



**co-operative  
party**

# Owning the Future – A Co-operative Plan for Wales

## Member Consultation

Owning the Future: A Co-operative Plan for Wales will be launched in February 2021, ahead of the Senedd elections in May. Following our recent series of on-line meetings, members in Wales are invited to make contributions. You can find a draft summary below – this builds on our previous manifesto, A Co-operative Agenda for Wales 2016. Contributions are welcome from individuals and branches – if you need help to plan an on-line policy forum for your branch, please contact [Karen Wilkie](#).

Send your response on the form below by 30 September.

## Consultation Questions

1. Take a look at the draft summary of Owning the Future: A Co-operative Plan for Wales 2021. This has been developed from our Co-operative Agenda for Wales 2016. Which policies do you agree with, which would you change, and which do you think are no longer relevant?
2. What additional policies or Welsh Government actions to support and promote the co-operative and mutual movement in Wales would you include?
3. What other co-operative solutions are there to improve the social, economic or environmental welfare of Wales?
4. Do you have examples or case studies? These can be from Wales, the rest of the UK or overseas.

## Timetable

June – July 2020: all member meetings with Welsh Government Ministers:	13 June – Speech & Q&A with First Minister followed by Discussion Forum with Deputy Minister Lee Waters MS, Christina Rees MP, Alun Michael PCC & Cllr Lis Burnett
	22 June – Q&A with Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for Health & Social Care
	7 July – Q&A with Jeremy Miles MS, Counsel General and Minister for Brexit & the post-COVID recovery
July - September	Member on-line submissions and branch forums
October - December	Wales Council to agree final text
February 2021	Launch (Welsh Labour Conference)
May 2021	Senedd election

## Owning the Future: A Co-operative Plan for Wales

### Introduction

The Co-operative Party was established in 1917 as the political voice of the co-operative movement in the UK. It is part of a global Co-operative Movement that includes over one billion people around the world.

We work with the Labour Party to influence its policies towards more co-operative solutions through our 11 Members of the Senedd, together with our 26 Labour and Co-operative MPs, 15 Peers, 7 MSPs and hundreds of local councillors.

A co-operative is an organisation that is owned and controlled by its members. Workers' co-ops are owned and controlled by the workers while consumer co-operatives are owned and controlled by the consumers; housing co-operatives are owned and controlled by the tenants; agricultural co-operatives are owned and controlled by the farmer members; credit unions are owned and controlled by the depositors. The United Nations has estimated that the livelihood of nearly 3 billion people, or half of the world's population, is made secure by co-operative enterprise. These enterprises play significant social as well as economic roles in their communities.

The size and scope of the co-operative movement in Wales is significant and often underestimated. It provides financial services ranging in size from the Principality Building Society to local credit unions; and retail shops, from the Co-operative Group to local community co-ops. Co-operative businesses run funeral services, travel agents, social housing, home care, childcare, residential care and all forms of new and traditional employee owned businesses.

They all have one thing in common – they provide jobs and create wealth in many Welsh communities, and they are controlled by the people they serve or those who work in them.



## **Owning the Future – the co-operative plan for recovery**

Since the last Senedd elections, the world, and Wales, has changed almost beyond recognition. As it becomes evident that there are some aspects of life that may never return to 'normal'; we also know that there are some that we wouldn't want to.

Recent polling shows that only 10% of people in the UK felt that sharing wealth fairly was given priority in the pre-coronavirus economy, but 62% think it should be given priority during the recovery.

69% of people in Wales think the economy would be fairer if more businesses were owned by employees and communities rather than owned by private shareholders.

With the huge challenges of rebuilding the Welsh economy comes opportunities to do things differently. To create a Wales that is fairer.

We need recovery that is environmentally sustainable - ensuring that a return to increased productivity means producing more of what we need - such as healthy, affordable, food, warm homes and green energy – and less of what we don't. A return to wealth and productivity cannot be tied to needless consumerism, short-life goods and waste.

We need a recovery that is economically sustainable. That means investing in the foundational economy and in jobs that are locally owned and anchored in their communities.

In June 2020, the Co-operative Party launched [Owning the Future – the co-operative plan for recovery](#). You can see more about that [here](#).

The impact of Covid-19 on our society has shown that we can respond to crisis with kindness, and communities – not corporations – have led the way. However, the rules governing the economy favour shareholder- and privately-owned businesses – meaning ownership is concentrated at the top. Those companies suffer from short-termism and this drives greater inequality thanks to low productivity and a lack of investment in wages

By widening ownership, we can narrow inequality and create a new normal.

## **Progress so Far**

### **A Minister for Co-operatives**

For many years the Co-operative Party called for a Minister to be given specific responsibility for the co-operative sector. This was a key ask in our Co-operative Agenda for Wales 2016 and its predecessors. We were delighted therefore that in his very first appointments following his election as First Minister in 2018, Mark Drakeford included the co-operative economy in the remit of the Minister for Economy and Transport



### **Co-operative & Mutuels Commission**

The Wales Co-operative and Mutuels Commission, set up by Welsh Government, highlighted the role that co-operatives and mutuels have a role to play in enterprise, education and the environment, in health and social services, in local government and public services, and sport. Moreover, it showed the commitment of the Welsh Labour Government to ensuring the continued growth of the co-operative movement in Wales.

Some of the recommendations in A Co-operative Agenda for Wales 2016 such as support and recognition for an alliance to strengthen links and mutual support across all parts of the movement in Wales were also in the recommendations of the Commission and have been implemented (the Mutuels Alliance).

## **Summary of Draft Recommendations for Welsh Government**

### **Co-operative & Mutuels Commission**

1. A clear process in Welsh Government to co-ordinate and drive actions that are within its remit.
2. Support for the co-operative and mutual sector to take action on those recommendations that are within the movement's remit.
3. A Co-operatives and Mutuels Strategy Unit to ensure that the wide-ranging recommendations made by the Commission are implemented.
4. A system for reviewing and reporting regularly on progress.

### **Economy & Transport**

5. Continued support for the Wales Co-operative Centre as the UK's leading co-operative development agency.
6. Clear signposting for the co-operative option by other business advice agents.
7. Support for the rural economy to include further development of secondary co-ops in agriculture and tourism to promote economies of scale and joint marketing, and help to secure food security and provenance.
8. Community Asset Registers to enable assets of community value to be identified and protected.
9. Community options for pubs, shops and community centres and A Community Right of First Refusal
10. Universal access to healthy, affordable food to be included as a national indicator.



11. Support co-operative solutions in food processing and distribution, such as food hubs, to foster local economies, support SME producers, reduce the environmental impact of transportation and enable better use of resources.
12. To promote an active role for excluded members of Welsh society and local communities in the design and control of businesses.
13. The regulation of public transport for the benefit of all users and protect the role for co-operative and social enterprise providers
14. Work with rail users and staff, as advocated in Rail Cymru - A People's Railway for Wales, to develop a not-for-profit model for rail that is accountable to the people of Wales, and to press the UK government for the necessary legislation to facilitate this.

### **Education & Lifelong Learning**

15. Ensure that co-operative ethics and models are central to business and citizenship curricula and to the way our children are educated in schools and colleges.
16. Support Young Co-operatives in schools to run credit unions and other businesses to promote and provide hands-on co-operative experience.
17. Build on the excellent principles set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act by recognising that our next generation will be failed unless informal education and skills through sport, music and the arts are nurtured through the Youth Service and community groups – and that this is a key equalities issue affecting children and young people in poorer families more than others.

### **Environment**

18. Examine further ways to support and promote community owned renewable energy schemes, including the option of a Community Energy and Climate Change Unit.
19. Lead the public and private sectors, communities and individuals in Wales towards a Carbon Neutral Wales.

### **Health & Social Care**

20. Examine new and innovative ways to improve primary care, such as GP co-operatives for the provision of out-hours-services and social enterprises such as community benefit societies for NHS dental services.
21. Continued and enhanced support for fresh food co-ops and community agriculture schemes.
22. Recognise and encourage an active role for excluded members of the community in the design and control of services.



23. Active support for social care co-ops to develop in the wake of the Health and Social Care Act.

### **Housing, Welsh Language and Local Government**

24. Encourage existing Registered Social Landlords to adopt co-operative principles and support them in converting to mutuals and co-ops where there is support for that approach from tenants and workers.
25. Target 20% of the future social housing grant programme towards mutual or co-operative homes. All rented housing schemes with greater than 25 homes should offer residents a mutual or co-operative offer. This includes local authorities considering building new council housing following borrowing powers.
26. Expand the development support role of the Wales Co-operative Centre to allow both the development and future management of co-operatives to be supported.
27. Increase the awareness of the option of co-operative delivery and urge local authorities to engage with employees and service users to discuss service priorities and service design.
28. Encourage local authorities to promote co-operative or mutual models of service delivery where these would have a strong chance of improving or protecting the service and jobs.
29. Encourage local authorities to support and procure from co-operatives and mutual businesses as a fair and sustainable way to promote local economic development.
30. Actively promote the concept of Welsh Co-operative Councils and support those councils that have already shown commitment to this model.
31. Give strong and explicit support to the impact of co-operative working between the police and devolved bodies, following the approach that has already had a positive impact in South Wales.
32. Support the development of new mutual models for the provision of public services that are currently in the private and 'for profit' sector, including residential and home care, health and pre-school and out-of-hours school care.
33. Consider the feasibility of converting Glas Cymru to a true consumer co-operative, which would ensure even greater confidence that the service is fully owned and controlled by, and accountable to, the people of Wales.

### **Welsh Taxes, Finance & Brexit**

34. Continue support for the development of strong, sustainable credit unions in Wales, facilitate shared resources and continue to undertake promotional campaigns on their behalf.



35. Ensure that financial literacy is included in at all levels in schools and colleges.

### **Equality of opportunity and respect**

36. Promote a co-operative approach to inclusion as an embedded priority within all departments and agencies and within schemes with economic, social, educational and health objectives – as a mainstream priority and not just as an afterthought.

### **Fair & Ethical Trade**

37. Assist in the promotion of improving animal welfare standards, including decisions on public sector procurement.
38. Work with the UK Government to develop and implement trade policies that benefit the poorest countries and allow their governments to choose the best solutions to end poverty and protect the environment, particularly in the areas of agriculture, regulation of water companies and core labour standards.