

## Priorities for the Sixth Senedd: August 2021

### Welcome to this quarter's Welsh Conservative Policy Forum consultation

As we start a new five year term of the Welsh Parliament, we're asking "What are the priorities for the Sixth Senedd?"

You can either complete the consultation using the response document or online at [www.conservatives.wales/cpf](http://www.conservatives.wales/cpf). If time is short, take a look at the 'One-Minute' survey online at [www.conservatives.wales/one-minute](http://www.conservatives.wales/one-minute). Below is a short briefing on some of the key areas but please do read around or give us your personal thoughts and experiences.

If you need any support please do email [dc.political@welshconservatives.com](mailto:dc.political@welshconservatives.com) or call 02920 736562.

**Clr Sam Rowlands MS**  
**Deputy Chairman Political – Welsh Conservatives**

### Overview

Following the Senedd Cymru-Welsh Parliament elections in May this year, the Welsh Labour Government has published their "Programme for Government" for what they want to achieve over the next five years, including legislation they are looking to introduce.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the issues that have been affecting Wales after 22 years of Labour rule, and sadly, has now exacerbated Labour's failings. Before the pandemic, waiting lists in Wales doubled in the year before Covid-19, now 1 in 5 people in Wales are on a waiting list.

This consultation will focus on the Welsh Conservative priorities for the Sixth Senedd, and how we can rebuild Wales and kickstart Wales' recovery.

The consultation will close at midnight on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2021. You can submit your responses online at [www.conservatives.wales/cpf](http://www.conservatives.wales/cpf) or email [dc.political@welshconservatives.com](mailto:dc.political@welshconservatives.com)

### Consultation Questions

Using the consultation response document answer the questions below or complete online at [www.conservatives.wales/cpf-august-2021](http://www.conservatives.wales/cpf-august-2021)

**Question 1:**

What do you think are the top priorities the Welsh Conservatives should campaign on over the next five years?

**Question 2:**

How would you tackle your top three issues, aside from Covid-19, impacting Wales at the moment?

**Question 3:**

What action would you take to deliver better health outcomes in Wales?

**Question 4:**

What changes would you implement to ensure that Local Government is able to deliver effectively for local communities?

**Question 5:**

How would you reduce carbon emissions in Wales by 2050? What are the issues that may prevent Wales from achieving this?

## Briefing: What are the priorities for the Sixth Senedd?

### Welsh Government priorities

In their Programme for Government the Welsh Government has outlined almost 100 specific areas of activity, whilst also promising to take swift action in the pledges made in their manifesto for the 2021 election. The Welsh Government state that their policies are “founded on the distinctively Welsh values of community, equality and social justice” putting “collaboration ahead of competition, showing how we will act to maximise fairness for all and eliminate inequality”.

Alongside the Programme for Government, the Welsh Government announced its legislative programme with five new bills which will be introduced from the autumn. These bills include:

- Introducing a new system for post-16 education and training
- An Agriculture Bill creating a new system of farm payments, rewarding farmers for their response to the climate and nature emergencies, as well as supporting them to produce Welsh food in a sustainable way
- The Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill to ensure the fair work rights of employees and more socially responsible public procurement
- A tax bill to enable changes to devolved taxes, responding quickly to unexpected events
- Making the law in Wales more accessible through a consolidation Bill, bringing together a mass of old, complicated legislation relating to listed building and the historic environment, into one single bill.

### The challenges facing Wales in:

#### Health and Social Care

Before the pandemic, the Welsh NHS was under immense pressure with the pandemic only making the situation worse. Latest figures show that 1 in 4 patients in Wales are waiting more than 52 weeks for treatment, compared to 1 in 16 patients in England, and the median wait for treatment being nearly 24 weeks. The Welsh Government target for cancer waiting times has not been met since 2008 and the target of 95% of patients waiting fewer than 26 weeks hasn't been met for 11 years.

Whilst the majority of patients spend less than 4 hours in A&E (70.6% ), this is 4% fewer people before the pandemic, nearly 6,000 people each month wait more than 12 hours for treatment. Shockingly, older patients have a substantial longer wait with those aged 85+ waiting on average for 5 hours and 50 minutes in A&E.

In June 2021, 60.6% of emergency responses to life threatening red ambulance calls arrived within 8 minutes, down ten points compared to June 2020 and June 2019. The Welsh Government target of 65% for red calls has never been met.

#### Education

Schools in Wales have often lost out on much-needed funding, holding back their ability to deliver a first-class education. The most recent statistics show that funding per pupil in Wales was around £6,017 in 2018/19, which is around 6% lower compared to its most recent high-point in 2009/10.

Pre-pandemic, Wales' GCSE results in 2019 – whilst better than in 2018 – were worse than in 2007. Overall passes (A\*-C) were 62.4% compared to 63% in 2007.

Meanwhile, the number of teachers employed in Wales has fallen year-on-year since 2010, resulting in a 9.6% drop between 2010 and 2020, a decrease of over 3,000 teachers. 6.5% of high school teaching posts were vacant in 2018/2019.

#### Economy and Housing

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the issues facing the Welsh economy, where Wales is one of the least productive places in the UK, and has the lowest Gross Value Added (GVA). The average weekly wage in Wales (£537.80) is over £47 lower than the UK average (£585.50). Wales also has the highest number of young people not in education, training, or employment in the UK (14.9% of 19 to 24 year olds), hindering their ability to reach their potential.

The Welsh tourism industry has been hamstrung by the pandemic. There were 59 million visitor days in 2020, a reduction of 100 million visitor days compared to 2019. The tourism sector in North Wales took the biggest hit, with a £2.17 billion reduction, compared with £790 million in Mid Wales; £1.1 billion in South West Wales; £1.87 billion in South East Wales.

Recent statistics show that only around 9,000 social homes were built between 2010 and 2019, with 67,000 people languishing on a social housing waiting list. Furthermore, the number of new homes built in 2018/19, a third lower than in 1999/2000.

### **Local Government**

Between 1999/2000 and 2021/22, the average council tax charge in Wales has increased by around 188%. In 2020/21, the average council tax charge is £1,731, an increase of £49 - or 3.5% - compared to the previous year.

The local government funding formula has consistently showed biases towards urban, Labour-run councils in South Wales. In the 2021/22 local government settlement, councils in North Wales received an average increase in their settlement of 2.75%, compared to an average increase of 4.2% for councils in South Wales East, and 4.1% for councils in South Wales Central and South Wales West.

Communities often feel shut-out from local decision-making. Research by the Welsh Parliament's Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee found that 70% of people surveyed either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they "feel able to influence decisions made by the council". An additional 56% of respondents stated that a main barrier to engaging with the council was that they did not think their "views will make any difference".

### **Environment and Climate Change**

Despite declaring a 'climate emergency' in 2019, Wales is lagging behind in reaching the Welsh Government's target of net zero by 2050, missing the interim target of 40% by 2020, with latest figures showing Wales reached 31% in 2018.

The Welsh Government are also failing to meet their tree planting targets, delivering only 4% of their 2,000 hectares a year target in 2019/20.

Whilst promising to introduce a Clean Air Act before the end of March 2021, it is unlikely that a bill will be brought forward until 2022 at the earliest. Air pollution and poor air quality in Wales is responsible for over 13,000 lost life-years, costing the Welsh NHS £1 billion a year.

Instead of working to solve the climate emergency, the Welsh Government has attacked rural Wales introducing a damaging all-Wales Nitrate Vulnerable Zone and despite endless consultations has no plans for a revised basic payment scheme for farmers, now that we've left the European Union.

## **Websites for further information**

**Welsh Government Programme for Government**

<https://gov.wales/programme-government>

**Welsh Government legislative programme**

<https://gov.wales/welsh-governments-legislative-programme-announced>

**Welsh Conservative Manifesto 2021 "A Plan for Recovery and Change"**

<https://www.conservatives.wales/plan-recovery-and-change>

**Welsh Labour Manifesto 2021 "Moving Wales Forward"**

[https://movingforward.wales/documents/WEB-14542\\_21-Welsh-Labour-Manifesto\\_A5.pdf](https://movingforward.wales/documents/WEB-14542_21-Welsh-Labour-Manifesto_A5.pdf)

**Senedd Research: Key issues for the Sixth Senedd**

<https://senedd.wales/media/eovoht1d/key-issues-for-the-sixth-senedd.pdf>

**StatsWales:** Welsh Government statistics website

<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue>

**Gwydir:** Conservative blogsite focusing on Welsh politics

<https://qwydir.wales/>