



wales  
co-operative  
party



plaid  
gydweithredol  
cymru

# OWNING THE FUTURE

**A CO-OPERATIVE  
AGENDA FOR WALES  
2021**





# 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 Labour and Co-operative Members of the Senedd, MPs, MSPs, Peers, Police & Crime Commissioners, Elected Mayors 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.

Worldwide, 3 million co-operatives provide jobs

or work opportunities to 10% of the employed population. The 300 largest co-operatives or mutuals generate \$2,035 billion while providing the services and infrastructure society needs to survive. These enterprises play significant social as well as economic roles in their communities.

The size and scope of the co-operative and mutual 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, social housing, home care, childcare, residential care, green energy schemes and all forms of new and traditional employee-owned businesses, and contribute £3 billion to the Welsh economy.

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.



This document is the contribution of the Co-operative Party to the task of setting out the future direction for Welsh Labour. It is written in the shadow of COVID-19 but with a positive belief in the leadership that has been provided in Wales through 2020 and a clear ambition for Wales to be at the forefront of building the Co-operative Commonwealth.

In the two decades since devolution led to the establishment of Welsh Government, we have contributed significantly to ensuring that Co-operation is a golden thread that runs through the story of Wales in the 21st-century and we have been rewarded by the enthusiasm with which Co-operation has been embraced by the leadership of Welsh Labour.

That has never clearer than in 2020 – the year of the pandemic. Instead of being side-lined during the pandemic, the benefit of pursuing co-operative principles has been particularly obvious since the advent of COVID-19. The leadership provided by First Minister Mark Drakeford and Health Minister Vaughan Gething has provided clarity for the public

in Wales, has been based on the need for joint action to combat the virus and has been imbued with community spirit and solidarity - the core principles of co-operation in action.

Ministers in the Welsh Government have worked with leaders in Local Government and appealed to community solidarity as they work in unprecedented times to do the best for our public. Non-devolved bodies have responded positively to working in a constructive devolved environment – due in no small part to the role played by our two Labour and Co-operative Police & Crime Commissioners. And while responding to the pandemic has drained time, energy and resources from all agencies we have seen positive developments in Wales as a result of the spirit of co-operation and mutual support.

Co-operation provides a golden thread of meaningful democracy which we hope will run throughout the sections and sectors of the Welsh Economy and Public Life in Wales – and it's our contribution to the future story of Welsh Labour. ●

## WALES IN THE UK AND IN THE WORLD

**I**n the Co-operative Party we are passionate and committed to doing the best for Wales, with 11 current members of the Senedd having been elected as Labour and Co-operative Members - but the Co-operative Party in Wales is also part of a vigorous UK political movement and a worldwide movement of co-operators that includes over one billion members around the world.

As the political voice of the co-operative movement, we are committed to building a society in which power and wealth are shared. We believe in democratic public ownership of the services and utilities we all rely on, in tackling the housing crisis through co-operative housing, enabling fans to have a say in their sports club, and enabling local credit unions to provide a safe and principled access to finance for everyone, and shops owned by their customers that give back to the local community. Working in partnership with Welsh Labour, the Co-operative Party is a voice for co-operative values and principles from local communities up to the places where decisions are taken and where laws are made.

The decision to form a Co-operative Party was taken in Wales – at a UK Conference held in Albert Hall, Swansea, in 1917 – and our roots go deep in the communities of Wales. In the past, wider

political considerations have frequently stood in the way of workable co-operative options in Wales, but the growing confidence in our capacity to design our own solutions should herald the dawn in Wales of a co-operative ethos in all aspects of business, public services and community growth. Ownership of the water industry in Wales sits with a unique organisation established on co-operative principles, which has benefitted consumers since it was established, and we have the potential to apply the same radical approach to fields like rail transport and to deepen the co-operative element in housing and social care. These are the options we seek to develop with Welsh Labour in the next stage of our devolution journey.

We are both local and internationalist by nature – rejecting the narrow short-term perspective that has led the UK government to abandon its commitment to invest 0.7% of national income on international development - and we want Wales and the UK to play a full part in building a better, fairer, cleaner world. These principles fit perfectly with the ambitions of Welsh Labour and this document is our contribution to helping build an ambitious and successful leadership for Wales into the third decade of our devolution journey. ●



## MAKING IT DIFFERENT IN A CO-OPERATIVE WALES

**W**orking in partnership with the UK Labour Party, the Co-operative Party is developing a blueprint for doubling the size of the co-operative sector under the next Labour & Co-operative government, giving customers, the community and those who work in an industry or service the chance of playing a full and fair part in decisions. It's an approach that is fair to everyone – but it isn't just about creating a modern framework for commercial activities. We also believe in and developing new models to bring key sectors such as transport and utilities under democratic public ownership that is efficient, effective and accountable.

In Wales the leadership of Welsh Labour provides the opportunity to go further, faster than in the rest of the UK, building on the work of the Co-operative Commission for Wales set up by Welsh Government, and applying co-operative principles in fields like housing and transport and social care and education as well as business. These are the principles and ideas we bring to the table as we work with our Sister Party, Welsh Labour, in preparing for the 2021 Senedd Elections. ●



## A CO-OPERATIVE VISION FOR JUSTICE

**I**n a parallel election, also in May, Wales will elect four Police & Crime Commissioners and electors in every part of Wales will be able to vote for a Labour & Co-operative Commissioner candidate. A powerful track record has been established by our two existing Commissioners – in South Wales and Gwent – with success in taking a Public Health approach to crime, disorder and harm. They have worked hard to ensure that their communities have the best possible response when help is needed but they also lead developments to intervene early to stop harm escalating, to prevent crime happening in the first place and to make sure that police officers and PCSOs are a vital part of the communities they police.

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That has involved a co-operative approach with other non-devolved criminal justice agencies as well

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as a close partnership with Welsh Government and Local Government. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the shared passion of our Commissioners and Ministers in Welsh Government to tackle the scourge of domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and exploitation of children and adults. They've shown how powerful applying the co-operative principle can be if it runs like a golden thread through a public service.

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 would not 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 do not. A return to wealth and productivity cannot be tied to the production of 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.

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 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 policies 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 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WELSH GOVERNMENT

## Building from the co-operative and mutuals commission

1. A clear process in Welsh Government to co-ordinate and drive actions on the Commission's 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. An authoritative Co-operatives and Mutuals Strategy Unit to ensure that the wide-ranging recommendations made by the Commission are implemented. This should be led by a Deputy Minister, as now, with an express remit to develop the co-operative economy.
4. A system for reviewing and reporting regularly on progress.

## Economy and Transport

5. A Welsh Marcora Law to provide the legal framework, financial support and advice for worker buyouts.<sup>1</sup>
6. Continued support for the Wales Co-operative Centre as the UK's leading co-operative development agency.
7. Clear signposting for the co-operative option by other business advice agents.
8. Statutory and contractual commitment to community wealth building and progressive procurement by the public sector and other anchor institutions to ensure the wealth is created - and retained - in local communities.
9. Support for rural economies to include further development of secondary co-ops in agriculture and tourism to promote economies of scale and joint marketing.
10. Support for towns and high streets to include further development of secondary co-ops and hubs to promote economies of scale and joint marketing for the foundation sectors.
11. Commitment to the real living wage across the public sector and public sector procurement.
12. Legislation to introduce Community Asset Registers to enable assets of community value to be identified and protected.

**READ MORE ABOUT THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY'S POLICY ON COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING [HERE](#).**

**WE WELCOME THE DECISION OF THE WELSH GOVERNMENT TO BRING THE WALES & BORDERS RAIL FRANCHISE INTO PUBLIC OWNERSHIP. THIS SHOULD NOW TRANSITION TO A MUTUAL MODEL THAT GIVES A REAL SAY TO STAFF AND USERS.**

13. Community options for pubs, shops, community centres and sports facilities and A Community Right of First Refusal, supported by asset locks.
14. To promote an active role for excluded members of Welsh society and local communities in the design and control of businesses.
15. Promote the regulation of public transport for the benefit of all users and protect the role for community transport and for co-operative and social enterprise providers.
16. Work with rail users and staff and utilise expertise and best practice across the co-operative movement to develop the Wales and Borders rail franchise into a publicly owned, mutually controlled service.

**READ MORE ABOUT THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY'S PUBLIC OWNERSHIP CAMPAIGN [HERE](#).**

## Food Justice

17. Include universal access to healthy, affordable food as a national indicator, and monitor data on food security and nutrition for vulnerable population groups to assess the effectiveness of policies and programmes on food security and nutrition.
18. A Wales Food Commission to direct and monitor a cross-departmental food strategy across education, agriculture, environment, health, economy and society.
19. A national programme, such as Origin Green, that will promote sustainable food production, support co-operation in all parts of the agriculture and food sectors and help enable access for all to food that is healthy, affordable and locally sourced.<sup>2</sup>
20. Support for co-operative solutions to food processing and distribution such as food hubs

<sup>1</sup> See [The Marcora Law supporting worker buyouts for thirty years | ICA](#)

<sup>2</sup> Learning from best practice examples elsewhere such as [Origin Green](#) in Ireland.

to foster local economies, support SME and co-op producers, reduce the environmental impact of transportation and enable better use of resources.

21. Support for fresh food co-ops and co-operative community initiatives such as Incredible Edible, including making land available for community growing.<sup>3</sup>

**THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY LED CAMPAIGNS ON FOOD JUSTICE THROUGH 2020. YOU CAN READ MORE ABOUT THESE [HERE](#).**

## Education and Lifelong Learning

22. 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.
23. Childcare costs in Wales are rising and fewer than half of local areas have enough places for parents working full time.<sup>4</sup> The Welsh Government's Childcare Offer, along with Flying Start, offer parents much needed support to afford childcare, but further support for co-operative and not-for-profit models should be provided to increase the availability of affordable, flexible early years care in which parents, carers and staff have a genuine say and a stake.
24. Make resources available to support teacher training and to promote locally driven, practical co-operative learning and models to support their delivery within the new national curriculum.
25. Support [Young Co-operatives](#) in schools to run businesses to promote and provide hands-on co-operative experience.
26. 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.
27. A National Robert Owen Day to highlight education for a better society and the role of co-operatives in the Welsh economy and globally.

**READ MORE ABOUT THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY'S EDUCATION POLICIES [HERE](#).**

## Environment

28. Examine further ways to support and promote community and worker owned renewable energy schemes, including the option of a Community Energy and Climate Change Unit.
29. Lead the public and private sectors, communities and individuals in Wales towards a Carbon Neutral Wales.
30. Support co-operative business models within the circular economy and direct business support, training and apprenticeships towards repair and recycle industries.

**THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY'S ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES ARE SET OUT IN A CO-OPERATIVE GREEN NEW DEAL.**

## Health and Social Care

31. Examine new and innovative ways to improve primary care, such as clinician co-operatives for the provision of out-hours-services and social enterprises such as community benefit societies rather than private practices for NHS dental services.
32. Recognise and encourage an active role for all members of the community in the design and control of services.
33. Active support for social care co-ops, including micro-co-ops to develop in the wake of the Health and Social Care Act and a publicly funded National Care Service.

**READ MORE ABOUT THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY'S SOCIAL CARE POLICIES [HERE](#).**

## Housing and Local Government

34. 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.
35. 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.
36. 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.
37. Support, and legislation if required, for a national leasehold co-operative.
38. Increase the awareness of the option of co-operative delivery and urge local authorities to

<sup>3</sup> See [Incredible Edible Wreccsam – Incredible Edible](#)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/welsh-families-face-rising-tide-childcare-costs-prices-rise-again>

engage with employees and service users to discuss service priorities and service design.

39. Encourage local authorities to promote co-operative or multi-stakeholder models of service delivery where these would have a strong chance of improving or protecting the service and jobs.
40. Encourage local authorities to support and procure from co-operatives and mutual businesses as a fair and sustainable way to promote local economic development .
41. Continue to support local authorities to eliminate modern slavery and ensure that this is properly monitored.
42. Actively promote the concept of Welsh Co-operative Councils and support those councils that have already shown commitment to this model.
43. 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.
44. 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.
45. Consider the feasibility of converting Glas Cymru to a true multi-stakeholder co-operative, which would ensure even greater confidence that the service is fully owned and controlled by, and accountable to, the people of Wales.

**READ MORE ABOUT THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY'S IDEAS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT [HERE](#).**

### **Welsh Taxes, Finance and Brexit**

46. Continued support from Welsh Government for a national co-operative bank alongside the role of credit unions that will provide banking services to all communities, giving better access to affordable credit, keeping wealth circulating in Wales and acting as a catalyst for town centre renewal across Wales.
47. Continue support for the development of strong, sustainable credit unions in Wales, facilitate shared resources and continue to undertake promotional campaigns on their behalf.
48. Ensure that financial literacy is included in at all levels in schools and colleges.

### **Fair and Ethical Trade**

49. Assist in the promotion of improving animal welfare standards, including decisions on public sector procurement.
50. 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.

### **Sport and Leisure**

51. Support and promote community ownership in sport.
52. The Welsh Labour administration has been proactive in supporting arts and cultural venues to survive the Covid-19 crisis. As well as this critical financial support, models of co-operative and community ownership should be promoted to help the sector recover.

### **Support Safe, Confident Communities**

53. Work with non-devolved bodies in Wales – particularly with Police & Crime Commissioners – to build on the aspirations of the Future Generations Act and to support safe, confident communities across Wales.
54. While arguing the case for devolution of Policing and Criminal Justice, work on the delivery of fairness and justice in Wales building on progress made in recent years with Local Authorities and the Police through refreshing Community Safety, taking new

**THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY HAS BEEN LEADING THE CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE LOCAL COUNCILS IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND TO TACKLE MODERN SLAVERY IN LINE WITH STANDARDS ALREADY REQUIRED IN WALES. YOU CAN READ MORE ABOUT THIS [HERE](#).**

**READ MORE ABOUT THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY'S IDEAS ON COMMUNITY SAFETY IN OUR PUBLICATION "[SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES](#)".**

initiatives to tackle substance misuse, reduce domestic violence and abuse and showing leadership that goes beyond devolved functions.



# OWNING THE FUTURE

To contact or to join the Co-operative Party in Wales, phone 0207 367 4150, email [mail@party.coop](mailto:mail@party.coop) or go to [www.party.coop](http://www.party.coop)

A Co-operative Agenda for Wales 2021 was edited by Karen Wilkie, Deputy General Secretary, with grateful thanks to everyone who met, made submissions, took part in policy workshops and commented on drafts.

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Co-operative Party Limited is a registered Society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registered no. 30027R.

Promoted by Joe Fortune on behalf of the Co-operative Party, both at Unit 13, 83 Crampton Street, London SE17 3BU. Printed by Solopress, 9 Stock Road, Southend-on-Sea SS2 5QF.

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