Welsh Conservatives | Ceidwadwyr Cymreig

OUR PLAN FOR RURAL WALES

SENEDD ELECTION 2026

#GETWALESWORKING #FIXWALES

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FOREWORD

Rural Wales is at the heart of our nation's identity. It is where our food is produced, our language is sustained, and our traditions are lived and passed on from generation to generation. Yet for too long, rural communities have felt overlooked, burdened by unnecessary regulation, and disconnected from the opportunities they need to thrive.

This manifesto sets out the Welsh Conservatives' clear and practical plan to put rural Wales first.

We will back our farmers with meaningful investment and a renewed focus on food security and productivity. We will support rural communities by protecting local services, improving infrastructure, and strengthening connectivity. We will champion a thriving rural economy that supports enterprise, tourism, and innovation, while taking a balanced approach to environmental stewardship that works with, not against, those who manage our land.

Above all, we recognise that rural Wales is not a problem to be managed, but a strength to be supported.

This is a programme rooted in respect for our countryside, confidence in our communities, and a determination to secure a sustainable and prosperous future for rural Wales.

Darren Millar
Leader of the Welsh Conservatives

Samuel Kurtz
Ceredigion Penfro candidate

RURAL AFFAIRS POLICIES

A **WELSH CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT** WILL:

AGRICULTURE AND **FOOD SECURITY**

Welsh agriculture is the backbone of our rural economy, culture, and communities. We will ensure it remains productive, profitable, and sustainable for future generations.

- Invest an additional £100 million into the agriculture budget over the next Senedd term to strengthen farm viability and rural growth.
- Axe Labour and Plaid Cymru's Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS), replacing with a whole-farm scheme that ensures food security and agricultural productivity are at its core.
- Take decisive and science-led action to eradicate Bovine TB in both livestock and wildlife, while continuing to support the TB eradication projects in Pembrokeshire and North Wales
- Increase the proportion of Welsh food and drink served in public institutions, including schools and hospitals.
- Replace the all-Wales Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) 'farming by calendar' approach with a targeted, catchment-based system that reflects local environmental conditions.
- Continue to oppose and campaign against the Family Farm Tax, protecting the future of generational farming businesses.

SUPPORTING RURAL COMMUNITIES

Strong rural communities are vital to Wales' identity and economic resilience. We will support local services, young people, and community life.

- Abolish business rates for rural pubs and post offices, safeguarding essential community hubs.
- Work with local authorities to expand access to free parking in town centres, supporting local businesses and high streets.
- Take decisive action to eliminate mobile signal blackspots and improve broadband connectivity in rural areas.
- Support Wales Young Farmers' Clubs (YFC), recognising their vital role in youth development, skills, and the Welsh language.
- Secure more banking hubs in rural communities where high street banks have closed.

A STRONGER RURAL ECONOMY

We will champion a thriving rural economy that supports farmers, food producers, and local enterprises.

- Introduce a Food (Wales) Bill, delivering a 'Farm to Fork' strategy to strengthen local supply chains and promote Welsh produce.
- Transform Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC) into a farmer owned, levy payer led organisation, with greater industry involvement, including processors.
- Establish an independent review group to assess the cumulative impact of regulation on Welsh farming and reduce unnecessary burdens.
- Introduce a Community Ownership Fund to support the purchase and protection of valued local assets, including libraries, pubs, leisure centres, and green spaces.
- Support the adoption of precision breeding technologies to enhance productivity and climate-friendly food production.
- Abolish the Agricultural Advisory Panel to streamline governance and reduce bureaucracy.
- Commit to an index-linked farm support budget within a five-year financial framework to provide certainty for farmers.
- Provide public recognition of the importance of sustainable shooting and practical conservation, including its contribution to the rural economy, health and wellbeing, food production, heritage, culture, and community life.
- Introduce a more flexible planning approach to allow on-farm permitted development for accommodation and diversification.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND REGULATION

We will deliver a balanced approach that protects our natural environment while supporting those who live and work within it.

- Replace Natural Resources Wales (NRW) with an independent, efficient, and fit-for-purpose environmental regulator.
- Take robust action to clean up rivers, improve bathing water quality, and deploy modern monitoring technologies.
- Establish a £20 million Wildlife Wales Fund to support conservation and biodiversity across Wales.
- Acknowledge that sustainable shooting, when responsibly managed, delivers clear environmental and conservation benefits and represents a significant yet underutilised tool in addressing the biodiversity crisis.
- Commit to working with stakeholders to ensure wildlife management practices support biodiversity recovery alongside rural livelihoods.
- Develop and deliver species action plans to protect unique crops, woodland, forestry, and native flora and fauna.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY

Charge We will ensure infrastructure development respects the Welsh landscape while supporting economic growth.

- Introduce a moratorium on industrial-scale solar and wind developments to protect the countryside from inappropriate large-scale projects.
- Adopt a ‘bury cables first’ approach to new infrastructure in rural areas to minimise visual impact.

FLOODING AND RESILIENCE

Flooding presents a growing risk to rural communities. We will act decisively to improve preparedness and resilience.

- Establish a National Flood Agency to coordinate flood risk management and ensure timely, independent reviews following major incidents.
- Introduce ‘Blue Belt’ designations in high-risk areas to prevent inappropriate development on flood-prone land.
- Conduct an urgent, risk-based national assessment of flood defences and vulnerabilities across Wales.
- Invest in modern flood defence infrastructure to protect homes, businesses, and transport networks.
- Provide riparian owners with access to advice and expertise to manage their responsibilities and reduce flood risk.

TOURISM AND MARKET TOWNS

Tourism is a vital part of the rural economy. We will support sustainable growth and regeneration in our coastal and market towns.

- Scrap the Tourism Tax introduced by the Welsh Government.
- Reduce the 182-day threshold for holiday lets to 105 days.
- Review permitted development rights in relation to tourism enterprises.
- Pilot a reduced 5% rate of VAT on tourism accommodation.
- Develop a Growth Strategy for Tourism in Wales.
- Establish a Market Towns Fund to support regeneration and improve the appearance of tourism-dependent communities.
- Introduce free weekend parking zones in seaside resorts.
- Develop action plans to promote tourism linked to Welsh religious heritage, film and television locations, and genealogy.
- Work with the Canal and River Trust to secure the long-term future of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal.

WELSH LANGUAGE, HERITAGE AND RURAL IDENTITY

Our language, heritage, and traditions are central to rural life in Wales. We will protect and promote them for future generations.

- Develop and promote opportunities for faith-based tourism, including strategies for sacred sites, historic chapels, churches, and pilgrimage routes.
- Establish a community right to bid for ownership of heritage assets and libraries threatened with closure.
- Create an 'Access to Welsh' Fund to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, can learn Welsh free of charge.
- Ensure that the impact on the Welsh language is considered as part of the planning process for all significant developments.
- Develop a network of Welsh Language Business Champions to promote the use of Welsh in the economy.
- Protect and promote horse racing as an important rural industry, cultural tradition, and contributor to the rural economy.

CONCLUSION

The Welsh Conservatives are committed to delivering a prosperous, resilient, and sustainable future for rural Wales. This manifesto sets out a clear plan to support our farmers, strengthen our communities, protect our environment, and drive long-term economic growth.