our councils will have a key role to play in this effort – through their support services they need to ensure our children are able to master the basic skills of reading, writing and counting.

It is important that as much funding is given to schools as possible. However, we also recognise that funds need to be held by councils in order to provide vital support services that schools could not afford to purchase on an individual basis, services such as speech and language therapy, educational psychology, school uniform grants and school transport.



“Together
we can make
Wales more
successful”



Caring for Vulnerable People: The *real* Respect Agenda

Plaid Cymru recognises that the barriers to a good education for our young people do not simply begin and end in the classroom. External factors have a significant impact on children. Plaid Cymru councils will ensure that breakfast clubs are maintained, these clubs not only allow young people to start the day ready to learn, they support parents who depend on this 'extra help' in order to stay in work.

Plaid Cymru councils will work hard to identify children who are carers for vulnerable people. We will make an assessment of their needs and provide them with the necessary support. No child should have to miss out on their education because they have to shoulder the responsibilities of care.

Plaid Councillors will look into the possibilities of offering parenting programmes similar to the The Incredible Years programme offered in Plaid Cymru-run Gwynedd, in local authorities across Wales in order to ensure that our children have the best start in life.

We will continue to support the development of the Foundation Phase in Wales. Plaid Cymru-run Councils will ensure that our children are educated in school buildings which are fit for 21st century learning.

Plaid Cymru will continue to oppose the marketisation of education. We reject the models of 'free' schools, 'foundation' schools and academies.

Our commitment to education is demonstrated by Plaid Cymru in Cardiff who have increased funding for the school-based budgets by over £3m in 2011/12. In Gwynedd Plaid Cymru is investing in new schools for our young people to ensure that they are educated in the right environment. In Cardiff, Caerphilly and Wrexham, our councillors have ensured that new Welsh medium schools have opened to meet parental demand.

We recognise there is still much work to be done to ensure that the required provision is met and also that pupils are able to progress along the linguistic continuum into further and higher education confidently through the medium of Welsh. Plaid Cymru-run councils will expand Gwynedd's Welsh Language Charter scheme to improve the way in which children perceive, learn and speak Welsh so that the language is not seen as something for use only in the classroom.

We believe that everyone in Wales has the right to a Welsh medium education. Plaid Cymru councillors will continue to fight the corner of Welsh medium education. Parental demand should be assessed and met by all local councils in Wales.

Plaid Cymru-run councils will make sure that leisure services for our young people are available to all. In rural areas we will develop a Youth Bus service, as Plaid has successfully introduced in Gwynedd, which provides young people with a place to socialise, relax and also receive education and skills services.

The most vulnerable people in society need our support to maintain their independence to the greatest possible extent. Caring for and supporting older people to stay in their homes, will reduce hospital admissions and save money for the health service. In the short term there needs to be closer collaboration between the NHS and social services. Plaid Cymru politicians at all levels will work towards this goal.

Plaid Cymru supports the sharing of budgets between Local Health Boards and social services to provide vulnerable people with proper support. This should be seen as mutually beneficial to the health service, social services and public service users.

Plaid Cymru believes in the principle of free social care which is paid for through general taxation. We know that you work hard through your lives and pay tax and national insurance so that you shouldn't have to spend your time worrying about your care, the care of your family members or someone in your community. We will implement this policy when Wales has the necessary powers and funding to do so.

In the meantime we will promote a mixed economy of care, preventing private sector monopolies, ensuring the retention of public sector provision where it still exists and encouraging re-provision where it has been lost, and promoting the participation of the Third Sector and community co-operatives in the provision of care.

In Conwy, the Plaid Cymru-led council is leading the way in providing Extra Care Housing for older people. Projects such as Hafan Gwydir and Hafod y Parc allow older people to live independently in individual apartments while also receiving all the support services they need as well as enjoying communal areas for socialising.

Plaid Cymru councils will create the conditions to allow looked after children to stay within their home counties. Plaid Cymru councils will follow the lead of Plaid Cymru in Conwy in improving the educational attainment of looked after children. Plaid Cymru councils will also prioritise identifying children who are carers and give them the support they need.

Plaid Cymru in Cardiff has increased the budget for social care for children by £2.1m as part of their wider efforts to prioritise children's services. This decision goes to the very heart of our principles as a party.

Plaid Cymru will continue in its campaign against the Labour Government's agenda of centralisation of health services. We know that your district general hospitals are important to you. We are committed to their continuation as providers of health services as close to people's homes as possible.



Sustainable Communities: Preserving and enhancing our 'built' and 'natural' environment

Sustainability is at the heart of Plaid Cymru policy. To build a better future for our nation we need to ensure that the communities of Wales are put on a sustainable footing economically, environmentally and socially.

Plaid Cymru in local government is implementing a range of policies and campaigning on issues to make sure that our communities can flourish in a sustainable way.

We will continue to honour the principle that everyone has a right to an affordable home as an owner, part-owner or as a tenant.

Plaid Cymru-run councils will make publicly owned land available for affordable housing. We will encourage people, by providing loans, to become self-builders and owners of their own homes without needing to cover the cost of the land. This builds on Plaid Cymru's success as part of the One Wales Government in releasing unused public land to provide affordable housing.

We will provide loans for first time buyers, expanding Plaid Cymru-led Conwy Council's local government mortgage scheme. This scheme will support young people who are struggling to find a mortgage on the open market to get a foot on the housing ladder.

Plaid Cymru councils will also bring empty houses back into circulation by offering grants and support to bring empty houses back up to scratch and ready to home people who are currently on the housing waiting list.

Plaid Cymru recognises the need to secure a sufficient supply of affordable housing but we will not support the adoption and implementation of any Local Development Plans (LDPs) which put the interests of developers ahead of the wishes of local communities. Your voice, your concerns and your needs matter to Plaid. That is why Plaid Cymru-run councils will work to provide affordable housing based on local need and campaign against any developments which undermine our communities.

Plaid Cymru, at all levels, will continue in its campaign to ensure that Wales receives the funding it deserves from its contributions to the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy Scheme. Under this scheme, funding from some of the poorest communities in Wales is re-directed to the UK Treasury, to the tune of £80m a year, which should be available to Welsh councils to provide social housing.

Plaid Cymru is committed to exploring different ways to make our communities, particularly rural communities with the unique challenges they face, sustainable in the delivery of services and employment opportunities. Plaid Cymru-run Councils will implement schemes such as Gwynedd's Sustainable Communities Project which provides grant funding to rural communities to develop ways of ensuring the long-term sustainability of an area through sharing community assets, exploring new methods of delivering services and developing opportunities to work.

Plaid will aim to make every community in Wales a safer place to live. Partnership and Communities Together (PACT) meetings provide a valuable forum for communities and their partners in the local and police authorities to resolve locally identified issues and create safer communities. Following the success of PACT meetings in a number of our communities, Plaid Councillors will campaign for similar meetings to be held in every ward in Wales. Consideration should also be given to establishing Youth PACT meetings.

Plaid will press for the transfer of responsibility and funding for the police and criminal justice system more generally to the National Assembly. As Wales develops its own distinctive body of law, Plaid will create a Welsh legal jurisdiction so that the administration of justice is tailored to the social and economic needs of Wales.

Plaid Cymru Councillors will work constructively with the police to support them as they face cuts to their budgets. Local Councils have powers over licensing. Plaid Cymru-run councils will take robust action against premises which act irresponsibly, serving alcohol illegally and causing anti-social behaviour.



A Greenprint for Wales: Empowering our people and our communities

Like you, Plaid Cymru recognises that climate change is the greatest threat facing humanity. We believe Wales must play its part in the global fight to ensure the planet remains habitable for future generations.

In Wales we are lucky that we have abundant natural resources which we can use to our advantage in order to help our economy and to produce clean energy. As a nationalist party we believe that the resources we have in Wales should be used for the benefit of our local communities. We need to harness our natural resources not only for the economic benefit of our communities but also to develop alternative energy sources as we work towards avoiding the costs and the challenges of peak oil.

We believe that all powers and revenues associated with existing resource taxes such as landfill tax should be transferred to Wales. The jobs created from the use of our natural resources would have a positive effect on the Welsh economy and the funding derived from our resources would improve our public services.

Developments for renewable energy and reducing waste need the support of local communities. Plaid Cymru favours a model of development which allows local people to take ownership of renewable energy projects in their communities, rather than feel their communities are being exploited by multinational corporations.

Plaid Cymru-run councils will encourage local renewable energy production projects and look into creating local energy service companies

as a radical means of reducing our carbon footprint. We will empower local communities to play their role in tackling climate change and reduce the fuel costs of citizens. We will encourage local ownership and control of renewable energy sources for our communities. Plaid Cymru Councils will agree a target with Dŵr Cymru to reduce surface water drainage input into the adopted sewerage network.

Plaid Cymru-run authorities have led the way in efforts to reduce waste and increase recycling. Plaid Cymru-run Caerphilly council now recycles or composts 53% of waste, with the local economy benefiting from the re-use of materials. We are committed to achieving the ambitious targets for recycling and composting waste. We will become a high-recycling nation by 2025 and a zero-waste nation by 2050. In doing this we will create more green jobs and skills as well as protect and enhance our natural environment.

Plaid Cymru-run local councils will produce their own Greenprints outlining how they will use the natural resources in their area to benefit the environment and local economies.

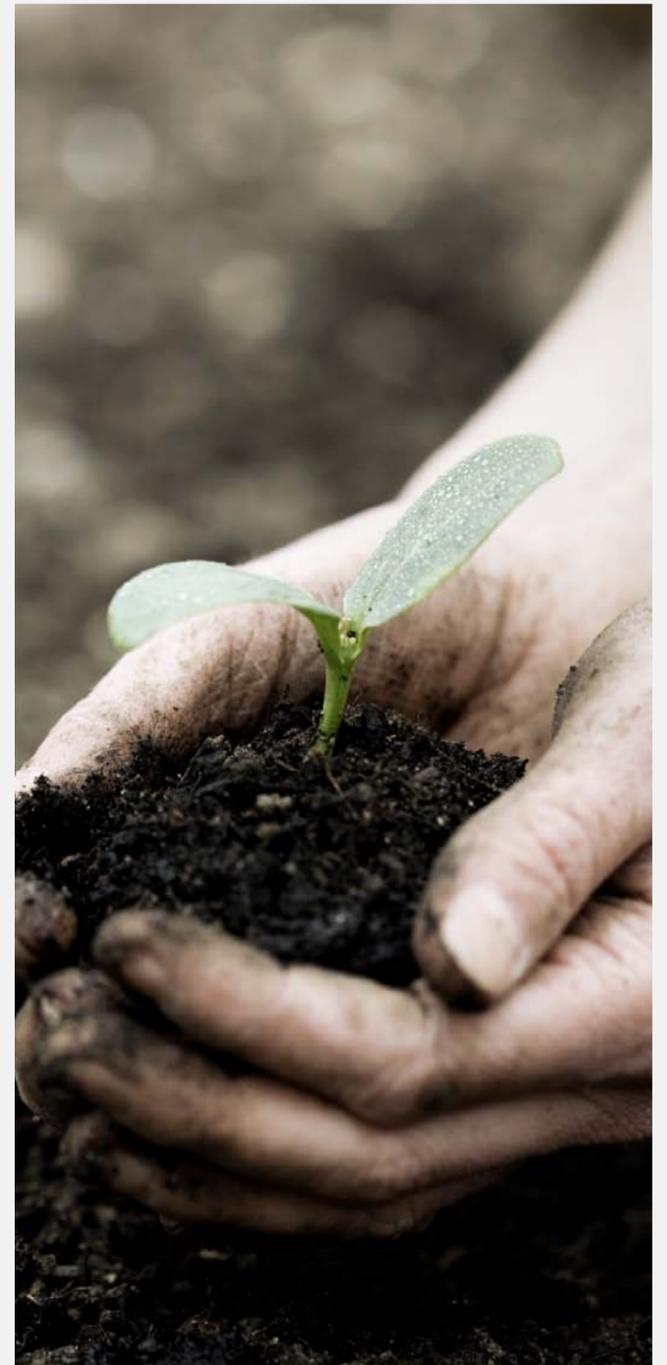
Adapting to a green and sustainable way of life can have an extremely positive impact on the economies of some of our most deprived communities in Wales. Plaid Cymru will introduce "People's Investment Funds" for low cost loans and grants to homeowners and start-up finance for green co-operatives or social enterprises. We will seek to fund this through the borrowing power of local government, EU funding, credit unions and the finance available from energy

providers as part of their climate change obligations. This funding will support people to improve energy efficiency in their homes, have greater access to healthy, affordable food and boost the local economy.

Plaid Cymru-run councils will ensure that small local businesses benefit from public sector contracts, building on our success in the One Wales Government, we will use clauses to provide local training opportunities, introducing environmental criteria and unbundling contracts to make them smaller, which will make local businesses more able to compete for contracts.

Active communities are vital for creating safer communities. Plaid-run councils will release publicly owned land for use as community gardens and allotments. By supporting and encouraging local growing, Plaid will be creating greener and healthier communities and turning unused land into prime food production sites.

Growing numbers of people are unable to afford food and energy to heat their homes, Plaid Cymru-run Councils will develop a series of measures to ensure that everyone has access to these basic commodities at affordable prices.





Connecting Wales: Making better transport & IT infrastructure engines of growth

The transport system in Wales is the main source of air pollution. Local councils have an important role to play in ensuring we have a transport system in Wales which meets our economic and social needs but also reduces our carbon emissions.

Plaid Cymru-run councils will build on Plaid Cymru's successes as part of the previous Welsh Government in ensuring that more money is spent on public transport than on road-building. In Cardiff, Plaid Cymru has more than doubled spending on cycle infrastructure, created new park and ride schemes and a bike hire scheme.

During our time in the Welsh Government, Plaid Cymru introduced the first ever National Transport Plan. Plaid Cymru's Transport Minister invested in projects to unite our nation and invested more on public transport. For the first time, more resources are now dedicated to integrated transport – rail, bus, walking, cycling, interchanges and real time information – than to roads alone.

We understand that making sure our communities are properly connected with each other is an important part of maintaining cohesive communities and of ensuring economic growth.

Plaid Cymru's Economic Renewal Programme made high-speed broadband for Wales a key priority. Plaid Cymru councillors across Wales will continue the campaign for major improvements in mobile phone coverage, broadband and wi-fi across Wales, including on public transport. We want to link every business and home to fast broadband and create wi-fi hotspots across the country to make Wales a truly Wireless Nation. Plaid Cymru Councils will create initiatives similar to "Digital Gwynedd" to ensure that people everywhere are able to make the most of broadband opportunities and highlighting the grants already available in areas where the connections are poor.

Democracy and Local Services: Believing that together we can make a difference

Plaid Cymru recognises that public services are coming under increasing strain as we face a period of financial constraint but also demographic changes within our society. We face the challenges of meeting the needs of an ageing population, chronic ill-health and poor educational attainment.

Plaid Cymru councillors recognise that collaboration between local authorities has an important part to play in providing high quality public services and in making efficiency savings. Plaid-run councils have taken a leading role in cross-boundary collaboration, for example, Prosiect Gwyrdd which runs across South East Wales is an ambitious project to deal with waste across 5 local authorities.

There's no doubt that the way services are delivered and organised locally is changing, but are you aware of how it effects your family and your community?

Plaid believes that it is time for an open and honest debate about how best to deliver services in the most effective, efficient and democratic way possible. We believe that the way this Welsh Labour Government is ignoring your voice in how you receive services in your community is wrong. They are rearranging local government through the back door with no consultation in an attempt to centralise power in the hands of one Minister. There may be a case for some changes but this should be done openly and honestly with full and proper consultation with local government, taxpayers and service users.

Plaid Cymru wants to see a Commission on the Governance of Wales established so that your voice is heard. The purpose of the commission would be to discuss openly the best way to deliver local services in Wales and how decision making and accountability can be strengthened, rather than eroded.

To ensure a genuine local democracy in Wales Plaid Cymru believes in the introduction of the Single Transferable Vote (STV) for local government elections in Wales, as is the case in Scotland, which would ensure that political representation reflects more proportionally the wishes of voters.

Plaid Cymru also supports the introduction of votes at 16 years of age. Our young people are citizens of Wales, receive public services in Wales, and are affected by the decisions elected politicians make on their behalf. We trust that our young people have the ability to make an informed choice at elections. We believe introducing votes at 16 would go some way towards restoring the reputation of the political system, make politicians listen to the concerns of younger people, and help strengthen Welsh civic society. It is today's young people who will shape the future of an independent Welsh nation, the sooner their voices are heard the better.



Paying for Services

In areas where Plaid Cymru holds power, the hard work, dedication and competence of our councillors has meant that we have been able to deal with the cuts in public spending in a fair and sensible way.

Unlike some Labour-run councils we have not threatened our valued public sector workers with being locked-out unless they accept a downgrading of terms and conditions. We have identified savings, cutting down on waste without taking such measures. We have managed changes to staffing levels thoughtfully by re-structuring at the top rather than cutting at the bottom. We have co-operated with neighbouring local authorities to deal with issues which we can solve better on a regional basis. Where possible we have kept council tax increases to a minimum, but this is not done at the expense of providing high quality services.

We will continue to work positively with trade unions to ensure that public sector workers are treated fairly and with the respect they deserve.

Through our role in the One Wales Government we made sure that the cuts faced by local councils in Wales were far less severe than in England.

Plaid Cymru believes that councils should have the freedom to charge up to 200% council tax on second homes and empty properties as a means of raising revenue and as an incentive to reduce the number of empty properties in Wales.

Plaid Cymru-run Councils will use the funding available from the new Local Government Borrowing Initiative to invest in transport infrastructure. We support the expansion of this initiative to other areas of local government expenditure and will use the funding prudently to invest in the future of our communities.

We will continue to fight for fair funding for our communities, and a replacement of the council tax with a local income tax which could have a significant, positive impact on our public services and our economy.

Our ambition for Wales is limitless, we believe in independence for our nation. In these local elections you have the choice to elect councillors who want to create strong, sustainable, thriving communities throughout Wales. A Wales that can take its rightful place in the world.

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