



Plaid Cymru
The Party of Wales



MANIFESTO 2003





In this manifesto Plaid Cymru - The Party of Wales outlines a coherent, alternative programme for the government of our country. It is a document that is both radical in its aims and realistic in its policies. It provides a unique opportunity for the revitalisation of Wales that so many of our people have waited to see.

These policies are the product of long and deep consultation with experts, party members, and the public at large. That process itself is an indication of the commitment of Plaid Cymru - The Party of Wales to provide better, more inclusive government for our country. These policies have been accurately costed and work within the confines of the present funding settlement. We will direct these limited resources to maximum effect. We are determined to use the present powers of the Assembly to the full, and within these pages you will find clear policies for transforming public services, reinvigorating the economy, and creating safer communities.

But we are also quite clear that the present Assembly powers are inadequate for the achievement of the complete transformation that our country so desperately needs. To that end we will establish a National Convention to bring together all strands of political, civic, and social opinion to discern a more coherent and effective structure for the governance of Wales.

Plaid Cymru - The Party of Wales is committed to nothing less than the transformation of Wales. This manifesto is the guarantee of our commitment.

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I THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

(I) A WASTED OPPORTUNITY: THE FIRST FOUR YEARS

The establishment of the National Assembly for Wales in May 1999 was heralded as a new beginning for our nation. It coincided with, and to a great extent resulted from, a heightened sense of national consciousness over a period of several years.

It followed nearly two decades of Conservative government, during which a whole raft of policies was implemented against the will of the people of Wales. Now, for the first time in 600 years, a degree of Welsh self-government was in place. Here then was an unprecedented opportunity to develop a policy programme designed to meet the needs of Wales, to tackle its problems and release its potential.

There were high hopes that the establishment of the National Assembly would lead to significant improvements in people's lives, especially in some of our most deprived communities.

When we set those high hopes of 1999 against today's reality, the frustration, even disillusionment, that many feel is not surprising. There is a widespread perception that the existence of the Assembly Government has failed to fulfil the expectation of improvement in people's lives and the condition of their communities.

Two factors in particular have contributed to the widespread sense of disappointment.

First, Labour in 1999 embarked upon the task of governing Wales with no policy programme worth the name. Their energies had been taken up with internecine fighting, and they had in any case no tradition of developing policy specifically designed for Wales. Under Alun Michael the Labour administration was characterised by indecision and drift, their first priority being quite clearly to implement Westminster New Labour policies in Wales with little variation.

The Labour-Liberal Democrat Coalition

provided an opportunity for a new beginning. However internal difficulties, together with a lack of any clear sense of direction, have prevented progress.

The greatest failure has been in the key field of the economy. The new First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, insisted on combining his leadership duty with the Economic Development portfolio. There followed a ten-month period when the Liberal Democrat leader Mike German took responsibility for Economic Development, until he was forced to stand down while under police investigation. For another eight months the First Minister again took responsibility for the economy, until the return of Mike German - not to his former portfolio, but as Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad. Andrew Davies became the third Economic Development Minister, and Mike German the third Agriculture Minister, in four years. Small wonder that both industrial and rural Wales have experienced such misery and so little hope

Thus was the very considerable goodwill enjoyed by the new Government of Wales squandered.

Despite this record of indecision and drift, Plaid Cymru the Party of Wales has no doubt that the establishment of the National Assembly constituted a major step forward in Wales's governance compared to the travesty of democracy that existed before.

There have been a number of important policy innovations, many instigated by Plaid Cymru, that could never have emerged from the old Welsh Office. Also, minds are being concentrated at last on Wales's needs, so that distinctive Welsh policies can be developed. And it is no small thing that the Government of Wales will soon have to face the verdict of the electorate on their record. This is in clear contrast to the 1980s and 1990s, when we were governed by a succession of Secretaries of State who had no popular mandate in Wales.

That our new system of government is far more open and transparent than under the



old system is an enormous gain. This has enabled Plaid Cymru to expose the way Wales was short-changed by the UK Treasury in relation to the European Structural Funds. As a result Wales is better off to the tune of hundreds of million pounds per year.

However, what has become increasingly clear is that the National Assembly is a deeply flawed model of government. This is the second reason for the widespread disappointment mentioned above.

Plaid Cymru argued from the outset that the Assembly's powers, based entirely on secondary legislation, were seriously inadequate, and the experience of the past four years has vindicated this view.

However, the degree of confusion over what powers are actually devolved has proved to have been even greater than expected.

This confusion derives from the fundamental deficiencies of the 1998 Government of Wales Act. Rather than giving the Assembly a general competence in the areas of its responsibility, the Act transferred to it piecemeal certain powers while retaining others, either wholly or in part. The result is enormous complexity, and a constant uncertainty as to whether or not the Assembly has the power to act in a particular way.

A third cause of frustration has been exposed as a result of the greater transparency resulting from the creation of the National Assembly. This is the serious injustice of the way in which Wales is funded by Westminster.

The funding method is based on the so-called Barnett formula. Introduced as a temporary expedient to simplify the process of determining the annual block grant for Scotland and Wales over 20 years ago, it completely fails to reflect the way in which Wales' needs have dramatically changed over that period. The result is that Wales is under-funded to the tune of some £800m per annum. The effect is a continuing struggle to keep up with the level of service delivery and new development in England.

(2) STATE OF THE NATION

When we examine the reality of Wales in 2003, we see the scale of the challenge involved in regenerating our country.

Having dominated Welsh politics for most of the twentieth century, Labour must accept a major share of the responsibility for the state of our nation today.

Bearing in mind the chronic difficulties in our health service, our under-performing economy, our deeply unjust society, and the poverty of far too many of our people, it is hardly an exaggeration to describe Wales in the year 2003 as a country in crisis.

It is a sad fact that the prosperity gap between Wales and the rest of the UK has opened further since Labour came to power in Westminster in 1997 and in Cardiff in 1999.

- Wages in Wales have fallen from 89.1% of the UK average in 1998 to 86% in 2002.
- Nearly a quarter of our people are classified as being in the EU Basic Poverty category, and according to the Children's Commissioner one-third of our children live in poverty.
- Wales suffered a net loss of 12,000 manufacturing jobs between March 2001 and March 2002.
- Economic inactivity in Wales has increased by 5% under Labour, at double the UK rate for the same period, and there are now 22,000 more economically inactive 16-24 year olds than in 1999.

Following the almost total destruction of our traditional heavy industries, 20 years of neglect have turned the communities that sustained them into some of the poorest areas of the European Union.

This has led to disturbingly high levels of sickness and ill-health in these areas.

There, and indeed throughout Wales, people are suffering from inadequate provision of healthcare.

The problem is exacerbated by a lack of

adequate capacity to deal with it. There is a severe shortage of health professionals, with the recruitment and retention of GPs and nurses proving to be a serious problem. There is ample evidence of a low morale among staff arising from unsatisfactory working conditions.

Rather than concentrating on this fundamental problem, Labour has focused on introducing structural changes to the NHS in Wales. Far from simplifying the structure, the changes will lead to greater complexity and more bureaucracy - thus consuming millions of pounds of scarce NHS money that could otherwise have been spent on patient care.

During its four years in office, the Assembly's Labour government has utterly failed to put in place a credible economic development strategy to lift Wales out of the vicious circle of economic decline. The optimistically entitled document *A Winning Wales* has been widely criticised as little more than a wish-list with hopelessly unrealistic targets.

Moreover, there is also a severe imbalance of development and prosperity within Wales itself. Certain areas are suffering the ill-effects of overheating and congestion. In others, economic decline can be seen in town and countryside alike - from the former coalmining valleys of the South Glamorgan to rural Gwynedd and Ceredigion.

The decline in agriculture is having a catastrophic effect on our countryside. The lack of alternative employment is causing an exodus of the young and economically active, while many of those who stay in their communities are excluded from a housing market spiralling out of their reach. This is having a damaging effect on the vibrancy of these communities, and the effect is felt particularly deeply in those areas where Welsh is the natural language of the community. This poses a major threat to any strategy for the revival of the language and the building of a truly bilingual Wales.

Wales also suffers from an antiquated infrastructure. Our road network, especially

internally, is seriously inadequate and electronic communication links are lagging behind. Our rail services are starved of investment, and the possibility of further decline cannot be discounted.

Astonishingly, the state of Wales today has been presented as a success-story by the Labour-Liberal Democrat Government in the National Assembly - a perfect example of the triumph of spin over reality on the one hand, and the mediocrity of their vision for Wales on the other.

(3) RELEASING THE POTENTIAL

One of Plaid Cymru's key missions as a party is to challenge and to defeat such mediocrity and lack of ambition for Wales' future.

The Party of Wales rejects utterly Labour's view of Wales as a country doomed to dependency and second-class status.

We see Wales as a land of boundless potential. We have no illusions about the scale of the task of transforming our country, but what drives us is the conviction that our people can meet the challenge of building a better future.

We suffer from no lack of natural resources particularly in the key area of sustainable energy.

We have educational institutions of international reputation.

Far from being peripheral, we are well placed to access major markets and have good links with Ireland, one of Europe's tiger economies.

Our strong community tradition, and magnificent natural environment, with town and country in close proximity, are major assets. Combined with our rich cultural heritage, including our unique language, they contribute to a growing sense of national identity and pride that can release energies for improvement and growth.

We believe that Wales could become a model of sustainable development, bringing



together economic success and social justice while protecting the natural environment which is the basis of all our wealth.

The great challenge facing Wales today is to release the potential of our land and all its people. To succeed, the following factors are crucial:

- a positive attitude to Wales as a nation;
- a policy programme focused on meeting the key challenges;
- the greatest degree possible of power at the Welsh level;
- adequate financial resources.

In all of these factors, Labour has signally failed to meet the challenge, and its coalition partners the Liberal Democrats have acquiesced in that failure.

It is time for the Government of Wales to be led by a political party committed to the task of transforming our country and releasing its true potential.

II PLAID'S PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

A UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Our radical but realistic programme for government is based on our central principles of social justice, environmental sustainability and national development, together with a commitment to equal opportunities and equal citizenship for all inhabitants of Wales.

The two most urgent tasks for the next government of Wales will be:

- to safeguard and improve our public services; and
- to put in place a strategy for sustainable economic development.

Public services, including decent healthcare and fair educational opportunities for all are fundamental to civilised society. Some of these basic values are under threat at present, and we are committed to defending them against

New Labour's plans for creeping privatisation.

We reiterate our opposition to the privatisation of public services and our commitment to the delivery of those services efficiently, through funding from the public purse, and to all without distinction. At the same time, we will put a strong emphasis on reducing bureaucracy, and on using public money to the best effect.

We reject the obsession with the use within the public services of the internal market, which can generate inefficiency and unfairness.

We will certainly put an end to the cynical way in which Labour is distorting priorities and planning through constant target-setting and political spin.

We equally deplore New Labour's dependence on the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) for infrastructural development as particularly damaging and expensive.

We are equally committed to the challenge of transforming the prospects of the Welsh economy. Our aspirations for creating a better future for Wales and its people will ultimately depend on economic success.

The dispersal of prosperity and economic vitality to all of the regions of Wales is fundamental in this.

However, we believe that sustainable economic growth should enhance the quality of life as well as increasing material prosperity. Our strategy will have social justice and the enrichment of the environment at its heart.

The task of regenerating our communities must go hand in hand with economic development. This will involve the active participation and empowerment of people in the development process.

We regard cultural vitality and creativity as key contributors to economic regeneration, as well as enhancing our quality of life. While committed to the strengthening of the Welsh language and to building a bilingual nation, we also value and will promote the English-

language tradition of Wales. We welcome and will strongly encourage the growing cultural contribution of ethnic minority communities to the life of Wales.

We are committed to the promotion of equal opportunities. We will mainstream the promotion of equality across all aspects of government, including the work of ASPBs, for which targets will be set and backed where necessary by appropriate sanctions. We will establish effective means of consulting traditionally excluded groups, ensuring that organisations seeking to represent those groups are accountable.

We see the further empowerment of Wales and its people as essential to our future as a nation. We will make the greatest possible use of the National Assembly's existing powers. However, we will always operate on the presumption that decisions should be taken in Wales unless there are good reasons for them to be taken at a higher level.

Within the context of a wider vision for Wales's future, this Manifesto focuses on the Party of Wales's programme for government for the immediate future. Many of our proposals can be implemented within the Assembly's existing powers; others will require primary legislation.

B) OUR PUBLIC SERVICES

(1) TOWARDS A HEALTHIER WALES

A commitment to build a healthier nation will be at the top of a Plaid Cymru government's priorities.

It is a massive challenge, and there are no quick fixes or miracle cures. Wales has a legacy of chronic ill-health, especially in some of our poorest communities. It is a sad fact that our country suffers from some of the highest incidences of cardiac disease, respiratory problems and cancers in the western world.

As well as securing better provision and prompter availability of health services, the building of a healthier society involves longer-

term measures aimed at improving the general health and well-being of all our people.

Health means much more than the absence of disease; it implies a sense of well-being, vigour and fulfilment. This is influenced by a range of factors in which the delivery of health services is only part - albeit a vital one.

The creation of a healthy nation is a project which must involve all our people, all our services, and all government departments. It calls for waging war on poverty, strengthening our economy, building a fairer society and safer communities, good houses and a pleasant environment, and a rich cultural life

For this reason every department in a Plaid Cymru government will need to show how its work and decisions contribute to this task.

Action is required on at least three fronts:

- tackling the poverty that causes so much ill health;
- increasing the capacity of our health services to deliver speedy and effective treatment to the sick and needy;
- the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

(a) Poverty and Ill-health

There is now indisputable evidence of the link between poverty and ill health. Not only are the poorest the sickest members of our society, but illness of itself is also a key generator of poverty.

Clear evidence of this link was provided by the Black Report in 1980, but the Conservative government of the time chose to ignore its findings and the problems grew worse. More recent research has highlighted the link and the deep seated nature of the problems caused by poverty.

A Plaid Cymru government will ensure that a full understanding of this destructive synergy between poverty and sickness will be mainstreamed into all government policy and decision making.

Further research has shown that the extent of inequality in societies also has a direct



effect on levels of sickness. Therefore the creation of a fairer society must be a fundamental part of the drive towards a healthier Wales. We will ensure that our economic policies will be geared to achieving greater equality, and thus reinforce our efforts to tackle all the determinants of sickness in Wales.

(b) Health and Social Services

In the short to medium term, our quest for a healthier Wales will depend heavily on improving our health and social services. This is our front line of attack upon illness and disease.

These services should be guided by the principles of equality, respect and dignity for all people. Organisations exist to provide for people, and it is their responsibility always to strive to enable and promote well-being, responding always to individuals' interests and choices.

Discrimination in the provision of services is unacceptable, and we will take proactive steps to promote equal treatment; ensuring for example that same-sex partners are regarded as next of kin when medical decisions are being made.

Responsibility for health is one of the National Assembly's main functions. The NHS accounts for around 35% of the Assembly's budget, which means that £4,158,448 will be spent in 2003-4. The NHS is also Wales' biggest employer, with a total of 87,000 full and part-time staff members, accounting for 7% of the total Welsh workforce.

We all admire the dedication of its doctors, nurses, social workers, other health professionals, and the ancillary staff, who perform daily miracles in very difficult circumstances.

Both they and their clients have been badly let down by governments over the years. Our health service today is suffering the effects of 20 years and more of neglect and under-funding under both the Conservatives and New Labour. In Wales, despite having the

worst incidence of sickness, we have the least capacity to treat it of any part of the UK.

The Barnett formula for calculating the National Assembly's block grant takes no account of our ageing population.

Neither does it take account of the increase in deprivation levels and therefore illness caused by industrial collapse in many communities.

The result is that it is well-nigh impossible for expenditure for improved provision to keep up with levels in England, except at the expense of other policy areas, such as housing, transport or economic development, themselves crucial for improving health and well-being.

The effect of this is illustrated by the fact that at the beginning of 2003 no-one was waiting over 18 months for an operation in England while the figure for Wales was 5,391. This despite the fact that Wales has only 5% of the UK population!

On top of this, our health service is still suffering from the misguided policies of past Conservative governments, whose introduction of the internal market into the NHS has been so damaging. A further blow to health services in Wales occurred in 1993, when John Redwood in effect abolished strategic national planning.

Today, patients in Wales are paying a heavy price for the decision of Tony Blair's government to keep to Tory spending plans for its first four years.

While we certainly welcome the extra investment that is at long last on its way to the Health Service, we regard it as still inadequate, and deplore the fact that it has come at least four years too late. Lack of spending in health is disproportionate in that the effects of under-spending in one year affect succeeding years. For each pound not spent in the late 1990s, much more must be spent now.

In 1999, Labour promised that no-one in Wales would have to wait more than six months for an out-patient appointment. The figure in February stood at 76,400, as compared to 676 in England. Labour must

bear full responsibility for failing to deliver on its promises. Disguising the truth through spin and double-counting must no longer be allowed to deceive us.

The reality is growing waiting times, deficient infrastructure, treatment failures, shortage of medical personnel including nurses, GPs and consultants, and a committed workforce demoralised by sheer pressure of work.

In 2003 we face a further threat to the Health Service with the sixth restructuring in 13 years. We have opposed these so-called 'reforms' because they divert resources and attention from the real issue of increasing capacity, and because we do not believe that the new structures will be fit for purpose.

The logic behind scrapping the five health authorities and imposing 22 new Local Health Boards (LHBs) is far from apparent, and has been met with a deep-seated anxiety and scepticism among health professionals. As well as the LHBs, various other organisations are to be established, bringing the total number of bodies responsible for health care in Wales to 52.

There is grave concern about the capacity of many of the LHBs to carry out their duties efficiently and effectively, and their sheer number will reduce the possibility of strategic planning. With the Trusts being retained, a key element of the Conservatives' internal market remains in place, despite Labour's claims that one of the purposes of the reorganisation was to tackle it.

The costs of setting up and running such an elaborate structure will add up to many millions of pounds, whatever misleading claims are made by the Assembly's Health Minister.

A Plaid Cymru government will therefore inherit an under-funded health service newly thrown into the turbulence of an inappropriate reorganisation.

More doctors, nurses, and beds

The immediate priority will be to develop greater capacity in terms of more doctors, nurses, other health professionals, and beds. A

Plaid Cymru government will put in place a detailed and coherent strategy towards this end; and we will co-operate with health professionals to find the best and most efficient ways of delivering these services.

On taking office we will begin an immediate audit of the present capacity of the NHS in Wales, including the key interfaces with social services, by amending the remit given to Derrick Wanless in October 2002.

Once this is complete, in consultation with representatives of the medical and care professions, we will draw up a National Capacity Plan. This plan will provide an all-Wales strategy with short, medium and long term goals for:

- more doctors, nurses, dentists, physiotherapists and other health professionals;
- the provision of more beds and appropriate equipment in hospitals;
- the provision of adequate and suitable nursing and residential care for the elderly;
- a campaign aimed at the retention of qualified staff.

Hospitals loom large in public consciousness. Consequently, in any debate on the NHS, a fact often overlooked is that 90 per cent of health care contact remains at the primary level.

Recognising the crucial importance of primary care, we will place particular emphasis on GP recruitment as part of our National Capacity Plan. Given the alarming statistics about a looming crisis in the number of GPs, and reports of waiting lists for a month or more for a doctor's appointment, urgent action is clearly needed.

In addition to implementing the new GPs contract, we will offer an attractive package to encourage GPs, including the option of salaried GPs, to serve in underprivileged areas where there are severe health needs.

We will be seeking ways of stripping away



bureaucratic burdens on staff. Doctors, nurses, and other health and social services professionals must be able to concentrate their time on caring for patients, rather than being tied down with unnecessary paperwork.

In consultation with representatives of the nursing and medical professions we will also be seeking imaginative and effective ways of skill-mixing.

This will not only free up time for doctors to concentrate on making full use of their professional skills, but also enhance the potential of trained nursing staff.

As well as being primary-led, Plaid Cymru has always insisted that health provision must be community-based in all its aspects. We wish to encourage, where appropriate, a fuller integration of health centres and community hospitals. We will also take steps to ensure that the care and support provided by social services is accessible in health centres and surgeries. This will be part of a drive to develop a closer working partnership between health and social services, and local authorities have a clear role to play in this.

The voluntary sector has a vital role, for example through the hospice movement. We will work closely with the sector to ensure that funding is predictable and stable.

Recognising the disruption caused to the NHS by the constant reorganisation of recent years, a Plaid Cymru government will do everything possible to avoid further restructuring. Despite our misgivings, we will do everything possible to make the new system work as well as possible.

However, we will be keeping a careful eye on the situation, working closely with professional and patient bodies. We will encourage collaboration among the LHBs, and the objective in the longer term will to integrate their work with the NHS Trusts, maintaining the principle of coterminosity, and thus move away from the remaining elements of the internal market.

Certain functions are best fulfilled at the

national level, including strategic planning and a strategy aimed at generating significant savings through the rationalisation of prescriptions.

(c) Older People

It is fundamental and crucial that the enormous contribution made by older people to our society be fully recognised. Their accumulated wisdom and experience constitute an invaluable asset which can be of particular benefit to children and young people. We will work with relevant organisations to find ways of maximising this contribution.

The stereotyping of the elderly as dependent and infirm is unacceptable as well as inaccurate. However, advancing years bring with them particular needs in relation to care, and it is an indicator of a civilised society that these are properly catered for, if only as a way of acknowledging a lifetime's commitment to the welfare of others.

We regard the artificial distinction between nursing and personal care needs as particularly damaging. It can inhibit the provision of early medical intervention to prevent ill-health and possible hospitalisation. Quite apart from the sheer injustice of such a situation, it imposes unnecessary pressure on the capacity of the health service to treat patients.

That is why we deplore the UK Government's refusal to implement the key recommendation of its own Royal Commission on the Long-term Care of the Elderly: to abolish the distinction between nursing and personal care. The National Assembly, unlike the Scottish Parliament, currently lacks the powers to implement the Royal Commission's recommendations, while the injustice of the Barnett Formula would make it extremely difficult to meet the cost. A Party of Wales Government will press for both these deficiencies to be corrected so that older people in Wales can be treated with justice and dignity

In the meanwhile much can be achieved in other ways.

We will combat ageism in all its forms, for example by ensuring that assessment for services is made according to need not age, and by developing advocacy and consultation with service users and carers. In this we will work with Community Health Councils and Care Forum Wales.

In order to address the burden on carers, we will be looking at ways of adequately resourcing the National Carers' Strategy.

Older people with needs should have support to enable them to make their own choices about the settings that they regard as most appropriate, and services should be geared to this objective.

We will emphasise the need for early identification of needs and prompt intervention. This will help to reduce admissions to residential and nursing homes and hospitals, and the need for older people to be uprooted as their needs change. To this end we will look to the development of integrated multi-disciplinary long-term care teams to provide for older people's acute, rehabilitation, and assessment needs.

An immediate issue is the crisis in the care-home sector which threatens to damage providers and clients alike, as well as exacerbating problems in our hospitals. It is of particular concern that family-run homes which provide the kind of homely environment so valued by clients face particular difficulties. This will need to be included in the Wanless review.

Older people have the right to maintain as much independence as possible, and the provision of services should be geared to this aim. We will provide LAs with the resources to pay for free home social care such as home-helps.

(d) Others with Long-term Care Needs

People of all ages can have long-term care needs. These should be met according to the same principles as those set out above.

(e) Mental Health

We will not tolerate any stigmatisation of those who suffer from mental illness. They are among the most vulnerable members of society, and must be given high-quality health care and treatment.

We will continue to oppose the proposed Mental Health Act, particularly as its reactionary proposals for the detention and enforced treatment of the mentally ill offend against basic Human Rights. It lacks any sound scientific basis and will be costly to implement, as the resources do not currently exist.

We support the promotion and expansion of Community Mental Health Teams. However, we need to beware of any resultant rationalisation and reduction in beds, causing the centralisation of services. Indeed there is an urgent need for additional beds.

(f) Children's Services

Our proposal to establish a Department of Education and Children's and Young People's Services will strengthen coordination in serving children. We will:

- emphasise the need to work with children and families to prevent abuse from occurring;
- ensure effective and swift child protection systems.

Working in partnership with LAs, we will give the highest priority to child protection and seek to ensure that no part of the system fails our most vulnerable children. We will work with the Children's Commissioner and voluntary and community organisations to take forward the principles outlined in the Children's Manifesto.

(g) Disability

An area which has seen enormous progress over recent years is in attitudes to and provision for, disabled people. However, discrimination is still common, and the capacity of disabled people to fulfil their potential and contribute to society is still frustrated in too many ways. We recognise that disability issues

are fundamentally about equality, which is why the recommendations below go well beyond the scope of health and social care.

A Party of Wales Government will operate on the basis of the “social model” which recognises that it is society that disables the individual. Recognising this reality is crucial to implementing equal opportunities.

2003 is the European Year of the Disabled and we will mark this with a fresh commitment to remove obstacles to real equality. We will work with disability organisations to make improvements in key areas such as:

- support and confidence-building programmes and advocacy and advisory services;
- equal access to health services and community and leisure activities;
- educational opportunities to enhance quality of life;
- countering discrimination in employment;
- empowerment of service users through promoting direct payments.

We will recognise British Sign Language (BSL) as a language in its own right and promote its use.

(h) Recruitment and Retention in Social Services

As with the NHS, difficulties with recruitment and retention of Social Services staff inhibit the capacity to provide consistent services of high quality. Whereas pay levels contribute to this, morale is also undermined by the burden of bureaucracy and the target-setting culture, which diverts time and resources from the essential task of serving clients’ needs, and also distorts priorities.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- emphasise and disseminate good practice;
- work with the Wales Care Council and the Regional Care Partnerships on workforce planning and recruitment;

- emphasise the right of workers to benefit from training and career development opportunities;
- seek to improve job-security and conditions of work;
- encourage flexible work opportunities so as to promote equal opportunities, reduce strain, make best use of available skills, and respond better to the needs of users.

(i) The Promotion of Healthy Living As well as being better than cure, prevention saves money in the long run.

A Plaid Cymru government will seek the necessary powers to introduce free eye tests and free dental checks for all. The additional expenditure will be more than justified in both human and financial terms through the early detection of disease which would result.

We will develop an effective programme of health promotion. Present initiatives to reduce smoking and encourage the eating of fresh fruit and vegetables, though laudable enough, are too narrowly focused on the individual. As a result they have had little impact where most needed.

Our programme for health promotion will be evidence-based and focused on communities. We will learn lessons from other European countries and regions where community based initiatives have been successful in tackling entrenched problems of ill-health.

Our programme will in particular build on the Communities First programme. There will be a focus on achieving recognisable health gain in the hundred most deprived wards which will be designated as Community Health Action Zones.

Healthy living will be promoted through our early years Educare programme

We will act upon the National Assembly’s resolution to seek primary legislation specific to Wales to ban smoking in certain public buildings.

We will also issue guidelines to schools to discourage the selling of sugar-saturated drinks and fat-saturated foods to our children, and ensure that school meals are healthy, nutritious and attractive. Learning from the lessons of the Powys Food Initiative we will also work with local authorities to develop procurement policies so as to favour local sourcing of good quality produce.

We will build upon and extend current initiatives for free access to swimming pools and leisure centres, particularly for children and young people and in disadvantaged communities.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- ensure that all government departments work towards a healthier Wales by tackling the poverty that causes ill health;
- produce a National Capacity Plan to employ and retain more doctors, nurses and beds;
- press for adequate funding to meet Wales's greater needs;
- seek alternatives to PFI and all other schemes aimed at 'privatisation by stealth';
- reduce bureaucracy and the proliferation of structures that set up boundaries between agencies, particularly health, social services and the voluntary sector;
- fund the provision of free home social care.

WE WILL SEEK PRIMARY LEGISLATION TO:

- enable the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on long term care for the elderly;
- to provide free eye tests and dental checks for all;
- to effect a ban on smoking in certain public buildings in Wales.

(2) A LEARNING NATION

A Plaid Cymru government will be committed to enhancing educational opportunities for people of all ages, all social backgrounds and all ethnic groups. We see education as fundamental to the task of creating a better, fairer and more prosperous future for our country.

As well as being essential for enabling sustainable development, education is important for the enrichment of people's lives, both as individuals and as members of their communities and of society. As well as meeting the needs of the economy through equipping our people with a range of transferable skills, education should aim to nurture thinking and creative individuals who are able to question and challenge, as well as serve society as active citizens.

Education has a key role in our national development by helping children and young people to develop a better understanding of themselves, their communities, their history and their culture.

Just as importantly, it must also instil in them a sense of global citizenship and the responsibilities that go with it.

The education system is crucial in the task of building a truly bilingual Wales. Plaid Cymru is committed to the dynamic growth of Welsh-medium education in response to demand. This will be further considered in the section on the Welsh language and bilingualism.

Our programme for lifelong learning starts with the earliest years of life.

(a) The Early Years

The early years are formative and as such crucial in the development of the individual. There is every justification for investment at this stage, as it will yield multiple benefits in social, cultural and economic terms. It can also contribute strongly to community regeneration by creating links between the child, the parent, and the community.



The concept of Educare - in which all care is educational, and all education involves caring - will be the foundation our policy.

In order to ensure that the principle is put into practice, Plaid Cymru will establish in the government of Wales a Department of Education and Children and Young People's Services to bring together all the elements. This will take responsibility for all services for children and thus enable the seamless integration of the various initiatives currently in operation. It will work with and encourage the further development of the county-based Early Years Partnerships and will ensure that the role of voluntary and private, as well as statutory, providers is valued and encouraged. It will emphasise the importance of quality provision and will develop opportunities for training and qualifications for staff in all settings. It will ensure that the free provision of half-time nursery education due to be introduced in 2002 will be seen in the context of a 0-6 Educare continuum.

The development of integrated Educare will be of particular benefit to meeting special educational needs, where early identification is key, and which often becomes a battleground between departments of education, health and social services.

It will play a crucial role in our programme for the growth of the Welsh language and the creation of a bilingual Wales.

Expanded provision of child care is important, so as to enable those parents who so desire to draw down tax credits, thus enabling them to join the workforce and bringing extra financial resources into our communities

Bearing in mind the many benefits that will spring from this sector, we will give it priority in our allocation of financial resources.

(b) Schools

We wish to see our schools increasingly integrated into the lives of their communities and to be developed as resources for those communities as a whole. We believe that they can play a significant role in regeneration.

The competitive market approach introduced by the Tories and continued by New Labour militates against this. It discourages co-operation and the sharing of good practice; exacerbates inequality and social exclusion; tends to strengthen the strong at the expense of the weak; and wastes resources. It can also lead to a spiral of decline and in some cases school closures, often to the detriment of the community. This can be particularly damaging in countryside areas, though it is by no means unique to them.

A Plaid Cymru government will embark on an extensive consultation into the introduction of a new funding formula for schools which will

- be based on need, with adequate consideration given to deprivation and population sparsity;
- involve a minimum spend per pupil;
- ensure greater predictability of funding over three-year periods and less bidding for specific sums.

Our aim is to establish a new framework of collaboration and partnership between schools, and also with other education providers, especially including Colleges of Further Education. We will pay particular attention to the development of a close relationship between comprehensives and their feeder primary schools.

In order to explore the possibilities of, and identify the obstacles to, the development of schools as resources for their communities, a Plaid Cymru government, working with local authorities, will pilot the concept in a number of catchment areas throughout Wales. There will be an emphasis on the school as a contributor to regeneration, and the provision of complementary services, such as health and social services on the school premises, will be explored. We will seek the co-operation of social partners - business, the trades unions and voluntary organisations.

There could be opportunities for innovation in patterns of governance, and in this we

would wish to work closely with Governors Wales. In all aspects of school governance and activity, we will ensure that children, for whose benefit the schools primarily exist, are able to participate and influence.

While education is a national service, it is delivered locally. A Plaid Cymru Government will need to consider how key services can be best delivered.

Local Authorities play a key role, for example through planning local provision; providing support services for schools; and monitoring their performance. However, the existence of 22 local education authorities, many of them very small, raises important issues - for example, in relation to the school advisory services.

We recognise the rights of local government in education policy as in other areas. Indeed, as we shall argue later, we wish to see a strengthening of the role and powers of local authorities. However we believe that national government must accept responsibility for ensuring the effective delivery of key services to schools. We believe that there is much to be gained through cooperation between local authorities.

A Plaid Cymru government will therefore seek through primary legislation a general power to require local education authorities to collaborate for specific purposes. Until such time as such a power is gained we will use our best endeavours, working with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), to encourage such collaboration on a voluntary basis.

A priority in this regard will be a high quality Schools' Advisory Service which is crucial in this age of change of constant change and innovation.

National Institutions

A Plaid Cymru government will consult on the best possible arrangements for our national educational organisations which have developed in a relatively ad hoc manner over the years. The aim would be to create a streamlined, efficient and democratically

accountable system. We see the following as likely components in a modified system:

- the amalgamation of the WJEC with ACCAC to form a single national examination and assessment body.
- adding the responsibility for regulating examination and assessment to the functions of Estyn;
- a new Research and Development Centre.

We propose the further Development of the General Teaching Council (GTCW) as an independent body for the profession, with responsibility for recruitment, initial teacher training and education for teachers, continuing professional development, and appraisal and performance management.

Curriculum

A Plaid Cymru government will, as an early priority, commence consultation on the development of a new National Curriculum for Wales. We recognise the need not to impose unnecessary change on an already overloaded teaching body. However, we regard this as a key component in our development as a nation, and also necessary to improve the quality of the school experience for teachers and learners alike. A new curriculum would take a number of years to develop, and teachers, along with learners and parents and a range of relevant organisations, would be fully involved.

Our proposals for a National Curriculum would include the following:

- a significant reduction in prescribed content;
- an emphasis on transferable skills;
- Welsh heritage and citizenship;
- key global issues, world citizenship and human rights;
- sustainable development;
- counteracting prejudice and discrimination.

We propose a fundamental revamping of the



testing and assessment process to improve its relevance to pupils, teachers, parents, and society, and to reduce strain.

We will build upon current proposals for the reform of Key Stage 4 as part of a new 14-19 curriculum providing parity of esteem between the academic and the vocational. We regard the current government's pilot of a so-called Welsh Baccaulaureate as flawed and a missed opportunity. However, we will learn the lessons of, and build on, the pilot in order to develop a comprehensive and genuine Baccaulaureate qualification for Wales.

(c) Special Educational Needs

We will give priority to ensuring that children and adults with special educational needs have those needs met in full, in the language of their choice. We will promote an active debate around the appropriate balance between mainstream placements for special needs learners, and specialised provision.

(d) The Teaching Profession

While schools exist to serve children, families, and the community, their success depends on the commitment of teachers. A satisfied profession, and a good relationship between teachers and parents, is thus crucial.

Low morale among teachers, arising from pressure of work, bureaucracy, and disempowerment, must be taken seriously. It leads to significant recruitment and retention problems, particularly in secondary schools and in shortage subjects. There is a need for much more than the tinkering around the edges done by the Labour administration so far.

A Plaid Cymru government is committed to reducing bureaucratic burdens through:

- the reform of curriculum and assessment, including the abolition of the present Key-Stage 2 and 3 tests;
- simplifying funding streams and a reduction in the need to bid for specific sums.

We will work with GTCW on a recruitment strategy, and will push for the devolution of responsibility for terms and conditions to the Assembly along with full legislative powers on all aspects of education policy.

We will make professional development both a requirement and an entitlement. GTCW will take responsibility for this, along with the redesign of leadership courses. We will explore the potential for a virtual school leadership college for Wales.

We are committed to supporting teachers in their pastoral work, and will ask GTCW to undertake a review of school discipline in order to identify the scale and nature of any problems, and to make proposals based on evidence and good practice.

We will develop further the role of non-teaching staff, bearing in mind the need for career development and training. In this we will work closely with the teaching unions.

(e) Adult and Further Education

We are committed to continuing with the coordination of post-16 education in order to provide maximum opportunities for lifelong learning for all. However, concerns about the running of the National Council of ELWAs show the need for careful and sensitive management of the process of change. A Plaid Cymru government will ensure that that this is the case. School sixth forms will continue to be important providers of post-statutory education, and can be crucial for accessibility. The new funding regime being developed by ELWAs will need to recognise this, as well as the connection between pre- and post-16 provision.

Colleges of Further Education (CFE) will play a key role in a Party of Wales Government's regeneration strategy. The sector's achievements over the period of major expansion during the last decade have been impressive, despite the funding pressures that have beset them. Their role in widening participation, nurturing basic skills, introducing innovative teaching methods and

collaborating with employers deserves recognition and support. In many cases they have developed comprehensive tertiary curricula and gained impressive results.

They offer a route into HE for a whole range of students. We will encourage collaborative arrangements between FE and HE.

Issues mentioned in the section on The Teaching Profession are as relevant in CFE as they are in schools, including bureaucratic burdens, recruitment and retention, and the need for continuing professional development. We will work with the National Council of ELWa and Fforwm, as the voice of the sector itself, to tackle these issues.

Plaid Cymru has long called for Further Education salaries to be brought into line with those in schools. This is essential both in terms of natural justice and in order to facilitate college-school collaboration in providing courses. We therefore welcome the current moves in this direction and will ensure that they are carried through satisfactorily

Alongside the development of opportunities to accumulate qualifications in a flexible manner according to the student's needs, we will ensure that informal learning for its own sake is also valued and provided for.

(f) Meeting the Needs of Young People

The Party of Wales strongly supports the policy approach set out in Extending Entitlement. Public authorities have a responsibility to ensure that opportunities are available for young people, in learning, work and leisure, and also in services and advice. In taking forward this policy, our priorities will be to:

- ensure that young people themselves can seriously influence decisions, specifically through membership of the Young People's Partnerships;
- pay proper regard to the proposals and views of the Children's Commissioner;

- ensure that young people from traditionally excluded groups, including disabled young people, lesbian, gay and bisexual young people, and those from minority ethnic groups are enabled to have their voices heard;
- improve methods of tracking the progress of young people so that they are not "lost to the system".

(g) Higher Education

The last two decades have seen a massive expansion of Higher Education so that it is no longer the privilege of a small minority. Unfortunately, successive UK governments have failed to fund this process adequately. This has resulted in enormous strains in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and an unacceptable decline in terms and conditions for staff, including the prevalence of short-term contracts.

The UK Labour government is now seeking to tackle this problem by raising fee contributions from students, and the promotion of a two-tier HE system through the introduction of top-up fees. Despite the long-delayed reintroduction of student grants, abolished by New Labour, top-up fees will work against extending access for students from less privileged backgrounds.

A Plaid Cymru Government of Wales will have to work within this unfavourable context to strengthen HE in Wales while pursuing the extending access agenda to which we are committed.

HE is an enormous asset to Wales and is crucial in achieving economic, social and cultural regeneration. It provides employment for 16,000 people and generates £1.5bn into our communities. It enjoys a high reputation internationally, standards of teaching are high, and performance in research has improved significantly over the last decade.

We recognise that as well as having to work within the unfavourable context of UK Government policy mentioned above, the sector in Wales has suffered the extra

disadvantage of a lower level of spending per student (the “unit of resource”) than in England and particularly Scotland. This has partly resulted from the funding pressures arising from the injustice of the Barnett formula, and the UK Government’s policy on European structural fund moneys which is causing education spending to rise at a lower level than in England over coming years.

We will ensure that the Welsh unit of resource will be at least equivalent to that in England but our aspiration over time, given a fair funding deal for Wales, would be to go beyond that. We will also endeavour to ensure that research in Wales is strengthened through funding from the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCW) and the Research Councils whose allocation to Welsh institutions is far too low.

Recognising the importance of “spinning out” the outcome of research to the economy we will look to increasing resources for this purpose. We regard increasing collaboration and networking among Welsh HEIs as a high priority and will provide resources for this. We will encourage the development of one national university which will facilitate this agenda.

We will seek modifications to the research assessment process, in order to remove obstacles to activity relevant to the specific needs of Wales.

On staff working conditions, we will work with the unions, specifically the AUT, and the sector in general, particularly to tackle the issue of short-term contracts and equal opportunities.

The glaring deficiencies in Welsh-medium provision provide an example of serious inequity, as well as a failure to help lay the foundations for the revitalisation of the language. We will support the implementation of the University of Wales Welsh-medium Teaching and Learning Board proposals, and explore with HEFCW, the University of Wales and the sector in general options for an appropriate institutional framework for Welsh-medium HE.

Wales will need to continue to attract students from beyond our borders, including more from overseas, but we will also work with HEFCW and the sector to put in place a strategy to attract more students from Wales into Welsh Higher Education.

We see no justification for the UK government’s target of 50 per cent of all young people entering HE. Any targets for Wales would need to take account of our economic and labour market strategies. However, we regard as a high priority the extension of access to HE to groups who were previously excluded.

We support the introduction of the Assembly learning grant for students in both FE and HE. We will monitor its effect on student poverty and patterns of recruitment, and consider it in the light of new proposals for student support from the UK Government. We will consider the options for mitigating the damaging effects of higher and top-up fees on students and HEIs.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- strengthen provision of early years Educare;
- establish a Department of Education and Children and Young People’s Services;
- integrate schools with their communities, developing them as resources for those communities, and bring forward a new funding method to this end;
- commence consultation on developing a National Curriculum for Wales;
- encourage cooperation between local authorities to improve service provision for schools;
- abolish the current tests at 11 and 14 years;
- reduce bureaucratic constraints on teachers, and develop a recruitment and retention strategy;
- work to strengthen the position of Welsh HE and its contribution to the life of Wales.

WE WILL SEEK

PRIMARY LEGISLATION TO:

- devolve the powers for setting the terms and conditions for teachers;
- obtain a general power to require local education authorities to collaborate on providing services for schools;
- abolish the competitive market between schools;
- streamline the national education bodies;

(C) SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE ECONOMY

(I) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The transformation of Wales' economy is imperative for national sustainability, self-confidence and social justice. This task must be seen as nothing less than the laying of the foundations for the future of Wales.

The regeneration of our economy will be a huge challenge. As we have already noted in the introduction of this Manifesto, a whole range of indicators show the extent to which our economic performance has declined in comparison with the rest of the United Kingdom over the past 20 years.

As this trend has continued under New Labour in London since 1997 and in the National Assembly since 1999, it must be seen as a major policy failure on their part.

The Welsh Labour government's approach to economic development over the last four years has been deplorable. With three different economic development ministers (including Rhodri Morgan who insisted on doing two jobs for much of the time), no coherent strategy has emerged.

The consequence is a National Economic Strategy that has been widely derided. Its targets have been dismissed as utterly unrealistic, with no clear indication of how they might be met. The Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition have refused to set

regional job-creation targets as a means of dispersing activity throughout Wales.

In particular, the Objective 1 programme is a plethora of complex structures and bureaucracy which has created serious obstacles to the private sector and inhibited a strategic approach, while at the same time marginalising the kind of capacity building in communities which is essential for their regeneration.

A Plaid Cymru government will take the opportunity of the mid-term review of the Structural Fund programmes in 2003 to simplify the Objective 1 structures and re-prioritise resources according to key objectives.

Plaid Cymru offers a coherent alternative economic development strategy tailored to meeting the specific problems and needs of Wales.

Our alternative approach to the economy is based on the principles of Sustainable Development and consists of six main elements:

- regionalisation and Special Development Centres;
- a Labour Market Strategy;
- growth Sectors;
- growing indigenous companies;
- Public Procurement Policy;
- training.

(a) Regionalisation and Special Development Centres

A commitment to disperse economic activity to all the regions of Wales is fundamental to our economic policy.

Despite devolution, Wales is experiencing a deeply divisive form of economic development, geographically as well as socially.

Rapid growth along the eastern part of the M4 corridor in particular has brought real benefits, but it is now leading to over-development, overheating and congestion, while failing to tackle the exclusion of



disadvantaged groups and communities within this area.

Meanwhile much of the rest of Wales is suffering economic decline, with all of the associated problems of low wages, poverty and out-migration of the young and economically active. Communities throughout our country have seen massive jobs losses in the manufacturing sector, with much of the alternatives available being in sectors where incomes are much lower and job security is poor.

This unbalanced development is bad for everyone. It is also inefficient in that it fails to harness the potential of the entire nation.

A Plaid Cymru government will begin to tackle this problem through identifying seven economic regions each of which will draw up sustainable development strategies tailored to their own particular circumstances. .

There will be consultation on the drawing up of precise boundaries, but we envisage that the regions will be broadly as follows:

- the north west;
- the north east;
- Powys;
- the south west;
- Swansea and its hinterland;
- the eastern valleys of the south;
- the south east coast, based around Newport and Cardiff.

The strategies for these regions will identify their key priorities, for example in infrastructure, communications, energy supply, industrial and business locations, environmental enhancement, and community regeneration. These strategies will take their place within the framework of the National Economic Development Strategy. Each region will have within it at least one FE College and, with the exception of Powys, at least one HEI, which will play a key role in driving innovation and providing the necessary training and skills.

Within each region, Special Development Centres (SDCs) will provide a focus for the development of the region. In the more sparsely-populated areas, SDCs will develop as 'dispersed conurbations', based on clusters of towns and villages. The aim is to develop these as attractive, sustainable and vibrant locations for business, employment, leisure, and certain key services. We see the development of these SDCs as essential to provide centres throughout Wales capable of competing with Cardiff and the English conurbations.

National and regional transport strategies will aim to provide good-quality links between and within these regions.

Policies for the countryside, including the whole range of land-based activities and tourism, will be prominent in regional strategies. These will be outlined in greater detail in the next chapter. The SDCs themselves, however, will also play a key role in maintaining the countryside by providing accessible urban-type employment. Rather than regarding town and countryside as separate and distinct, we see them as integrated to form a viable and attractive combination. This is in any case the emerging reality of rural Wales today.

The implications of all this for planning policy are set out in Section 7.

Those areas of Wales which have undergone massive change resulting from the decline of traditional heavy industries must be given special attention.

We propose that the Eastern Valleys of the South form one of the seven economic regions. We must aim at no less than the transformation of that area, together with the similar area extending westwards as far as Carmarthenshire. A designated Minister will be given the responsibility for overseeing this historic task. Former mining and quarrying areas in other parts of Wales would be brought under her/his oversight.

A Plaid Cymru government will contribute directly to the process of dispersing prosperity by moving some government jobs and departments out of Cardiff to other

regions. The efforts of the existing Government of Wales in this regard have been half-hearted. We will bring a new urgency to the process.

(b) A Plan for Jobs

A Plaid Cymru Government will bring the issue of jobs to the heart of economic development policy. This will involve a fundamental change of emphasis.

The key priorities of our Labour Market Strategy will be:

- ensuring that the needs of business are met;
- the creation of jobs that are sustainable in the longer term;
- emphasis on the quality as well the number of jobs;
- ensuring that the benefit of development policies reach disadvantaged areas and groups, including ethnic minorities, disabled people, and women;
- creating opportunities for career development within Wales, especially for young people.

This shift in emphasis will also involve moving away from the use of GDP as the sole indicator of prosperity. We will adopt the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) as an alternative. In addition to GDP itself, ISEW takes account for example of social resources and environmental capital. We would include the retention of young people in Wales as an element in our ISEW.

We will work with the Wales Refugee Council on the integration into Wales of those who have achieved refugee status. We will provide core funding for their activities in this area where there are opportunities to harness the skills of refugees for the benefit of Wales and its communities.

In order to implement this strategy a Party of Wales government will establish a Jobs and Economic Strategy Unit at the heart of the Government of Wales.

While its initial brief will be to concentrate on labour market issues, it will proceed in due course to take responsibility for economic development strategy as a whole. In this, it will work closely with the recently-established Economic Policy Research Panel.

It will have two divisions. The first will commission research and provide data, offer strategic guidance, and set targets, including those for the regions. The second will monitor and assess performance. The two key national bodies, the WDA and ELWa, will then concentrate entirely on delivery and service provision.

The Business Partnership Council will be given a new impetus, working closely with the Jobs and Economic Strategy Unit, and playing a much more strategic role. It will give a far stronger voice to business and will have fewer politicians.

(c) Growth Sectors

In order to create sustainable economic growth, we will need to focus on certain sectors that have potential for growth and in which Wales has a natural advantage or is capable of taking the lead.

A Plaid Cymru Government of Wales will identify these key sectors for particular attention and support through research and development resources, including through our HEIs, and for the attraction of inward investment.

Those growth industries that contribute to Sustainable Development will enjoy a special emphasis.

We regard the following as particularly promising:

Renewable Energy

In this key area for the future Wales has an enormous natural advantage and considerable expertise. However the current government has frustrated the growth of the sector over the last four years, and Wales has fallen behind rather than forging ahead. A Party of Wales government will release the



potential. For the immediate future wind (both on-shore and off-shore), the tide, and energy crops offer most in terms of both quantity and cost, and have the potential to create large numbers of jobs. However, the potential of other technologies including wave and photo-voltaics must not be forgotten. Already Welsh HE is leading the field on the generation and use of hydrogen, and we will ensure that this work is strongly supported.

We support the target of 4TWh (Terra watt Hours) from renewables by 2010 set by the National Assembly's Economic Development committee, following well-established Plaid Cymru policy. However, we will aim higher. 6TWh by 2010 may be possible. In the longer term we believe that renewables could meet all of our energy needs.

In the medium term, fossil fuels will make an essential contribution and much can be achieved through new technology to reduce their environmental impact. We support in particular the continued operation of the Tower and Betws mines.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

As well as being crucial for development, particularly in a country of dispersed settlements such as Wales, ICT is important as an industry in its own right. The nature of our communities, set in a beautiful environment, makes them ideal centres for new knowledge-based industries, provided access to a broadband network is in place. We set out our proposals for a broadband communications network in the section on Communications.

Opto-electronics

Wales is already a world leader in this technology. We welcome the intention to establish the OpTIC Technium at St Asaph as a hub for optronics experts and companies and will support its development. We also welcome the joint Welsh-Irish initiative to use laser and light technologies to improve productivity in manufacturing industry.

Tourism

Wales could benefit from the growing interest in environmental, activity, heritage and cultural tourism, and we will build on the Wales Tourist Board's strategy in this area. A Party of Wales government will seek more powers for the Board to promote Wales overseas; develop centres of excellence for the study of Tourism in Higher Education, and facilitate the development of public-private enterprise for certain key projects.

Waste

Rather than being seen as an environmental problem in search of a solution, waste is increasingly being regarded as a valuable raw material. European legislation will increasingly drive practice in this direction. Wales needs to anticipate future trends and seize the opportunities for economic development.

In order to increase recycling as a commercially viable activity we will explore options such the establishment of a Secondary Commodities Exchange and a national supply network for recovered materials. Large-scale incineration can discourage recycling and so we will favour the use of small-scale technologies such as gasification and pyrolysis for waste-to-energy alongside reuse and recycling.

Landfill tax credits should be used specifically to support recycling activities. We will also explore the possibility of raising the level of landfill tax in Wales as a way of stimulating the growth of the sector.

Working through the voluntary, public, and private sectors, it will be possible to generate very significant activity and job-creation at all levels.

(d) Growing Indigenous Companies
Plaid Cymru favours a significant shift of emphasis from the attraction of inward investment to the development of our own capacity to generate economic growth. This is not to deny the continuing importance of inward investment, but we are convinced of the need to be more selective. The debacle

of high profile failures of companies such as LG emphasises the need for a change of approach. It is confirmed by the general trend among multinational companies to cheaper labour markets, meaning that Wales cannot expect to attract inward investment on a similar scale to that achieved in the past.

The key mechanism for driving growth among Wales-based companies will be our Growth Companies strategy. This will involve identifying those businesses that have both the desire and the potential to grow, and targeting them with concentrated demand-led support.

Companies will be identified through robust criteria, and consideration will also be given to their location so as to further our aim of dispersing economic activity throughout Wales.

There will be three different support levels. A full specialist package will be offered to the 100-200 Level 1 companies; a smaller package will be available for a further 1000 Level 2 companies; while a basic Level 3 package will be on offer to all other businesses that apply. Companies will be able to move between the levels according to their performance and potential.

The twin aims of our support strategy for businesses will be:

- to increase the number of businesses operating in Wales, and in the number and diversity of jobs;
- to improve productivity and efficiency in existing businesses so as to safeguard their future, and to enable them to add value to the Welsh economy.

The Entrepreneurship Action Plan will be revamped so as to improve focus and clarity. A Plaid Cymru government will ensure that it concentrates resources on promising entrepreneurs, and helps communities as well as individuals. We will establish a database of 'exiled' entrepreneurs to attract them back.

We will give increased emphasis to small businesses, which make up 98% of firms in

Wales and whose major potential for job- and wealth-creation is being largely ignored. We will engage with the small business sector so as to understand and respond to their concerns.

Business support for existing companies needs to be more accessible and demand-led. There is considerable concern about the complexity and bureaucracy of business support systems and the proliferation and duplication that exists. A Plaid Cymru government will undertake a full review of all bodies and frameworks in the economic development field, and is committed to creating a simpler, more transparent, structure that is more responsive to the needs of business and workers.

(e) Public Procurement Policy

The total value of public procurement in Wales is currently around £3 billion, much of which is spent outside the locality, the region, and Wales itself. We believe that there is major potential to harness this spending to provide a significant boost to our economy and to promote Sustainable Development.

While recognising that extra costs are involved, both in terms of price and administration, it should be regarded as a worthwhile investment in sustainable development which could bring major benefits. A Plaid Cymru government will urgently investigate ways in which Best Value and local authorities' new powers can be utilised so as to enable environmental protection and local economic benefit to be considerations. In this we will build on the work of the Wales Procurement Initiative Team.

We will pilot a new approach to public procurement with a number of local authorities and public bodies. Potential obstacles, including constraints imposed by European regulations, will be investigated. Strategies will be developed to make maximum use of local, regional and national providers and to develop their capacity and efficiency. There will be an opportunity too to promote equal opportunities and good



employment practices among those providing services and goods.

(f) Training

The provision of appropriate and high-quality training is essential for the success of businesses and to fulfil the aspirations of workers.

There are serious concerns at present that in many instances young people follow courses that do not provide the skills that they really need.

A Plaid Cymru government will remit ELW_a to work with the new Sector Skills Councils to achieve a better match between skills and qualifications on the one hand and the needs of businesses and the economy on the other.

Employers will be encouraged to play a key role in determining training priorities, alongside workers and trades unions.

We will also ensure that essential skills such as courtesy, being on time and thinking for oneself are nurtured in the early years and at school.

Training programmes should aim to eliminate gender-based job segregation and contribute to the elimination of discrimination in the workplace.

It is important that all Sector Skills Councils have offices in Wales, and that the Sector Skills Development Agency has at least one business adviser here.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- ensure a better geographic balance in economic development so as to spread prosperity to all regions;
- locate government jobs in different regions;
- designate seven economic regions to draw up Sustainable Development Strategies for implementation within a national framework;
- designate Special Development Centres to provide a focus for development in their regions;

- ensure the economic regeneration of areas which have undergone major industrial decline;
- establish a Labour Market and Economic Strategy Unit within the Government of Wales and enable the WDA and ELW_a to concentrate on delivery;
- target growth industries, especially new technology, and those that benefit the environment;
- implement a growth companies strategy for Wales-based businesses;
- use public procurement to boost local and regional economies;
- ensure that ELW_a and the Sector Skills Councils cooperate to meet the skills needs of individuals and businesses.

(2) A LIVING COUNTRYSIDE

A commitment to a thriving countryside is an integral part of Plaid Cymru's vision for the future of Wales. Our rural communities are part of our national heritage, and we are determined to ensure that they are sustained into the future.

The loss of jobs in agriculture, and factors such as inflated house prices mean that rural communities feel that they are under siege at present. For the UK Government the crisis in our countryside is a matter of little concern. Its handling of the Foot-and-Mouth epidemic showed its lack of understanding of farming and countryside realities.

We have already set out our commitment to spread prosperity throughout the whole of Wales, and as part of that a Plaid Cymru government will ensure that the countryside gets a fair deal. Ensuring effective broadband connections will be crucial to this.

Our Regional Development and Growth Centres Strategy recognises that the viability of the countryside will depend in part on accessible urban jobs as well as on traditional rural industries. At the same time we are equally committed to maintaining the key role that agriculture and other land-

based activities still have to play, and to strengthen activity and employment in the countryside itself.

(a) Agriculture

Unlike Labour, Plaid Cymru believes that agriculture remains a fundamentally important industry, and the family farm its essential foundation. We need farming families to maintain our magnificent landscape and all that is part of it, as well as to provide a secure food supply of high quality.

The current agricultural crisis, with an average 35 people a week leaving the industry, poses a serious threat to the viability of countryside communities.

There is a real danger that farming is moving towards a pattern of large-scale ranching, which could have damaging effects on the landscape, and lead to the loss of priceless agriculture-linked skills.

It will be part of a Plaid Cymru government's responsibility to exert pressure on the United Kingdom government to adopt a more positive attitude towards farming and the countryside.

A combination of UK government policies is causing immense damage.. There is the negligence in monitoring imports and a chronic unwillingness to access European funding. European funding for schemes such as Tir Gofal and organic farming ends up in the Treasury rather than in Welsh agriculture. Meanwhile the high level of the pound against the euro undermines the competitive position of farmers, and reduces the value of agricultural support payments.

In the face of all these difficult circumstances, a Plaid Cymru government of Wales will have two main objectives.

The first objective will be to maximise the income from farming itself.

In the first place, the farmer's position in the market place must be strengthened. The yawning gap between farm gate and retail prices is unacceptable. We will actively

promote co-operation among farmers and press the supermarkets to accept that they have both a responsibility and an interest in maintaining a robust Welsh, UK and European supply chain.

We will use public procurement as a tool to strengthen regional food producers.

We will redouble the efforts to add value to agricultural produce in Wales so as to improve returns for farmers and provide additional employment in the countryside, including for members of farming families.

We support the further development of Tir Gofal along with a broad and shallow agri-environmental scheme. The reality, however, is that UK Government attitudes to European funding have limited the potential for development along these lines. In other countries and regions, such as Ireland and the German Länder, European funding has enabled a major expansion of agri-environmental and other rural development schemes, raising farm incomes, creating employment in the countryside, and enhancing the environment. In Wales, Tir Gofal has had to be funded out of the limited resources of the Assembly's own block grant. Rectifying this situation will be a major priority for a Party of Wales government in the context of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

We will encourage a greater emphasis on high-quality, environmentally sustainable, safe, animal-friendly food that can command higher prices. We help ensure strong Welsh promotion, marketing and labelling. We will also promote the growth of organic farming to meet market demand.

We are committed to assisting young entrants into farming. Here again the additionality of European funding is a key issue.

We will also act to speed up the payments of agricultural subsidies, and we deplore the failure of the current Government of Wales in this.



The second objective will be to provide additional sources of income for farmers and their families.

We will ensure that the planning system facilitates all sustainable forms of diversification.

We will work to improve the running of Farming Connect.

The development of renewable energy is a major plank in our economic development strategy. This could provide serious opportunities for farmers and their families. Energy crops for heat and electricity in local small-scale power stations are likely to become a key growth sector, and we will provide maximum encouragement for this

We believe that there are important opportunities for applying the skills of farming families to profitable shortage areas such as plumbing, carpentry, building and electrics. We will ask ELW to give priority to these areas.

Further employment opportunities should be developed in the management of sites of environmental and scientific significance and we will explore ways of funding these.

Recent evidence confirms that there are significant risks in proceeding to plant genetically-modified (GM) crops, currently being driven by naked commercial self-interest. We deplore the way in which the Agriculture Minister Mike German failed to draw relevant information to the attention of the National Assembly when agreeing new legislation for Wales. We will tighten up Welsh legislation and use all necessary powers and influence to prevent the planting of GM crops in Wales.

The Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

Fundamental changes in the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy will have far-reaching effects on Welsh farming. In many ways the interests of Welsh farming are different from those of England, and it will be up to the Government of Wales to advance

those interests in European negotiations. Labour will inevitably toe the party line, whereas a Plaid Cymru government can be depended upon to put Wales first.

While supporting the general principle of decoupling payments from production, and a shift of support from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2, Plaid Cymru, unlike the UK government, will press the need for maintaining a significant level of financial support for farming.

We see this as totally justified for social, cultural and environmental reasons as well as ensuring a secure food supply. We will press the United Kingdom and the European Union to stand firm on this in World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations.

There are both opportunities and threats for the Welsh dairy industry in the reform proposals. Measures must be put in place to ensure a viable future for this sector which is such a large part of our agriculture.

Welsh needs must be protected in relation to modulation, and full match-funding from the UK Treasury must be the bottom line.

(b) Forestry

Forestry in Wales has considerable potential for adding value and increasing employment.

Generally we support the National Assembly's agreed Woodland Strategy and will work with the Woodland Forum on its implementation.

However, the present Government of Wales has failed to bring about the change of direction necessary to release the potential of Welsh forestry. Despite the spin about promoting sustainability the overwhelming majority of replanting on the Assembly's estate is still of conifers. There is no environmental or economic case for this approach. At present a great opportunity for Wales is being lost.

We will aim for 50% of new planting to be of broadleaved species, and for 50% of the Assembly's estate to be broadleaf by 2020. All planted ancient woodland should be back to native species by the same date

This will still leave a significant role for conifers but new markets must be developed. We will encourage their use, together with forest waste, farm energy crops and recycled timber, for energy production.

(c) Sea Fishing

There is considerable potential for the development of inshore fishing to strengthen the economy of coastal communities. This is an issue that has been neglected as the debate has concentrated on the problems of deep-sea fishing caused by long-distance factory farming.

A Party of Wales government will ensure that the voice of Welsh fishing communities is heard in negotiations on the future of the Common Fishing Policy.

We will:

- encourage the use of good environmental practice to maintain the marine environment and to restore fish stocks;
- implement a strategy for sustainable inshore fishing, developed with the participation of fishermen and environmental and fisheries experts;
- ensure that financial support, including Objective 1 money, is available for the purchase and renovation of vessels and for processing and value addition, including local markets;
- move to establish a single national Sea Fisheries Committee, strengthened sufficiently to work effectively with the Assembly Fisheries Division, the WDA and the Countryside Council for Wales.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- put Welsh interests first in CAP negotiations;
- encourage local and regional value-addition to farm products;
- demand that Wales gets a fair share of European moneys for rural development, and that these moneys are truly additional;

- insist on full match funding for modulation;
- promote the public procurement of locally and regionally produced food;
- support young entrants to farming;
- support the shift to sustainable farming systems, including Tir Gofal and organic;
- encourage diversification, including the development of sustainable energy;
- increase the planting of broad-leaved trees;
- develop and implement a strategy for sustainable inshore fishing.

(3) COMMUNICATIONS

A major improvement in our communications infrastructure within Wales is essential for sustainable development, as well as strengthening national cohesion.

This will involve improving electronic communications and safeguarding our postal services as well as developing an integrated transport system.

While better road and rail links are essential, electronic communications can reduce the need for physical mobility as well as enabling the dispersal of business activity and the decentralisation of government. That is why we need an integrated communications strategy.

The Electronic Network

Since 1994, Plaid Cymru has stressed the importance of broadband communication to our national future. We envisaged that by 2002 there would be a full broadband service to every town and village and Wales could lead the world. However that opportunity was squandered and Wales has fallen to bottom place in the UK.

The Labour-Liberal Democrat Government of Wales have:

- failed to present a comprehensive broadband strategy to the Assembly;
- failed to use the £66m in the Objective One programme allocated to IT infrastructure;



- set a target for 2007 which would leave Wales even farther behind the rest of the UK and Europe;

A Party of Wales government will therefore set a priority target of a comprehensive broadband service available to 90% of our population by 2008. To ensure that the system is “future-proof” the basic network must be fibre-optic, with wireless and satellite as valuable supplementary technologies to serve subscribers remote from the fibre network.

The funds already available are adequate to meet this target provided they are used efficiently according to an overall strategy.

Road and Rail

Our transport policy will be driven by the need:

- to promote economic development in all the regions;
- protect the environment;
- improve social inclusion;
- unite the nation.

A truly integrated transport strategy is essential for this

Effective integration can only be achieved if the Assembly has control of all transport modes. The transfer of responsibility and resources for our railways from Westminster to the Assembly is therefore an urgent necessity. It is also vital in order to avoid the threat of further cuts and yet more neglect arising from the Strategic Rail Authority’s concentration of attention and resources on the English South-East. Unless we succeed in this the danger is that we will not be able to take full advantage of the new all-Wales franchise, gained as a result of constant pressure by Plaid Cymru.

We will press for the transfer of a range of other powers also, including for example bus regulation, the traffic commissioner, airport and air service development, powers on rail franchises and network rail, and port development

A strategic priority will be the completion of the “figure of 8” road network, which, together with the north-south rail service, will link together the four corners of Wales and so serve our regional development strategy. The A470 and A483 will receive particular attention to improve road safety, and reduce environmental impact on towns and villages. The reduction in north-south journey times is a strategic priority. Good quality links to the main UK network are obviously crucial for access to markets from the mid and western areas.

The public transport network will be developed as an integrated whole with an emphasis on high-quality long-distance as well as local bus services. Improvements to the North-South TrawsCambria service will be promoted. This will be backed by an effective one-stop-shop public transport information system.

In line with our commitment to promote Sustainable Development and move towards a carbon-free energy policy, we will explore possibilities for the use of alternative fuels. Road improvements will be accompanied by measures to facilitate the use of public transport. In accordance with our new public procurement policy we will make maximum possible use of local and regional contractors.

We will promote the improvement of rail services in the Valleys of the South and drive forward the re-introduction of passenger services from Cardiff and Newport to Ebbw Vale in order to help the revitalisation of the Eastern Valleys .

In order to implement an integrated transport policy we will need an appropriate organisational structure. This will include:

- a national Passenger Transport Board to direct and work with the SRA (and in the longer term assume its functions in Wales);
- statutory regional transport boards based on the existing consortia.

Rural areas have their own transport needs and challenges. Countryside dwellers deserve good public transport, and running fleets of half-empty buses is not the way ahead. We will pilot the development of a demand-responsive public transport system, using satellite technology to link cars and taxis with main bus routes.

We will explore the possibility of extending free bus travel to under-18s and those in full-time education.

We will also look to the reintroduction of bus grants as a way of modernising the bus fleet and improving access for disabled people.

In seeking to improve vehicular transport the convenience and safety of pedestrians must always be borne in mind.

So too must the fact that cycling can make a significant contribution to mobility, promote good health and help the environment. It must be taken seriously as a significant element in transport policy. The provision of cycle lanes should be integral to road improvement schemes at all times.

Air and Sea

We will develop our own air transport strategy for Wales, as the UK Government's current proposals for Wales are utterly inadequate.

We believe that Cardiff International Airport has considerable potential for growth. We will encourage the expansion of terminal capacity and new service to major European cities.

We will instigate a full review of airport facilities in the South-East of Wales.

Our strategy will encompass regional airports throughout Wales. We will encourage a wider range of services with countries and regions in the Atlantic Arc.

Postal Services

With a network of 1300 Post Offices and 9000 employees, the future of the Royal Mail is crucial to our communications system.

It is facing many challenges at present. The

UK government's decision to introduce ACT for benefit payments will lead to a sharp loss of revenue, resulting in cuts in services and outlets. Jobs are also being lost through the centralisation of sorting services out of Wales.

With the government forcing the pace on deregulation faster than European Union legislation requires, direct government support for Post Offices could end in 2007.

Another challenge to the post is the likely drop in business as a result of alternative developments, especially e-mail and mobile phone texting.

We believe that any Government of Wales has a responsibility to use its influence and powers to safeguard our postal services.

A Plaid Cymru government will argue the case for protecting jobs and services in Wales and will press the Royal Mail to appoint a National Director for Wales with executive responsibility for postal services.

In order to strengthen our network of Post Offices, we will build on the already existing Post Offices Development Grant and work with the WDA to enable Post Offices to provide a wide range of services, including banking. We also believe that Post Offices have considerable potential as information and advice centres, and deplore Labour's refusal to carry forward the "Your Guide" initiative in Post Offices. We will explore the possibilities for this development and work together with local authorities, which are currently developing their own systems.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- ensure a high-quality broadband network to all parts of Wales;
- demand the transfer to Wales of key transport functions, including responsibility for rail;
- link up the regions of Wales through the "figure of 8" road network and the all-Wales rail franchise;



- develop national and regional organisations to deliver integrated transport;
- pilot a demand-led public transport system for rural areas linking cars and taxis with the main bus routes through satellite technology;
- encourage the development of Cardiff International and regional airports;
- work with Royal Mail and development agencies to enable Post Offices to provide a wide range of services, including information and advice systems.

WE WILL SEEK PRIMARY LEGISLATION TO:

- transfer transport responsibilities including railways in Wales to the National Assembly.

(4) HOUSING

A number of major challenges will face a Plaid Cymru government in ensuring that affordable good-quality housing is available for those who need it. "Shelter" estimates that 250,000 people in Wales live in housing of unacceptable condition. The challenges include:

- a massive backlog of repair and renovation in social housing arising from lack of investment and mismanagement;
- low incomes and external pressures, particularly in attractive rural areas, causing house prices to rise well beyond what local people can afford;
- UK Treasury rules that prevent local authorities from raising funds for renovation;
- insufficient social housing stock arising in part from the disposal of properties through right-to-buy schemes;
- abandonment of social housing in some areas caused by community breakdown.

Meeting these challenges will involve a range of policy actions and significant investment. In this, as in so many other areas, the unfairness of the funding allocation to Wales, and other UK government policies, make tackling the

problems difficult. A Party of Wales government will however use whatever means are available in order to succeed.

In doing so we emphasise that investment in housing can bring multiple benefits:

- improving health and quality of life;
- reduced pressure on services including residential, nursing and hospital provision - according to Shelter, poor housing costs the NHS £50m a year;
- contributing to the regeneration of disadvantaged communities
- reducing social exclusion;
- job-creation and stimulating the local economy.

The link with economic development is obvious, as is the possibility of linkage with the Objective One programme. One aspect of this is the scope to promote home energy efficiency both through adaptation, using the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) and the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA), and through the use of building regulations

Plaid Cymru deplores the way in which New Labour dogma and Treasury rules are forcing the transfer of housing stock from local authority ownership, often against the wishes of tenants. Where such transfers are necessary, however, Plaid Cymru will encourage the development of community-owned organisations in which tenants are active participants. Such bodies can contribute to the growth of the social economy. Investment in housing must then be seen as integral to community regeneration, following the example of enlightened local authorities such as Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Housing renovation grants will be integrated with the regeneration process so as to gain the greatest benefit for society as well as the recipient.

Disabled facilities grants to give equal opportunities to the disabled are vital. We will support the Care and Repair scheme which enables older people to remain in

their own, improved, homes. We will encourage the development of “Homes for Life” which provide for people’s changing needs, including disability.

The particular needs of ethnic minority communities merit attention through for example:

- recognising the importance of the extended family;
- increasing awareness among relevant officers;
- attracting members of ethnic minority groups into housing management.
- there should be a special emphasis on integration with the community as a whole.

The specific problems of rural areas where externally-generated price inflation excludes local people from the housing market need a policy approach tailored to their circumstances. The impact on the position of Welsh as the main community language should be an important consideration.

So far the policy response has been fragmentary and inadequate.

A Plaid Cymru Government will develop a specific policy for areas of this kind. Local Authorities (LAs) will be required to undertake detailed assessments of need, and communities will themselves be given the opportunity to work with LAs and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in developing solutions. This process would be linked with work on Community Strategies and Unitary Development Plans.

On the basis of this work, variation in the level of social housing grant should be allowed in order to respond to the realities of the local market. RSLs would then be able to make use of this resource to provide flexibly for local need through a combination of affordable rented accommodation and owner-occupation (through the Homebuy scheme). There should be support for purchase and renovation, but also for new-

build where necessary, particularly on land made available for local need and therefore at little more than agricultural value.

Far from extending the right to buy, Plaid Cymru proposes its suspension in areas where there is a shortage of social housing.

In order to protect standards and prevent the exploitation of tenants, we will call for legislation to introduce compulsory registration in the private rented sector.

We will support the UK-wide campaign to demand that Westminster New Labour end the discrimination against local authority housing and tenants in the Housing Benefit System.

We oppose moves by the UK Government to change the basis of Housing Benefit so as to limit choice of location and property for claimants, a move which is calculated to increase social exclusion.

We will call for the transfer of responsibility for housing benefit to the Assembly when it achieves full legislative and taxation powers

In the interests of social solidarity and inclusion we wish to encourage a better mix of social and general housing and will make use of the planning system to this end.

A later section will outline our plans for a new means of raising finance for public investment, including housing.

Many of the factors outlined above, among others, mean that homelessness remains a significant problem affecting some 50,000 people every year. Solving this problem requires action at UK Government level but there is much that the Assembly and its partners can achieve. We will work with Shelter and others to this end.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- demand a change in Treasury rules to enable the renovation of publicly-owned social housing;
- integrate housing renovation and development with community regeneration;



- develop a specific policy approach for rural areas affected by externally-generated price inflation;
- recognise the needs of ethnic minority communities;
- work with Shelter and others to tackle homelessness.

WE WILL SEEK PRIMARY LEGISLATION TO:

- require the compulsory registration of private rented housing.

(5) REGENERATING COMMUNITIES

Tackling the poverty and spiral of decline that is blighting many communities will be a key priority for a Party of Wales government.

In disadvantaged areas, development policies must be geared to community regeneration.

A Plaid Cymru government will further develop and support the Communities First initiative. We will:

- stress empowerment and capacity-building rather than quick results as fundamental to the regeneration process, recognising power-differences within communities;
- ensure that local people themselves define the priorities;
- welcome the role of outside bodies, particularly the voluntary sector in providing support and guidance;
- provide longer-term funding to give stability and confidence to voluntary organisations and local people;
- link community regeneration more effectively with mainstream economic development, e.g. through Objective One partnerships;
- bring extra resources from other policy areas to bear, including Health, Education and early years Educare, environmental improvement and energy conservation.

People from ethnic minority and lesbian and

bisexual people are often vulnerable, as are women and older people. Their needs merit particular attention.

While ‘Communities First’ areas have very special needs and merit priority attention, it is important that there is co-operation with adjoining wards in order to avoid duplication, avoid the displacement of problems elsewhere, and maximise the benefit of developments.

We will work with the police to strengthen their participation in community regeneration.

Schools have a key contribution. The more they are seen as integrated into their communities and dedicated to serving their needs, rather than being free-standing entities in a competitive market, the more they will be able to contribute to regeneration.

A Plaid Cymru government will ensure that at least one of the community school pilots to which we are committed (see Education) covers one or more ‘Communities First’ wards. These pilot projects will deploy other services including Health and Social Services on school premises.

Children and young people should be able actively to participate in regeneration programmes

Public Protection

Freedom from violence and fear is a basic human right that must be upheld

No responsible government should turn its back on the way in which crime and vandalism are damaging the quality of life for many people especially in some of our most disadvantaged communities.

As well as the direct harm caused to victims, each crime committed contributes towards creating a climate of fear in many areas. The perception of crime can itself cause stress and unhappiness .

Despite the familiar cliché, “tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime”, Labour has failed to tackle either effectively. It has also failed to come up with any coherent strategy. Its increasingly mixed messages and

gimmicks make it clear that its policy is driven more by the quest for newspaper headlines than an honest determination to build safe and contented communities. .

A cool and mature approach is essential in tackling crime and vandalism. It must balance the underlying economic and social causes with the need to accept personal responsibility.

Simplistic and populist approaches from politicians and others help no-one. Overcrowded prisons will not solve society's ills or help to build safe communities.

However, the response to the reality of crime and its effect on communities' quality of life cannot wait upon the holistic policies that could get to the root of the problem. This would be insulting to victims, who are as likely as not to be at least as poor as those who have committed the offence.

It is clear therefore that there must be effective action for public protection.

There can be no substitute for effective police forces accountable to the public. We need a much stronger presence and greater involvement in the community to help deter and prevent crime, as well as to improve detection and conviction rates.

We also need a criminal justice system that both protects the public and is more imaginative in its attempts to reform offenders.

The National Assembly's current powers make it difficult to develop an integrated strategy for reducing crime. Whilst the Assembly is responsible for most aspects of community regeneration and social work, powers over the police and the criminal justice system remain with Westminster.

A Plaid Cymru government will use all the powers at its disposal to help make our communities safer. However, we will also seek the transfer of further powers to enable a more co-ordinated and integrated approach.

Our first step following the May election will be to strengthen co-operation among all those involved in law enforcement on the

one hand, and community regeneration work on the other.

Drug-related crime

The need for community action is particularly relevant where drug crime is concerned. Economic despair and social breakdown must never be underestimated as causes in driving young people towards more and more dangerous drugs.

Class A drugs such as heroin and crack cocaine are wreaking havoc in many communities, not only among the users themselves but also among the victims of their crimes. At the same time the havoc wreaked through the misuse of alcohol should not be underestimated, nor the need for effective action to prevent its misuse neglected.

Swift action is required on two different fronts. Firstly, rehabilitation must be easily and promptly available for drug users. As well as the obvious importance of this in humanitarian terms, it is far more cost-effective than allowing continuing addiction and offending on the one hand and imprisonment on the other.

Powerful dealers who are making a fortune from the misery of others should be dealt with severely and their profits seized. We believe that takings from such seizure should be used to pay for the treatment and rehabilitation of those suffering from drug-dependency.

On the issue of classification, we welcome the more pragmatic approach now being taken to the use of cannabis. Whereas it is undoubtedly harmful, it clearly belongs to a different category to Class A drugs. However declassification without decriminalisation is an unsatisfactory compromise, leaving distribution in the hands of illegal dealers. It is a typical New Labour fudge. Plaid Cymru supports decriminalisation for minor offences such as possession for personal use, but we emphasise the need for vigorous educational campaigning to show the dangers of use. This would enable the police to concentrate more on apprehending those who trade in hard or Class A drugs.

Policing and Justice

A Party of Wales government will seek the transfer of responsibility for policing to the National Assembly. This is vital in order to enable the co-ordination of activities and to develop a policing policy appropriate to Wales.

Strong support for such a move has already been expressed among senior figures in Welsh police forces, and we believe that it should take place as soon as possible.

We will put a strong emphasis on community policing. In consultation with the police forces, we will aim to increase the numbers of officers in the community and consider ways of developing the roles of others who could support their work.

To protect accessibility to justice, we will oppose any further closures of magistrates courts.

Looking towards the time when the Assembly gains legislative powers, we advocate the establishment of a Wales Ministry of Justice to take responsibility for policing, most of the work of criminal and civil courts, prisons and probation services. This will enable us to fashion our own criminal justice system and develop the kinds of solutions that work for us.

We support the maximum use of non-custodial sentences particularly for less serious offences. This is not mere leniency, but rather recognition that in many cases prison is simply a very expensive way of making people far worse.

Community service must not be seen as a soft option but rigorously enforced so that offenders are making an appropriate reparation to society. There should be widespread use of technologies such as electronic tagging.

We will strengthen witness protection services so that fear of reprisal will not inhibit the presentation of evidence that could lead to a conviction.

We will also strengthen victim support through the existing Victim Support Teams

and ensure that specialist rape crisis counselling is available.

Hate Crime

We will put particular emphasis on protecting members of vulnerable ethnic minority communities. Racially-motivated attacks are beyond the pale and must not be tolerated.

We will work closely with the Wales Refugee Council on positive approaches to the issue of refugees and asylum seekers so as to counter any danger of persecution.

We will develop a consistent approach to tackling homophobic hate crimes, working with the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Forum to identify, disseminate and resource best practice.

Violence in the Home

We will also ensure that domestic violence is treated with the seriousness it deserves. We will provide resources to make it possible for vulnerable women and children to leave violent partners, find new homes and rebuild their lives.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- encourage greater co-operation between the police and those involved in community regeneration;
- tackle the economic and social problems that cause crime;
- provide funding for drug rehabilitation programmes;
- oppose any further closures of magistrates courts;
- provide more funding for the protection and support of victims and witnesses.

WE WILL SEEK PRIMARY LEGISLATION TO:

- transfer responsibility for the police to the National Assembly.

(6) THE ENVIRONMENT

As one of the three pillars of Sustainable Development, the need to protect and

strengthen the environment permeates our policy programme. It is inevitable that tensions will arise between the need for development on the one hand and environmental protection on the other, but we believe that Wales is well placed to achieve the reconciliation of the two.

Our revamped Sustainable Development Scheme will set out the way in which we will achieve this. It will be as much about seizing opportunities for action in certain key areas as about setting up obstacles to inappropriate development. As such it will be closely integrated with other aspects of our policy programme, economic development in particular. The need to reduce Wales's global ecological footprint will be an important issue.

The key considerations will be:

- contributing to reducing climate change;
- protection of biodiversity;
- sustainable use of natural resources;
- prevention of damaging emissions and pollution.

We have already shown that:

- sustainable energy and waste will be growth sectors in our economic strategy;
- the development of ICT will enable a reduction in the need for travel;
- we will promote the development and use of alternative fuels, particularly hydrogen, and give priority to public transport;
- we will prioritise agri-environmental farming;
- our forestry policy will be based on environmental principles;
- we will create extra employment through the positive management of sites of scientific and ecological importance;
- we will promote sustainable fishing practices;
- our public procurement policies will incorporate the proximity principle.

We will also look to strengthen the status of Sites of Special Scientific Interest by giving them Favourable Conservation Status (FCS).

The importance of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has also been mentioned. It is essential that our young people grow up with a strong awareness of their duty to look after the natural environment as a wonder of creation, an invaluable asset and the basis of our survival and of all wealth. This will be seen in the context of the need to ensure global equity and social justice. We will work with others to ensure that Sustainable Development and global citizenship are linked as key elements in our new National Curriculum and in teachers' education and training.

In our jobs strategy there will be an emphasis on career opportunities in various aspects of Sustainable Development such as those mentioned above.

In all of this we will work closely with the recently-established Sustainable Development Forum.

The remit of the Countryside Council for Wales and the National Parks will put the promotion of Sustainable Development at the top of their agendas. We will encourage the National Parks to see themselves as exemplars of Sustainable Development .

We will seek the devolution of the Environment Agency to Wales. However, rather than creating an additional Assembly Sponsored Public Body (ASPB) we will explore the possibility of establishing a single national environmental body to take over the regulatory, advisory and policy development functions of the Environment Agency, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Forestry Commission.

Water

Water is a priceless asset in this age of shortage and must be recognised as such.

While recognising the importance of conservation to protect the ecology of streams, rivers and lakes, a Plaid Cymru government will seek opportunities to use



our rich water assets responsibly for economic advantage.

We will draw up a new national water strategy, working with the Environment Agency, the WDA, CCW, and Glas Cymru.

In order to promote more efficient use of water use, especially in certain areas, we will implement a metering and reduction strategy that responds to Welsh needs.

Insisting on Wales' right to control any transfers beyond our borders, we will seek primary legislation to require payment for water transferred across the border. The receipts will be allocated to reduce water bills and to fund regeneration in reservoir catchment areas.

We will enter into early negotiations with OFWAT on these matters.

The Sea

The seas on the three sides of Wales are among our major assets, with around 70 per cent of our 1600 km of coastline designated for various reasons and 60 cent of our coast and offshore waters of European value and candidates for Special Area of Conservation (SAC) status. The rich biodiversity of these waters must be protected.

A Plaid Cymru government will develop an ecosystem-based policy for oceans and coasts in consultation with scientists, stakeholders and environmental bodies. Its intention will be to:

- provide sustainable livelihoods for coastal communities;
- improve the health of our seas;
- protect marine wildlife;
- promote safe marine activities.

We will draw up an Action Plan showing the possible contribution of Wales to the UK government document 'Safeguarding our Seas'.

The opportunities for the development of sustainable energy from wind, tide and waves should be compatible with, rather than

conflict with, the need to protect our waters. However, sensitivity is essential, as is achieving the highest possible standards.

Other developments such as aggregate extraction are more problematic. It must be demonstrated that there is no threat to marine ecosystems and coasts before developments of this nature can be allowed.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL

- place Sustainable Development at the heart of policy;
- target environmental industries as special growth areas;
- develop education in Sustainable Development;
- strengthen designation and management of sites of environmental importance.

WE WILL SEEK PRIMARY LEGISLATION TO

- establish a single environmental public body for Wales;
- enable payment for Welsh water transferred across the border.

(7) THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

In 1999 The Party of Wales advocated radical changes to the planning system in order to develop a distinctively Welsh approach. Some of those ideas have since been taken up, but this has been a slow and piecemeal process. We will inject new urgency into getting the planning framework right to ensure the sustainable development of our communities and the nation as a whole.

Strategic planning on a national level is essential in order to promote sustainability on the one hand, and to enable the regionalisation of development on the other. Unfortunately, at the time of writing the Wales Spatial Plan has yet to appear, while the main planning document Planning Policy Wales is cumbersome and still lacks a

distinctly Welsh perspective. We will address these deficiencies. We regard the Wales Spatial Plan as an important opportunity to integrate geographic, environmental, social, cultural and linguistic factors so to establish the foundations of a new planning system. We will ensure strong strategic planning at the regional level, within the framework of Planning Policy Wales, to enable the implementation of our regional sustainable development strategies.

As well as facilitating growth in many areas, we will restrain development in areas experiencing congestion and overheating, including much of the M4 corridor

The polycentric approach set out in the EU's European Spatial Development Perspective will underpin our strategies. It is notable that the UK suffers from the greatest difference in prosperity between regions in the whole of the EU.

The Countryside

Nearly 40% of the people of Wales live in the countryside or in small towns and villages. These communities need to be able to grow, diversify and innovate if they are to flourish.

We will therefore revise Planning Policy Wales so as to allow appropriate development in the countryside which helps to regenerate communities of low growth but which is well designed and respects both vernacular building styles and the landscape. We will encourage local planning authorities to commission design guides for this purpose. We will encourage urban-type enterprises to flourish on farms and villages if they are of appropriate scale and design.

The planning system should enable the use of certain areas of land specifically to meet the needs of the local community.

Regenerating Urban Areas

The present Government of Wales has completely failed to address the particular needs of urban areas. For example there is no "Urban" priority in the Objective One documents, and there have been no spatial

typologies of various kinds of urban settlements. We will set about correcting these deficiencies.

Energy

We will revise Planning Policy Wales to enable the development of renewable energy as set out in our economic development proposals. We will explore the possibility of requiring all large new industrial and commercial buildings to obtain a percentage of their energy from renewable resources as well as adopting high standards of energy efficiency.

We will call for the devolution of responsibility for large-scale energy projects to the Assembly. This will enable us to block any new nuclear energy stations. We will allocate quotas to all the regions for the generation of renewable energy including wind farms. We condemn the existing Government of Wales for its failure over four years to complete the work on Technical Advice Note (TAN) 8, which should have provided the planning framework for renewables. This has blocked the development of an important sunrise industry in Wales.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- provide a national and regional planning framework to promote polycentric sustainable development and discourage congestion;
- encourage appropriate and well-designed development of businesses in the countryside;
- use the planning system to ensure that the needs of local communities are met;
- address the planning needs of urban areas.

WE WILL SEEK PRIMARY LEGISLATION TO:

- transfer responsibility for large-scale energy generation projects to the National Assembly.



(D) CULTURE

Culture is not merely a desirable but dispensable luxury. It is essential to the quality of our lives and our identities and a key defining feature in our diversity and distinctiveness as a nation. It has always been, and is now increasingly, a major contributor to the economy.

Setting the boundaries of culture is difficult but the discussion here will encompass the arts, sport, recreation and the media.

Our strategy will place particular emphasis on that which is unique to our country, while recognising and celebrating the diversity that typifies Wales today. We will ensure that the contribution of ethnic minority communities, including their languages, is celebrated and encouraged.

The Department of Culture under a Plaid Cymru government will play a powerful strategic role, taking responsibility for Tourism, a key economic sector, and for the revitalisation of the Welsh language so as to build a truly bilingual nation.

(1) The Arts

We will strive to bring the arts closer to the people, and will encourage national institutions such as the National Orchestra, National Opera, and National Dance Companies to strengthen links with communities throughout Wales. We will also ensure that the Wales Millennium Centre embraces its responsibility to serve the whole of Wales.

We will promote Wales as a land of creativity, with equal respect for native artists and those who have come here to practise their talents. We will explore the possibility of providing sponsorship for artists who are political refugees.

We will:

- proceed with plans to develop a Welsh-language National Theatre and develop Clwyd Theatr Cymru as its English-language equivalent, whilst ensuring also the development of community theatre;

- work with the Arts Council (ACW) to provide a National Gallery for the Visual Arts, and explore the potential for it to contribute to economic and social regeneration in a disadvantaged area;
- work with Sgrin Cymru and the Wales Screen Commission on the development of Welsh film and television, and also promote Wales as a location for film production;
- drive forward a programme of public art in cooperation with Cywaith Cymru (Artsworks Wales).

We will revitalise Cymru'n Creu, providing it with a permanent secretariat, and charge it with the task of bringing together all aspects of our nation's cultural life.

(2) The English Language in Welsh Cultural Life

Major areas of the Welsh experience, particularly over the last two centuries, have found expression through the English language which has often taken distinctive and vigorous forms in our communities.

The Party of Wales values and celebrates this vital aspect of our national life.

Welsh forms of spoken English should be respected and nurtured rather than denigrated or patronised. We will seek to promote their use in high-status contexts such as broadcasting and public performance.

Welsh writing in English must be given the status and support it needs and deserves. We will encourage its study in schools and ensure its inclusion in our new National Curriculum. We will support the establishment of an adequately-funded Centre of Welsh Writing in English within our Higher Education system. Its work would include translations of Welsh-language writing into English.

(3) Broadcasting

Current developments in the world of broadcasting bring both opportunities and threats to Wales.

The Communications Bill now proceeding

through the UK Parliament threatens to marginalise the needs and influence of the nations and regions of Britain. Its emphasis on commercial values endangers the principle of public service broadcasting which has been crucial for the nurturing of Welsh culture and identity.

New technology, including digitalisation, will transform broadcasting as we know it in ways that are hard to predict.

A Plaid Cymru Government of Wales will commission a study of the potential for creating a national broadcasting service in the context of these changes. This study will cover:

- the need to protect and develop further Welsh-language broadcasting;
- the need to develop a comprehensive English-language broadcasting service for Wales;
- the role of local radio, and the need to ensure that it is truly local;
- options for the future funding, licensing and regulation of Welsh broadcasting;
- the link with telecommunications.

We will meanwhile lobby for adequate representation for Wales under the new Communications legislation. We would support the establishment of a Wales OFCOM to take responsibility for the regulation of broadcasting and telecommunications in Wales and regard a continuing emphasis on public service broadcasting as vital.

(4) Sport and Recreation

We will raise the prominence of sport, and work with the Sports Council and others to develop a coordinated national strategy. The foundations of this policy will be:

- promoting better health through increasing participation;
- its use to tackle social exclusion;
- delivering sporting success to boost Wales internationally;

- capitalising on the economic benefits of sport.

In education we will aim to provide time for two hours a week of Physical Education (PE) on our new national curriculum. We will encourage a choice of sporting activity to suit the needs of children of all kinds, and not just the talented. Our community schools strategy will foster cooperation between primary and secondary schools in their local clusters and close links with local clubs and voluntary activity

We will ensure closer collaboration between the Sports Council and the sports governing bodies in providing coaching and encouraging participation.

We will integrate the development of leisure centres and sporting facilities in all the regions as part of their sustainable development strategies. In this way we will seek to spread the benefits of sports tourism throughout Wales. The Sports Council and WTB will assist in developing a strategy to this end. We will explore the potential for extending free access to leisure centres.

We will target groups with low participation rates, including women, the disabled and poorer people, seeking ways of assisting and encouraging their participation

We will include clear guidelines in planning policy documents to protect open spaces and recreational areas of all kinds, with a view to ensuring six acres of recreational ground per thousand of the population within defined areas. The provision of space and facilities to facilitate cycling and walking will be encouraged.

We regard the promotion of sport and physical recreation as a significant element in regenerating our communities and national life.

(5) Tourism

Transferring responsibility for tourism to a strengthened Culture Department will enhance its status and economic significance.

We will encourage the development of



quality environmental, cultural, activity and heritage tourism and will work with the Wales Tourist Board (WTB), WDA and the Arts Council (ACW) develop the workforce to serve these sectors. Emphasis will be placed on the visual and built heritage.

We will seek additional powers for WTB to market Wales abroad, working closely with the WDA, the Sports Council, ACW and Cymru'n Creu.

We will work with these bodies and the British Council to promote Welsh culture abroad.

A PLAID CYMRU

GOVERNMENT WILL:

- strengthen the Culture Department in the National Assembly to include Tourism;
- base our approach on the distinctiveness and diversity of Wales;
- promote Wales as a land of creativity with equal respect for native artists and those who choose to work here;
- celebrate the English-language culture of Wales and promote Welsh writing in English;
- require the new Millennium Centre to serve the whole of Wales;
- facilitate the establishment of a National Gallery of the Visual Arts, preferably as part of economic and social regeneration;
- promote Welsh film and theatre;
- commission a study of options for the future of Welsh broadcasting and telecommunications;
- work with the Sports Council and others to develop a comprehensive policy for increased participation in sport and physical recreation.

(E) A BILINGUAL WALES

We regard the revitalisation of the Welsh language and the creation of a bilingual Wales as a key strategic objective because:

- the language, and what it has expressed through the ages, is a unique treasure;

- it is a key component in our national identity and our society's cultural diversity;
- it has enormous potential to enrich the lives of individuals and society at large;
- there is widespread support for this among the people.

We believe that Wales can, over time, become a model of sustainable bilingualism at work.

We regard creating circumstances in which people are able to use the Welsh language without hindrance as an issue of Human Rights.

Our vision is of a truly bilingual society where the great majority of the people of Wales will be able to communicate effectively in both Welsh and English, and where the use of the Welsh language will be commonplace in all aspects of life. To realise that vision, we will need to plan strategically for a continual growth in bilingualism over several generations until it becomes the norm, as it is in many other European countries.

Action will be needed on several fronts:

- to increase the number of its speakers;
- to ensure suitable economic development that is conducive to the growth of the language;
- to promote the use of Welsh within communities all over Wales.

We welcome the progress that has been made on a cross-party basis in the National Assembly over the past year.

A Plaid Cymru government will build upon, strengthen and act upon the agreed proposals of Assembly's Culture and Education committees.

While the Ministry of Culture will have overall responsibility for the strategy to revive the Welsh language, all other departments will be required to play their part. The promotion of bilingualism will be mainstreamed into areas such as Education, Economic Development, Planning and Housing.

Education and the Community

A Plaid Cymru government will give a clear strategic lead in the expansion of Welsh-medium education at all levels, responding to but also encouraging demand, and ensuring that Welsh-medium education is available to all within reasonable distance. We will place a particular emphasis on early years Educare.

There will be three broad models of provision, but variations will occur according to local circumstances:

- Welsh-medium in all or nearly all subjects;
- some subjects taught through the medium of Welsh;
- English-medium schools where Welsh is taught as a subject.

With parental support it should be possible for schools to move from one category to another; and there will be encouragement for English-medium schools to begin teaching some subjects through the medium of Welsh. The designated Welsh-medium schools have shown themselves to be uniquely successful in developing effective bilingualism among students from both English-speaking and Welsh-speaking backgrounds and we will encourage the expansion of this sector.

It is crucial that Welsh-speakers who have special educational needs are able to have those needs met through the language of their families' choice

We will introduce a programme of staff development, including sabbaticals, to enable Welsh education to keep up with the demand.

We will also strengthen the Welsh-language Unit in ELWVa to develop an effective strategy for the teaching of Welsh for Adults as well as the expansion of Welsh-medium post-16 provision. Its work will include the provision of work-based training that will be linked to our Jobs Strategy to meet the growing demand for bilingual skills. Essential to this task will be ensuring an adequate supply of teachers, lecturers, trainers and teaching materials.

We will facilitate the development of language-planning research and teaching in Higher Education

Expanding the role of Welsh in Higher Education is vital if the language is to acquire prestige and high-level usage. We have set out our plans for this in our Education section.

We will provide special support for the Welsh Language Board's TWF initiative, along with a strategy for strengthening links between the school and the home. Mentrau Iaith will be strengthened as local language planning and animateur bodies.

Development and Regional Variation

We regard the revitalisation of Welsh as a national project, relevant to the whole of Wales.

However, the practical policy will vary according to local circumstances. Areas where Welsh is widely used as a community language will merit particular attention. The same could apply to areas that have seen a significant growth of the language over recent years.

A Plaid Cymru government will therefore designate Areas of Special Linguistic Significance on the basis of a comprehensive demographic analysis.

At present, the economic weakness of areas where the Welsh language is strongest is one of the main threats to its future. Nearly all of these are within the Objective 1 area. With agriculture providing direct employment for 10 per cent of Welsh speakers, the farming crisis is having a disproportionate effect on the language.

A Plaid Cymru government will develop a special unit whose remit will be to link language planning with economic development, either within the WDA or through developing further the role of Menter a Busnes. This unit will play a lead role in the economic development of Areas of Special Linguistic Significance.

The Welsh language will also be a factor for consideration in our plans to move government jobs out of Cardiff.



Planning and Housing

Many areas where the Welsh language is under threat suffer from a lack of affordable housing for local people. At the same time, they must also be protected from over-development. We have set out our proposals for this in our sections on Housing and Planning.

Language Legislation

We will provide adequate resources to enable the Welsh Language Board to fulfil its responsibilities effectively. A Plaid Cymru Government of Wales will back the Board, through legal action if necessary, in ensuring that schemes submitted under the 1993 Welsh Language Act are both robust and implemented.

We are in favour of further legislation to strengthen the position of the Welsh language. We will undertake a study of the kind of new legislation required and draft proposals for enactment at Westminster.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- build upon, strengthen and implement the recommendations of the Assembly's Culture and Education Committees;
- boost Welsh medium education across all age groups, with particular emphasis on early years Educare;
- designate Areas of Special Linguistic Significance;
- establish an Economic and Language Planning unit to work towards sustainable developments in Areas of Special Linguistic Significance;
- strengthen ELWa's Welsh-language Unit to promote Welsh for Adults and post-16 Welsh-medium education and training;
- build upon the Welsh Language Board's TWF initiative to promote language transmission within families;
- ensure access to affordable housing in vulnerable Welsh-speaking areas.

WE WILL CALL FOR PRIMARY LEGISLATION TO:

- strengthen the legal status of the Welsh language.

(F) EUROPE AND BEYOND

Effective representation within the European Union is vital for the protection and promotion of our interests. Already under-represented in comparison with small member-states, Wales faces a further reduction in the number of its MEPs from five to four.

Representation will be more effective to the extent that we are able to raise the status of Wales as a European nation and region. The acquisition of full legislative powers is crucial in this.

In the meantime, a Party of Wales government will ensure that Wales plays a full role in the alliance of Constitutional Regions with Legislative Powers. A strong presence for Wales in the United Kingdom's Permanent Representation (UKRep) within the European Union is of course essential.

We will ensure that Wales participates in relevant negotiations, with a Welsh Minister representing an identified Welsh standpoint. While co-operating closely on matters of common interest among the nations of Britain, we will also develop an independent position on aspects of policy in which Welsh interests are distinct, such as agriculture and regional development, and lobby effectively for them.

We will pursue the possibilities for developing Tripartite Agreements between Wales and the EU, for example in areas of environmental policy.

We deplore the absence of Wales from discussions in the Convention on European Governance for the 2004 Conference. A Plaid Cymru government however, together with our Members of the European Parliament, will seize every opportunity to present our viewpoint on the future development of Europe.

The Party of Wales strongly supports the creation of a more democratic European Union with a written constitution and a Charter of Fundamental Rights incorporated in the Treaty. We want the Council of Ministers' decision-making process to become more accountable and transparent, and we advocate strengthening the powers of the European Parliament.

We will push for the right of direct appeal to the European Court, for example, as this could be highly relevant in challenging the United Kingdom's refusal to apply the additionality principle to European funding.

The Party of Wales's aspiration for Wales to achieve full membership as a member-state of the EU is discussed in the next section.

Here in Wales, we will review the work of the Assembly's European Committee with a view to improving its capacity to predict the effects of EU legislation and to scrutinise Assembly legislation arising from it. We will also look at ways in which the Assembly might take direct responsibility for European policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy and Structural Funds.

Welsh representation in Brussels has been damaged by the way in which Rhodri Morgan withdrew from the Wales European Centre at short notice; as a result there is much ground to be regained. A Plaid Cymru government will develop a multifunctional centre to act for Wales in Brussels. The Government of Wales Representation would be housed within this 'embassy', as would representatives of other relevant organisations.

International Affairs

We regard it as entirely appropriate that the National Assembly should from time to time debate and adopt a position on matters of international importance, particularly when they have relevance for Wales. Examples could include negotiations on trade and the environment, the UK going to war, or minority and human rights.

Iraq

Plaid Cymru works for a peaceful and just world where the real causes of conflict are addressed and problems are resolved by non-violent means on the international level. We oppose the war on Iraq as immoral and unlawful. A pre-emptive strike is contrary to the principles which underpin the United Nations and would have catastrophic effects on the whole region.

We have particular concerns about the GATS negotiations which threaten to drive service provision towards privatisation with possibly disastrous effects for workers and local economies. The Government of Wales should certainly intervene in matters of this kind.

A Plaid Cymru government would regard it as its duty to speak for the people of Wales in such cases.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- ensure more effective representation for Wales in Europe;
- support calls for a more democratic Europe;
- ensure Wales plays a full and active role in the alliance of Constitutional Regions with Legislative Powers;
- oppose the war on Iraq as immoral and unlawful;
- review the work of the Assembly's European Committee;

III POWERS and RESOURCES

(I) WELSH GOVERNANCE

(a) A Parliament by 2007

A Plaid Cymru government will be committed to transforming the National Assembly into a law-making Parliament by the beginning of its next term in 2007.

Whilst accepting that we will inevitably be working within the broad framework of the



Assembly's existing powers for its coming term, we are clear on the need for a more satisfactory constitutional settlement.

Our experience over the past four years in the Assembly has reinforced our view that its powers are utterly inadequate, and highlighted the degree of confusion over what powers are actually devolved.

We therefore regard the establishment of a legislative Parliament as soon as possible as a prerequisite for good governance in Wales.

We reject the oft-repeated objection that the Assembly has not yet acquired the skills or experience necessary to deal with the responsibilities of a fully legislative body. The objection is spurious, as is the entirely inappropriate metaphor of having 'to learn to walk before we can run'. The reality is that the present confusion and complexity is a far greater challenge to effective operation than a fully legislative Parliament.

We are driven by logic, as well as our ambitions for the nation, to the conclusion that Wales should achieve a status similar to that of Scotland as a matter of urgency.

The clarity in the Scotland Act is in sharp contrast to the ambiguity that has bedevilled government in Wales. Instead of listing the devolved functions, the Scotland Act lists those functions that are retained by Westminster. There is therefore an assumption that responsibility lies with the Scottish Parliament unless the Act indicates otherwise.

The powers that we are advocating for a Welsh Parliament by 2007 include:

- full legislative powers over all functions already devolved;
- the transfer of further powers, including powers over the police, probation service and the railways for reasons that we have already outlined in the relevant sections;
- taxation powers (the right to vary income tax levels as in Scotland is the

obvious option, but others include the right to vary Corporation Tax and some environmental taxes);

- borrowing powers;
- powers for the promotion of equality and the enforcement of equality law, including the powers of the statutory equality commissions, with a view to establishing a single Equality Commission for Wales.

We would also favour similar provisions to those in the Scotland Act for further transfers of powers by statutory instrument without the need for primary legislation in Westminster.

We believe that the establishment of such a Parliament would provide coherent and stable constitutional arrangements which would also make it possible to begin to unlock the potential of our country.

The establishment of such a Parliament would neither assume or preclude the possibility of further constitutional progress. Legislative devolution should not be regarded as a mere staging post to full national status. It is a perfectly valid constitutional state of affairs in its own right, which is far more than can be said of the present arrangements.

The Party of Wales's aspiration is for our country to achieve the status of member state within the European Union. However, we recognise that such a momentous change would have to be subject to the approval of the people in a referendum.

A National Convention

As we have stated above, we are clear about the powers that we want Wales to have by the time of the next Assembly election in 2007.

We would regard a victory for Plaid Cymru at this election as a broad mandate to push for further devolution of powers to Wales.

At the same time, we strongly believe in the right of the people to determine the precise form of government best suited to their needs. We will therefore seek to achieve the broadest possible consensus on the way ahead.

Immediately on taking office, a Plaid Cymru government will set up a National Convention made up of representatives from all sections of civic society. Among those invited to affiliate and participate will be representatives of trade unions, business, the voluntary sector, public bodies, and political parties.

The National Convention will be charged with the task of defining a constitutional settlement that can command the broadest possible support among the people. It will need to agree on a scheme to transform the present National Assembly and its current ad hoc assortment of powers into a legislative body with clearly defined powers and functions.

The Convention will consult widely across the whole spectrum of political opinion in Wales over a period of up to two years. It will take account of the findings of the Richard Commission, to which we as a party, in contrast with Labour, have already submitted our views. We will be advocating the same views within the Convention: in support of a legislative Parliament on the Scottish model, with powers of taxation.

The Convention will look in detail at all aspects of a new constitutional settlement. As well as the range of powers that should be devolved to Wales, it will also consider:

- the relationship between a Welsh Parliament, Westminster, Whitehall and Europe;
- its size and composition along with the electoral system;
- the implications for the civil service in Wales.

Based on its findings and conclusions, the National Convention will be expected to draft a bill for a new Wales Act to replace the 1998 Government of Wales Act.

We are fully aware that these conclusions may differ from our own proposals, although the logic in favour of legislative devolution is compelling. Nevertheless, we will be bound by the National Convention's conclusions, reflecting as they will public opinion in Wales.

The bill drawn up by the Convention would be debated by the Assembly. With the Assembly's support, a Plaid Cymru government would then open a process of dialogue and commence negotiations with the UK government on enacting legislation in time for the 2007 Assembly election.

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- establish a National Convention to agree on a draft bill to transform the National Assembly into a legislative Parliament by 2007.

(b) Local government

In line with our belief in subsidiarity, we are committed to strong and powerful local government.

We also favour the transfer of as many as possible of the functions of the Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies to direct democratic control by local authorities.

We are, however, doubtful whether the present pattern of local government could cope with such additional responsibilities.

Many local authorities are indeed finding it difficult to fulfil all of their present functions effectively. This is hardly surprising, as part of the hidden agenda of the 1992-93 re-organisation was to reduce the power of local government.

It would be irresponsible at this time even to contemplate the upheaval of a further reorganisation. However we believe that there is much to be gained through inter-county collaboration. Indeed there are many examples of good practice in this direction already in existence. We believe that there is scope for more.

A Party of Wales government will therefore seek powers through primary legislation to require Local Authorities to collaborate for certain purposes. The present Government of Wales has already taken such powers in relation to Special Educational Needs. However we will adopt a consensual



approach and work in a spirit of partnership to make progress.

There are many functions where such collaboration either already exists or could be developed, including transport, waste management, economic development, planning, advisory services to schools, and social services.

Collaboration would be crucial in drawing up and implementing the regional sustainable development strategies described in the section on Economic Development.

We believe that in the longer term it will be necessary to undertake a comprehensive review of Welsh governance as a whole in order to achieve the greatest possible efficiency and strengthen democratic participation and accountability. This would occur in the context of the acquisition of full law-making powers by the National Assembly.

Such a review could consider the number the number of local authorities and their membership and the scope for acquiring extra powers including the transfer to them of certain of the functions of ASPBs. The role of community councils is currently being considered and the findings may well be relevant to a debate on the wider picture.

One possibility would be the establishment of a Commission on Local Government. A Plaid Cymru Government will give due consideration to this in consultation with its partners, and in particular the Welsh Local Government Association.

(c) Working in Partnership

In the meanwhile the continuation of the partnership relationship with local government is essential in order to ensure the effective delivery of policy and services. We will work with the Partnership Council to promote and develop the good practice set out in the Local Authority Equality Standard.

A Plaid Cymru Government will strengthen the National assembly Voluntary Sector

Scheme, promote the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council as a forum for debate, and work closely with voluntary organisations and with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) to promote the contribution made by the sector to the life of the nation. Those organisations representing traditionally excluded groups merit particular attention.

(2) FUNDING REGENERATION

A Party of Wales Government will be obliged to undertake the task of regenerating Wales within the constraints of an unjust financial settlement and UK Government Treasury rules that inhibit the very public sector investment that is crucial for success. Whereas much can be achieved through clarity of policy and focused action, the scale of the challenge is enormous.

A just financial settlement based on need would transform the prospects, and a Plaid Cymru government would lead the nation in a great push for justice. Victory in the coming Welsh general election would give us clear mandate for a renegotiation of the now notorious Barnett formula.

We believe that we could find important allies for our efforts among some of the disadvantaged region of England.

We would not be asking for any special favours - simply justice and a recognition of the ill-effects of UK government policies on Wales, particularly following the election of the Tories in 1979.

Over the past quarter of a century in particular, the UK financial, fiscal and spending policies have led to a shift of resources away from Wales and from poorer English regions to the south east of England. This process still continues.

This, together with the collapse of Wales's heavy industrial base, has led to Wales's GDP falling further behind the UK average - from 88 per cent to 80 per cent - over the same period. The proportion of older people - the highest in any part of the UK - has also increased during that time, with obvious

consequences on the demand for health and social services.

The Barnett formula takes none of these factors into account. Moreover, the way its year-on-year increases have been calculated have also gradually eroded the block grant's relative worth in comparison with the rest of the UK. The result is that it is impossible for Wales to keep up with the level of spending increases in England, and so finds itself falling further and further behind.

Our detailed calculations show that the Barnett Formula provides us with around £800 million less than it should.

This shortfall is further compounded by the fact that European funds for the structural fund programmes are only partly additional and that not a penny of public-sector match funding has been provided from the UK Treasury. The consequence is that European programmes have to be funded in large part from resources that would otherwise be available for core activities such as health, social services, education and transport.

We calculate that the total shortfall in the National Assembly's annual budget resulting from all of this amounts to some £1 billion a year. Gaining access to this lost £1 billion would make a huge difference to our public services and to the task of economic regeneration.

A further obstacle to regeneration is to be found in the UK Government's obsession with the use of private funding for investment in the infrastructure. The Private Finance Initiative (PFI), which the Party of Wales opposes, offers short-term gains - cash for new infrastructure outside Treasury rules and without higher taxes - at the expense of putting future generations in hock. It is in effect a form of hire purchase, which rips off the borrower. PFI has been shown to be expensive and to lower standards of design. It disempowers public sector organisations and employees. In the long run it threatens to undermine the public provision of services and strengthen the push to privatisation.

A Plaid Cymru Government will phase out the use of PFI by:

- exposing its reality in a rigorous review of its financial effectiveness, its effect on democracy, employee terms and conditions and its long term effects on public sector revenue;
- safeguarding employees' conditions;
- separating the capital and service elements of contracts;
- using a realistic public sector comparator;
- using alternative sources of finance, including the Public Investment Trust mentioned below.

A Minister of Finance and Investment will work with Local Authorities and other public bodies, through a National Transformation Accord, to:

- make the best strategic use of assets and grants;
- raise finance cost-effectively;
- support councils in making maximum use of their increased freedom to borrow for capital investment;
- investigate how to save money by avoiding the use of 'middle-men' agencies;
- use EU Structural Funds more holistically.

Further, we will promote the establishment of a Public Investment Trust for Wales which could raise finance at competitive interest rates, and in certain circumstances enable borrowing beyond the constraints of the Public Sector Net Cash Requirement (PSNCR).

A PLAID CYMRU GOVERNMENT WILL:

- seek a just financial settlement for Wales through a review of the Barnett formula, together with full additionality and match funding for European programmes;
- agree a National Transformation Accord with local government and other public bodies for investment in capital projects;



- phase out the use of PFI;
- promote the establishment of a Public Investment Trust for Wales to raise finance for public investment at competitive rates.

IV CONCLUSION

We have set out our vision for the regeneration of Wales. It is comprehensive and ambitious. We have no doubts that the implementation of this programme would be an enormous challenge. We understand too that it could not be delivered in full within the four-year span of a single Assembly term. Many of its elements will require primary legislation enacted at the UK Parliament - clearly illustrating the need for those powers to be transferred to Wales. Much of what we believe could be achieved will be made more difficult because of the injustice of the financial settlement within which the National Assembly must operate.

However, we believe that our vision will find favour with the people. They recognise the need for radical change to transform their country's prospects. What many lack is the confidence that it is within Wales's reach to succeed as we believe it can.

Success will depend on the best efforts of everyone: those involved in government at all levels, elected members and public servants alike; those who strive from day to day to sustain the public services that are the foundation of our society; activists in the voluntary sector; employees and trade unionists; those whose drive and efforts in the world of business and commerce are so crucial for prosperity; ordinary people whose contribution to the community's well-being attracts no public attention.

It will be the task of Plaid Cymru the Party of Wales in Government to mobilise this great potential. We exist to serve the needs and advance the interests of Wales.

It is time to release Wales from the grasp of a Labour Party that has lost its principles and its conviction and that lacks any worthwhile vision for Wales.

It is time for The Party of Wales to lead the government of Wales.

