

The Wales We Want

"We are not for names, nor men, nor titles of Government, nor are we for this party nor against the other ... but we are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom." Edward Burrough, 1659

Quakers do not use a form of words to reflect belief, but share an experience that indicates that there is something, that some will call God, that is available to all people. The inference from that experience leads us to work for peace, equality, truth, sustainability and justice. It is, however, no longer sufficient for us to try to shape our own lives, since our actions are now defined by the political context. We can influence it in small ways, by petitions, letters, campaigns, by conscientious objection to consumption, but the wider society, of which we are a part, continues its march towards global climate catastrophe, war preparations and increased inequality.

Build Back Better, or as it was?

The Coronavirus Pandemic has brought nations to a stand-still but that is presenting situations that many people thought were impossible, showing possibilities. For many, however, the immediate concern is to restore the economy, ignoring the real crisis of global climate breakdown and economic justice

There is an awareness of the possibilities for change, but without any clear definition of how that change should be led. In that situation the status quo becomes the easy option, needing less imagination or detailed thought to make that the target. The alternatives are harder.

Wales, since devolution, has inspired with its legislation, particularly as all Government action has to be measured against the well being of future generations.

As we reflect on the Wales that we, Quakers in Wales, want to see established, we have to be aware that many of the changes we want are controlled by the reserved powers of the UK Government, and that European funding for Wales is now to be diverted into a UK Government Community Fund and branded as such. Many of our aspirations depend on the restoration of the allocation for Wales. This limitation cannot be allowed to colour our vision of the Wales we want to live in, although it does affect the way in which we may progress towards it.

The Welsh Government/Senedd Cymru is referred to throughout as the Senedd.

We congratulate the Senedd on supporting Wales to become a leader amongst bi-lingual societies, and hope that they will continue to promote and strengthen the use of the Welsh language.

Information

The Senedd has comprehensive, bilingual and transparent on-line information which is available to many if sought. This needs to become available in a variety of ways to more people, especially those who are not conversant with technology. Training assistance is needed for people without these skills. Detailed documents need to be accompanied with more accessible, shorter materials. The ability for subscribers to get notifications of all new

publications is important.

Peace

We welcome the orientation of the Senedd's International Strategy to reflect wellbeing goals, but we regret any instance where the economic benefits of the arms trade have outweighed wellbeing and ethics.

We welcome the appointment of a Minister for International Relations in the Senedd. We want that position to advocate for a more peaceful, just and equal world.

We welcome the establishment of a Peace Academy in Wales.

We want to live in a Wales which

- lives in peace with the rest of the World;
- takes into account the impact of armed conflict on the environment and on human welfare worldwide, and shapes its policies and actions accordingly – e.g. in seriously researching and implementing alternatives to violence.
- Includes in our children and young people's education, the knowledge, skills and behaviours that promote a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and an appreciation of Wales' long-standing peace heritage as well as its ongoing appreciation of Wales' contribution to sustainable development as set out in Sustainable Development Goal 4.7;
- We do not want
 - to have any industry that manufactures or contributes to manufacturing weapons of war,
 - an economy that benefits from the sale of weapons of war or of forceful repression
 - our country to house training grounds or research facilities that practice and develop the practicalities of war.
 - Members of the armed forces visiting schools for recruitment purposes.

Education

- We welcome the new Welsh curriculum with its emphasis on four core purposes which support young people to develop the skills and attitudes to fit them for life and work as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world including critical thinking, creativity, adaptability and emotional intelligence.
- We ask that our children and young people's education include the knowledge, skills and behaviours that promote a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and an appreciation of Wales' contribution to sustainable development as set out in Sustainable Development Goal 4.7. We welcome the recent initiatives of Peaceful Schools delivered by Quakers and others.
- We ask that the Senedd agree to include the history of BAME people in the teaching of history in Wales

- We support the opportunities for all pupils to learn Welsh so they can benefit from, and contribute to, a bilingual society. We support the Welsh language immersion practices in nursery schools and hope that English will not become a compulsory element at this stage. Using different languages is not a sign of difference but an acceptance of diversity and an invitation to inclusion.
- We ask that all staff in our schools educate our young people to understand:
 - That we live on one planet, but use the resources equivalent to three planets, we must use its resources in ways which inform our environmental ambitions;
 - how their nation needs to live to limit the impact on the planet, because climate breakdown is endangering their future;
 - the choices they have to make, for example in where they live, what they buy; money and debt, to prepare them for life;
 - the importance of their input into community life;
 - how to treat each other with respect, work together and learn skills to solve problems in a constructive way;
 - how to live, work and play with others, co-operating rather than competing;
 - Wales' place in the world, in terms of language and culture which is an acceptance of diversity and an invitation to inclusion, encouraging interdependency, sustainability, equality and human rights.
- We want an education system that:
 - is free for all, available to all, at whatever age, (*life long education*);
 - recognises, nurtures and values the abilities and gifts of each person, and does not confine learning to subjects that just apply to the world of work;
 - equips pupils with vocational and technical skills so that they have the choice to remain in their communities and develop businesses, should they so wish;
 - creates an awareness of the history of colonialism;
 - recognises the benefits of living and working alongside others from a different cultural and religious background;
 - does not promote Welsh history as simply white, Christian, homogenous and static but gives space to historically grounded accounts of it, and recognises the benefits of all the inward migrations including those brought by BAME peoples.

Environment

- We want to live in a Wales that
 - has addressed the New Green Deal, that has recognised the economic disaster of the Covid-19 lock-down, and is re-building through investment in green industries, improving housing stock, addressing transport, redirecting the talents of our workers and other resources to be environmentally friendly.

- explores public funding methods such as Climate Income (sometimes called 'carbon fee and dividend') to reduce our emissions. It imposes a carbon tax on the sale of fossil fuels, and then distributes the revenue of this tax over the entire population as a monthly income or regular payment, and which could become a basis for a national basic income;
- recognises and accepts that we live on one planet, but are inline to use the resources of three, which is insupportable, and which limits our economic and life style ambitions, as we work towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030;
- measures its progress in wellbeing rather than gross domestic product;
- lives in balance with its environment;
- has a chemical footprint that minimises global warming;
- creates energy only through non-polluting methods;
- recognises that small scale, locally produced energy is in the interests of both the community and the environment,
- allows, designs and creates an environment that absorbs more carbon dioxide from the air than we create;
- holds rainfall naturally so that it is released gently and avoids flooding;
- encourage bio-diversity to flourish naturally;
- embraces the technology that already exists, and adds the political ambition;
- take the lead in planning (a Wales Climate Action Plan) and making the changes that will avoid climate disaster;
- re-establishes the Climate Change Commission for Wales, to provide specialist research and input;
- encourages the innovative work of companies such as River Simple in Llandrindod, which has designed and built Hydrogen powered cars, funded by a totally different finance arrangement;
- All of these would benefit a population that is then living, and able to work, in a country of beauty, clean air and good food.
- The Senedd should re-examine the zero rating of self catering accommodation, removing differences in VAT and planning fees. These benefits reduce the income that should help to sustain our local services and have a substantial cultural impact on the local community, especially in the winter and, as just seen, during a pandemic.
- The UK is moving away from European Union environmental regulations, due to Brexit, the Senedd should find ways of re instating that level of protection.

- We ask that the Wales Climate Plan should assess the role of land use, (Agriculture, forestry) which may include assessing the impact on and of diet and exports;
- While planning for world leading environmental ambitions there are still existing problems that need to be addressed, the flooding problem in Fairbourne, mining spoil slips 55 years after Aberfan, multi rise flats with inflammable cladding three years after Grenfell.
- There will need to be plans in place for loss of homes due to sea rise through climate change.

Health

- We want an integrated health service:
 - that treats disease where it occurs, but is designed to prevent it;
 - with good communication and managed interaction between patients, hospitals, home care, care homes and GPs;
 - that develops and uses innovative electronic communications. Additional support is needed for those who are unfamiliar with technological ways of communicating,
 - to be a service free at the point of need, for both health and care;
- For a generation the UK has trained only a small proportion of our requirement for doctors and nurses, with a severe in-balance between numbers wanting to train, need, and training places, content with a colonial attitude that drew key workers from the rest of the world; we want to see Welsh trained medical staff in demand across the world. We need to show respect for these crucial health and care workers, increase training, career paths and remuneration.
- We are concerned about the higher incidence of infection and death amongst BAME health workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, which must be investigated and action taken to avoid repetition. Care Homes, their residents and staff must be accorded the priority, respect and funding that they require and deserve.
- We welcome the new app for communication between local Health professionals and consultants, pharmacists and health centre
- Care homes are vulnerable after the Covid-19 disaster, 50% are particularly at risk. 120 Care homes in Wales are already run as social enterprises. We ask that The Senedd takes action to encourage further take up of this pattern of ownership. It is best practice for care homes being based on well-being and social value, not profit, for the residents and the workers they employ and supply chains they work with.

Justice

- We ask the Senedd recognises that our prisons should be seen as a safety net, places that can help people to rebalance their lives and regain their place in society.

- We ask that our prisons become places
 - of rehabilitation, where every offender through education, skill training and meaningful work is given the best hope of a different life
 - of safety, equality and respect for all who live and work there
 - to have sufficient, well-trained, high-quality staff who are committed to a rehabilitative culture and feel valued in their work
 - to have a commitment to the families of offenders and recognise the huge benefits of keeping the link between the offender and his/her family.
 - placed where prisoners can be visited by families, The pandemic made it possible to develop the use of video calls between prisoners and their families. We ask that this be continued and developed. It is cheap and easy.
- We ask that our probation service
 - be effective and professional, working to help offenders to integrate into society;
 - enable a high level of success ‘beyond the gate’, supporting women and men in the difficult time of leaving prison and finding a clean, safe place to live and work or an education placement during the first months out of prison;
 - give ex-offenders, men and women, a fair chance of a new life by providing them with sufficient money to survive;
 - *The italicised points below are not directly or only prison-related, also covering non-offenders. Do they belong in a separate category of ‘social care’ or combined category of ‘health and social care’? (maybe care homes, ex-armed forces, benefit claimants here too?)*
 - help negotiate the hurdles that are often placed in the way through no fault of their own e.g. no transport or money;
 - guarantee that no-one will be left to sleep on the streets on leaving prison;
 - approach the health and well-being of their clients proactively with the aim of finding remission from addiction and establishing good health;
- We need a devolved Justice system for Wales to support Senedd legislation and to meet bilingual needs and to reduce extensive travel.
- We ask that our justice system:
 - recognise that a woman’s needs in prison are not the same as a man’s and that sentencing and their treatment in prison reflects this;
 - replace short sentences with other community and education alternatives, including restorative justice, and circles of support and accountability, acknowledging that the rehabilitation of an offender takes time;
 - be fully representative of the public in its choice of judges and magistrates;

more women, more people from working class backgrounds, more BAME.

Sanctuary

Note: Migration can be caused by war, pestilence, or (and this is less recognised) development. Migration is practically always a survival move.

We want a Wales that;

- takes pride in its Sanctuary movement;
- becomes the first (or one of the first) Sanctuary nations;
- does not cause the migration of people elsewhere;
- provides asylum seekers and refugees with truly adequate means of survival neither through permission to work or a monetary allowance or both.
- works with the other nations of the UK and Europe to:
 - establish legal paths for migration, and stop the criminalisation of humanitarian aid;
 - launch a European Search and Rescue Operation to replace Frontex;
 - encourage family reunification;
 - accept our fair share of asylum seekers, implementing fast and fair asylum proceedings and access to work.

Land

The Senedd should explore land ownership and discern which of the following should be made available in Wales:

- The Community Right to Buy is a pre-emptive right to buy land for communities throughout Scotland under Part 2 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. It provides for those communities, who successfully register a community interest in land, to have the first option to buy when the registered land is offered for sale. We ask that this right is extended to the people of Wales
- The Commons are those resources that are used by communities, e.g our forests, and open lands, our settlements, our energy provision, our water and natural resources. Rather than have these resources owned either by private enterprise as a nationalised asset they could be owned in common by the people who use them. This system
 - obliges people to work together, to sustain their resources and decide how the income should be used;
 - gives community life a clear focus, depends on democracy in its truest form, destroys inequality;
 - provides an incentive to protect the living world;
 - creates, in sum, a politics of belonging in the form of Community Land Trusts, Community Energy Trusts, Community Housing Trusts, etc.;
 - uses structures such as co-operatives and social enterprises.
- We want a Wales that has open and full land registry showing who are the beneficiaries; and that no public grants or subsidies be given to unregistered land; and that land not registered within 4 years of this reform will become the property of the local community,

with open and full disclosure of tax returns, where the income occurred and who were the beneficiaries of holding companies.

The Planning Process is no longer fit for purpose, it

- Needs to be rethought to start with the One Planet concept, then calculate what is the land and seaboard, how much can it support in terms of wind, solar, biofibre, food, wildlife, absorption of CO₂ etc. and then plan to remain within that portion.
- is too concerned with the look of the building rather than the function.
- works against the adaptation of old buildings , e.g. churches, to modern, wider community use;
- Works against adapting old buildings to mitigate against the effects of the coming Climate Disaster;
- Is too geared to Agricultural use that may well not equate with the Well-Being of Future Generations (e.g. chicken farms that pollute rivers);
- second homes need to be a separate planning category

Transport

- We welcome the change from Arriva to Transport for Wales,
- We regret that while Germany are investing in hydrogen powered trains that run for 600 kms on clean Hydrogen TfW are still purchasing diesel units;
- We want direct and speedy links between north Wales and mid Wales and south Wales.
- We want a Wales that has an integrated transport system:
 - that works on non fossil fuels, reflecting the need to react to the Climate Crisis. CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions from transport are second only to buildings;
 - taking pressure off roads and delivering people where and when they want, we recognise that in rural areas cars are important, but while fossil fuels must be phased out as soon as possible electric batteries depend on materials from environmentally sensitive areas that have poor employment history. The Senedd should promote car sharing schemes;
 - Which aids equality of opportunity, bringing work opportunities to deprived communities, and,
 - allows public transport commuting to the centres of the economy.
 - Reducing the number of cars in towns, delivery vehicles and vehicles for disabled allowed but limited to walking pace,
- The Senedd should further extend the long-distance cycle routes and provide more cycle lanes in cities.
- Emissions from aircraft are a major pollutant. We want the Senedd to consider from the point of view of wellbeing of future generations, whether Cardiff Airport should continue to be supported.

Technology

- We want a Wales of equal technological opportunity,
 - where access to the internet is affordable for all (which would entail being free to the poorest)
 - where home workers can operate from anywhere in Wales to reduce their carbon footprint.
 - where small businesses and agriculture can utilise mobile phone systems and the latest generation of WiFi to be able to work in complementary ways with others in the UK and beyond.
 - where the data of its population is seen as their property

General

- We in Wales strive to be the first nation to eradicate person on person physical, emotional and sexual violence. We are proud that the Senedd has banned the smacking of children.
- We commend the Senedd's ongoing work to counter and eradicate domestic violence.
- We strive to eradicate poverty and any form of discrimination.
- We encourage the Welsh Government in their work to improve financial integration and to use community based initiatives such as Credit Unions to assist this.
- We strive to create a country where each person living in Wales, of whatever nationality, rejoices in the Welsh identity, culture and nation.

We do not need to be afraid of the dark, because God is there. The future of this earth need not be in the hands of the world's "leaders". The world is in God's hands if we are led by God. Let us be led by the Spirit. Let us walk with a smile into the dark.' (Qf&p 29.01).

This document has been edited by Peter Hussey. Every effort has been made to ensure that it reflects the views of Quakers in Wales, in particular those partaking in Meeting of Friends in Wales, however all errors and omissions are the editor's.