

GREEN, FAIR, AND CARING



A Feminist Roadmap for Wales

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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FOREWORD

At Oxfam Cymru, we believe that poverty and inequality cannot be tackled in isolation from the fight for gender and climate justice. Across the world, those who contribute least to the climate crisis—particularly women, people living in poverty, and communities marginalised on the basis of gender, race, class, disability, or migration status — are the ones who bear its greatest costs. That is why Oxfam’s global strategy commits us to advancing feminist, decolonial alternatives that place care for people and planet at the heart of economic transformation.

This report, A Feminist Green New Deal for Wales, contributes to that global vision by grounding it in the Welsh context. It recognises that the economic and climate crises are deeply interconnected as interlocking consequences of unjust systems—patriarchy, neoliberalism, and extractive economics—that exploit people while degrading the environment. Within this, the undervaluing of care—both paid and unpaid—illustrates how these systems rely on exploitation while failing to sustain the very foundations of our societies. A **just transition** must therefore be feminist: tackling inequality at its roots, revaluing care as essential social infrastructure, and ensuring no one is left behind.

Grounded in Wales’s own context, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the momentum toward a wellbeing economy, this discussion paper sets out practical proposals across four key areas—social care, work, transport, and energy. These recommendations call on government, public services, and civil society to act now to shape a fairer, greener future.

This paper envisions an economy that nurtures both people and planet: where care is recognised as a human right and public good, and where decisions are guided not by short-term profit for the few but by long-term wellbeing for everyone. We hope it sparks the urgent conversations and political action needed to build a fairer, greener, and more caring Wales—whilst standing in solidarity with global struggles for justice across the Global South and beyond.

Sarah Rees
Head of Oxfam Cymru

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A just transition must be feminist: tackling inequality at its roots, revaluing care as essential social infrastructure, and ensuring no one is left behind.”

WHAT IS A FEMINIST GREEN NEW DEAL?

The concept of feminist versions of green new deals began in the USA and has been adapted to the UK context by the Women's Budget Group (WBG), in partnership with the Women's Environmental Network (WEN UK). They argue that a gender perspective is missing from policies preparing us for climate adaptation and mitigation, and that women's grassroots organisations need to campaign on the impacts of climate change on women but often lack capacity to do so.

Proposals for change began by identifying remedies for the macro socio-eco political frameworks that define our times (patriarchy, colonialism, globalisation). These include creating a wellbeing economy, democratising energy ownership models, decarbonising physical infrastructure, and reordering the global economy around climate justice.¹ Mainstreaming equalities evidence into policy development was reiterated as essential.

Specific policy proposals followed, including: the proper valuing of both paid and unpaid care work (social reproduction), a right to decent and affordable housing, affordable integrated transport, investment in the circular economy, and building a sustainable food system.²

The WBG and WEN set out four goals and the necessary shifts in public policy to reach a 'Green and Caring Economy' as we were emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic. Most notable, at the time, was that as Boris Johnson's government was preparing to invest in 'shovel-ready projects', the WBG powerfully brought these arguments to public consciousness by calculating that:

...a 2% GDP investment in care (e.g. social care, childcare, parental leave and care level) creates double the number of jobs for women and almost as many for men, as the same investment in construction.³

At the heart of a feminist green new deal (FGND) is an economy organised around a different set of values.⁴ All policies should be informed by an understanding of the gendered impacts of providing unpaid and unrecognised care labour to the current economy. Alongside this, a shift to a wellbeing economy requires the valuing of

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At the heart of a feminist green new deal (FGND) is an economy organised around a different set of values.”



people and their work, what is important to them about sustaining the natural world, and economic indicators that include these measures, whilst questioning the centrality of ‘economic growth’ to drive policy.

A FGND in Wales is underpinned by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFGA), and the Future Generations Commissioner has recently put a wellbeing economy at the heart of a new action approach.⁵ The WBFGA Act will also form the framework for the Welsh Government’s approach to a Just Transition. In ‘An Equal and Just Transition to Net Zero’, we argued that without significant investment and an intervention leading to a ‘more equal Wales’, we will not attain the skills needed to meet our Net Zero targets, recommending:⁶

- 1 Carbon literacy for all** – to take the fear out of climate adaptation policies.
- 2 National Climate Programme (investment and training)** – national programme of renewal and retrofit investment and skills building.
- 3 Addressing existing workplace inequalities** to address entry and retention barriers in decarbonising industries – without which diversity initiatives may fail.
- 4 Care jobs as green jobs** – valued as needed for a greener future.
- 5 Job redesign** – all jobs will change, redesign roles and train for a sustainable future workforce.

This report presents findings from research commissioned by Oxfam Cymru to review economic and climate vulnerabilities in four areas of Welsh policy: Social Care, Work, Transport and Energy, and their related current Welsh policies. Energy policy is not fully devolved, and further thinking is needed in linked areas such as housing, health, and education.

The full report sets out the evidence of inequalities, analysis of current policy, and proposals for change to orientate Wales towards the realisation of a Feminist Green New Deal, with policies and approaches that seek to recognise and shift oppressive systems and structures of power that exclude and discriminate on the basis of gender, race, class, disability etc. These proposals were debated and expanded in discussion with stakeholders and are discussed in the full report.⁷ This executive summary provides evidential highlights and three key proposals in each policy area. Throughout, we emphasise the continuing gender neutrality and lack of a wider intersectional lens of policy, which has the effect of reproducing inequality in successive generations.

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SOCIAL CARE



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GENDER INEQUALITIES AND CURRENT POLICIES

A secure and sustainable care system is essential to day to day living. Climate change will cause pressure on care systems needed to sustain wellbeing and social cohesion, by impacting already vulnerable paid care workers and increasing the demand for these services. A comprehensive understanding of the health and social care system includes the role of women as unpaid carers for children and adults, and as skilled employees in the health, social care and education sectors.⁸ But with social and health care systems helpful for identifying the needs of carers, this paper only looks at social care rather than childcare. Notably, unpaid carers are also likely to need health care services more because their self-reported health

is often poor.⁹ Reducing the impacts of climate change, including emissions from transport for domiciliary care, is challenging because the size of the workforce is increasing to address ‘gridlock’, due to chronic underfunding and staffing shortages.¹⁰ As Wales’s over-70s population continues to grow, so too will the demand for formal care provision and the responsibilities associated with informal care.¹¹

POLICY PROPOSALS

Proposal 1.

Take the profit out of care/social investment. An increasing reliance on unpaid care labour to fill the gaps in public provision is not sustainable. The Welsh Government is making progress towards taking the profit out of looked-after children’s services.¹² The learning from the implementation of this policy should be transposed to considering similar aims for social care.



Social enterprise and co-ownership workers’ cooperatives should be considered alongside the recommendations of the Social Care and Social Partnership Forum, that profits from social care should be reinvested in social care, within a community benefits model. These proposals could be supported by devolved policy and the Welsh Government’s ethical procurement framework.

Proposal 2.

Pay care better. Case studies in Germany, where the pay of care workers has been increased and the contributions of care home residents have been reduced, and analysis of the ‘living wage’ in Scotland, show that efforts to increase pay must be addressed through ‘hard’ legislative pay reform.¹³ Evidence from Scotland shows the unintended consequences of ‘soft reform’, i.e. optional inclusion can also lead to private care bodies leaving the care system. Payment of the Real Living Wage in social care should be mandatory, and efforts made to increase regular hours of work within secure employment contracts.



Proposal 3.

Centralise ‘Care Security’. Protecting and sustaining care security¹⁴ must be given the same standing as such measures for food security. This will include measures under proposals 1 and 2, and ensuring the protection and recognition of migrant workers in the care workforce. Investment in training and job progression opportunities should also be expanded for the social care workforce in Wales.



WORK



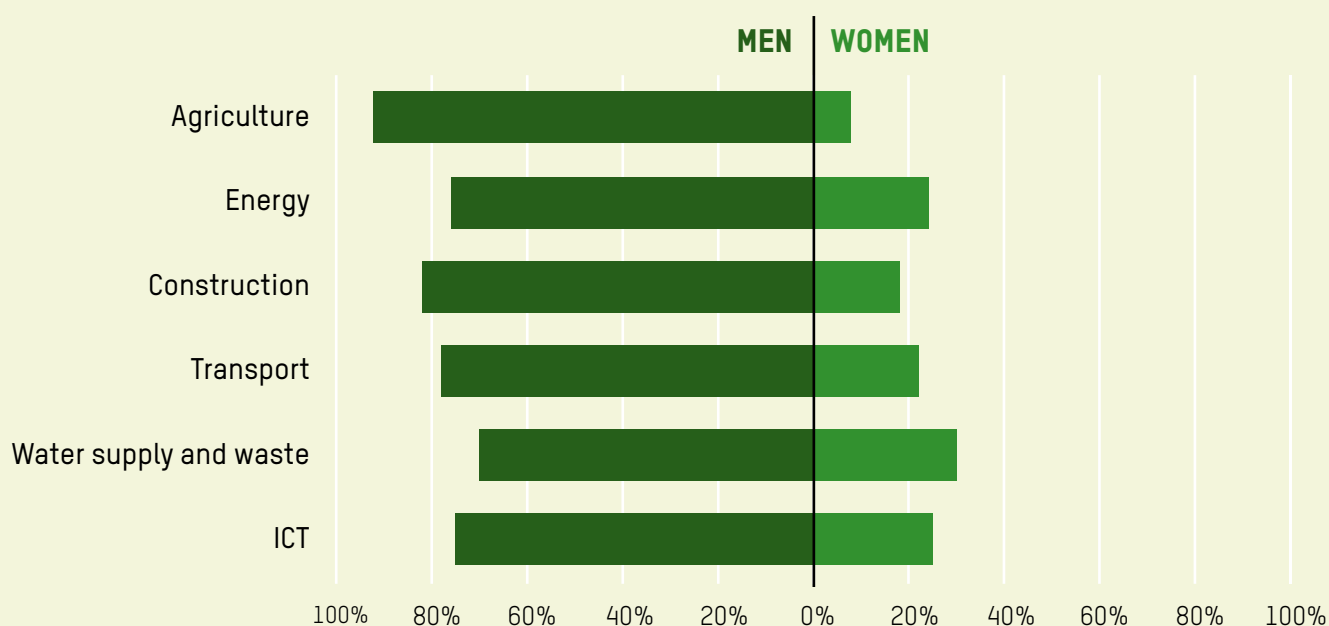
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Without interventions, economic transitions can exacerbate existing labour market inequalities.”

GENDER INEQUALITIES AND CURRENT POLICIES

A feminist green new deal considers women and work in two ways – the revaluing of social care as social infrastructure (adding its value to GVA, while also focusing on shifts to a wellbeing economy), and ensuring that women do not lose out on opportunities to gain skills, secure employment and progression in a changing labour market (sectors and occupations introducing AI and digitisation, and in processes of decarbonisation). Women are 7.9% of Agricultural workers, 24.2% of Energy, 18% of Construction, 22% of Transport, 29.9% of Water supply and waste etc., and 25% of ICT.¹⁵

PERCENTAGE OF WORKERS BY SECTOR



Source: WEN Wales (2024) Feminist Scorecard

Without interventions, economic transitions can exacerbate existing labour market inequalities.¹⁶ Our review of Welsh Government policies on employability, a fairer greener economy, economic mission, skills for Net Zero, a Just Transition, shows that while some discuss addressing gender, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic inequalities, they lack specific action and outcome measures. For example, how will we know the results of the Welsh Government's stated intent to 'ensure equality for groups who might be adversely impacted by the transition'?¹⁷ How will we know if delivery of the Net Zero skills action plan has increased women's take-up of Green Personal Learning Accounts in decarbonising sectors?

POLICY PROPOSALS

Proposal 1.

Evidence. Understanding what works to address gender segregation The Welsh Government Wellbeing Report (2024), the EHRC report 'Is Wales Fairer?' (2023) and NGO reports, such as the Feminist Scorecard (WEN Wales, 2024), provide a valuable overview of women's employment but an in-depth intersectional analysis is needed of which women work where, and under what conditions in Wales.¹⁸



However, addressing gender segregation is difficult and requires coordinated action for the long term. Up-to-date data is needed to provide a gender perspective to inform policy and support FE and HE colleges and decarbonising organisations to address gender segregation and segmentation in and through their work. (many of whom acknowledge that without greater diversity they will not acquire the needed skills, see National Grid 2020, Construction Industry Training Board, CITB,2021).¹⁹

The review should include a gender beneficiary analysis of education, training and upskilling programmes (Green PLAs, Further Education vocational programmes and apprenticeships, etc). In-depth examination of the impact of poorer working conditions (temporary, fixed, zero hours and agency working), real living wage, and analysis of gender pay gaps by sector and occupation, and seniority is needed. The review should set out both equality mainstreaming and positive action measures.

Proposal 2.

Pay gap duties for ethnicity and disability. The disability gender pay gap is smaller in the public sector than in the private sector, but evidence suggests a ‘glass ceiling’ still exists in the public sector.²⁰ The ethnicity pay gap is increasing in Wales.²¹ Eliminating these gaps, and the gender pay gap, by 2050 is a Welsh Government National Milestone (no.17).²² New Welsh Specific Equality Duties for ethnicity and disability employment and pay analysis, drawing on the unique ‘gender pay difference’ duty for Wales, should be developed.



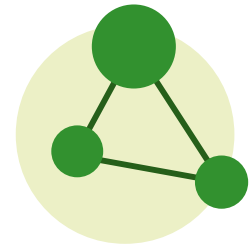
Wales’s unique Welsh Specific Equality duty on ‘gender pay differences’ requires each public sector employer to produce a combined occupation, grade, contract type, working hours and pay analysis by gender. This analysis demonstrates the drivers of pay inequalities, and an action plan is required demonstrating how these will be tackled.

Lessons from the operation of this duty and the recommendations for enhancing it, need to be considered as we deliberate on new Welsh Specific Equality Duties pay gap duties for ethnicity and disability, and the UK government consults such regulations on the basis of existing GPG reporting (posting mean and medium pay and bonus gaps, and employee quartiles to the GPG portal).²³ We must guard against the watering down of our existing Welsh Specific Equality Duties. Collaborative work between government policymakers, NGOs and academics needs to begin now, to ensure new duties specify data requirements for understanding the drivers of inequality, and for annual action plans and reporting.

Proposal 3.

Coalition Building. With the trade unions, revitalise the coalition of women's groups, statutory agencies and government officials who jointly led the 'Close the Pay Gap campaigns'.²⁴ The new coalition will need an intersectional focus from inception and will work to improve employment conditions in the transition to Net Zero:

- ensure equality is embedded in the implementation of new employment rights under the Employment Rights Bill 2024,
- support the implementation of new ethnicity and disability pay gap duties, supporting their aim to address occupational segregation by job, grade, working pattern and contract types,
- champion flexible and hybrid working patterns (monitor their availability and impact on progression),
- bolster the campaign for the Real Living Wage,
- monitor equality outcomes from Welsh Government employment and skills plans.



TRANSPORT



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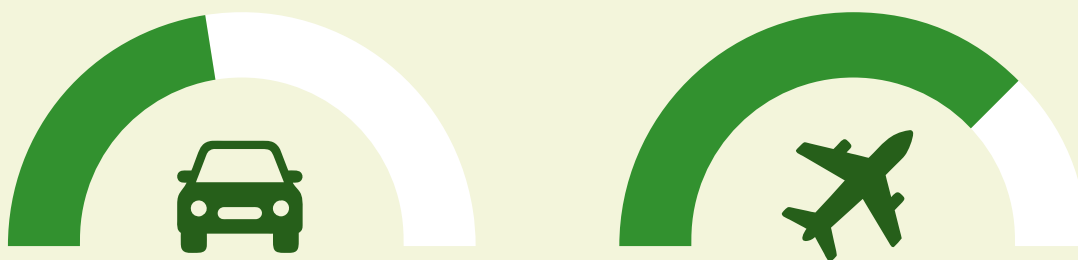
Women are more likely to walk and use public transport.”

GENDER INEQUALITIES AND CURRENT POLICIES

The top 10% income group use 45% of the energy used for land transport, and 75% for air (Hefferman et al 2021).²⁵ Inequalities in consumption, emissions, pollution and design make transport a site of the reproduction of discrimination and racism.²⁶

Women are more likely to walk and use public transport, and are shown to have more sustainable or green forms of travel, often having trips that are both shorter and greener (Heidegger et al 2021).²⁷

THE TOP 10% INCOME GROUP...



...use 45% of the energy used for land transport, and 75% for air.

Source: A feminist European green deal (2021). *Towards an Ecological and Gender Just Transition*.

At the same time, travel systems are not gender neutral and women are failed in their travel and safety needs as private travel users are prioritised, with public travel systems often modelled on men's direct commutes to work.

Llwybr Newydd, the Wales Transport Strategy (2021) has specific priorities for: 1. Reducing the need to travel, 2. Moving to more sustainable travel and 3. Reducing incentives and barriers for sustainable travel.²⁸ This plan aims to be equitable by delivering well-being through accessibility. It commits Wales to achieve best practice in design, training and service standards in line with equality, language and human rights duties set out in wellbeing, transport and disability strategies.²⁹ However, none of these actions and measures are gender specific.

POLICY PROPOSALS

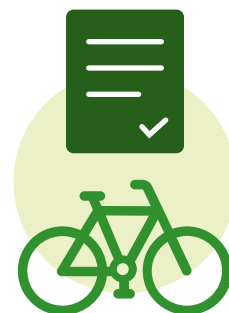
Proposal 1.

Make active travel safe and accessible through updating road safety strategies, ensuring that roads, cycle paths, and footpaths become more attractive for walking, wheeling and cycling. Fully serviced and accessible bikes, including e-bikes could make a real difference to active travel, where routes are designed with the places that women want and need to travel to in mind. Rather than planners assessing the trips that women may make, it is essential that safety is not 'done to' these groups. Women, on an intersectional basis, must be included in the co-design of active travel and transport, and related procurement and digital solutions.



Proposal 2.

Integrate Active Travel across policies linking the ecosystem of health, transport, planning and climate policies, and extending to policies involved in the allocation of public assets, economic resources, and safety and environmental regulations. Active travel initiatives are built on the presumption that they improve human and environmental health and reduce costs for social, as well as environmental services. Infrastructure plans that include travel to key public services like hospitals and schools need input from an integrated policy approach that is also genuinely co-created with communities.



Proposal 3.

Address Wales's rural transport problems by incorporating disaggregated data on women's rural transport needs into transport strategies for Wales. This includes safe and accessible travel options across the day (seasonally adjusted), consideration of journey times, examination of rural inequalities and how these inform the design of transport planning. Community transport has evolved to address needs in rural Wales (as well as the needs of disabled communities) but these are systems that speak to the gap in existing provision. Disadvantaged groups and communities have a role in the identification of support needs and co-design of Wales's transport strategy.

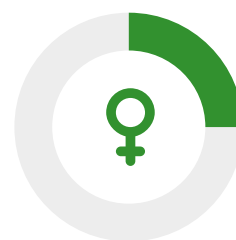


ENERGY



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STEM Women predict that women will hold only 25% of ‘green jobs’ by 2030.”



GENDER INEQUALITIES AND CURRENT POLICIES

When money is short in low-income households in Wales, after cutting back on days out, clothing and toiletries, women turn the heating down or off.³⁰ Income poverty particularly impacts lone parents, 86.4% of whom are women,³¹ (ONS, 2021), and households with a disabled person are more likely to be in income poverty.³²

Industry and trade recognise that without diversifying the traditional demographic of energy workers, skills needs for the energy transition will not be met. However, an ‘energy diversity gap’ is already apparent in the renewable energy industry, and STEM Women predict that women will hold only 25% of ‘green jobs’ by 2030.³³

Community-owned projects with defined benefits can provide much needed support for community assets and services, reduce fuel costs, and could be invested in retrofit to reduce energy demand for householders/tenants who cannot afford insulation or transferring to renewable heat sources (see, for example, Swansea Community Energy).³⁴ This is an area in which women could lead in a green energy revolution but there are policy issues to overcome.

However, in our stakeholder meetings, we heard that developing community projects has been stymied by current energy and planning policies. The letting of very large projects excludes the Community Energy Sector, and it appears that collaboration and shared ownership models are not attractive to large producers. The Community Energy Learning Network (ELN) argues that fully realised collaborations have the potential to provide participatory benefits, so that communities do not feel 'done to' and therefore resistant to new renewable projects.³⁵

A feminist green new deal could support women's greater economic independence through involvement in shared ownership models and ensure that they have a role in deciding where to reinvest community benefits – in skills, supply chains, and to support retrofit to reduce fuel poverty by reducing demand.

POLICY PROPOSALS

Proposal 1.

Defined community benefits and mandatory shared ownership models for new renewables. We echo calls from the Community Energy Wales review (2024) and Net Zero 2035 Challenge report on energy, that everyone should be able to become stakeholders in new energy projects, and that Defined Community Benefits should be put on a statutory footing with a clear direction that surpluses will be reinvested by the community in retrofit, community upskilling for employment, community transport, other forms of climate adaptation and measures to address inequalities.³⁶



Proposal 2.

Positive action. Access to training/retraining is currently focused on an already skilled workforce in declining traditional energy industries – thus exacerbating inequalities.³⁷ To address gender segregation, including addressing the 'chill factor' of sexual harassment, significant investment is needed to encourage diverse women to



enter the clean energy sectors. Case studies are set out in the full report. A feasibility study for positive action women-only training in further education should be undertaken.

Proposal 3.

Workplace cultures. Without intervention, green energy companies may reproduce traditional androcentric workplace cultures and structures, which will reinforce inequality. Providing women or marginalised groups with access to Net Zero job training or reskilling may not be enough – a dedicated programme of workplace cultural change is required. The role of the Social Partnership Act (2022) is vital, working alongside the Economic Contract to ensure recruitment is backed by investment in retention initiatives within workplaces.



CONCLUSION

This summary shows how policymaking in general, and climate policies in particular, insufficiently consider gender inequalities in policy design. An intersectional gender perspective is needed in their development, not just to ensure that climate adaptation and mitigation do not reinforce existing inequalities, but that through such policies gender equality can be actively promoted.

This summary offers a range of proposals for further consideration. The underpinning evidence, policy reviews and rationale for the recommendations are set out in the full report, which we hope will be a useful resource for the ongoing consideration of a feminist green new deal for Wales.

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ENDNOTES

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- 3 WEN (2022) [What is a Feminist Green New Deal?](#)
- 4 IWA (2024) [A Wales that cares for people and planet](#), in partnership with Oxfam Cymru
- 5 Office of the Future Generations Commissioner (2025) [Strategy](#)
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- 28 [Llwybr Newydd: the Wales transport strategy 2021](#) – GOV.WALES
- 29 [Ibid. p.19](#)
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