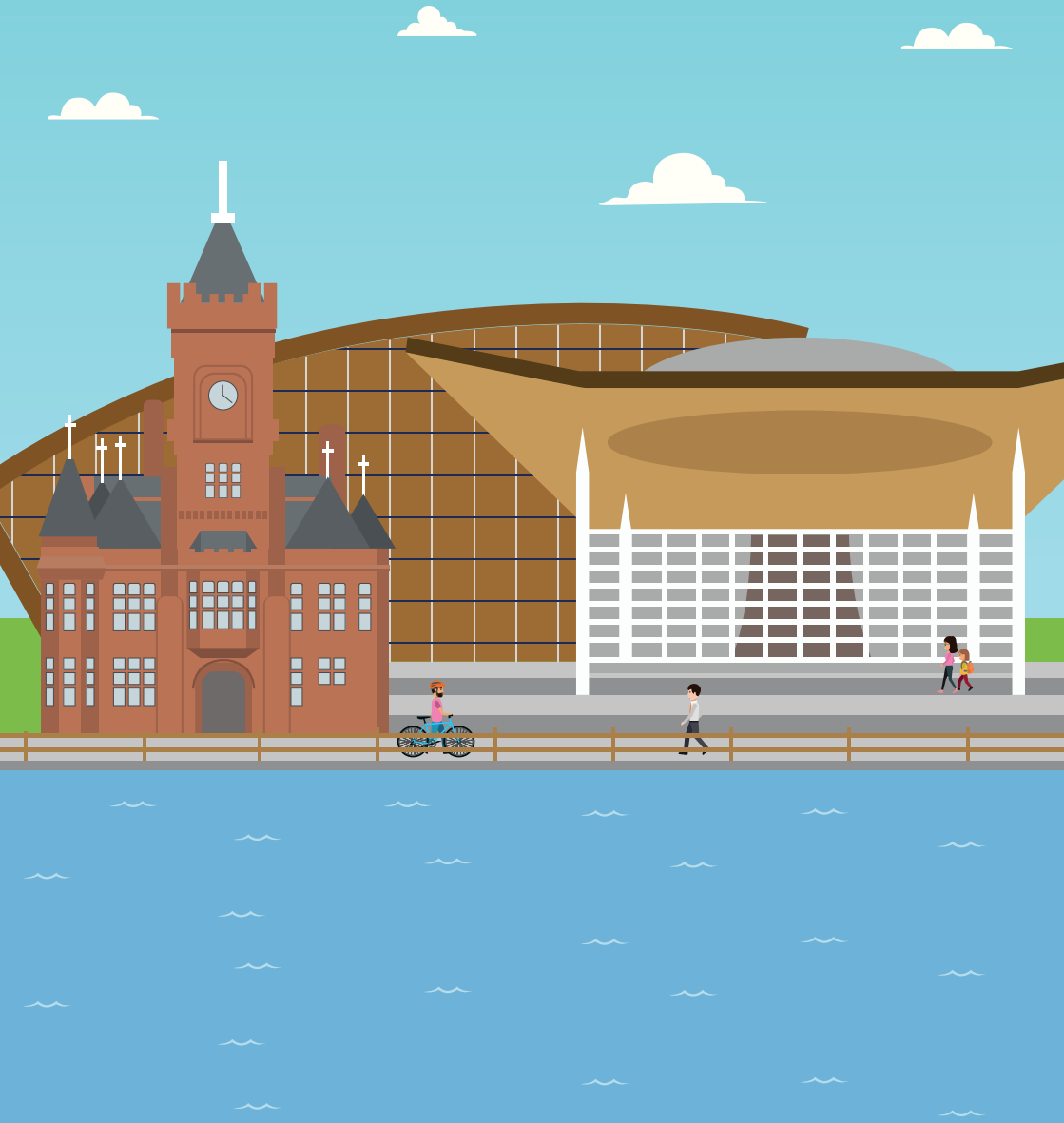




**Cyfoeth
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**Natural
Resources
Wales**

2026 and beyond: Bold steps for people and the environment



A greener, fairer Wales starts here: Our call to our next Senedd

Wales faces urgent challenges, from climate change to pollution, rising costs, and pressure on our land. The next Senedd will decide our future. At Natural Resources Wales, we see what works and what doesn't.

Right now, our environment is under threat because decisions are too fragmented, polluters slip through the cracks, and short-term fixes fall short.

We're calling on Wales's next leaders to back clear, bold, practical plans—plans that protect our rivers, lands, communities, and climate for generations to come.



Water quality: Act now to protect our rivers and health

We propose stronger powers to hit polluters fast and fair.

We must ban toxic 'forever chemicals' like PFAS to safeguard families and wildlife.

And we need simple, science-backed rules to stop pollution from farms and industries—keeping our soil and water clean and safe.



Better places to live: Build safer, climate-ready communities

We call for smarter planning—no more homes in flood zones. We need better flood defenses to protect people and property.

We want new standards to make Wales's homes and towns resilient to floods, heatwaves, and storms.

Every public body should lead by example, cutting emissions, investing in green jobs, and building climate resilience.



Sustainable prosperity: Grow a green economy for all

We urge the next Senedd to launch a national green skills strategy—giving everyone a fair shot at green jobs.

We need to tackle waste at the source, designing products to last and be reused, not just recycled.

And it's time to massively invest in nature restoration - wetlands, peatlands, and marine habitats that create jobs and help Wales lead globally in climate solutions.

We need a plan for our land, that ensures we balance food, homes, energy, and nature for everyone's benefit.





A plan for our land:

Who decides what goes where?

We need a land plan for a thriving Wales.

Summary

Wales has a unique opportunity to lead the way in how we care for land, balancing food, homes, energy, and nature for everyone's benefit. A national land use strategy would help us work together, think long-term, and make joined-up decisions that give future generations a better, greener Wales.

Details

Wales faces many challenges, such as climate change, the loss of wildlife, food security, and a growing need for homes and energy. These priorities are often at odds with each other because there is no overall land plan. A national land use strategy would create a clear framework to balance these issues in a way that benefits everyone, communities, wildlife, and the economy.

This strategy should be based on evidence, involve stakeholders, and align with long-term goals for sustainability and wellbeing. With a unified land management approach, we can make fair, transparent decisions that will work for generations to come.

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Hit polluters where it hurts: Fairer, faster environmental justice

Summary

Everyone has a right to a clean and healthy environment, and most businesses want to do the right thing. By giving regulators fairer and faster powers, we can stop harm early, ensure polluters put things right, and restore public trust. This means safer rivers, cleaner air, and a level playing field for responsible industries.

Details

Polluters in Wales too often escape meaningful consequences due to outdated and limited enforcement tools. We can currently advise or prosecute, but there's little in between. This means many offenders go unpunished or face delayed consequences, undermining public trust and allowing damage to persist.

Civil sanctions offer us more enforcement tools and include variable monetary penalties, compliance notices, and restoration orders – all of which allow regulators to act quickly and proportionately. They are legally binding, fair, and adaptable to different scales of harm.

Expanding civil sanction powers across all environmental regimes would ensure that polluters face appropriate and timely consequences and are required to repair the damage they cause. It would also reduce the burden on the courts and help us to deliver more efficient enforcement with its limited resources.

Benefits of civil sanctions



Allows regulators to act quickly and proportionately



Enforcement tools that are legally binding and fair



Adaptable to different scales of harm



Polluters face appropriate and timely consequences



Reduces the burden on the courts



Strengthens public trust with timely consequences

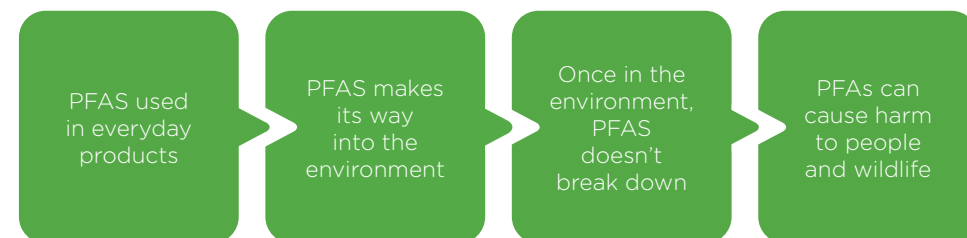


Kick out dangerous ‘forever chemicals’: A clean slate for future generations

Summary

Everyone in Wales deserves clean water, safe products, and a healthy environment. By phasing out PFAS in non-essential uses and cleaning up past contamination, we can protect people and nature from toxic ‘forever chemicals’ and build a future where safety comes first.

The PFAS cycle



Details

PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are a group of harmful chemicals that have been used in products like non-stick cookware, waterproof clothing, and even food packaging. They are often called ‘forever chemicals’ because they don’t break down in the environment, and once they’re in our bodies, they stay there.

There’s growing evidence that PFAS can cause serious health problems, including cancer, fertility issues, and damage to the liver and immune system. In Wales, PFAS have been found in rivers, lakes, and even some drinking water.

To protect people and wildlife, we should ban PFAS in products where they’re not essential, such as cosmetics and non-stick cookware. Any waste containing PFAS must be safely disposed of to stop further environmental harm. We also need to clean up contaminated areas and set stricter limits for PFAS in water and soil.

Where PFAS are still needed for industrial use, we must support safer, affordable ways to treat and dispose of the waste. Controlling PFAS in water is vital to protect health, nature, farming, and food safety.

The UK currently has no national standards for PFAS in water, making it hard to tackle the issue. Following the Health and Safety Executive’s advice to set clear legal limits would be a major step forward.



Stop waste before it starts: When recycling isn't enough

Summary

Wales has shown the world what's possible with recycling—now let's go further. By designing out waste, reusing materials, and creating products that last, we can build a circular economy that's better for people, the planet, and our pocket.

Details

Wales has made great progress in recycling, but the problem of waste continues to grow. While recycling helps, it's not enough to solve the problem if we continue to produce large amounts of disposable products. To truly tackle waste, we need to stop it from being created in the first place.

This means encouraging companies to design products that last longer, are easy to repair, and can be reused or repurposed. For example, we could create rules that make electronics, like phones and computers, easier to recycle and repair, rather than encouraging people to throw them away after just a few years.

Additionally, businesses should be encouraged to adopt circular economy practices, where they take responsibility for their products even after they're used. Instead of throwing things away, products should be returned, refurbished, and reused. By stopping waste at the source, we can reduce pollution, save resources, and create a more sustainable economy.



Upgrade Wales for a changing climate: Build resilience, cut costs

Summary

By preparing today, we can protect tomorrow. From greener homes to flood-resilient streets, every upgrade we make helps communities stay safe, reduces bills, and creates green jobs. Let's invest in smarter design and energy efficiency to build a stronger, fairer Wales.

Details

Wales is already feeling the effects of climate change, with more frequent flooding, heatwaves, and extreme weather. To protect people, homes, and infrastructure, we need urgent investment in both climate resilience and energy efficiency.

At the same time, we must tackle the huge energy waste in our outdated housing and public buildings. Energy efficiency upgrades will reduce emissions, lower bills, and tackle fuel poverty.

This means:



Modernising building regulations to require flood-proofing, shading, natural ventilation, and climate-adapted design in new developments;



Retrofitting existing buildings with insulation, low-energy systems, and green roofs to reduce emissions and improve comfort;



Expanding green infrastructure like tree-lined streets, urban wetlands, and parks—to help towns cope with extreme weather;



Embedding climate resilience in planning, making it a core requirement for local development strategies.

Power nature and finance: Invest in a greener, resilient Wales

Summary

Nature is not a cost, it's an investment in our future. By funding restoration, unlocking green finance, and embedding climate resilience into every decision, we can turn our 30x30 goal into thriving landscapes, thriving communities, and thriving local economies.

Details

Wales's commitment to protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030 is ambitious, but progress is lagging due to underinvestment and limited strategic planning. To accelerate delivery, the Welsh Government must scale up investment in carbon-rich habitats such as peatlands, wetlands, and marine ecosystems that deliver for both biodiversity and climate adaptation.

This means embedding legally-binding climate risk assessments and adaptation strategies into all public planning and development decisions. It also means aligning conservation and resilience funding with a bold green finance strategy to deliver transformational change.

We propose the creation of a Welsh Green Investment Fund to support local nature recovery, clean energy, and climate-resilient infrastructure—mirroring models like the UK's National Wealth Fund. New tools like green bonds, sustainability-linked disclosures, and tax incentives for green innovation can attract private investment and de-risk nature and climate projects. Public-private partnerships can play a key role in scaling these efforts, as demonstrated by initiatives like Great British Energy.

A connected and well-funded approach will:



Deliver on the 30x30 pledge by protecting and restoring key ecosystems;



Create green jobs and economic growth through sustainable enterprise;



Build climate resilience into communities, infrastructure, and land use;



Position Wales as a global leader in nature-positive investment and innovation.



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Just as we care for our patients every day, we must care for the world they live in. Climate action isn't separate from healthcare - it's part of protecting lives, now and in the future.

”



Climate action from every public body:

Lead by example

Summary

Public bodies have the power to lead. By embedding climate action into every decision across health, education, housing, and transport, we can unlock green jobs, cut emissions, and improve wellbeing across Wales.

Details

Some public bodies in Wales have plans to deal with climate change, but many don't have enough resources or haven't fully built them into their day-to-day work.

All public bodies should be required to create and carry out plans to manage climate risks and adapt to future impacts. These plans should come with dedicated funding to make them happen.

Climate risk and adaptation must become part of everyday decision-making, with regular checks to track progress and hold organisations accountable.

Training and support will help public bodies deliver strong, effective plans.

By leading the way on climate action, Wales can unlock new green jobs, support communities, and improve wellbeing for future generations.



- ☒ Have a clear climate plan
- ☒ Train staff to act on climate
- ☒ Cut emissions from buildings and travel
- ☐ Build greener hospitals and clinics
- ☐ Improve air quality
- ☐ Support staff and communities through change

Stop building in the danger zone: Safer homes for a safer future

Summary

Everyone deserves a safe place to live. By planning wisely and avoiding flood-prone areas, we can protect people, reduce costs, and create homes and infrastructure that stand the test of time. Let's build smarter, not riskier.

Details

As climate change increases the risk of flooding, development in flood-prone areas puts lives and property at risk. A national policy should prevent new construction in floodplains and other high-risk zones. This includes reviewing existing sites and enforcing stricter planning regulations. Investing in flood prevention infrastructure and smarter land-use planning will help reduce long-term flood damage and improve climate resilience.

Actions



Investing in flood prevention infrastructure



Smarter land-use planning



Prevent new construction in floodplains



Stricter planning regulations

Benefits



Reduce long-term flood damage and incurring costs



Improve climate resilience



Infrastructure that stand the test of time



Protect people and their homes





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Without the right ingredients – soil tests, a proper plan, and careful timing – we risk doing more harm than good. Clear standards help us protect our land, our water, and the wildlife that depends on them.

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Safe and sustainable land use: Clear rules for a healthier Wales

Summary

Healthy soil, clean water and safe food begin with how we manage land. By setting clear, science-based standards for spreading materials and managing nutrients, we can protect our natural resources and support farmers to do what's best for land and livestock alike.

Details

The current rules for spreading organic manures on land are complex and not always consistent. There is no clear, unified approach to Nutrient Management Planning that links soil and crop needs with proven agricultural benefit.

These regulations should be reviewed to check whether they offer enough protection for the environment.

By exploring regulatory reform and wider policy incentives, we can build a more joined-up and sustainable system for managing nutrients and reducing their impact on soil, water, and air.

Over-application or inappropriate use of materials – both traditional (slurry and manure) and new (basalt rock dust) can lead to soil and water contamination, health risks, and biodiversity loss. Wales should establish standards for safe land application, including permissible contaminant levels and guidelines for application rates. Testing, certification, traceability, environmental monitoring, and public access to information are key to ensuring that materials applied to land are safe and beneficial.

10 Key Actions to Protect Wales's Natural Resources

Right now, our environment is under threat because decisions are too fragmented, polluters slip through the cracks, and short-term fixes fall short. We need clear, bold, practical plans that reach beyond election cycles and protect our rivers, lands, communities, and climate for generations to come. To do so, we're recommending the following 10 key actions:

- 1 Create a National Land Use Strategy to balance climate, wildlife, food security, housing, and energy needs.
- 2 Give regulators stronger civil sanction powers to act quickly and hold polluters accountable.
- 3 Phase out harmful PFAS in non-essential uses and set legal limits for water contamination.
- 4 Support circular economy models, making businesses responsible for products after use.
- 5 Invest in climate resilience and energy efficiency, embedding both in planning rules.
- 6 Deliver a National Green Skills Strategy, funding apprenticeships and reskilling for green jobs.
- 7 Set up a Welsh Green Investment Fund for nature recovery and clean infrastructure.
- 8 Make all public bodies plan for climate risks and future-proof their services.
- 9 Stop building on floodplains, reviewing current and new sites with stricter rules.
- 10 Unify Nutrient Management Planning to reduce pollution and protect soil, water, and air.