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for Wales

# Manifesto for the Future: Our Local Elections

March 2022

Recommendations for political parties and candidates in 2022 Local Government Elections  
Prepared by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

# "Let's create the future together"

By **Sophie Howe**

**Future Generations Commissioner for Wales**

The Welsh Local Government Elections in May provide us with the opportunity to create the future we want for our communities. It's also significant as 16 and 17 year olds will be voting for their councillors for the first time.

As Public Service Boards\* across Wales develop their latest assessments, it's clear that there are key local challenges emerging relating to high levels of income and health inequality, fuel poverty, mental health and social isolation, and loss of biodiversity and the cost of living crisis.

Now is the time for local authorities to adopt a bold package of measures to address these challenges in ways that bring about well-being benefits to all. Making access to public transport easier, investing in fuel efficient homes, improving access to green spaces are all ways to improve health and well-being whilst also tackling multiple crises.

- Nearly a quarter of all people in Wales (23%) were living in relative income poverty (after housing costs) between 2017 and 2020.
- During January to March 2021, 51% of women said they felt safe compared to 84% of men.
- Younger people are the most likely to feel lonely, although during the pandemic adults aged 45 to 64 felt more lonely than in previous years. Those aged 65 and over still felt the least lonely.



With smart policy-making, the problems of both the present and the future can be addressed at the same time, and making these connections is vital.

Our communities across Wales continue to face multiple challenges which must be addressed by local authorities and other partners.

The tragic scenes in Ukraine and the ongoing climate and nature crises provide a difficult backdrop for these elections, but remind us of the role our communities and democratic institutions can play in striving for a better world for future generations.

\*[Public Services Boards](#) (PSBs) improve joint working across all public services in each local authority area in Wales. Each board must carry out a well-being assessment and publish an annual local well-being plan. The plan sets out how they will meet their responsibilities under the Well being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. Local Authorities are members of PSBs.

## Developing this Manifesto

In May 2020, I published my statutory report - [The Future Generations Report](#), which sets out the progress made by public bodies towards meeting their duties and my expectations under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The content of the Report is drawn from my involvement with over 5,000 individuals and organisations in Wales, making recommendations to maximise public body contributions towards the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

This document includes key recommendations I believe political parties should consider within their manifesto work and discussions with the public. The full Future Generations Report (and its recommendations) should be read in conjunction with this document.

The voices of young people are important in shaping the future we want. I welcomed the opportunity to partner with Omidaze to increase awareness of the Well-being Future Generations Act, as part of our movement for change work.

Omidaze specialises in communicating information about democracy through culture, using theatre and the arts to empower, inform, challenge and inspire positive social change.

[The Democracy Box](#) is an Omidaze project which works with young people aged 16-26, born or based in Wales, as paid co-creators to seek to increase democratic participation and provide information about the UK's democratic system and structures. My partnership with The Democracy Box involves co-creating engaging resources explaining the Act, with young people, for young people.

I welcomed the opportunity to work with the young people in informing the recommendations of this Manifesto.

We have co-produced a [podcast](#) and a [song](#).



## My Voice Matters



"Hi! I'm Eva, I'm 16 and I'm a young co-creator with the Democracy Box.

Our voices as young people are so important because we are the future, so we should speak up about issues in order to shape the best future for us to inherit.

The Well-being for Future Generations Act is vital in ensuring that decision makers pave the best possible path for us to take over. Wales is the only country in the world to have this act in place which makes me proud to be Welsh!

I will be able to vote for the first time in the upcoming local elections and it is crucial that young people like me get to the polls and have our say because it is the most direct way to have your voices heard."

**Eva Franklin 16, Caerphilly**

"Young people's voices matter because we are the future. In 50 years time, the WCFG Act will ensure that Wales will be a more equal country, that focuses on what matters. Whether that is environmentally, economically or the physical and mental health of everyone.

The local elections are as vital as any other election because the focus is solely on where we live and hopefully our councillors will ensure that we can feel safe and listened to whether it's asking for new street lights or improving resources for schools."

**Emily Mae Jones, 19, Connah's Quay, Deeside**



# Open for Debate

By Tess Wood, 26, Swansea and Cardiff

Open for debate,  
How can I communicate?  
Gentle but fighting.

This community,  
Is open for discussion.  
A network for change.

Our voices are heard.  
Now, expressing together.  
Gentle but fighting.

This invitation,  
Provided us with answers.  
Our voices are heard.

Getting the answers,  
We're open for discussion.  
Power in numbers.

Radical at heart,  
We're looking to make changes.  
This space is open.

Our community,  
Is looking for the answers.  
Together we stand.

This shared engagement,  
This is our community,  
This is what matters.

Getting the answers,  
They're gathering voices heard.  
In this open space.

A conversation,  
Now we're open for debate.  
Searching for changes.

Asking your questions,  
In this space its encouraged,  
Together we share.

This space is open,  
Provided with the answers,  
Our voices are heard.

I felt confusion.  
Now, expressing together...  
I feel clarity

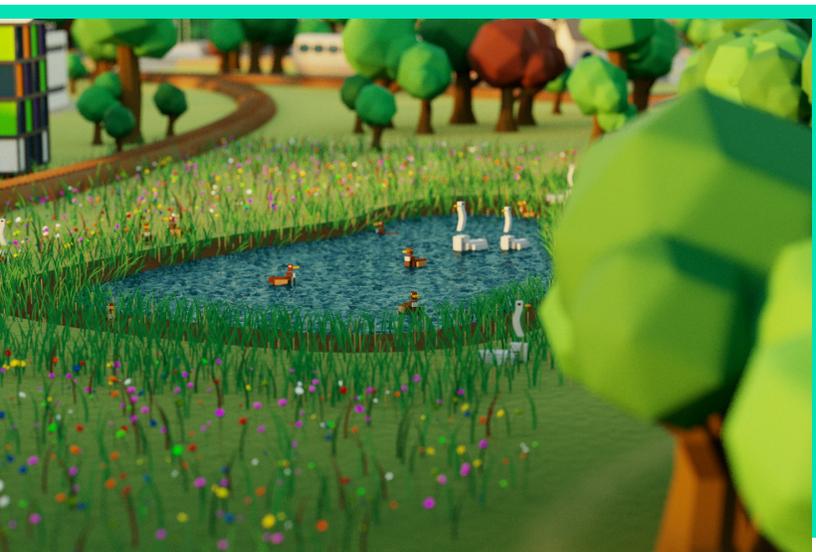
Haiku is an unrhymed form of poetry from Japan, consisting of seventeen syllables. This is Tess' creative response to the Manifesto.



# Create a just and green recovery

In May 2020, I published a [5 point plan](#) on the areas Wales should consider investing and prioritising as part of its green recovery post COVID.

In this very challenging context, I urge political parties and those standing in elections to act boldly to create a better future using an approach to economic stimulus that supports green jobs, prevents poverty and inequality, and addresses the climate, nature and cost of living crises. We must seize this moment to start doing things differently.



**Recommendation 1**  
**Invest in nature and prioritise funding and support for large-scale wildlife habitat and landscape restoration, creation and connectivity.**

## Recommendation 2

**Invest in skills and training, including through the medium of Welsh, to support the transition to a better future, creating new greener jobs.**

## Recommendation 3

**Invest in better ways to connect and move people through improving public transport, active travel and digital connectivity.**

## Recommendation 4

**Encourage the shift to well-being economics, using the economy as a means to improve the health of people, society and the planet, and not just as an end in itself.**

## Recommendation 5

**Invest in the industries and technologies of the future, supporting businesses that will help Wales to lead the low carbon revolution and lock wealth and jobs into local areas.**

## Recommendation 6

**Set out a plan for responding to future trends in ways that reduce inequalities rather than perpetuating them.**

# Take positive action to tackle climate injustice and the nature emergency

Our natural environment is vital for our well-being. Wild and natural landscapes can sustain us; give us clean water to drink and fresh air to breathe, they store carbon and protect our homes from flooding, and they can help make us happy and healthy.

Nature gives us the foundations for our economy, energy system and our food and farming. We must respond to climate and nature crises in a way that improves quality of life for all, ensuring that action to tackle these crises also helps to raise the social floor and alleviate the effects of inequality.

New York City passed a green new deal, requiring 'green roofs' on new buildings as part of its 'Green Roofs' Act. The \$14 billion Act is working towards a singular goal: a 40% reduction of NYC's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and carbon neutrality by 2050.

An initiative in Denver, Colorado requires buildings taller than 25,000 square feet to have green roofs or solar panels - including affordable housing projects.

## Recommendation 7

**Invest in responding to the climate and nature emergencies and commit to increasing spend year on year.**

## Recommendation 8

**Establish local nature recovery and habitat restoration targets.**

## Recommendation 9

**Ensure people can access natural green space within 300 metres of their home.**

## Recommendation 10

**Be transparent in showing the carbon impact of all policies and spending decisions.**

## Recommendation 11

**Commit to greening your communities by delivering 20% tree canopy cover in every town and city in Wales by 2030.**

## Recommendation 12

**Require green infrastructure to be delivered as part of every new development such as school improvement, building community and health facilities etc.**

# Tackle the root causes of poverty

Systematic change is needed to not only help those struggling today, but to prevent the possibility of falling into poverty in the first place.

- Nearly a quarter of all people in Wales (23%) were living in relative income poverty (after housing costs) between 2017 and 2020.
- Children are the most likely to be in relative poverty (31% of children compared to 18% of pensioners).
- Nearly half (49%) of single parents were in material deprivation in 2019-20 and 1% of households said they had received food from a food bank during 2020-21.

Supply chain issues, living cost crisis and fuel poverty present immediate and very serious problems to be addressed in the short term. However, the root causes of these must be tackled with long-term solutions.

## Recommendation 13

**Support measures to address fuel poverty, including retrofitting of local housing stock.**

## Recommendation 14

**Work with Welsh Government, the private sector and the voluntary sector to address data and digital poverty.**



## Recommendation 15

**Consider opportunities for a shorter working week and support local employers to explore this further.**

## Recommendation 16

**Invest in a care-led recovery to increase quality jobs in care (a low-carbon sector) and prioritise needs of unpaid carers.**

## Recommendation 17

**Become a Real Living Wage employer.**

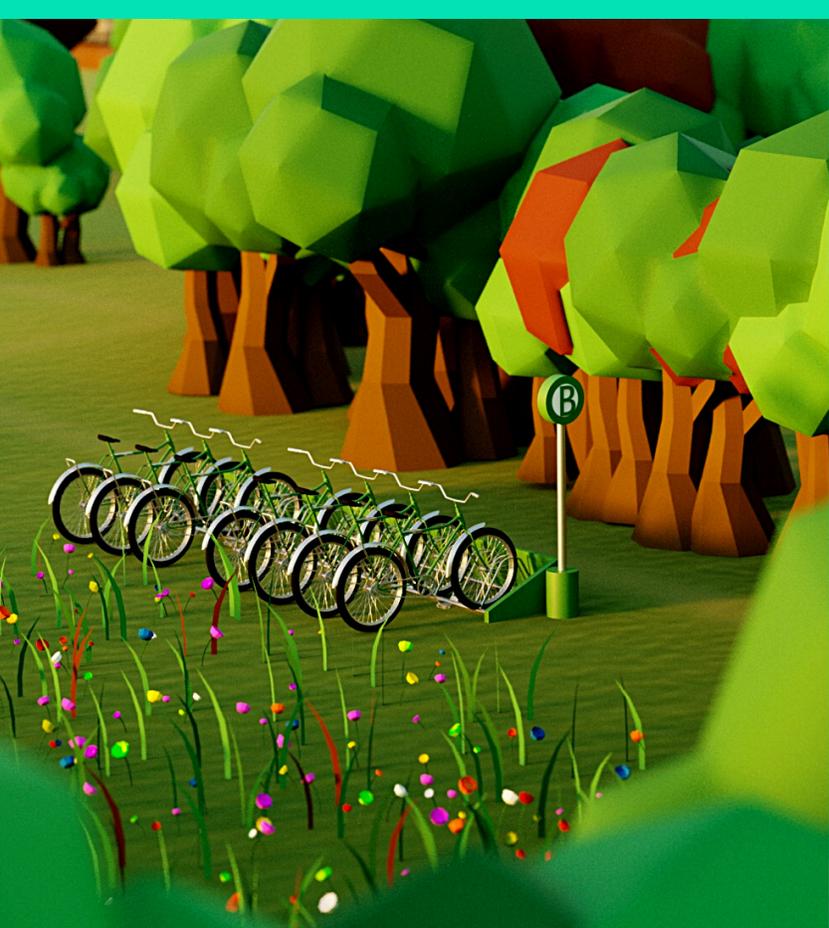
## Recommendation 18

**Strengthen community measures to tackle food insecurity, like community growing and cooking projects, info hubs and workshops.**

## Recommendation 19

**Mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis; such as halving public transport fares for all and strengthening local food growing programmes.**

## Promote and invest in sustainable travel



The Netherlands made trains free on National Book day for people who show up with a book instead of a ticket.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, nature and the outdoors have been valued by so many communities. However, not everyone has been able to enjoy and has had access these green spaces that can increase positive mental health, boost biodiversity and promote pride in the community.

Talinn, Estonia was the first in the world to offer free public transport to its residents in 2013, which has subsequently been introduced in 11 out of Estonia's 15 counties in 2018.

Miami, USA, launched a new app that rewards residents for using green transport. By cycling, car-sharing or taking public transport, users can collect points to pay for future trips.

### Recommendation 20

**Set local targets for modal shift to enable people to adopt low carbon modes of travel, in line with national targets.**

### Recommendation 21

**Introduce free public transport for young people in Wales.**

### Recommendation 22

**Involve disabled people in the design of sustainable and inclusive travel solutions to ensure that they are fully accessible to all.**

### Recommendation 23

**Invest in low carbon transport provision for Local Authority services, e.g. local buses, Council vehicles.**

# Enable good access to key well-being and mental health services

Our NHS is often at the forefront of crises. The pandemic has exacerbated the pressures and demonstrated our gratitude. We need to develop a national wellness system, which is an holistic approach to keeping people well and focusing on the wider determinants of health.

The below diagram from the World Health Organisation's Health Equity Status Report shows the most important factors in reducing health inequalities. There should be a clear plan for investing in these areas as part of a national wellness system.

25% relates to Living Conditions and 19% to Social and Human Capital. Only 10% relates to Health Services, and 7% to Employment and Working Conditions.

## Recommendation 24

**Support non-medical initiatives known as 'social prescribing' (e.g. sport, volunteering, cultural activities) to boost health and well-being within communities.**

Brussels in Belgium ran a trial in 2021 whereby doctors could prescribe museum visits to patients in an effort to rebuild mental health and alleviate burnout amid the pandemic.

## Recommendation 25

**Create 20 minute neighbourhoods to ensure people can access key services closer to home; creating healthier, greener & happier communities.**

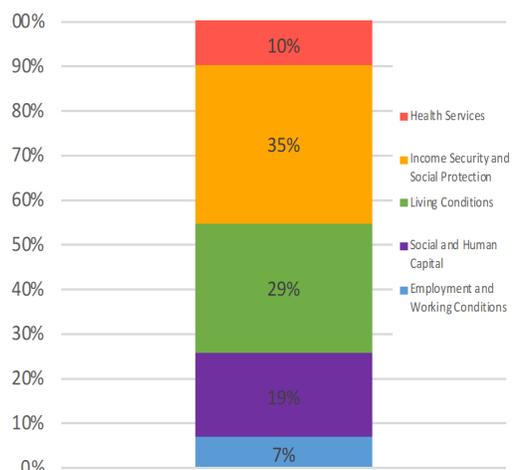
## Recommendation 26

**Appoint a Cabinet Member for Prevention and top slice budgets to spend on preventative policies.**

## Recommendation 27

**Invest in and value the important role biodiverse green and blue spaces play in supporting people's health and community well-being.**

Decomposing the gap in health status between poorest and richest income quintiles over 36 European countries



% of the gap explained by differences in 5 factors, controlling for age & gender (based on analysis of EQLS)

## Equality for all

Welsh society is unfortunately not equal and current and future trends look set to exacerbate this if changes are not made. For example, we know that climate change is likely to hit the poorest hardest if we don't ensure there is a just transition to a low carbon Wales. Racial inequality and gender inequality are still endemic in our society, as are socio-economic factors in determining health and educational outcomes. People from minority groups are also still under-represented in decision making.

Existing societal and institutional inequalities must be addressed whilst ensuring they prepare for the future, making policy now which seeks to reduce future inequalities.

The pandemic has both highlighted and exacerbated existing inequalities in society, with a devastating impact on the poorest communities in Wales, according to the Senedd's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee.

Jönköping, a city of around 120,000 in Sweden, won the 2021 Access City Award for its all-encompassing approach to accessibility. This includes tailored support to access local jobs, continuous collaboration with businesses and organisations to improve accessibility of both public services and buildings, involvement of key players such as disability organisations at all stages of new projects and planning decisions.

### Recommendation 28

**Create a Disability Rights Strategy and Action Plan to tackle the ableism and inequalities experienced by disabled people in Wales.**

### Recommendation 29

**Set ambitious targets for recruitment of women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and disabled people across the public sector.**

### Recommendation 30

**Create a Race Equality Strategy to tackle the inequalities experienced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Wales.**



## Create safe and cultural 'spaces in places'

### Recommendation 31

**Provide flexible public transport (e.g. on-demand routes and times) to encourage people to travel sustainably and more efficiently.**

### Recommendation 32

**Invest in community centres and anchor organisations, ensuring facilities and services meet local needs.**

### Recommendation 33

**Find ways to engage and include young people in decision-making processes through local groups, networks and youth councils, and work to improve political literacy.**

### Recommendation 34

**Encourage the creation of accessible and trusted LGBTQ+ spaces for young people, particularly in rural areas.**

Ciclovía is an intervention that started in Bogotá, Colombia and has spread to 100 cities in South America. It allows runners, walkers, cyclists, and skaters to exercise on streets by closing them off to cars, every Sunday morning and every public holiday.

The role of culture and creativity was highlighted by the pandemic, as well as the importance of human connection. This was especially felt amongst young people, who were cut off from friends, support networks, educational opportunities, and outlets of expression. The toll on the mental health has been severe, with young people at particular risk of loneliness and depression.

- During January to March 2021, 51% of women said they felt safe compared to 84% of men.
- There were 763 hate crimes recorded by police in which sexual orientation was considered the motivating factor in 2019-20, though Stonewall Cymru research suggests that many such incidents are not reported to the police.
- Younger people are the most likely to feel lonely, although during the pandemic adults aged 45 to 64 felt more lonely than in previous years. Those aged 65 and over still felt the least lonely.

It is vital that all young people - regardless of their background - have the means and the spaces to develop healthily and safely as a central part of our communities, and democracy.

# Demonstrate global citizenship and leadership

Wales is part of a worldwide community.

As global issues increasingly impact our daily lives - whether the pandemic or the climate and nature emergencies - it is vital people are given ample opportunities to fully understand them and how they interlink.

They need to be able to develop the skills and confidence to navigate through the impacts of global issues and work together to make a positive difference. This is especially important for young people who have had their education, future plans and lives interrupted by COVID-19 without having sufficient opportunities to influence the huge decisions that are impacting their futures.

Although Wales is a world leader in household recycling, we continue to use up resources faster than they can be replenished.

Whether the displacement of people from Ukraine or the climate emergency, we have a crucial role to play in being a globally-responsible nation.

## Recommendation 35

**Create global citizenship and eco-literacy opportunities for all ages, including for the current workforce (e.g. international school twinning, community nature data gathering).**

## Recommendation 36

**Divest from all sources of harm, e.g. fossil fuels, pollutants, and goods driving deforestation and arms trade.**

## Recommendation 37

**Set up repair cafes, re-use centres and support school uniform swap shops.**

## Recommendation 38

**Act in line with the Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary principles and demonstrate how local key services and provisions like transport, education and housing will support this vision.**

## Recommendation 39

**Recognise people who are displaced by natural disasters and climate change as refugees and advocate for them to be given refugee status.**

# Build appropriate, affordable and sustainable homes

Housing is a major challenge, but one which also presents opportunities. Decarbonising and retrofitting housing stock could mean thousands of new jobs and upskilling the existing workforce.

Wales has some of the oldest and least efficient housing stock in Western Europe. Retrofitting insulation and decarbonisation is not only an opportunity to tackle fuel poverty, but could create thousands of new jobs.

Additionally, sustainable and sensitive planning means meeting the needs of our communities and providing the conditions for new ones to thrive.

'880 Cities' in Toronto, Canada, is the concept that communities should be built around the needs of everyone, whether rich or poor, 8 or 80.

In Brussels, 350 intergenerational homes are being created to enable home sharing - an older person offering a spare room at low cost to a young person in exchange for help and companionship.

The Netherlands' mortgage rules allow households to borrow up to €25,000 extra to purchase or refurbish to a net zero energy home.

## Recommendation 40

**Adopt a placemaking approach for all community policy and funding decisions.**

## Recommendation 41

**Encourage use of local contractors, supply chains and employment opportunities.**

## Recommendation 42

**Require all publicly funded buildings (including housing developments) to be carbon neutral.**

## Recommendation 43

**Ensure planning decisions are aligned with the needs of the local community including the need to facilitate and promote the use of Welsh as a community language.**



## Widen access to culture and provide services through the medium of Welsh and other community languages

Culture and creativity are an integral part of our lives and our societies. However as a sector it is one of the more vulnerable, being hit particularly hard by the pandemic and by austerity.

Creative thinking will be needed to reset Wales post-COVID. Creative and cultural professionals have a unique role to play in creating vibrant communities, and highlighting big issues like climate change, loneliness and mental health.

Mexico City - 'Laboratorio para la Ciudad' is Latin America's first urban innovation lab, designed to help reform the city. It consists of 20 young people various backgrounds (urban, political sciences, humanities, social sciences, art, activism, film making, and an adviser for cities and institutions). They provide creativity and the ability to imagine a different, better and more participatory kind of future for the city.

The cultural trail in Indianapolis, USA, is a curbed, paved, richly landscaped, and lit bicycle and pedestrian pathway that connects all cultural venues in the urban core. It is an exploration trail designed to connect people to the city centre.

### Recommendation 44

**Ensure affordable and inclusive access and participation to arts, culture and sports, and involve all impacted voices when making decisions on venues, practice spaces etc.**

### Recommendation 45

**Ensure adequate funding for the Welsh language to reach the targets of a million Welsh speakers by 2050, working with voluntary sector and community anchor organisations.**

### Recommendation 46

**Make high streets more attractive to shoppers and businesses by working with cultural professionals and freelancers.**

### Recommendation 47

**Work with communities of faith, diaspora communities and the voluntary sector to support and celebrate diverse cultures and languages within communities.**

# A Future Public Sector

What's your vision for a future fit public sector? What processes, policies and strategy do you have in place to ensure the local government responds to current and future needs?

Cincinnati in the United States is showing citizens how the government policies affect where they live. The CincyInsights portal allows users to track public spending, business activity, ambulance calls, and services relevant to their neighbourhood including rubbish collections. The platform has significantly increased the use of and demand for public data, as well as improved public services.

The Scottish Government have placed kindness within their core values and reflected this in the National Performance Framework. They have begun to recognise this change in actions as well as words by measuring and auditing for kindness, designing policy for kindness and regulating for kindness. Carnegie Trust research puts Scotland above Wales, Northern Ireland and England for public perceptions of how kindly they have been treated.

## Recommendation 48

**Ensure all procurement contracts include and require carbon reduction.**

## Recommendation 49

**Make knowledge and expertise on the interests of future generations a key requirement of at least one post on every public sector board.**

## Recommendation 50

**Create a long-term vision and strategy for the Local Authority fit for the future.**

## Recommendation 51

**Introduce a fast-track programme within Local Authorities to recruit people from seldom-heard groups into senior policy development roles.**

## Recommendation 52

**Promote kindness at every level of the Local Authority and in public policy and financial decisions.**

# Manifesto for the Future

You can find the full Future Generations Report with all the recommendations and findings on our website or if you are viewing this document electronically you can be directed to the report by clicking [here](#).

For all queries please email:  
[contactus@futuregenerations.wales](mailto:contactus@futuregenerations.wales).

