

**Securing Wales for future generations- Carwyn Jones (Welsh assembly first minister)**

**Foreword**

*When engrossing in this subject I felt thinking hypothetically aided me greatly in fully understanding how we can secure our wonderful country for the foreseeable future. What would we do if faced with a global climatic crisis easily capable of destroying our whole way of life? At first I'm sure the people would band together and hasten to prepare and protect themselves from ensuing floods, hurricanes, droughts and diseases. But soon enough humans adapt and when they do, I believe they'll look back at our generation, the 2000-2020 generations and despair with us. Why did we not heed the warnings? Where was the moral obligation to clean up our act and change our ways for good? Fundamentally, where was our human nature to protect the planet and those who grace it? Hypothetically speaking that is the chilling reality of the future if we don't act right now today in 2015. As your first minister it's my duty and goal to ensure that the outlined situation never happens. In fact, I want us to strive towards the complete opposite, where decades from now people will laud our efforts, pioneering the new age of humans and creating a fairer world. Ambition, innovation and dedication will all be pivotal in achieving our vision for a Wales that leads the world in a range of ways and a Wales that urges the rest of the world to follow suit, and here's how we are going to do it!*

**1. Cutting out climate change**

It's self explanatory as to why climate change is at the top of my agenda for Wales. No issue poses a greater threat to not just Wales but humanity than it. It's not just the warmer temperatures which although nice bring new tropical diseases and increase the risk of cancers; it's the extreme weather that really concerns me. Flooding, storms, droughts and heat waves will all grow in intensity in the

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coming years whether we like it or not. We can't rectify our predecessors failings, however what we can do is make sure we get our calculations spot on here and now.

Logically then we must begin at the root of the problem, the fossil fuel industries. We have a proud heritage here in Wales of coal, steel, iron, gas and many other heavy industries which have become mainstays in recent Welsh culture. Good hard workers have established those famous industrial regions, the Rhondda, Merthyr, Neath and Port Talbot. Industry and manufacturing has been the route towards development ever since our very own industrial revolution but maybe now the time has come to develop elsewhere. Were all well aware of the greenhouse effect and that the anthropogenic input in this last century has surged. The emissions produced from heavy industry are staggering and Wales's rich traditions mean we owe accountability to climate change just as much as the big polluters today (China and India) do. We have significantly cut back our industrial activeness in the last thirty years; perhaps Thatcherism may have left a positive legacy as closing the mines and coal plants has led to a steep drop in our emissions in the long term. But we are still a coal powered nation with a love for industry. I don't want to alienate our proud workforce, what I do want to do is take them with us into a new age.

My aim is simple, cut Wales's non renewable energy reliance by 50% by 2030. This will involve the painful task of closing fossil fuelled power stations and establishing stronger links in the renewable sector. To me it's vital that the most important people are not lost in this transitional period; the workers of Welsh industry. Under my plans we will match every last job lost in the old plants with an employment and career opportunity in renewable energy. There can be no better initiative for us politicians to invest and develop renewable energy than us knowing it will guarantee hundreds of thousands secure future employment. On the side of the topic you may wonder what will happen to Port Talbot steel works or Uskmouth power station to name but a few. Our government will vote on whether we demolish these structures or we showcase Wales's creativity, regenerating, refurbishing

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and reopening them as urban metropolises. Similar to the Battersea project, I'd like to see new houses, shopping centres and cultural hotspots all spring from these schemes. It could provide for and solve a national housing crisis, even a refugee one? The possibilities to adapt to a fast changing world are endless; it just takes the courage to say yes.

So much change on one side ultimately means change must be balanced out on the other side. Our new tidal lagoon in Swansea bay spearheads the renewable campaign but there is so much more to sustainable power. Look up over the Black mountains and you'll find wind farms, over fields solar instalments and in the beacons Hydro electric power. Phenomenal feats of human ingenuity and engineering, but honestly, no matter how many turbines we construct we will not bring the overwhelming energy deficit created by non renewable energy unless something else budges. By that I mean our own attitudes. Personal but collective, I want every citizen of Wales applicable to my proposals to engage as fully as possible. One persons contribution may not make much difference but imagine the results of over three million people? A brief outline of what will become the individual contribution programme in Wales, every citizen who is able to meet the criteria set will be expected to make their contribution towards a sustainable Wales. Fines will be issued to those who fail to participate and rewards for those who exemplify what the project aims to achieve, citizens with an environmental conscience and awareness of the need for rationality in humanitarian situations. Such legislation can sound incredibly authoritarian but let me solidify the purpose of the act, it's not aimed to penalise the less fortunate who may never be able to meet the acts measures and it's not a pension fund to eco-warriors either. The act will be applied differently as it is of course an individual act. Every citizens 'plan' will be tailor made on their responses to government analysis. Take for example your average working man, full time, steady job, affordable house and small family. Let's take a look at his plan for his input in securing Wales;

.For every ten journeys made within a five mile radius, either walk, cycle, run or use public transport

.At least 40% of your weekly food shop must be locally sourced

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.Ensure within four years your home has adequate insulation, solar panels, a compost bin, double glazed windows and an electric oven

A very brief insight but those are just some of the guidelines we would like to see citizens of Wales engaging in on a daily basis. They're not set in stone but we hope that if considered seriously, they could reduce emissions greatly and aid Wales and the world in fighting climate change.

Local currencies have become a local interest in South East England and have captured our imaginations in living under alternative currencies. I want to introduce a 'Welsh pound' for our people to use in order to strengthen the Welsh economy and prop up our ambitious regional goals. Using a geographically smaller currency means we become more resilient financially as money circulates within a smaller range. Reduced dependency on foreign trade which ultimately means cut backs in aviation which contributes significantly to emissions and a better deal for local businesses. Importantly if climate change continues to grip the world and worsens as forecasted, the world economy will suffer in time too. Having a complimentary financing system to fall back on could protect jobs and welfare in the face of a climate crisis and this is crucial in ensuring Wales is secure.

North Wales has such a plethora of opportunities for energy production that it would seem incompetent to not invest there. We want to add to existing wind farms off the coast, harnessing the power of the strong winds of the Irish Sea and creating locally sourced power for local communities. In deprived areas like Rhyl, Prestatyn and Mold I intend to spearhead the transformation of these run down resorts into environmental hotbeds. By this I mean constructing the most planet friendly and energy efficient homes yet, incorporated into communities where sustainable living is the norm. I want North Wales to lead the way and for their new approach to trickle down into South Wales.

An impetus must be placed on transport if we are to drastically reduce our emissions and adhere to UN targets. Our motorways are currently bursting at the seams, with urban areas creating regular

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tailbacks and plumes of damaging car emissions. If we can reform transport, we solve at least 25% of our emissions. Under my government, every citizen under twenty will be able to claim a free bicycle from a national fund. We know how hard it is to accommodate our children's transport needs. Teenagers I find are a generation dependent on mum and dad's car as our society today encourages them to move around places which I fully support. If our kids all had access to a free, enjoyable form of transport, think how many car journeys would be avoided, how many tonnes of emissions wouldn't enter the atmosphere. To make a larger cycling population feasible we will make all restructure all main roads to ensure nobody is put off cycling because of safety. Alongside that one of my biggest plans is to cut half of all civilian traffic out of the main city centres and prop up park and ride projects by a further 20%. We're going to introduce a congestion charge for city tourists, so workers don't lose out but traffic is heavily cut out. This all leads us to public transport and our bus networks where I want to add to our already mentioned rewards scheme for sustainable living. Like your town barbers, your local bus driver will now be handing out loyalty cards for sharing transport with others and reducing congestion on our roads. It's important to have initiatives to follow rather than laws to abide by I feel if we are to be universal in living within our means.

Unfortunately we have already damaged our planet climatically and we will have to bear the brunt of disaster in coming years whether we like it or not. Tackling the impacts of climate change will not only save lives, it will provide jobs and experience to an ever more highly skilled workforce. Flooding is theoretically the most frequent impact we will experience due to climate change and fortunately is a rather easy threat to mitigate. A flooding committee will be launched in Wales to manage specific cases under serious threat of flooding. Such applications to the committee will receive the most practical, relevant and reliable flooding defences. So for beautiful Gower beaches were not going to put millions into an ugly sea wall, instead regular beach nourishment and a steeper beach slope will tackle the problems more naturally. But when hard engineering is required, we won't hesitate to put on our hard hats and protect our coastlines. For Aberystwyth this couldn't be more relevant, here my plan is to construct a world class out to sea artificial reef to absorb the energy of further

strengthened waves. This should ensure the beautiful town is not subject to the damages it experienced two years ago.

Before I finish on climate change I want to make clear that devolution plays a major role in combating this crisis in our weather. I want local people to have all the power they need to act in a manner they feel will protect themselves and their environment. Impetus on local councils and more representative decision making will ensure everyone has a say in how we fight climate change.

## **2. Social problems**

If we can protect Wales against climate changes predicted impacts then we will have succeeded in securing Wales, but what type of Wales we have secured is still in our hands too. Many regions of Wales would still consider themselves poor and worse off than what they should be. Getting a fair deal for every citizen is top of my agenda. Wales should be a place where hard workers are rewarded but only for hard work and not inherited wealth. I believe everybody's clock should start at zero and that doesn't mean I want to make the rich poorer, rather I intend to make the less fortunate better off. Only when someone from a working class family has just as good a chance of a job than that of a privately schooled middle class equivalent have we created a fair Wales. The hard worker comes first no matter who they are or where they are from, that's what equality is all about.

Education is where everything starts and where so easily, everything can be lost. No child should have to go to a lower achieving school because either his parents can't afford the better option or they are the not the preferred application in an increasingly selective process. This process has its benefits; it creates schools which champion results and cultural experience but it also has flaws; it creates schools which are too full, lacking staff and behaviour spirals out of control. There must be consistency in our schools and my proposal is that there will be a legal limit on class sizes to a maximum of 25 pupils. The smaller the group the better the teaching, that hypothesis is often true

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with cases against coming from exceptional schools. Smaller classes, better behaviour standards and support gives any and every child the opportunity to work hard and get the grades that reflect their true potential.

Looking at crime and punishment I feel we need a complete reform in certain areas. I have always agreed that if you do wrong you should be punished, but what's the point of putting someone in a cell where they can do the minimal amount? Of course the most serious cases should make criminals serve deserved sentences behind bars but what about low grade offences? Rehabilitation has become a taboo in the law and order spectrum, that's something I seek to change. We're going to put more emphasis on community service and contribution than ever before for low level offenders, so instead of being wasted away in an overfull prison, we get them working and repaying their damages to society in a far more practical manner. For young and first time offenders of low level crime this will be mandatory, If you fall within the criteria you will (guaranteeing you do not reoffend) not serve time behind bars but instead will be subject to services set to you by the council. Am I provoking anarchy? Or are we talking serious steps to tackling basic and petty crime and solving the problem of crammed, expensive prisons?

Finally immigration, an issue that will always raise debate here in Wales. I'm a firm believer that we're not only a free country, but a free world. If someone wants to come and work here then we should take it as a compliment and not exploit it to provoke racism and discrimination. As mentioned we will reward hard work not wealth here in a Wales of fairness and no case will be treated differently. Economic immigrants will be judged the same as Welsh people in jobs, in race and in society. That doesn't mean we are going to open our borders fully, as every country has a fine limit to population capability and Wales is no different. We have beautiful unspoilt landscape that to a large extent I want to keep untouched by introducing three new national parks. In urban areas we will continue to build homes and will progress with welcoming a steady multicultural population to

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Wales. A fluid and representative society is the aim and with rational immigration we can create just that.

Coming to conclude, Wales is very fortunate in the fact it won't need watershed policies to secure it for future generations. A shift in attitude is needed regarding energy consumption and equality for all, but those are issues which within a generation that are educated rationally and tolerantly, we can easily achieve. The people of Wales are open to change, a Welsh assembly for example showcasing our ability to adapt well to a new situation. The next thirty years will be all about reforming existing issues socially and innovating new solutions to climatic issues in my opinion. Everybody has a view on these issues some way or another and democracy is vital in making breakthroughs which could change the very way we think and act. Ambition and hard work is all the people of Wales need to secure their futures. With a strong education and support for fair welfare, we can all cooperate and contribute in creating a self sufficient, innovating and world leading Wales that looks firmly towards the future.

By Stephen Hughes

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*What would I do with £500?*

*With the money I would like to harness the potential of a rewards scheme for walking and cycling to my local college rather than using the bus or car. I want to break lazy habits of people who live within twenty minutes of college taking the bus when theres a perfectly good cycle track. The younger generation are the most influential and if we can enlighten them to the benefits of travelling on their own two feet and not by the power of fossil fuels then we will have made gains in tackling climate change and obesity, both of which are important in Wales future.*