



A Workers' Manifesto for a Fairer Wales

This document sets out actions to improve people's working lives and get them out of poverty. It is grounded in people's right to a collective voice at work.

We want to democratise the discussion about employment rights and labour standards, so that everyone is clear about what is expected of employers and how their governments will eradicate worker exploitation.

We have two goals – to get rid of bad, unfair work, and to make sure that everyone has a fair chance of getting a good job.

This will make a huge difference to incomes, health and wellbeing, our housing and what we have to spend on food, clothes and other essentials. It will help children – both now and in future - including their likelihood of being in poverty when they're adults. And it will also help people when they retire.

Our plan rests on empowering workers. Governments can mandate minimum standards; but only workers and employers can bargain for the best deal for their workplace.

Workers deserve a revival in workplace democracy and collective bargaining so that they can have a fair say over their pay, terms and conditions. And they deserve a fair say at a policy level too. Employers are powerful – balancing this out will result in fairer outcomes.

Sometimes the labour market is described as a spectrum in terms of exploitation, with the most extreme forms (i.e. modern day slavery) at one end, and good and fair work at the other end. We subscribe to the Fair Work Commission's definition of fair work to define what the 'good' end of the spectrum should look like.

We want the next Welsh Government to act to move every worker along that spectrum, with action to support those at risk of all forms of illegal and highly unfair employment practices in particular.

We're talking about types of work and sectors where we see the most exploitation, like agency work, those in other types of insecure work and sectors like food processing. We also want action to support those at risk of this - whether it's those facing redundancy in a challenging labour market or to bring about a just transition to a greener economy.

We're not looking for government to be prescriptive. Lots of what we recommend will grow and strengthen the collective voice of workers so that *they* identify the changes they need in their workplaces. But we also make recommendations for urgent actions to help those on very low incomes immediately. There are changes which could be made overnight to help those in poverty, including rent controls and a review of Wales's 'social wage'.

And this is all within the limits of our devolution arrangements. The Welsh Government isn't responsible for employment rights or industrial relations. In some instances our solutions are not the most straightforward way to address an issue, and sometimes the best approach is for

the Senedd and next Welsh Government to be a strong ally to workers by standing up for employment rights and nurturing trade union growth.

Our recommendations are based on years of working with the government and employers to make work fairer, building on what has delivered change and how this should be replicated or scaled up. And it also roots us back in workers' fundamental labour right to a collective voice and the need to use this as the main mechanism to make work fairer and support a healthy economy.

But action must be based on the realities of Wales's labour market. Some misconceptions have started to take hold. It's not the case that the vast majority of Welsh workers are employed by micro and small businesses – around half work for medium and large employers. It is not the case that small and micro businesses necessarily offer better jobs, or that Welsh employers do for that matter.

And based on almost every measure there are several sectors – including tourism and hospitality – that typically offer very bad jobs. This is not 'talking these sectors down', but it does mean that we need to question any strategies which seek to increase the number of jobs in sectors characterised by low pay and precarious work without directly addressing the risk of creating bad jobs.

All workers – no matter where they live, what they do or what they want to do – deserve a government that stands up for them, whether that's through creating good jobs or supporting them to unionise. We hope these ideas will help the next Welsh Government achieve this.

Our Big Challenges

This section covers key actions which can tackle some of Wales's biggest labour market challenges. The risk of being in a bad job, including those where a worker's minimum legal rights are not being upheld, is high. This is an immediate threat to someone's health and wellbeing when it comes to health and safety rights being undermined. Equality (in relation to people's characteristics) is still an enormous issue where progress is slow. And Wales continues to face very high poverty rates, including amongst those in work.

As we begin to recover from the pandemic, unemployment is forecast to rise but we continue to face the pre-pandemic problem whereby many are not able to access the right opportunities to develop their skills or have their skills effectively used at work.

Fair Work

Our ask here is simple as the work has already been done. We are calling on the next Welsh Government to implement in full the 48 recommendations of the Fair Work Commission's [Fair Work Wales](#) report.

Health and Safety

The coronavirus pandemic has refocused a lot of attention on workplace health and safety which must be sustained. Trade unions want the next Welsh Government to:

- Strengthen the role and influence of the Welsh Government's new Health and Safety Forum and use this to develop a 'worker first' approach to health and safety inspections conducted by councils. This would mean they were proactively working to identify other aspects of labour exploitation, consult with trade unions and support the workforce after enforcement activity.
- Give the Social Partnership Council oversight over Public Health Wales' workplace activities, so that workplace interventions are defined by the principle of social partnership rather than bipartite dialogue between the state and employers.
- Seek devolved control of the Health and Safety Executive.
- Recognise the impact of the crisis on workers' mental health and well-being, but devising a comprehensive support plan in social partnership to reach all parts of the labour market.
- Fund a large-scale workplace safety campaign as part of the Covid-recovery programme targeted at all employers regardless of whether or not their workplaces have been shut during the crisis. The campaign should aim to tackle the widespread failure to adhere to workplace safety guidance, stress the importance of consulting workers on all measures taken, and increase workers' awareness of their rights.
- Support trade unions to increase the number of health and safety reps in workplaces so that workers are more aware of their rights and more likely to apply and enforce them locally.

Equality

So much work in this area has progressed in the last five years or so, but we need to see the balance shift to delivery, including:

- Deliver the Race Equality Action Plan and progress work on other action plans.
- Work with trade unions to develop sector-specific action plans for sectors with high levels of exclusion, to identify actions to ensure a better representation of those typically excluded from good jobs.
- Use social partnership arrangements and collective bargaining arrangements as the key mechanisms to address labour market inequalities.

Skills

We need to rebalance our skills sector to make workers' more powerful and recognise that skills policy should serve workers as much as employers. There are several steps needed to achieve this:

- Increase funding for the Wales Union Learning Fund so that more workers, especially those who are typically less likely to engage in training, are reached.
- Rebalance the interests which influence skills policy so that workers' interests are on an equal footing to employers and providers. Ensure that all skills interventions are designed and implemented along the principles of social partnership and introduce the WULF model into mainstream skills policy.
- Introduce a dedicated strand of skills policy with a high level of investment so that those with no or few formal qualifications can access good quality training and career advice at no cost, as part of a wider agenda which address why certain people are less likely to progress in the labour market because of their individual characteristics, their industry or occupation.
- Develop the commitment to a green recovery by addressing the skills pipeline issues by working with unions and others to identify how workers in impacted sectors could adapt their existing skills, whilst also creating new jobs for those who have lost their job in the pandemic. Commit to a long-term funding stream so that employers and unions can collaborate on workforce planning to ensure the upskilling effort results in good quality jobs and career pathways.

Poverty

- Rebalance the tackling poverty agenda to focus on tackling the causes of poverty (i.e. high housing costs and bad jobs) as much as efforts to manage the outcomes.
- Review the Welsh 'social wage' to raise awareness of the unique safety net this offers and look at how it could be expanded to reach more of those who slip through the existing safety net because of things like eligibility criteria or low awareness.
- Recognise the need to rebalance power in the private rented sector and the massive impact that the Covid crisis has had on private tenants by quickly scoping and introducing a system of rent controls for high rent areas of the country.
- Fund a green council house building programme as a long-term solution to the problem of high-cost housing.
- Review the Welsh Government's capacity to target support to both businesses and individuals during economic crises and develop options for greater direct support routes that would improve consistency and remove barriers to getting help.

Rising Unemployment

With furlough being phased out over the summer, retaining jobs is the immediate priority. We need to tackle the threat of rising unemployment by:

- Prioritising jobs and employers, including through union-supported efforts like short-time working or reviving the ProAct initiative. If jobs are lost, every effort must be made to minimise someone's time out of work, including replicating the Better Jobs Closer to Home pilots to support those in poorer parts of Wales or those who are less likely to get a good job.
- Continue funding ReAct and allow workers to pool the wage subsidy element to buy-out their employer.
- Prioritise investment in unionised co-operative models, rather than simply more self-employment and entrepreneurship. The pandemic has shown that the state is unable to properly support many self-employed workers so options on how they could become more resilient need to be considered.

The Best Opportunities to Make Things Fairer

The wider policy agenda and commitments create plenty of opportunities to make society and work fairer, which need to be harnessed by a future Welsh Government. Our key priorities focus on the response to the climate change emergency, the need to grow trade unions, new technology in the workplace and the future of devolution.

A Just Transition

Welsh Government's declaration of a climate change emergency was a welcome recognition of the seriousness of climate change and the urgency with which it needs to be addressed. Every workplace must play a part in this, and government can help by facilitating:

- A step change in the number of green reps in workplaces and the number of other reps trained to negotiate on decarbonising the workplace and other issues which are key to addressing the climate emergency, including by agreeing that green reps are entitled to facility time in the public sector.
- Working with social partners to deliver on the aims of a just transition, recognising that all industries are part of the solution in some way and that no worker can be left behind.
- Investing in large scale, green infrastructure projects in sectors such as housing retrofits while also complying with relevant construction industry sectoral agreements. Priority projects have been identified in Wales TUC's [Job Creation in Wales from Infrastructure Investment](#) report.

Trade Union Growth

The pandemic has shown how an unorganised, fragmented labour market is a weakness that damages all parts of society, but especially the most vulnerable. We don't have the power to change industrial law, but the next Welsh government can make a difference by:

- Launching a nationwide 'Join a Union' advertising campaign to encourage people to realise their right to a democratic collective voice at work. The Welsh Government should follow the clear example set by local authorities in other parts of the UK as well as the new administration in the United States by making clear that the position of the Welsh Government is that union membership is the best way to protect workers' rights and interests.
- A trade union induction for any funded training or job opportunities (e.g. apprenticeships) and lessons on trade unionism to be taught in all schools/as part of careers advice.
- Increasing collective bargaining coverage in Wales through a clear message via all Welsh Government channels that this is the way in which fairer work is achieved in the workplace.

The Future of Work

A lot of new workplace technology has been adopted through the pandemic, with varying results for workers. And plenty of other forms of new technology are likely to be introduced in workplaces in the next few years too. Through an inclusive approach that again follows the

principles of a just transition, we want every worker to gain from this and to those in lower paid roles to experience the greatest uplift. This can be achieved by making sure that:

- Investment in new technology must always come with a corresponding skills development fund, designed in social partnership and incorporating the principles of WULF.
- A 'no worker left behind' principle must define the approach to the future of work. A policy focus on issues like reskilling, job design and workforce planning so no worker is disadvantaged.
- State investment must prioritise those communities and sectors where workers are least likely to access fair work, so that their skills levels do not fall disproportionately behind.

Devolution

A strong commitment to make work fairer has not always achieved tangible outcomes because of the constraints of our devolution settlement. The next Welsh Government must work with trade unions to strengthen devolution arrangements for a fairer labour market, including:

- Supporting a Wales TUC commission to consider how a future devolution settlement can improve the chances of all workers accessing fairer work.
- Lobbying for the power to introduce further wage boards to introduce a higher minimum wage and other terms and conditions in certain sectors.
- Harnessing and expanding Wales's borrowing powers and introducing new taxes to make the overall tax regime more progressive.

Our Public Sector

The devolved public sector delivers our much-valued public services while offering many of the best jobs in our communities. Wales's public servants deserve a fair reward, and we also need to make sure that anyone employed by public funds gets a good job. Not a penny of public money should ever result in exploitative work.

Public Services

Our public servants deserve good jobs, and the devolved public sector must lead by example when it come to creating a Fair Work Nation. A future government must:

- Work with trade unions to oppose a public sector pay freeze.
- Invest in an equivalent to the [greater.jobs](#) site created for Manchester public services, as a modern replacement for People Exchange Cymru, to advertise vacancies, training and other progression opportunities across the devolved public sector.
- Move to an 'insourcing by default' model when outsourced contracts fail, and ensure continued investment in high-quality, universal public services which continue to be owned by the public and oppose any form of privatisation.

Social Partnership

Social partnership is where government works with unions and employers on an equal, tripartite basis to design and implement policies which impact workers. It defines policy development in countries with strong industrial relations like Germany, as well as the European Union.

To sustain this idea of fairness and to replicate the idea of collective bargaining at the policy level, the next Welsh Government must:

- Pass the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill and introduce a social partnership protocol as an immediate measure to ensure that workers' interests are always fairly represented when decisions impact them.
- Build on the Fair Work Forum for social care by establishing social partnership arrangements in sectors with poor labour standards and/or a high level of government intervention, including tourism and hospitality, to leverage the power of investment to improve working conditions.
- Work with social partners and enforcement agencies to develop solutions to the most pernicious forms of labour exploitation, including certain occupations and types of work where people are far less likely to even have their basic employment rights upheld.

Public Spend (Procurement, Grants and Loans)

Our public sector spend is one of the most important ways we can create good jobs. The next Welsh Government must:

- Make permitting trade union access to the workforce when requested a condition of any grants, loans, or procurement spend.
- Strengthen the Economic Contract with social partners to foster better employment practices and other social and environmental outcomes. Explore sector specific contracts like the 'culture contract' where a generic template is less relevant, such as in sectors with high levels of self-employment.
- Work with the Wales TUC to use the Well-being of Future Generations act and the Social Partnership and Public Procurement legislation as a basis for delivering shared 'fair work' objectives for public bodies and public service boards, including via a fair work duty.

Our Economy

Our recovery and future economic policy must do everything possible to avoid any growth in insecure work. Precarious workers like agency staff were among the hardest hit in this pandemic, but we're also worried that financial incentives and ongoing restrictions will foster further growth in insecure jobs in the next few years.

We need to address this head on with an economic policy based on whether sectors are typically bad or good employers, rather than if employers are small businesses or Welsh-owned. And we also need to focus on growing employment in those sectors which do tend to offer good jobs and be far more cautious about public investment in those which tend to exploit workers.

Economic Policy

Economic policy has become too detached from workers' lived experience. We need to go back to basics and prioritise investment in those sectors which typically create good jobs. The next Welsh Government needs to:

- Abandon the focus on tradeable and non-tradeable (foundational) sectors as the main basis for economic strategy and instead base the nature and objectives of interventions on whether sectors, types of employer and industries are more or less likely to offer good employment prospects.
- Ensure that social values such as the need to end poverty are inherent in economic interventions and evaluate interventions on this basis.
- Developing strong, 'fair work' supply chains should not just be limited to Wales. We should be actively mapping out countries which share our values in relation to fair work and unionisation, to build resilient supply chains which support better quality of working internationally. In turn, abandon assumptions that small businesses are somehow better for Wales when employment outcomes don't back this up, and the idea that the vast majority of businesses want to do the right thing.

Manufacturing

One of the key reasons manufacturing is so important to Wales is because it continues to offer many of the best jobs in lots of different parts of Wales. And they're the best jobs because they're unionised workplaces, where pay is typically higher and conditions are better. Our manufacturing sector must thrive under the next Welsh Government by commitment to:

- Build on the ['save our steel' Procurement Advice Notice](#) to increase procurement from other Wales-based manufacturers.
- Invest in Wales's manufacturing skills base as the key action to incentivise employer retention.
- Work with industry, unions and employers to ensure continued investment in key manufacturing plants, while also working with parts of the industry (i.e. food manufacturing) to dramatically improve the quality of employment offered.

Transport

We have the potential to build a fully integrated public transport network which meets people's needs, supports the economy and offers really good jobs. The next Welsh Government should work to this ambition by:

- Building on the decision to renationalise the rail and borders franchise by designing a public transport system based on the principles of social partnership and delivering good jobs.
- Undertaking a detailed assessment of what a nationalised bus service for Wales could look like.
- Recognising taxi and other professional drivers as part of the public transport network and provide support to the sector as a vital public service.

Culture and Leisure

Sectors like hospitality, non-essential retail and many workers in the creative industries are critical to our economy and society but have been hugely impacted by the pandemic. The idea of 'building back better' presents a chance to improve working conditions for many in these sectors, as well as build on the social partnership arrangements that the crisis brought about to improve worker outcomes from government interventions:

- Continue to strengthen social partnership working within the creative industries, including in Welsh Government sponsored bodies, and ensure that support for workers in the sector remains available so long as the industry is impacted by the pandemic.
- Explore 'fair work forums' (sectoral social partnership arrangements) for sectors like hospitality and retail to retain a focus on issues such as health and safety at a devolved level, but also to achieve fair work outcomes from public spend in policy areas like skills.

About the Wales TUC

The Wales TUC exists to improve the economic and social conditions of workers in Wales, regardless of if they are currently in a job or not. Its mandate and purpose builds on the role of its individual affiliated trade unions.

Workers join trade unions to represent their interests, and these unions affiliate to the TUC to establish a shared agenda, agreed democratically at a Congress held every two years and managed by the General Council which meets four times a year.

Around 400,000 people are trade union members in Wales. The vast majority of these people are members of trade unions which are affiliated to the Wales TUC.

How unions work

Unions are groups of workers organised together to win a better deal at work. In most workplaces where unions are active, members will get together to talk about what's going on – and any problems they are having. The issues most likely to come up are pay, pensions, safety at work, unfair treatment, or simply the way work is organised. The union members elect someone to speak for them, called a rep (or sometimes a shop steward). They are usually a volunteer. The rep takes their concerns with management and helps individuals too.

In many workplaces, the union is legally recognised by the employer. In these workplaces, the union reps have the right to formally negotiate with managers about pay and other terms and conditions. A union becomes recognised either when enough members have joined and the employer has agreed to recognise the union, or when the union has won a vote of workers. Bigger workplaces may have a number of recognised unions, representing different groups of workers. Reps in bigger workplaces may have agreed time off work (sometimes called facility time) to represent union members in negotiations with managers.

Many employers welcome having a union in their company. They understand that it is better for workers to be able to raise problems and sort them out rather than having to just put up with unfairness or poor treatment. And unions can help companies plan for the future and manage change – as well as making sure workers have an independent voice if big changes like redundancies or site closures are planned.

Beyond the workplace

Unions tend to be organised into branches for similar jobs or a local area, with elected volunteer officers. These branches will be part of a region or nation, and often an industry or professional sector within their union.

All unions have a national committee (often called an executive) and a general secretary. Together they lead the union. Both the executive and the general secretary are elected by individual union members. Each union will hold regular conferences, attended by representatives from branches. The conference decides on the union's priorities.

Unions also have structures to support the involvement of women, LGBT workers, Black and minority ethnic workers, disabled workers and younger workers.

Most unions also employ paid staff to support members negotiate with employers, run the union and organise in new workplaces. They may also employ lawyers, press officers and campaigners. Unions are financed by members' subs.