



Friends of the Earth Pembrookeshire Cyfeillion y ddaear Sir Benfro

Questions for candidates – Senedd elections 2021

Climate

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stated that the world must act decisively on climate change by 2030 in order to avoid disastrous runaway climate change. Wales has made progress in reducing emissions with the UK Committee on Climate Change recently stating that Welsh territorial emissions in 2018 were 31% below 1990 levels. Much more needs to be done, however.

Would you support the updating of Wales’s carbon reduction pathway to be consistent with the aim of being a globally responsible Wales and reaching net zero well before 2045?

Jobs

The economy in every part of Wales has suffered because of the COVID-19 pandemic. A recovery plan is needed to rebuild economies and livelihoods, but it is also important that such a plan addresses the climate and ecological emergencies and does not exacerbate them.

The Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA) has for instance identified that investing around £5 billion in energy efficiency measures for 870,000 homes would deliver work equal to around 10,000 full time jobs annually over the next 15 years. A further 5,000 jobs could be generated by developing renewable energy, if Wales were to aim to supply all its energy needs through renewable energy by 2035.

It is equally important that those currently employed in carbon intensive industries be given the training and opportunity to take up new jobs of equal skill and pay in a “just transition”.

Would you support a COVID-19 recovery plan that focuses on building the green economy of the future (e.g., renewable energy, energy efficiency and low-carbon heating, forestry, etc)?

For the young people aged 16 and 17 who are voting for the first time, where do you see their education and employment opportunities in the green economy in west Wales?

Nature

With total woodland in Wales being only 15% compared to an EU average of 38% and with the UK being one of the world’s biggest importers of trees and tree products, some of which is from areas high in biodiversity, the need for more tree cover in Wales to enhance biodiversity, drawdown carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and reduce imported timber is apparent.

Would you commit to supporting an official target in Wales of creating 100,000 hectares of new woodland in Wales by 2030?

Transport

The transport sector is a high-level source of both air pollution and climate emissions (around 16% of Wales's emissions). It is also a social cohesion issue with official figures suggesting that in the UK, 50% of the lowest income households do not have access to a car and the proportion of women who do not have access to a car is double that of men. Achieving a move away from car use would include the use of fiscal measures (e.g., road user charging, payroll taxes) as well as incentives (such as free bus travel, reduced train fares, or grants for e-bikes).

Would you support doubling the proportion of journeys made by walking, cycling and public transport by 2030?

Food and farming

Farming is an important economic sector for the Welsh economy and is culturally tied into Wales's DNA. With almost 90% of land in Wales being farmland, how this is farmed has a very significant impact on all aspects of environmental performance. In many cases, current farming practices are not sustainable enough and farmers need to be supported to transition to more sustainable farming methods, as well as supported to diversify (for example, through increasing Welsh timber production).

To help the Welsh economy and sustainability of farming, food production and consumption should be kept local as much as possible and there should be a strong emphasis on this in all public sector procurement. The long-distance international import and export of foods that can be grown in Wales makes no sense environmentally and is not resilient to international supply chain breakages.

Would you support a Welsh farming strategy that is focused on the production of high-quality food that protects and restores nature, contributes to carbon emissions reductions and sequestration, and supports farmers, including tenant farmers, to diversify farm incomes?

Would you also support the notion that all public procurement of food should prioritise the purchase of Welsh-produced food, as local as possible, and the meeting of healthy eating standards, which require a significant reduction of meat and dairy consumption?

Energy

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) has said that the most affordable way for the UK to power itself is through 90% renewable energy, backed up by hydrogen for when the sun isn't shining or wind blowing. Renewable energy is now much cheaper, faster to build, and cleaner than nuclear power or fossil fuels.

Wales, like the rest of the UK, needs to generate much more renewable energy and also much more rapidly. The IWA has suggested that Wales could be self-sufficient in energy using renewable energy by 2035.

Would you support a target for 100% of Wales's electricity demand to be met by renewable energy generated in Wales by 2035, including through community-owned renewable energy capacity?