



make a **difference!**

National Assembly Election Manifesto 2007







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It's time to make a difference

2007 is the year to move our nation forward. To build a real national movement for the whole country and for the future. To make real progress for the people of Wales. A time to make a difference.

This manifesto offers a bold vision of the nation that Wales can be. It offers an exciting, innovative and achievable agenda for Wales.

The ideas here address the most pressing problems we face as a nation: rising debt and the lack of housing, the crisis of climate change, poor access to health care and the low-wage economy.

When I was first elected to the National Assembly we were a nation united by a new hope. Today we have become divided, disappointed and desperate for a new direction.

Now is the time for that new direction - a time to build the kind of Wales we want – universal childcare, laptops for our children, new help with student debt, a first-time buyer's grant and the biggest energy saving plan in the whole of Europe - stopping the hospital closure programme, and capping and then scrapping the council tax and care charges for the elderly. New ideas for a new era.

In all our history as a nation men and women have dreamed of a brighter future. Now we have the power to begin to deliver it.

Let's honour the hope of all the years, and put our faith now in our future. Vote Plaid Twice on May 3rd and together we can make a difference.

IEUAN WYN JONES
Leader, Plaid Cymru



Seven for '07

The priorities for a Plaid government,
our promises to the people of Wales,
firm foundations for our shared future.





Help us create a cleaner environment
for him to grow up in

1

Saving Wales - the energy plan

In facing the global challenge of climate change, saving energy is easier than finding more. Energy conservation and efficiency is the biggest, cheapest, quickest and most practical way of cutting back on greenhouse gas emissions. **Less really is more** environmentally-friendly and cost-effective for consumers and business alike.

A Plaid Government will cut energy use by 10% – saving you money and saving the environment.

To help meet our target of a 3% a year reduction in CO₂ emissions we will create a national Energy Saving Plan with non-means tested energy efficiency grants of up to 50% of the costs of insulation – with more available for low-income groups and the elderly and in disadvantaged areas.





Plaid will ensure affordable childcare for ALL

2

Universal Affordable Childcare

Our children are our future. Good childcare is vital for our children, important for parents and essential for the economy. Current childcare provision in Wales is expensive and patchy. Indeed it is practically non-existent in some areas.

A Plaid Government will provide affordable childcare in every community.

In the first four years of a Plaid Government, funding for childcare will be nearly doubled to £100m per annum as a first step towards ensuring universal affordable childcare for all children post-maternity leave.





Bringing education into the 21st Century

3

One laptop per child

We need to give our children the tools for success in the twenty first century. The laptop is today's equivalent of the pencil. We owe it to our children to make available to them the medium of our time.

A Plaid Government will give all eleven-year-olds their own laptops for learning.

By giving a laptop to every child, with the latest educational software, for their entire time in secondary school, we can make Wales the most knowledge-rich nation in the world.





Freeing our young people from the burden of debt

4

Stamp out student debt

The young people of Wales deserve a better chance in life and the security to succeed. One of the biggest barriers they face is student debt.

A Plaid Government will help reduce the debt burden of graduates who live and work in Wales.

A Plaid Government will support students who graduate from Welsh Universities and Colleges and work in Wales for five years by paying their student loan repayments during that period. We will continue to rule out top-up fees at Welsh Universities. By doing this we can help create a generation that is forward looking and confident.





Plaid can't reduce house prices but we CAN help you AFFORD them

5

First home grants

The average property in Wales costs more than six times the average annual Welsh salary. As a consequence the number of people able to buy their own homes has fallen by 20% over the last year.

A Plaid Government will introduce a first home grant to help people with the cost of buying their first home.

To help first time buyers get a foothold on the property ladder a Plaid Government will offer grants of up to £5,000, on a £ for £ match funded basis, to all first time buyers who save for three years in a government-supported scheme.





Plaid will reduce business taxes and kick start our economy

6

Business tax cuts

Without a strong economy we cannot achieve the kind of society we want to create. Business throughout Wales needs to be encouraged to invest in order to expand and create more jobs.

A Plaid Government will slash the business tax burden on small and medium businesses.

To help successful companies invest in their future, we will reduce business rates by up to a half and seek to offer a corporation tax rebate of up to a third in West Wales and the Valleys. Targeted tax cuts will kick-start business growth and transform the prospects of some of our most disadvantaged areas.





The health service saves lives; Plaid can SAVE the Health Service

7

A new community health service

Since 1948, the National Health Service has provided an invaluable service to the people of Wales. But times are changing, and Plaid realises that the NHS and the focus of Government must evolve to deal with 21st century health care challenges.

A Plaid Government will create a new Community Health Service – nurses in schools, check-ups at work and ‘Centres of Wellbeing’ the length and breadth of Wales.

Our vision is of health services rooted in the heart of our communities that are as much about promoting wellbeing as about tackling illness. We will stop the hospital closure programme in its tracks and make decisions about local health services accountable to local people. We will create a Patient Rights Contract so people know the basic services in their area on which they can depend. A national Children’s Health Service will place a new emphasis on the health of the next generation. And in the single biggest investment in the history of the Welsh NHS we will create a network of state-of-the-art primary care and walk-in treatment facilities in communities across Wales, beginning with those where the traditional GP and dentist provision is failing.

Strong foundations

Our children are our future. A Plaid Government will lay strong foundations for our children and young people to succeed in life by implementing innovative and inspiring policies.

Plaid believes that education is a fundamental right. Our children and young people must be equipped with the skills needed to thrive and everyone must have continued access to education and training to enhance their employment prospects and enrich their lives.

Schools are at the heart of our communities, offering opportunities to all. The resources which our school buildings contain should be enhanced and made accessible to the communities they serve.

Educare, in which all care is educational and all education involves caring, will be the foundation of our early years' policy. Through an early years' curriculum which emphasises learning through play, we will encourage and stimulate those social and independent learning and living skills which will lay strong foundations for our children's development.

A Plaid Government will prioritise universal, affordable, and high quality childcare, provided by a range of deliverers, for every family in Wales. High quality childcare has proven educational benefits, giving children an early chance to develop important social and educational skills. Affordable and accessible childcare will provide economic benefits for families by enabling parents who wish to do so to return to the workplace. Universal affordable childcare available from the end of maternity leave will also help close the gender pay gap in Wales.

We support the goal of the elimination of child poverty in Wales by 2020. The employment opportunities for providers and beneficiaries and the better life prospects for children created by our expansion of affordable childcare will contribute to cutting child poverty levels.

Access to information is vital in our increasingly IT-dependent world. **Under a Plaid Government, all eleven year old pupils will be given their own lap-tops with the latest educational software, making Wales the most computer-literate nation on the planet.**

We will replace A-levels and GCSEs with a more broadly-based baccalaureate. A Plaid Government Welsh Baccalaureate scheme will build on and learn from the current pilot, but will be based on the renowned International Baccalaureate. A vocational as well as an academic form of the Welsh Baccalaureate will give students a genuine choice of qualification at fourteen. **Under a Plaid Government, education and training will be compulsory for all to age eighteen for those entering secondary school in 2008, subject to enactment of the necessary legislation.**

This move is vital to tackle youth unemployment, improve workforce skill levels and equip the next generation for our rapidly changing society and economy.

Saturday schools for sport, music and the arts will be introduced on a pilot basis, as well as summer schools for students who fall behind in their studies.

Welsh medium education should be a choice for all in Wales, but the demand is not being met by current provision. Plaid will establish the right for all parents to choose Welsh medium education for their children. **A Plaid Government will create a National Welsh Medium Education Strategy to develop effective provision from nursery through to further and higher education.**

A Plaid Government will ensure that pupils with special educational needs have access to the provision they need to meet those needs in the language of choice on the basis of equality throughout Wales. We will ensure funding for equitable access to language and speech therapists.

The ability of schools to serve children and their families successfully is wholly dependent on the commitment and hard work of Wales' teachers and support staff. Our aim when in Government will be to provide teachers with the support and training to give them genuinely professional status. Plaid will ensure that children are taught by qualified, registered teachers supported by classroom assistants. Plaid will create a clear training and career pathway for classroom assistants supported by a national pay frame. We will also guarantee a year's teaching experience to all teachers who are newly qualified in Wales to ensure they can complete their Induction year and become Qualified Registered Teachers.

We believe there is an urgent need to promote good health among children and young people. **A Plaid Government will bring forward a comprehensive action plan to ensure that the children of Wales are healthier and fitter. A minimum provision of one school nurse for every secondary school** and its associated primary schools will lay strong foundations for promoting good health from an early age. A school-based

dental service will help address the tooth decay crisis among children and young people. We will pilot the introduction of **free nutritious school meals for primary school children.** This will help pupils to perform better academically and lay the basis for healthy eating habits. Plaid will seek a ban on the advertising of unhealthy food and drink on children's television and encourage schools to get rid of junk food vending machines. Free fruit at primary schools will help educate children's palates as well as delivering immediate health benefits.

We will encourage greater out-of-classroom learning, countryside and other outdoor activities, and increased walking and cycling to improve children's health and national wellbeing. We will direct more resources towards Physical Education and end the sell-off of school-playing fields and playgrounds. We will also give children free access to council-owned swimming pools.

Rising mental and emotional problems among our children and young people is of grave concern. Wales has insufficient adolescent inpatient beds, leading to children and young people being placed inappropriately on adult wards, at times a considerable distance from home. **A Plaid Government will invest heavily in mental health services, and provide schools, parents and children access to the specialist support they need and deserve.**



Looked after children are entitled to the same life opportunities as their peers. We will work to ensure that every school in Wales has a designated teacher for looked after children, and that a holistic and flexible education framework is in place for them. A Plaid Government will ensure that all looked after children have access to an independent and centrally funded advocacy service providing a reliable voice to speak on their behalf, and will ensure that leaving grants will be standardised across Wales, offering young people the same opportunities wherever they live. We will require Local Authorities to exercise responsibility for looked after children until they are 21 years of age, as well as contributing on their behalf to the Child Trust Fund.

Road accidents account for nearly half of all accidental injury fatalities in children. **Plaid will increase the number of 20mph zones in residential areas and 10mph zones outside schools during school hours**, saving hundreds of Welsh children every year from death and injury. We are also committed to improving safety on school buses.

Community and continuing education are crucial for many who wish to return to education and training. We will review the provision of community and lifelong learning opportunities and work to give communities a voice in the choice of courses offered in their areas.

Plaid will continue to oppose top-up fees at Welsh Universities, and will fight to reduce the burden of debt for graduates who live and work in Wales for five years. Our young people should be able to enter Higher Education on choice and educational ability – not on the ability to pay. Plaid will identify necessary courses which cannot be studied in Wales, and seek to extend to students who follow those

courses the financial support available to those studying in Wales.

Welsh-medium provision in our universities is dependent on the goodwill and attitudes of departments, heads and lecturers, a situation we consider wholly unacceptable. **Plaid believes that a Welsh Federal College should be established in order to secure progress on this important issue.**

Wellbeing: A healthy nation

Nearly sixty years after the National Health Service was created it's time to build a new health service fit for the twenty first century.

Our vision is of health services rooted in the heart of our communities, a health service that is as much about promoting wellbeing as it is about tackling illness, a health service that will ensure that the people of Wales, whatever their background and wherever they live have the opportunity to lead healthy and happy lives. Now is the time to invest in that healthy future.

We intend to create a truly national Children's Health Service, as outlined in the previous chapter. We also want to lay the foundations for a **next generation health service** for everyone.

To address the legacy of chronic ill health and in response to growing concern about access to primary healthcare services, **a Plaid Government will establish Wellbeing Centres in communities across Wales**, directly accountable in the first instance to Local Health Boards. Our deprived rural and urban communities in particular are finding it increasingly difficult to attract and retain independent contractors such as GPs and dentists. In a civilised and prosperous country no community should have to accept this.

Each Wellbeing Centre will be staffed by a multi-disciplinary salaried team, offering the range of services identified in an assessment of local needs. This will allow patients to receive care and advice from the most appropriate staff, in the heart of their community.

The Wellbeing Centres will play a central role in health promotion. Targeting chronic conditions through disease management and prevention will be central to their work. The appropriate professional will offer health care services and workshops to patients with chronic conditions or those at risk, as well as healthy living workshops and advice. Such extended community healthcare will be key to keeping people out of hospitals in the long term and central to the work of our **next generation health service**.

Occupational health services can have a major effect in preventing illness and in ensuring that people are able to return to work as early as possible. **A Plaid Government will therefore bring Wales into line with most European countries and place a new legal requirement on employers to provide workplace health services.**

Depression and anxiety is a growing problem in Wales. One family in three is affected. We will create an army of therapists and counsellors to provide treatment and counselling free of stigma in our new Wellbeing Centres. To make sure this happens, in the first two years of a Plaid Government the Deputy Health Minister will work primarily on mental health issues. **So that we can achieve all we need to do, a Plaid Government will call for all powers over mental health to be devolved to the Assembly through an Order in Council.**



Secondary Care

Given the geography of Wales and poor public transport infrastructure, the people of Wales need and deserve adequate services within easy reach of their home. Plaid has led campaigns across Wales against the downgrading of community facilities as these decisions have been made in response to short-term financial pressure and without adequate planned community provision. **A Plaid Government will stop the proposed programme of closures and cuts.** The current proposals contain little detail on how or where alternative services will be provided in the community, and as such they are entirely unacceptable.

Plaid's aim in Government will be to develop community, general hospital and specialist services that serve people as close as possible to their homes. As part of a programme of improving services, change is inevitable. But we will create a **Patient Rights Contract** which will set out the protected core services that must be made available within any locality and will ensure those bodies making any future proposals on reconfiguration are locally and democratically accountable. The Contract will also, for the first time, create a system for no-fault pay-outs if patients receive sub-standard care.

We will also look at developing radical new approaches to out of hours care, using the ambulances service in co-operation with community hospitals. A Plaid Government will ensure that our ambulance service receives the further capital investment needed to deliver an excellent service.

We will create a National Institute of Health Research in conjunction with the Welsh Medical Schools to accelerate breakthrough medical research in chronic diseases currently ignored by the pharmaceutical industry and speed implementation among medical practitioners.

Bed blocking

Bed blocking is a cause of continuing crisis in Welsh health and social care. A delayed transfer of care can often worsen the condition of the patient and have a negative impact on the patient's family and friends. It also needs to be tackled in order to keep waiting lists down. **In the short term a Plaid Government will require Local Health Boards and Local Authorities to share their budgets in order to cut bed blocking. This will be a first step towards the creation of a single seamless tier of joint health and care authorities.**

A Plaid Government will increase funding for palliative care in both home and hospice settings, to ensure that all terminally ill patients are enabled and supported to die in the place of their choice. We will ensure that patients and healthcare professionals have more information regarding the option of dying at home, to reduce the barriers currently preventing people from choosing a home death.

We are committed to ensuring that the carers voluntarily looking after our sick, disabled or elderly citizens are adequately supported.

Free Care

Plaid believes in securing free care provision for older and disabled people, in principle and as an aim. We reject the distinction between nursing and personal care. Intimate personal care can not be described as optional or a matter of convenience for the patient. By linking entitlement to care given by nurses, the current funding structure leads to older people and disabled people being denied appropriate care thereby causing preventable health deterioration and often hospitalization.

A green and prosperous land

In the short term a Plaid Government will:

- Cap Charges set by Local Authorities.
- Raise the savings threshold for contributing towards residential costs to more accurately reflect the value of an average family home.
- Create Benefit Take Up teams in every Local Authority to ensure that older and disabled people receive benefits to which they are entitled.

To bring in our policy of free care, a Plaid Government will request the necessary powers to create a National Care Fund financed through a proportion of the revenue received as part of our proposed local income tax.

Plaid Cymru is committed to building a sustainable, flourishing economy, offering real quality of life to everyone in Wales, now and in the future.

A flourishing economy is vital to the success of the nation. The fact that the relative GVA per capita in 15 of Wales' 22 counties remains at 65% of the UK average is a clear indictment of the failure of the economic policies pursued by Labour and Conservative governments over the past 30 years and shows how much work needs to be done.

Business has a key role to play in our vision for a thriving economy. We are committed to supporting locally-based production and services throughout Wales. We will apply sustainability criteria to economic development projects and will prioritise support for leading edge environmentally sustainable industries.

To help successful companies invest in their future, we propose to cut business rates by up to half and, if possible, the effective corporation tax rate by up to a third. We believe that this would be a better use of taxpayers' money than grants as the cost to government is closely aligned to a company's success. We want successful companies to develop deep roots in our nation's economy and build for the long-term. We would require beneficiaries to pay back grant and tax break monies if they relocate elsewhere within three years.

We will target this support particularly at businesses in the **West Wales and Valleys** area, where we will ensure that the new European Convergence Funds are used effectively to release local potential and plug the still-yawning income gap with the rest of Wales and much of Europe. We will

press the UK Treasury for full match-funding and will take the issue up with the EU authorities if the response is unfavourable.

As well as targeted tax cuts, our strategy will include using the public sector's purchasing power to support local business.

We will make it easier for smaller companies to compete for public procurement business by structuring contracts appropriately and offering clearer information about the process.

We will review planning regulations and procedures at the local and national levels to help facilitate sustainable economic development and remove unnecessary barriers or bureaucracy.

A fair deal for farmers

We recognise that public policy has shifted from agricultural production towards agri-environment measures. However, securing a sustainable food source for our country is becoming increasingly important, as we seek to lessen the carbon footprint of the food industry. Over the next few years, the agricultural industry deserves a period of stability. We will ensure that any transition to new support measures is as smooth as possible. **We will fully fund Tir Mynydd for the next three years and we will work with farmers' representatives to secure a new scheme for 2010 onwards and negotiate a fair deal with the European Commission for Welsh farmers.**

Young farmers in particular deserve a start in the industry and there is an urgent need to lower the average age of farmers.

We will introduce a scheme to support young entrants.

We will engage with all the relevant players to make sure that changes to the CAP and the support mechanisms for farmers post 2013 will not weaken our rural economy or damage the environmental gains which are essential for a thriving and sustainable countryside.

To help support Welsh agriculture we will aim to ensure that 80% of all publicly procured food is sourced locally by 2015. We will help farmers to take up the option of growing crops for energy and biofuels.

Transport

Our vision for a modern all-Wales transport system will unite the nation and promote more equitable economic prosperity.

Building the transport infrastructure that Wales needs is a long term task and substantial investment is needed to achieve that aim and to reduce dependency on road travel. Creating better links, both road and rail, from the North, the West and the South Wales Valleys to Cardiff will be a priority. We are committed to reopening a limited number of railway lines and to dual track single lines.

We will draw up a firm programme to upgrade North/West - South road links to be completed by 2015. We will create a fast, convenient national long distance express coach service, well-integrated with feeder rail and local bus services.

We will give a new impetus to the flagging programmes to extend cycle paths and urban bus lanes; promote park and ride schemes and plan seamless links between transport modes.

Plaid Cymru will fund added transportation improvements through a special bond issue.

We will re-regulate buses and establish a new national transport authority, setting fares, routes and timetables, so that services run where people want them, not where the greatest profit is to be made. We will continue to support the restoration of full public ownership of the rail system.

Saving Wales- saving the world

The world cannot afford any delay in tackling climate change. Plaid believes that Wales must play its part in the global effort to save our planet. That's why we propose both to set a Welsh target of 3% a year for cutting CO₂ emissions and a series of practical actions to make that happen – actions that will generate new jobs and business opportunities and safeguard our land for future generations.

We will give the highest priority to a well-funded nationwide Energy Saving Plan to reduce energy use by households and commercial users. Non-means tested energy efficiency grants of up to 50% of the cost of home insulation and other household energy efficiency measures will be available throughout Wales. There will be a similar scheme for business energy saving.

In addition to the grant scheme we will introduce initiatives such as a national plan to phase out the incandescent light-bulb and a national reward scheme for people who cut their energy usage.

We will seek the transfer of power over building regulations to the Assembly as soon as possible. Our Government will adopt the Code for Sustainable Homes, and will extend it to existing homes. We will use Building Regulations to bring about carbon neutrality in consequential improvements. We will bring forward robust building regulations on water

efficiency and environmentally friendly construction materials. Plaid will ensure that Government properties are Zero Carbon by 2012.

While Labour has confined itself to wind farms in a limited number of areas, **a Plaid Government will bring clean secure energy to communities across Wales by supporting a range of alternatives including marine power, micro generation and fuel cell technology.** We will seek to develop a coherent approach to alternative energy research in Wales and issue guidelines to HEFCW, the universities funding body, to target resources for this purpose. We will appoint professionally competent consultants to evaluate the economic and environmental implications of tidal and estuarial energy sources and make the results available for public examination and debate. We will introduce a Welsh Marine Bill as a framework for protecting and developing our maritime resources.

A Plaid Government will encourage local people to become involved in deciding on the most appropriate mix of renewable energy sources for their communities. To enable such community energy plans to develop, it will be necessary to review TAN8, the planning regulation which specifies where onshore windmills can be sited.

We will create a Welsh National Forest of native trees to act as a carbon sink and will seek to ensure that economic projects do not harm our landscape. We will press the UK government to invest in scaling up carbon capture and storage and heat storage technologies.

We will ensure that all the Government's capital spending programmes comply with the highest standards of environmental sustainability.

Skills for the future

Our vision for Wales can only be realised if the workforce has the necessary skills to take up new job opportunities and use these skills and their earnings to transform their own lives and their communities. **A Plaid Government will develop a labour market strategy** to ensure that both young people and older workers develop skills for the future; that those who are economically inactive can contribute to a revitalised Welsh economy; and to help spread employment opportunities in a more balanced manner across the country and to different social groups. We will promote employee ownership of small and medium sized enterprises.

We will initiate a fresh approach to hi-tech education and research, developing management and administrative skills in the public, voluntary and private sectors, and encouraging leadership, enterprise and innovation. We will set up an Expert Group on **Future Skills Needs** to help ensure that Wales has the necessary balance of skills for a vibrant future. As part of our strategy to strengthen the science base in Wales, we will create a national science academy to spur invention and innovation.

In order to combat the scourge of the low-wage economy we will create a national living wage set by an independent Welsh Pay Commission with which all contractors for publicly-funded contracts in Wales will be asked to comply.

Strong communities

For Plaid, devolution means more than merely devolving power to Cardiff – it means empowering the people who make up our communities and distributing regional and individual prosperity to every part of Wales.

We will work to make our communities safer, in cooperation with residents, to boost access to affordable housing to rent or buy, to sustain and develop all that makes our communities diverse and vibrant.

Our plans for a sustainable Wales will strengthen local and regional economies and safeguard our environment.

Strong communities are living communities, with all the facilities necessary for a full life. We will defend and extend local provision of health and education and services supplying day-to-day needs. **In order to empower Welsh communities we will seek to enact into Welsh law the Sustainable Communities Bill currently before the Westminster Parliament. We shall seek to place a new statutory responsibility on local authorities to promote culture in communities across the country.**

We shall maintain and strengthen the Post Office Development Fund **and work with the Post Offices to develop a full range of over-the-counter banking services geared to people who otherwise would be excluded from financial services, effectively creating a ‘people’s bank’.**

Homes for Wales

The shortage of affordable housing to rent or buy is one of the biggest barriers to community cohesion, even to survival

in some cases. The planning system at present favours the rich at the expense of the poor. The property ladder has lost its bottom rung and first time buyers are being priced out of the market. **Plaid Cymru would seek to have the powers over all planning matters transferred to the Assembly and would create a new planning system for Wales with the aim of providing houses to meet local demand, reinvigorating town centres, and spreading economic progress more evenly.**

The affordable housing of the future should include opportunities for partnership, renting and private ownership. But they need to be affordable in perpetuity and be built to meet local need and high sustainability standards.

As part of our affordable housing strategy **we will introduce first home grants** to help people buy a first home. Under this scheme people who save over a period of three years will have their savings matched pound for pound up to a maximum of £5,000.

We will repeal the ‘Right to Buy’ in housing hot spots where there is a shortage of rented accommodation.

We will introduce a new planning class for second homes to allow local authorities to limit the number of holiday homes where they exceed 10% of housing stock.

Plaid Cymru believes the current planning system stifles the development of affordable local housing. **We will promote measures to encourage the release of land** for affordable housing to meet local need while ensuring that the homes are affordable in perpetuity. **In the countryside we will**

extend the current full time agricultural worker provision to include a rural worker planning provision.

A good supply of social housing is an essential part of our strategy and we will seek to ensure that all sizeable new developments have a percentage of social housing reflecting local need. We oppose the principle of stock transfer and will seek powers to ensure that councils have a level playing field alongside housing associations so that they can develop and maintain their housing stock, and that housing receipts are spent on repairs and renovations to reach the Wales Housing Quality Standard. We will legislate to ensure that housing can be managed by local housing cooperatives, held in trust by a national not-for-profit housing service.

The success of our housing strategy will deal with many of the underlying causes of high and growing homelessness in Wales, which we are determined to eradicate within a decade.

Safer Communities

A Plaid government will aim to make every community in Wales a safer place in which to live. **We will develop a national Safer Communities Strategy, which will seek to break the links between substance misuse and crime and which prioritises rehabilitation.** This will reduce repeat offending and the recycling of offenders through an overcrowded prison system. To help ensure that the strategy can be fully implemented we will seek the devolution of criminal justice services from the UK Home Office to Wales, beginning with the Youth Justice Board to enable us to take action to reduce the number of children in prison.

In consultation with local communities, we will ensure that crime trouble spots are targeted with tactics adapted to local or changing circumstances. Where appropriate we will increase police or community police officer visibility and promote local projects and services which tackle the causes of crime, such as youth facilities and easily accessible detoxification and rehabilitation services. We will seek means of applying the measures contained in the Children Act 2001 instead of anti-social behaviour orders. Over the course of a four-year term a Plaid government will seek to fund up to 500 additional police officers.

The majority of crime is drugs or alcohol related. We will address the causes of substance dependency by implementing a substance misuse harm reduction strategy, in the development of which we will consider the results of research underway elsewhere, such as the pilot project in England testing prescription of heroin under strict medical supervision. We will invest in social services departments and counselling services in order to prevent problematic substance use. Substance misuse education will be delivered in every school in Wales by trained substance misuse professionals, using a harm-reduction approach. We will ensure that low-risk mentally ill and substance dependent offenders are provided with treatment in the community.

We will implement fully resourced strategies to reduce hate crime: child, domestic/sexual, racial, homophobic, and vulnerable adults' abuse. We will ensure that crime victims and witnesses are properly supported. We will seek to ensure that Wales has enough properly funded and experienced probation officers in the public sector to reduce recidivism.

Communities will benefit from better amenities for young people to help counter the attractions of ‘hanging around the streets’, drugs and alcohol misuse. The new **national citizen’s service** will help young people develop a sense of public service and responsibility. This service will also provide a bridge between young and older generations, which will help to reduce fear of crime in the long term. We will work in partnership with the Westminster Government to establish ‘turnaround’ centres where persistent young offenders will be able to learn a trade and work on community and environmental projects, instilling in them a strong sense of personal responsibility.

Inclusive communities

Plaid appreciates the contribution of the voluntary sector and will support the work underway in many communities aimed at ending social exclusion, the manifestations of poverty and the results of decades of educational and economic neglect.

We want to work with voluntary organisations to improve access to rights advice and financial literacy. We will encourage local authorities to place free cash machines on council properties used by the public and to make reasonable access to free ATMs a condition when granting planning permission for new developments.

Civic service in the community will be an integral part of the education curriculum. A new **national citizens’ service** – a civilian equivalent of the TA - will be created for adult volunteers wishing to continue with civic service after completing their education.

We will give a new impetus to the National Assembly’s duty to promote equal opportunities and will seek devolution of statutory responsibility for equality and full legislative powers over the child protection system.

Greener Communities

We will seek the power to require Local Authorities to implement universal, meaningful **recycling**, and we will set targets to end the disposal of **waste** in landfill sites, ensuring that European Directives on waste reduction are fully implemented. **Air quality** will be improved by ensuring that planning guidelines consider the need to cut carbon emissions.

Democratic communities

Our **Ministries on the Move** plan will bring government closer to people - departments will be relocated around Wales, improving access and spreading jobs and other economic benefits around the nation.

Plaid is committed to fair votes for all and will seek **legislation to introduce the Single Transferable Vote** for every election in Wales, beginning with local authority elections. We will aim to make local government more open, effective and answerable to the community. We will investigate means of injecting new vigour into community and town councils.



A vibrant culture

Plaid Cymru believes we should celebrate and support the cultural riches of the diverse and vibrant communities that make up modern Wales, and welcome the input of new citizens, without in any way forgetting what makes us a unique nation.

Language

The Welsh language belongs to everyone in Wales, whether or not they speak it. It is a national treasure which must be safeguarded and promoted.

Plaid's aim is to create a truly bilingual society. We want to see everyone in Wales given every opportunity to learn and use Welsh.

A Plaid government will introduce a new Welsh Language Act which will form the basis for creating a bilingual Wales. It will give official status to Welsh, create rights for individuals to receive services through the medium of Welsh, and create the post of Language Commissioner to ensure that the interests of Welsh are proactively safeguarded and promoted.

Government departments can play an important role in promoting Welsh in areas such as education, housing, planning and employment. **We will set up a powerful language unit in the First Minister's Office to ensure effective coordination of policies across government.**

Plaid is committed to the development of Welsh medium education at all levels and **our Government will support the establishment of a Federal College to offer provision through Welsh in our universities, as outlined in the Stronger Foundations section.**

Culture

Plaid is totally committed to promoting a confident and creative culture in Wales. Culture and the arts are an integral part of the process of regenerating our communities, by creating a sense of identity and developing our potential as a nation.

We led the campaign against the plan to weaken the Arts Council, as we believe that the government should not interfere directly in the arts. The role of government is to create the framework which allows culture to flourish and to give a strategic lead. We welcome the Stephens report and will implement many of its recommendations.

We will promote artistic and cultural activity for all ages and backgrounds in all parts of Wales. We will support activity in all the regions of Wales through strategic regional partnerships as part of our vision of creating regional growth centres.

We will establish a body similar to Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru working through the medium of English. We will also push ahead with the plan to establish a National Gallery for the visual arts.

Broadcasting & Media

Strong and independent media in Wales are vital in the digital age. A Plaid government will create a media strategy for Wales with the aim of developing strong broadcast and print media in Wales, for the people of Wales, in both Welsh and English.

Wales and the world

We will seek to maintain and increase S4/C's budget so that it can meet the digital challenge. A Plaid government will support the campaign to establish a Welsh language daily newspaper.

Sport

Sport can play a role in making society healthier as well as raising Wales' profile on the international stage. We will make sure that the Sports Council uses its funding to create more sporting opportunities for women and for people with disabilities. We will cooperate with the national bodies responsible for particular sports in Wales to ensure that young people have more opportunities to develop their skills.

We will support and encourage a bid to host the Commonwealth Games in Wales. This would not only raise Wales' international profile but will also be a shop window for the sporting facilities we have in Wales. And we will seek opportunities to ensure that Wales has national teams in as many sports as possible.

A Plaid Government will make full and creative use of limited National Assembly powers in international relationships to develop a distinctive Welsh position on global affairs. We look forward to Wales taking its own decisions on the world stage and to being a full member of the European Union and United Nations. As an interim step, we will seek to obtain observer status for Wales at the UN, and will seek associate membership of the Commonwealth and other appropriate international bodies. We will support the **.cym** campaign to gain domain name status for Wales on the Internet.

Inequality and injustice fuel tension and conflict. Creating a fairer world will lead to a safer world. As a contribution to establishing fairer international trade systems, **our Welsh global trade strategy will include clear steps towards winning international Fair Trade status for Wales and making Wales an international centre of excellence for socially responsible business and ethical procurement.** We will also put forward practical measures for Wales and its people to make a positive contribution to help some of the poorest nations in the world meet the Millennium Development Goals.

We will strengthen the role of the Assembly's European Committee making it an effective tool for scrutinising European proposals and legislation, to predict their effect on Wales and ensure early and effective action is taken to seek changes where appropriate and argue Wales' case in the EU decision making process. We will work towards the creation of a single multifunctional embassy in Brussels, to maximise the representational effect of the Welsh Assembly Government, National Assembly, local government and other relevant organisations.

Paying for what Wales needs

A Plaid Government will insist that the UK Government consult with the National Assembly on European Commission proposals and accept Welsh participation in UK delegations in all relevant negotiations at Council of Ministers level.

Plaid consistently and emphatically opposed the war on Iraq and will continue to press for the withdrawal of UK forces and the dismantling of their military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan. We will also continue to work for an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian land as part of a lasting and fair two state solution and will press the UK Government not to facilitate the selling of arms to unstable regimes. We will oppose nuclear weapons, in particular the proposed new generation of Trident.

Plaid Cymru wants to establish a strong sustainable basis for a thriving nation and we will not take a short-term approach to governing or financing Wales. The pledges in this manifesto can be implemented within the Assembly budget but we will also be investigating innovative means of ensuring that we can finance our longer term plans, and will campaign strongly for a fairer funding formula geared to giving Wales the investment and services it needs.

The incoming Assembly Government will have to face the effects of rising inflation, which will put extra strain on the Assembly budget, and of the UK Treasury decision to slow the rate of increase in public spending. As Wales is still denied the right to vary taxation, an Assembly Government could not tax its way out of a tight financial corner even if it wanted to do so. That the Welsh budget is very largely a result of the spending plans of UK Government Departments, under the Barnett funding formula, causes ongoing restrictions.

Our Government will work within the Assembly budget but will demand that the UK Government replace the Barnett formula with a fair, needs-based system, and provide full match funding for the European finance allocated to Wales from the European Convergence Fund. We will ensure that the Convergence Fund is used to make genuine economic advances in the most deprived areas of Wales, including developing skills for a sustainable future and channelling more support towards making our transport, health and education infrastructure fit for future purpose.

Rather than just hoping for a burst of generosity from the Treasury or a change of heart on taxation or the formula for setting the Welsh Budget – as the UK-based parties

would do - a Plaid Government will explore new methods of raising sufficient finance to radically improve the quality of publicly owned assets in Wales. One financing vehicle we will investigate will be a Welsh public investment bank which could raise funds directly on the capital markets instead of having to satisfy shareholder interests. We will also pursue an investment agreement with the European Investment Bank.

We will initially cap Council Tax for the elderly and, in due course, scrap Council Tax and replace it with a local income tax, a move that will directly benefit people on low incomes, whether working or in retirement.



Governance

The fundamental principle of our approach to governance is that **sovereignty rests with the people of Wales**. Plaid Cymru believes that power should lie in the hands of the people. It is the inalienable right of the people of Wales to decide our own future, to decide where power should be exercised, by whom and for which purpose.

A Plaid Government will call a referendum during the next Assembly term to establish a Proper Parliament for Wales, on the model set out in the Government of Wales Act, 2006. We believe it is fundamentally unjust that, while the Scottish people can shape their own destiny through their parliament, the people of Wales are treated as second class citizens.

Our long term vision is of an independent Wales standing shoulder to shoulder with the nations of the world and extending a hand of friendship both within and beyond these islands. Our vision of an independent Wales is rooted in the needs of the everyday lives of the people of Wales. The evidence across Europe is overwhelming - the citizens of small and medium sized independent countries such as Ireland and Sweden are wealthier and healthier. The people of Wales deserve such a future too. Our journey towards independence is one that we undertake in full partnership with the people of Wales, and because it is the people who are sovereign, every significant step along the way will be subject to a referendum.

Political power can only genuinely reside in the hands of the people when the system of governance is clear, transparent and effective. Sadly, it is the development of bureaucracy that has been at the heart of Labour's reforms to governance rather than clarity and efficiency. In the NHS alone there are 55 different bodies. It is no wonder that people complain that too much of their hard earned cash is spent on bureaucracy

rather than front line services. **We will establish an Independent National Commission on the Governance of Wales to produce proposals for a clear and effective system of governance, reducing bureaucracy and the number of overlapping bodies, and increasing the funds available for front line services.**

But we are impatient for progress. Therefore as a government we will be the most open and transparent administration in Europe. We will hold open cabinet meetings, invite people across Wales to take part in 'citizens' assemblies' with those who lead our country, and introduce the right of a citizen's initiative. With our **Ministries on the Move**, people in communities across Wales will have governance brought closer to them on a day to day basis.

Plaid believes in the great potential of the people of Wales to govern themselves. They deserve no less than Plaid Cymru - a People's Government working with a People's Parliament to deliver the People's Priorities.

Orders in Council

To use the powers of the Assembly to their fullest extent, we will need a proper Parliament. Until then, we will use existing powers to make a real difference to the lives of the people of Wales. Many of the policies in this manifesto will require Orders in council which we shall submit to the Secretary for State for Wales for approval by the Westminster Government. Our expectation is that requests for those measures contained in this document will be granted as they will have an election mandate behind them.

"Photographs in this document are of models and any views implied may not be those of the people featured"