

26th November 2021

CO-OPERATION AGREEMENT

Purpose

1. To update members on the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru.

Background

2. The Co-operation Agreement was announced on 22nd November, by the First Minister Mark Drakeford MS and Adam Price MS. The agreement has been approved by the executives of Welsh Labour and Plaid Cymru, but the agreement will require the support of Plaid Cymru's wider membership on the weekend.
3. The Agreement will last three years and states *'we will use this opportunity to address issues which take the greatest political and policy effort to resolve and, together, we will create progressive, made-in-Wales solutions. Where agreement is possible, people rightly expect political parties to work together. We look forward to making a real and lasting difference for people in Wales. It is said that those who lead should be a bridge – our hope is that this partnership will help forge the bridge we continue to build together as a nation.'*

Summary

4. There are nearly 50 policy priorities contained in the Agreement. The Agreement notes that 'we will continue to work with and support local government' and many of the policy priorities have a direct impact on local government or local services.
5. The Agreement is included in Annex A, but some of the key policies of interest to local government include:
 - 5.1 **Regional partnership arrangements** – Keep regional partnership working under review, together with local government partners, to ensure they are efficient and work for Wales as new Corporate Joint Committee arrangements are introduced. Any changes should be locally led, driven by what works best and based on local priorities and existing relationships.
 - 5.2 **Future of Social Care** – Set up an expert group to support our shared ambition to create a National Care Service, free at the point of need, continuing as a public service. We will agree an implementation plan by the end of 2023. We will continue to better integrate health and care and

work towards parity of recognition and reward for health and care workers.

- 5.3 **Council tax reform** – Reform one of the most regressive forms of taxation – which disproportionately impacts poorer areas of Wales – to make it fairer.
- 5.4 **Local tourism levies** – Introduce local tourism levies using local government finance reform legislation.
- 5.5 **Free school meals** – Extend free school meals to all primary school pupils.
- 5.6 **School term dates** – Aim to reform school term dates to bring them more in line with patterns of family life and employment. We will also explore options to reform the rhythm of the school day to create space for more wide-ranging, culturally accessible activities and opportunities.
- 5.7 **Supply teaching and looked after children** – We believe these two vital services should not be run for private profit. We will work with partners to develop options for a more sustainable model of supply teaching with fair work at its heart, which will include local authority-led and school-led alternatives and put in place a framework to remove profit from the care of looked after children.
- 5.8 **Tackling Second Homes and Ending Homelessness**
- 5.9 **Flood review** – Commission an independent review of the local government section 19 and Natural Resources Wales reports into extreme flooding in winter 2020-21 and act on its recommendation
- 5.10 **Senedd reform** – Support plans to reform the Senedd, based on 80 to 100 Members; a voting system, which is as proportional – or more – than the current one and have gender quotas in law. We will support the work of the Senedd Special Purpose Committee and introduce a Senedd reform Bill 12 to 18 months after it reports.

Recommendations

6. Members are asked to

6.1 Note the contents of the report.

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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Annex 1

The Co-operation Agreement

2021

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Mark Drakeford MS
First Minister of Wales



Adam Price MS
Leader of Plaid Cymru

Introduction

Almost a quarter of a century ago, people in Wales voted for self-government for Wales, with a promise of a new type of politics.

They placed their trust in a new democracy with an instruction to work differently – inclusively and co-operatively.

Today, as the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru come together in this Co-operation Agreement, we take another step forward in our collective effort to fulfil that promise of a new politics – radical in content and co-operative in approach.

At the start of the Sixth Senedd, Wales faces great opportunities but also many challenges.

We are continuing to respond to an once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic, which has claimed the lives of millions of people worldwide and affected every aspect of our daily lives.

The climate and nature emergencies together pose a far greater and lasting threat to our country and our way of life than the coronavirus pandemic if we do not take action now to address its worst affects. We have ambitious plans to create a low carbon Wales and move towards net zero – but these plans will need all of us and our public services to make choices and changes.

The UK has now left the European Union but we are still dealing with the aftermath of this decision and we are faced daily with the actions of a Conservative UK Government determined to consolidate power in Westminster and turn back the clock on devolution.

At the start of this Senedd term, it is more important than ever that we have a strong Welsh Parliament able to work together and respond effectively to these challenges and make real and lasting change for people in Wales.

This Co-operation Agreement is a response to these external challenges and that need for a stable Senedd, capable of delivering radical change and reform.

The commitments outlined in this agreement build on a number of shared values – social solidarity, a sustainable planet and a vibrant democracy.

The Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru will work together over the coming three years on the defined policy commitments listed in this document – policies in which we have common interests to implement progressive solutions – from ensuring no child goes hungry to ending homelessness. From working together to explore the long-term future of social care to meeting our shared commitment of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

Together, we will use this opportunity to address issues which take the greatest political and policy effort to resolve and, together, we will create progressive, made-in-Wales solutions.

Where agreement is possible, people rightly expect political parties to work together. We look forward to making a real and lasting difference for people in Wales.

It is said that those who lead should be a bridge – our hope is that this partnership will help forge the bridge we continue to build together as a nation.

Policy Programme

Radical Action in Testing Times

The challenges we face in the aftermath of the pandemic call for radical action, which will improve the lives of everyone in Wales.

From school children going hungry to parents juggling the costs of childcare and access to early years education. From rising household bills and a housing crisis affecting every generation to older people worried about whether they can afford care in their later years, this agreement will support people throughout their lives, during the most testing of times.

The Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru will be ambitious in the action we take together to address these issues.

Working together, we will:

- **Free school meals** – Extend free school meals to all primary school pupils, over the lifetime of this agreement, as a further step to reaching our shared ambition that no child should go hungry. We agree that universal free school meals will be a transformational intervention in terms of child hunger and child poverty, which will support educational attainment and child nutrition and local food production and distribution, benefiting local economies.
- **Childcare** – Expand free childcare to all two-year-olds with a particular focus on providing and strengthening Welsh-medium childcare.
- **Future of Social Care** – Set up an expert group to support our shared ambition to create a National Care Service, free at the point of need, continuing as a public service. We will agree an implementation plan by the end of 2023. We will continue to better integrate health and care and work towards parity of recognition and reward for health and care workers.
- **Second homes** – Take immediate and radical action to address the proliferation of second homes and unaffordable housing, using the planning, property and taxation systems. Actions being planned include a cap on the number of second and holiday homes; measures to bring more homes into common ownership;

a statutory licensing scheme for holiday lets; greater powers for local authorities to charge council tax premiums and increasing taxes on second homes. We will explore local authority mortgages.

- **National construction company** – Establish Unnos, a national construction company, to support councils and social landlords to improve the supply of social and affordable housing.
- **Building safety** – Significantly reform the current system of building safety, which has allowed a culture of cutting corners to the detriment of public safety. We will introduce a second phase of the Welsh Building Safety Fund.
- **Property and Fair Rents** – Publish a White Paper to include proposals for a right to adequate housing, the role a system of fair rents (rent control) could have in making the private rental market affordable for local people on local incomes and new approaches to making homes affordable.
- **Homelessness** – End homelessness. If people are made homeless it should be brief, rare and unrepeatable. We will reform housing law, enact the Renting Homes Act to give renters greater security and implement the Homeless Action Group recommendations.
- **Council tax reform** – Reform one of the most regressive forms of taxation – which disproportionately impacts poorer areas of Wales – to make it fairer.
- **Procurement** – Explore how to set meaningful targets to increase Welsh public sector procurement from the current 52%. As a first step, we will carry out a detailed analysis of the public sector supply chains and promote the purchasing of made-in-Wales products and services.
- **Local tourism levies** – Introduce local tourism levies using local government finance reform legislation.

A Greener Wales to Tackle Climate Change and the Nature Emergency

The climate and nature emergency are the greatest threats facing our world. If we do not act now, our children and grandchildren will inherit a more polluted, more unstable and more dangerous planet.

By working together to tackle these twin emergencies, we will take bold steps towards a net zero Wales. We will address nature loss, improve biodiversity and plant more trees. As our climate changes, too many people have woken to find their homes flooded and they fear when the next storm will hit. We will learn from past flooding events and invest in flood defences to protect communities.

We will also start the process of reforming farm support to help family farms and agricultural businesses become greener and more sustainable.

Working together, we will:

- **Net zero** – Commission independent advice to examine potential pathways to net zero by 2035 – the current target date is 2050. This will look at the impact on society and sectors of our economy and how any adverse effects may be mitigated, including how the costs and benefits are shared fairly. We support devolution of further powers and resources Wales needs to respond most effectively to reach net zero, specifically the management of the Crown Estate and its assets in Wales.
- **Public transport** – Ask Transport for Wales (TfW) to explore the development of transport links between North and South Wales, including how to protect potential travel corridors on the west coast of Wales. We will continue to press ahead with Metro developments to improve connectivity and encourage people to switch to public transport. We will ask TfW to work with local authorities in North West Wales and the Welsh Government to develop plans for an integrated transport system.
- **Net zero energy company** – Work towards the creation of Ynni Cymru, a publicly-owned energy company for Wales, over the next two years, to expand community-owned renewable energy generation.
- **Biodiversity** – Agree that targets and an environmental governance body have a role to play in helping to protect and restore biodiversity for species and habitats in our terrestrial and marine environments.

- **Tree planting** – Work with the farming community to encourage woodland creation on less productive land and through agro-forestry. This will include support for active landowners and farmers through the sustainable farming scheme. We will explore ways of drawing investment for woodland creation that secures local ownership and control.
- **Agricultural pollution** – We will work with the farming community to improve water quality and air quality, deploying the Water Resources Regulations 2021, taking an approach targeted at those activities known to cause pollution.
- **Flood review** – Commission an independent review of the local government section 19 and Natural Resources Wales reports into extreme flooding in winter 2020-21 and act on its recommendations.
- **Flood capital investment and national resilience** – Invest more in flood management and mitigation and plan to respond to the increased risk of flooding. We will ask the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales to assess how the nationwide likelihood of flooding of homes, businesses and infrastructure can be minimised by 2050.
- **Sustainable farming scheme** – Introduce a transition period as we reform the system of farm payments so stability payments will continue to be a feature of the Sustainable Farming Scheme during and beyond this Senedd term. We will agree the longer-term arrangements for Welsh agriculture, recognising the particular needs of family farms and acknowledging ecologically sustainable local food production.
- **Community food strategy** – Develop a community food strategy to encourage the production and supply of locally-sourced food in Wales.

Reforming the Foundations of Wales

With devolution under threat from this Conservative UK Government, we must send a clear message to Westminster that the Senedd is here to stay and decisions about Wales are made in Wales.

This means reforming our electoral system to enable Wales' parliamentarians to represent people more effectively and seriously considering all options for the future of our constitution.

We will continue the reform of our education system to support all learners' physical and mental wellbeing and their academic progression, especially disadvantaged children; work to strengthen the media in Wales to address the democratic deficit and protect it from UK Government attacks on its independence, and we will continue to work with and support local government.

Working together we will:

- **Senedd reform** – Support plans to reform the Senedd, based on 80 to 100 Members; a voting system, which is as proportional – or more – than the current one and have gender quotas in law. We will support the work of the Senedd Special Purpose Committee and introduce a Senedd reform Bill 12 to 18 months after it reports.
- **Constitutional Commission** – Support the work of the Independent Commission on Wales' Constitutional Future. Both parties are free to make submissions and interact with the commission independently. The commission's interim and final reports will be presented jointly to both parties.
- **Broadcasting** – Explore the creation of a shadow Broadcasting and Communications Authority for Wales, to address our concerns about the current fragility in the media and attacks on its independence. This body would support the use of the Welsh language, particularly in digital and encourage media plurality. We believe broadcasting and communication powers should be devolved to Wales.
- **Media financial support** – Fund existing and new enterprises to improve Welsh-based journalism to tackle the information deficit.

- **Arfor** – Address inequalities between poorer and richer parts of the country by building on the Arfor pilot, which promoted entrepreneurship, business growth, community resilience and the Welsh language. We will create a second phase with local government and ask the OECD to look at and design models for local government to work together in West Wales and the South Wales Valleys to tackle shared challenges and opportunities.
- **National School of Government** – Explore how setting up a National School for Government might contribute to the principle of a One Wales Public Service.
- **Regional partnership arrangements** – Keep regional partnership working under review, together with local government partners, to ensure they are efficient and work for Wales as new Corporate Joint Committee arrangements are introduced. Any changes should be locally led, driven by what works best and based on local priorities and existing relationships.
- **Sustainable public services** – Work with the Wales Governance Centre, the Office for Budget Responsibility and others to understand devolved public finances and the future needs of Welsh public services. We will look for new ways to address any future funding gaps, grow our tax base and consider the funding implications of any recommendations from the Constitutional Commission.
- **Supply teaching and looked after children** – We believe these two vital services should not be run for private profit. We will work with partners to develop options for a more sustainable model of supply teaching with fair work at its heart, which will include local authority-led and school-led alternatives and put in place a framework to remove profit from the care of looked after children.
- **School term dates** – Aim to reform school term dates to bring them more in line with patterns of family life and employment. We will also explore options to reform the rhythm of the school day to create space for more wide-ranging, culturally-accessible activities and opportunities.
- **Reforming qualifications** – Focus on experiences and wellbeing as we reform qualifications, in line with Wales’ new curriculum. We will significantly expand the range of made-in-Wales vocational qualifications to fit the needs of our learners and our economy.
- **Tertiary Education and Research Bill** – Take forward this Bill to empower education providers to be part of a diverse, agile and collaborative sector that delivers for learners, employers and communities. We will jointly develop a new mission-based national innovation strategy to be implemented across government and by the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, which has a leading role in promoting innovation in Wales. We will also work together on post-16 curriculum reforms informed by our new national curriculum, an expansion in lifelong learning and workforce professional development.

Creating a United and Fairer Wales for All

In recovering from the pandemic, we want to ensure everyone shares in the opportunities of the future, wherever they live, so no one is held back or left behind.

We are opposed to the short-sighted and cruel decision by the Conservative UK Government to cut the £20 Universal Credit uplift, which will drive more households into poverty as we face a cost-of-living crisis. We will do all we can to reduce inequalities and tackle poverty.

We want to make Wales an anti-racist nation and drive out stigma and hatred. We want a Wales where everyone is respected and their diversity celebrated. Wales will continue to provide a warm welcome for all.

Wales has a long and proud history and distinctive culture, built around our language, which thrives today. We will work to strengthen our language and culture, protecting it where needed, promoting it and helping make Welsh an everyday reality for all, as we work towards our shared goal of a million Welsh-speakers.

Working together, we will:

- **Culture strategy** – Develop a new culture strategy, reflecting Wales' diversity, a thriving Welsh language, our arts, culture and heritage sectors and our duties under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. We will ensure the financial sustainability of national cultural institutions as we implement the strategy and we will also develop the proposals for a national contemporary art gallery.
- **Curriculum** – Improve the teaching of Welsh history, taking account of the Estyn report. We are committed to Welsh history being mandatory in the new Curriculum for Wales. New curriculum resources will be developed to support Welsh history in all its complexity and diversity. National Network conversations will start in early 2022.
- **Prosiect 2050** – Promote the daily use of the Welsh language in more places. We will lead by example, supporting more sponsored bodies, local authorities and the Welsh civil service to operate through the medium of Welsh.
- **Welsh language education** – Introduce a Welsh Language Education Bill, which together with more immediate non-legislative work, will strengthen Welsh in Education Strategic Plans; set new ambitions and incentives to expand the proportion of the education workforce who can teach and work through the Welsh language; establish and implement a single continuum of Welsh language learning; enable existing schools to move into a higher Welsh language category and incentivise the increase of Welsh-medium provision in all education settings.

- **Welsh Language Standards** – Work with the Welsh Language Commissioner to reduce obstacles in setting Welsh Language Standards; streamline the process for implementing standards, without weakening their impact; implement standards on public transport; regulators in the health sector; newly established public bodies currently outside the standards regime and water companies; and begin work on implementing standards on housing associations, which will be completed in the Senedd term. We are committed to the full implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and will develop a list to prioritise the further rollout of standards under its schedules beyond the term of this agreement.
- **Welsh language place names** – Ensure Welsh language place names in the built and natural environments are safeguarded and promoted.
- **Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and National Centre for Learning Welsh** – Invest in Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the National Centre for Learning Welsh to increase the proportion of Welsh-medium apprenticeships and further education and provide free Welsh language learning for 16 to 25-year-olds.
- **Seren network** – Increase the ability for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to take part in the Seren Network. We will offer summer schools at each Welsh university for Seren Foundation learners; expand the current partnerships with Aberystwyth and Cardiff universities and set up new pilots in other Welsh institutions.
- **Tackling poverty and inequality** – Support the devolution of the administration of welfare and explore the necessary infrastructure required to prepare for it. Such a transfer of power would need to be accompanied by the transfer of appropriate financial support.
- **Mental health** – Test how community facilities run by trained third sector staff with clear referral pathways into NHS services if needed – the sanctuary model – can help support young people in crisis or with an urgent mental health or emotional wellbeing issue. These would be open evenings and weekends.
- **Disability** – Strengthen the rights of disabled people and tackle the inequalities they continue to face. We are committed to the social model of disability and together we will ensure the success of the Disability Task Force set up to respond to the Locked Out report.
- **Race Equality Action Plan** – Tackle institutionalised and systemic racism and support the publication of the *Race Equality Action Plan*. We will work with communities, stakeholders and partners, including the police and courts, to make the plan as strong as possible. We support efforts to ensure the devolution of policing and justice powers.
- **LGBTQ+** – Make Wales the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe and support the publication of the LGBTQ+ Action Plan. We will call for the powers to legislate to improve the lives and protect the safety of Trans people in Wales to be devolved.