



YMGYRCH DIOGELU CYMRU WLEDIG
CAMPAIGN FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL WALES

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CPRW LAUNCHES TEN-POINT ELECTION MANIFESTO FOR RURAL REVIVAL

Tackling Climate Change, the Biodiversity emergency and ensuring change is properly supported for farming and rural communities must be a priority for political parties in May's Senedd election – says the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW).

The CPRW is today (13 April) launching a 10-point election manifesto and calling on all political parties and candidates to endorse its proposals to safeguard the environment.

A registered charity, for nearly a century, the CPRW has been championing the Welsh landscape and those who live and work in rural areas.

The CPRW 10-point plan* outlines action it believes should be taken to protect and enhance Wales' countryside and green spaces. Measures include:

- The appointment of a Welsh Landscape and Wildlife Commissioner.
- A post-Brexit system of support for medium and small farmers.
- Revitalising National Resources Wales.
- Practical and climate-friendly measures to improve rural transport.

CPRW's chairman, Jonathan Colchester, said, "It is two years since the Welsh and UK Governments declared Climate Change and Biodiversity as emergencies. But the steps to address them are overdue.

"The past year has been turbulent for all who live in Wales. Still, as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic and meet the obligations of Brexit, we cannot forget the responsibilities we have to protect and re-build rural Wales for this generation and those to come.

"Now more than ever, we need to protect our countryside and rural communities. We must acknowledge the contribution of those who are not only custodians of our countryside, but who put the food on our plates."

CPRW chief executive, Jon Parker, said, “Protecting the environment and Wales’ natural inheritance should be uppermost in politicians’ minds. Indeed, one of the areas that Covid-19 has highlighted is the vulnerability of our planet. Therefore, the welfare of the environment and sustainability of Wales’ countryside and food production system must be addressed urgently by politicians from all sides of the political spectrum.”

Mr Colchester said, “Improving Wales’ social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being is enshrined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

“Therefore, Wales needs to have a Government, and local authorities that value and protect our natural environment whatever the location – rural and urban, scenic and sensitive – if we are to meet those obligations for the benefit of all our futures.”

Ends.

NOTES TO EDITORS

***CPRW MANIFESTO ACTION POINTS:**

1. The appointment of a Welsh Landscape and Wildlife Commissioner.

Such an appointment would give a new and permanent focus in Government to protect our irreplaceable natural assets. The Commissioner would provide advice to Government and Local Authorities while holding powers of last resort to prevent threats to the natural environment. The Commissioner should also have a key role in leading actions to combat the Biodiversity Emergency and reverse habitat loss.

2. Introduce a post-Brexit system of support for medium and small farmers, which rewards their crucial role in producing healthy, local food and protecting nature and landscape.

The market alone will not sustain rural communities, leaving small farmers too vulnerable to supermarkets and developers’ pressure. We must find ways to make farming genuinely sustainable and resilient throughout Wales.

3. A new system of countryside grants for small-scale enterprises to promote conservation and sustainable tourism in rural and urban fringe areas in Wales.

These could be piloted in different areas to test the scope, take-up and organisation. Local Authorities should be trusted to run the schemes under a broad national framework.

4. A Welsh Government programme to enhance and extend Areas Protected for Nature in Wales.

This programme would have twin components. First, a review within six months of all existing National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in Wales. This review should identify the current condition of nature protection and accelerate steps required to restore and enhance their biodiversity, to meet national 30% targets of land and sea protected for nature by 2030. Secondly, the selection of new areas requiring more statutory protection and resources to help meet those targets. Strong candidates are the Gwent Levels, Cambrian Mountains and Radnor Forest.

5. Revitalising Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

NRW is an overstretched agency attempting too wide a range of tasks with too few resources. It should be reformed by separating some of its duties. A strong Wildlife and Landscape Conservation Agency should be created, and the administration of National Parks and AONBs should stand alone.

6. Action to save our rivers and seas from pollution.

CPRW seeks a holistic approach to river, estuary, inter-tidal and marine pollution. Changes in agriculture and increasing pressures from the domestic and industrial sectors have increased emissions, effluent, erosion and environmental degradation. NRW figures show that 2/3 of our most protected stretches of river are failing. All contributors to pollution should become stakeholders in securing improvements by consensus, using collaborative approaches alongside regulation, monitoring and enforcement. An inclusive Welsh task force on freshwater and marine pollution should harness all available expertise, including the best science, to produce an action plan with specific targets.

7. Stronger powers for local authorities to enforce protection of open green spaces, wildlife, rural landscape and agricultural land.

In particular Local Authorities must have the means to enforce the conditions on new development, which are supposed to be a key part of our planning system. At present, it is clear that many conditions are inadequately monitored, leading to patchy implementation and enforcement. Through the new regional and local development plans, Local Authorities should be required to insist on a 21st-century principle of mixed-use development to reduce commuting, protect the countryside and create sustainable communities. Also, more Green Belts should be created across Wales.

8. A firm Welsh Government commitment to a balanced programme of renewable energy with more emphasis on offshore generation.

Future Wales needs to be complemented by a full-blooded Welsh Marine energy programme to ensure tidal and wind energy contribute the majority of our energy to meet our Net Zero carbon targets and for export. Terrestrial renewable energy must use the right technology in the right places, using brownfield sites, minimising impacts on landscape, and completely avoiding all adverse impacts on National Parks, AONBs and SSSIs, and their settings.

9. A specific Welsh Government-led programme of measures to tackle the damage of existing and immediate climate impacts.

This programme has to run alongside measures such as renewable energy targets, which will slow down climate change. Improved protection against flooding by inland rivers, coastal flooding & erosion, and habitat loss is essential to saving lives and property in rural and urban areas. This protection should be matched by actively improving the ability of natural ecosystems to absorb environmental pressures.

10. Practical and climate-friendly measures to improve rural transport.

These measures should include an emphasis on electrified public and private transport and extra infrastructure for cycling and walking. The Welsh Government should secure full devolution of train services in Wales to provide resources for improving both urban and rural rail infrastructure, including new stations.

PHOTO CAPTION: Jon Parker, chief executive of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales.

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