

A VISION FOR A JUST CYMRU

How the Senedd can fight injustice and inequality while protecting people and the planet.

November 2025





**THE NEXT SENEDD MUST MAKE
TACKLING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY
ITS CENTRAL MISSION. WE MUST
REJECT EXPLOITATIVE MODELS OF
GROWTH AND BUILD AN ECONOMY
ROOTED IN CARE, EQUALITY,
FAIRNESS, WELLBEING, AND
SUSTAINABILITY.**

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INTRODUCTION

In a world marked by growing inequality and climate breakdown, Wales faces a defining choice.

We can lead the way towards justice, sustainability and fairness for all, or allow these crises to deepen, at home and globally.

The challenges before us are immense. Across the world, entrenched poverty, rising economic inequality and the soaring cost of essentials are making daily life a struggle for billions.¹ Public services are under pressure, debt is mounting and humanitarian needs² are escalating amid conflict and climate chaos.

These are not isolated problems. They are symptoms of deep-rooted injustices, where power and wealth are concentrated in the hands of a few while the voices of the many – especially those marginalised by race, class, gender, disability, migrant status and other aspects of identity – are excluded.

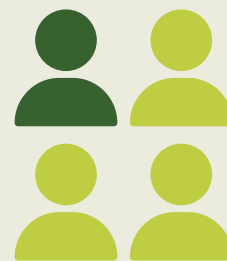


838 million

people live in extreme poverty globally³, one in ten, while we approach the era of the first trillionaire.⁴

Wealthy governments are cutting life-saving aid,⁵ undermining international institutions, and ignoring humanitarian law. Gender equality remains generations away,⁶ while equality and women's rights are increasingly under attack from authoritarian regimes, far-right and anti-rights movements and the rise of so-called 'culture wars'⁷. At the same time, global progress on tackling the climate emergency is dangerously off track.

Here in Wales, poverty and inequality remain stubbornly high. One in four people live in poverty, including nearly one in three children.⁸ The cost-of-living crisis has deepened to the point where hardship is normalised, while public services are under immense pressure. Our health and social care system is in crisis, inequalities are rising and climate targets are falling behind.



One in four people live in poverty, including nearly one in three children.⁸



The cost-of-living crisis has deepened to the level that hardship is normalised.

Wales's commitment to future generations, the wellbeing of people and the planet, sustainable development and global responsibility is enshrined in law – but we are falling short. Climate action is too slow, and the failure to raise revenue fairly is holding back the investment needed to secure a just transition. Future generations will pay the price.

Those most affected – who often face multiple, overlapping inequalities – are routinely excluded from decisions that shape their lives. From unpaid care and insecure work to inaccessible services and policymaking that overlooks lived experience, inequality is woven into everyday life.



Yet, despite the scale of these challenges, a fairer, greener, more equal Wales is possible—if we choose bold leadership and transformative action.

The next Senedd must make tackling inequality its central mission. This means moving beyond short-term fixes to confront the root causes of injustice. We must reject exploitative models of growth and build an economy rooted in care, equality, fairness, wellbeing, and sustainability. Business as usual is no longer an option.

This paper sets out Oxfam Cymru's vision for a fairer Wales. We call for action across four interconnected pillars:



**Economic
Justice**



**Social
Justice**



**Climate
Justice**



**Global
Justice**

Progress in one depends on progress in all.

Wales needs, and should have, greater devolved powers to deliver real change. But even within the current settlement, there is scope – and a responsibility – to take bold action. With the powers already at our disposal, Wales can and must lead the way in shaping a fairer, greener and more equal future. And with the right powers in place, we could go further still. A better Wales that cares for the people and the planet is possible. This is our moment to act – together, and for all of us.



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Photo: TATA Steelworks Port Talbot, Chunyip Wong, iStock.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

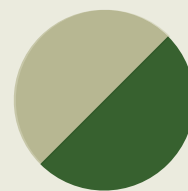
Across Wales, 700,000 people—22% of the population—live in poverty.⁹ That's more than the combined populations of Cardiff, Swansea and Merthyr.

Poverty hits some groups harder: half of ethnic minority households live in relative income poverty, compared to 22% of white households,¹⁰ while one in four households with a disabled family member are in poverty.¹¹ Single-parent households face the highest poverty rates in Wales, with 35% living in poverty¹² – and more than 80% of single parents are women.¹³

Among children in Wales, more than three in ten (31%) live in poverty, and child poverty is rising fastest among families with very young children.¹⁴ In households where the youngest child is under four, rates have surged from 33% to 45% in just four years. Overall, 57% of children in poverty are under the age of five, highlighting the urgent need for action in the earliest years of childhood.¹⁵

While overall poverty rates have remained stubbornly high for two decades, poverty is now deeper, longer lasting and more complex.¹⁶ Yet too often, poverty is treated as a short-term crisis, even as crisis has become the new normal. Essential public services – from childcare to health and social care – are overwhelmed, and emergency funds such as discretionary payments fall far short of what people need. Structural drivers like the two-child benefit limit, unaffordable childcare, and parents – especially mothers – being pushed out of the workforce all compound the problem, as highlighted in Oxfam Cymru's *Little Steps, Big Struggles* research.¹⁷

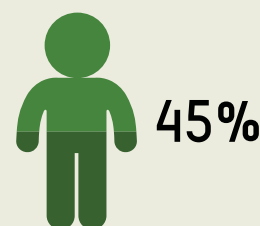
Real solutions require both immediate action and systemic change. Scotland's child payment offers one model – but delivering this in Wales would demand significant reforms in powers, funding and delivery systems. In the meantime, the Welsh Government must take bold, practical steps: reform childcare, strengthen and sustain crisis support and invest in affordable housing.¹⁸



Half of ethnic minority households live in relative income poverty, compared to 22% of white households.¹⁰



Single-parent households have the highest poverty rates in Wales, with **35%** living in poverty¹² – and over **80%** of single parents are women¹³



of children aged 0–4 in Wales are growing up in poverty.

Employment patterns deepen inequality. Economic activity in Wales (76.1%) lags behind the UK average (78.4%).¹⁹ Women face higher rates of economic inactivity than men (27.2% vs 20.5%), largely due to unpaid caring responsibilities – 20.7% of women cite looking after family as their reason for not working, compared to just 6.8% of men.²⁰

The disparities become even starker when viewed through an intersectional lens. Employment rates for ethnic minority women stand at just 54.4%, compared with 71.5% for white women, 73% for ethnic minority men and 76.5% for white men.²¹ Unemployment for ethnic minority women is three times higher than for white women (9% compared with 3%). Disabled people also face significant barriers: 43% of disabled people in Wales are economically inactive, compared to 40% across the UK.²² While the unemployment rate for disabled women is 4% compared with 2.8% for non-disabled women, almost half (45.3%) are not participating in the labour market at all.²³

Additionally, while the gender pay gap for full-time employees in Wales has narrowed to 1.9% – lower than the UK average of 7% – structural inequality persists.²⁴ Women remain concentrated in low-paid caring roles and excluded from higher-paid, male-dominated sectors like ICT, energy and construction.²⁵ On average, women in Wales earn the lowest salaries of any UK nation.²⁶



20.7% of women cite looking after family as their reason for not working, compared to just 6.8% of men.²⁰



These figures make one thing clear: inequality is holding Wales back. Unless we tackle it head-on, economic growth will not reduce poverty – it will deepen divides and entrench injustice.

That means ensuring fair opportunities and targeted support for those who want and are able to work – including parents, carers and disabled people – while also guaranteeing dignity and adequate support for those who cannot, or choose not to, work due to illness, disability or caring responsibilities. True economic justice requires both pathways: enabling participation for those who can, and security and respect for those who cannot.

Traditional growth strategies will not solve the deep-rooted challenges in Wales' economy. We must move beyond GDP as the measure of progress and base policy and spending decisions on what truly matters:²⁷ tackling inequality and ensuring the health and wellbeing of people and the planet. This means valuing – and investing in – essential public services and infrastructure such as health, care, childcare, and nature itself.²⁸



A fair economy also means recognising the true value of unpaid care work – for children and for disabled, ill and older people – and nature.

Photo: Launch of the Care Policy Scorecard for Wales, Carers Week, July 2025. Oxfam Cymru.

Developing new economic metrics that capture the contribution of unpaid labour would provide vital insights for Welsh government policies and ensure that invisible but essential work is properly valued.

Wales' current fiscal framework and budget, however, is failing to meet the nation's needs. The Barnett formula²⁹ – introduced as a 'temporary' measure in 1979 – still underpins Welsh funding, despite being widely criticised by the Holtham Commission,³⁰ the Senedd Finance Committee³¹ and third sector organisations³² as outdated and unfair. It does not reflect the relative need of Wales, or the additional costs of delivering services in rural and deprived communities. Through this inadequate formula, Wales' ability to act is constrained by its reliance on UK allocations. For example, arbitrary exclusions from consequential – such as Wales' omission from HS2 funding³³ – have starved infrastructure investment and entrenched regional inequalities.

This structural flaw, compounded by a decade of austerity, has left Welsh public services chronically underfunded.



As a result, over half the budget is consumed by health and social care,³⁴ with most of the remainder spent firefighting crises – leaving little scope for long-term, transformative investment in prevention, infrastructure and poverty reduction.

To make real progress, Wales needs greater tax powers. Without transformation, Wales will remain underfunded and unable to deliver the investment our communities need. With fairer funding and stronger devolved powers, we can build an economy rooted in care, justice, and wellbeing.



To help deliver economic justice, we call on political parties currently represented or seeking election to Senedd Cymru to commit to:

1.

Make reducing economic inequality a national priority to ensure meaningful progress in tackling poverty

Wales need a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy that puts inequality reduction at the heart of economic development. This should combine quick wins with long-term reforms – delivering a child poverty action plan with statutory targets, planning a Welsh Child Payment, expanding free school meals to secondary schools and breakfast provision, ensuring affordable childcare and investing in affordable housing.³⁵ Poverty support programmes must be flexible and sustainable, while critical services such as free school meals and discretionary funds must be protected.

Alongside these steps, the Welsh Government should pressure the UK Government to abolish the two-child benefit limit and reform social security. Above all, it must prioritise raising living standards and wellbeing, while laying the foundations for structural change in funding and welfare to deliver lasting economic justice.

2.

Set a clear economic direction

Wales must put wellbeing at the heart of the economy, replacing narrow GDP growth with goals that prioritise people, communities and the environment. This requires delivery plans across the government, reformed budgeting that aligns with wellbeing outcomes, and new economic metrics that capture the value of unpaid domestic work, care and nature.³⁶ By doing so, Wales can set a bold direction that tackles poverty and inequality while creating a fairer, greener future.

3.

Fix the Foundations

To build a resilient and fair economy, Wales must invest in prevention, promote fair work and ensure ethical public procurement.³⁷ This means funding services that stop poverty and inequality from taking root;

recognising and redressing existing overlapping inequalities across gender, race, disability, age and more; ensuring every worker has decent pay, security and rights; and using public money to support businesses that act responsibly towards people and planet. A strong foundation will enable Wales to reduce long-term costs and create a fairer society.

4. A wellbeing approach to devolved taxation

The current budget limits the Welsh Government's ability to make long-term, transformative investments, as resources are tied up in crisis spending and pressures on health and social care. Wales needs greater fiscal flexibility – more powers to introduce additional income tax bands for higher earners and stronger borrowing powers to deliver major transformative projects³⁸ These tools would give the Welsh economy more leverage, flexibility and capacity to invest.

In the meantime, the next Welsh Government must adopt a wellbeing approach to devolved taxation – using tax not only to raise revenue but to drive social and environmental progress. This means reforming Council Tax to make it fairer,³⁹ introducing measures such as road user charging and levies on unhealthy or high-emission products – with proceeds ringfenced for local services – and offering tax breaks to socially and environmentally responsible businesses.⁴⁰ By shifting taxation towards wealth, assets and harmful behaviours, Wales can create a fairer tax system that reduces inequality, strengthens local Government and delivers lasting wellbeing benefits.

5. Accelerate purpose-driven innovation

Wales needs to create the conditions for transformative, inclusive innovation that addresses social and environmental challenges.

This means backing research, skills and investment that drive solutions for care, climate and community wellbeing – not just profit.⁴¹ By focusing on innovation with purpose, Wales can become a global leader in building a fair, green economy where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



6.

Support socially responsible businesses

Wales should prioritise co-operatives, social enterprises and community-led initiatives that reinvest in people and places.⁴² By supporting socially responsible businesses through access to finance, advice and public contracts, the Welsh Government can ensure that more of the wealth created here stays here – strengthening local economies, building resilience and addressing the underlying causes of inequality.

7.

Eliminate inequalities in work

Wales must take bold action to eliminate inequalities in work by addressing gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gaps, and tackling structural barriers that keep women and marginalised groups out of better jobs.⁴³ This means gathering robust evidence to challenge gender segregation in skills and employment, introducing mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting, and fostering coalition-building across government, trade unions and equality groups to drive systemic change. Fair work must be the standard for all, with investment in reskilling and upskilling to prepare workers for the transition to a net zero economy and a renewed national commitment to becoming a Real Living Wage nation.⁴⁴

8.

Investing in a feminist caring economy

A fair economy is impossible without a strong foundation of care. Wales must invest in a feminist caring economy that treats care as essential social infrastructure.⁴⁵ This means recognising the value of unpaid care, removing profit from social care, reinvesting resources in communities, and ensuring social care and childcare workers are fairly paid, securely employed and supported to progress.⁴⁶ ‘Care security’ should be a core principle of policymaking, guaranteeing affordable, high-quality care throughout people’s lives.⁴⁷ Childcare must also be reformed to be truly accessible and affordable, giving children the best start, enabling parents – especially women – to work and strengthening the workforce itself.⁴⁸ By valuing and investing in care, Wales can deliver dignity, equality and wellbeing for all, while driving sustainable economic growth.



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SOCIAL JUSTICE

Photo: DragonImages, Adobe Stock

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Despite Wales' progressive commitments, deep and persistent inequalities continue to undermine wellbeing, safety and dignity.

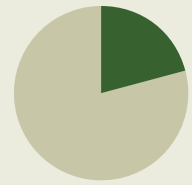
Those most affected by poverty and injustice are women, disabled people, ethnic minorities, carers and individuals facing multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination. Inadequate social security, the undervaluation of care work and a lack of affordable housing deny too many people the essentials they need to live with dignity.⁴⁹

The social security system should act as a safety net for all, but in Wales it is failing. As of July 2025, 21% of the working-age population – over 400,000 people – depend on Universal Credit, compared with 19% in England.⁵⁰ The majority of benefits, including Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments (PIP), are controlled by the UK Government, leaving the Senedd with little power to shape provision to meet Welsh needs. Punitive policies such as the two-child limit and the benefit cap are driving families into deeper poverty.⁵¹

The current UK Government's proposed cuts to disability benefits and PIP would hit Wales especially hard.⁵² The estimates shows that 190,000 people – around 6% of the population – could see their incomes reduced by up to 60% by the end of this Senedd term.⁵³ Wales already has higher disability rates than the UK average, with 900,000 people (27% of the population) living with a disability, including 11% of working-age adults compared with 7% in England.⁵⁴



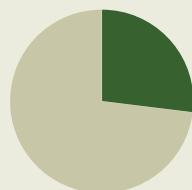
These cuts risk deepening poverty and inequality for disabled people in Wales.



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Within these limits, the Welsh Government has taken important steps through the creation of a Welsh Benefits System,⁵⁵ bringing together schemes such as free school meals, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, the Discretionary Assistance Fund, the School Essentials Grant and the Education Maintenance Allowance. Aiming to build resilience and reduce dependence on food banks, these supports are lifelines for many low-income families. Yet the system remains fragmented, with inconsistent delivery between local authorities, low awareness and complex processes leaving many families without the help they are entitled to.⁵⁶ Payments also fail to keep pace with inflation, undermining their effectiveness. Transformation is essential to ensure the Welsh Benefits System is consistent, accessible, sustainable and able to reach those with the greatest needs, including carers, migrants and people with no recourse to public funds.

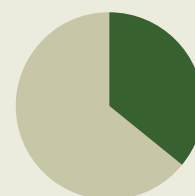
Care lies at the heart of social justice. According to the 2021 Census, over 310,000 people in Wales – one in ten – provide unpaid care for disabled, ill and older people, nearly 60% of them women, and almost a third of them disabled themselves.⁵⁷ Unpaid carers face stark inequalities: 100,000 carers live in poverty, with poverty rates 30% higher than the general population. Rising living costs have worsened pressures – 36% of unpaid carers struggle to afford food and 76% of those receiving Carer's Allowance worry about meeting basic living costs.⁵⁸

Paid care is also chronically undervalued. Social care and childcare workers, who are predominantly women, are concentrated in insecure, low-paid jobs with limited opportunities for progression, despite their essential contribution to society.⁵⁹ The result is high turnover, workforce shortages and growing unmet care needs.

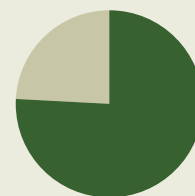


100,000

carers live in poverty in Wales⁵⁸.



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76% of those receiving Carer's Allowance worry about meeting basic living costs.⁵⁸



With a rapidly ageing population and widening health inequalities, the crisis in care will only deepen unless urgent investment is made in a publicly funded, rights-based care system that guarantees affordable, high-quality support throughout people's lives.

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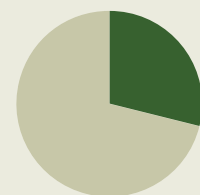
Child poverty is another crisis facing Wales. It has the highest rates in the UK, with almost a third of children growing up in relative income poverty – most in families where parents are in work.⁶⁰ In Wales, 29% of households with at least one working adult live in poverty,⁶¹ while 27% of couples with children are in poverty – 5% more than the national average.⁶² Families with children make up the largest share of those affected, accounting for 35% of all households in poverty. In this picture, childcare is another critical barrier to opportunity. Wales still has no government-backed support for children under two, leaving families struggling. Oxfam Cymru’s research shows that 43% of parents cut back on essentials after paying for childcare, and 53% feel paid work is financially unviable once childcare costs are factored in.⁶³ Flying Start, limited by postcode-based eligibility, has failed to reach many families. Although the Welsh Government pledged to extend the scheme to all two-year-olds by April 2025, this has now been delayed until an unspecified time in 2026.⁶⁴ Bold investment in childcare is essential to tackling poverty – making it truly affordable and accessible, improving conditions for the workforce and ensuring every child gets the best start in life.⁶⁵



Structural racism, gender inequality and the housing crisis also reinforce injustice. People from racialised, marginalised and minority ethnic backgrounds face higher poverty rates, lower employment and systemic barriers in education, healthcare and housing.

Women face a persistent gender pay gap, occupational segregation and high rates of gender-based violence, with services that often fail to be trauma informed or gender responsive. Meanwhile, over 170,000 people – approximately 90,000 households – remain on waiting lists for social housing, while private rents continue to rise.⁶⁶ Without secure, affordable homes, social justice cannot be achieved.

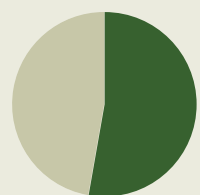
Delivering social justice in Wales requires bold action: valuing care as essential infrastructure, reforming and strengthening the Welsh Benefits System, investing in childcare and social care, building affordable homes and dismantling systemic inequalities. The next Welsh Government must act decisively to deliver dignity, equality and opportunity for all, ensuring no one in Wales is left behind.



29% households with at least one working adult live in poverty.⁶¹



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To help deliver social justice, we call on political parties currently represented or seeking election to Senedd Cymru to commit to:

1. Strengthen the social security system for all

Everyone deserves a secure standard of living, whatever challenges life brings. The next Welsh Government must increase and protect the real value of devolved social security provision while expanding eligibility and maximising uptake so that support reaches everyone who needs it. Wales should press for greater devolution of social security powers and secure sustainable financing for the Welsh Benefits System. Strengthening Welsh benefits means acting to offset the impact of UK benefit reforms and deliver genuine social justice by designing support through an intersectional lens – ensuring women, children, racialised communities, migrants, asylum seekers and unpaid carers get the targeted support they need.

2. Action to fully deliver the Child Poverty Strategy

The high poverty rate among working households shows that – due to insecure jobs, low wages and rising living costs – employment alone is no longer enough to lift families out of poverty. Tackling child poverty must therefore focus on maximising family incomes – ensuring parents can cover essentials and protecting children from the damaging effects of poverty. The two-child benefit cap and 16-hour work requirement imposed by the UK Government are pushing families deeper into poverty; the next Welsh Government must continue to advocate for their removal while doing everything within its devolved powers to mitigate their impact.

The Child Poverty Strategy⁶⁷ is a welcome step, but without clear, measurable targets it cannot drive the change Wales needs. **The next Welsh Government must embed child poverty reduction within a wider anti-poverty strategy, with integrated action across housing, childcare and financial support.** In the short term, urgent investment in affordable, accessible childcare would both support children's early development

and enable parents – particularly women – to return to work.⁶⁸

In the longer term, the introduction of a Welsh Child Payment, modelled on Scotland's, should be a priority once the necessary fiscal powers are secured. Eliminating child poverty is essential for the wellbeing of future generations and must be placed at the heart of Wales' mission for social justice.

3. Deliver justice for unpaid carers

The next Welsh Government must introduce a dedicated action and implementation plan to close the gap between the rights promised in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014⁶⁹ and the reality carers experience.⁷⁰ This plan must be fully co-produced with unpaid carers and their organisations, draw on recent evaluations, and ensure consistent delivery and monitoring across every local authority in Wales.

Efforts to identify unpaid carers remain inadequate. With a national register deemed impracticable, the next Senedd must urgently explore alternative solutions – such as a comprehensive census of carers – and convene a roundtable with all stakeholders.⁷¹ There must be no delay in identifying unpaid carers and addressing the loneliness and poverty they too often face.

Carers deserve secure, fair support. The next Welsh Government should provide long-term funding for the Carer Support Fund,⁷² commit to annual public reporting on carers' rights and launch a nationwide campaign to both improve understanding of entitlements and help more people recognise themselves as carers.⁷³ It must also address inconsistencies in local charging regimes, reform the travel scheme (Companion Pass) and work with local authorities to set practical targets.⁷⁴ Alongside this, Wales must use every lever available to ensure no unpaid carer is left in poverty or isolation, while pressing the UK Government to reform Carer's Allowance, strengthen welfare support and introduce paid carer's leave for those balancing unpaid and paid work.⁷⁵



4.

Value and protect social care and childcare workers

All political parties in Wales must commit to ensuring all eligible care workers receive at least the Real Living Wage, with strengthened monitoring, transparent reporting and enforcement.⁷⁶ To address the recruitment and retention crisis, Senedd Members should go further by supporting an enhanced Real Living Wage for social care workers, recognising the vital role they play in supporting families, communities, and the wider Welsh economy.

To ensure quality and sustainability in childcare, funding must reflect the true cost of provision and be underpinned by fair work principles. This includes guaranteeing a sector-wide Real Living Wage as well as clear pathways for career progression and robust wellbeing support for childcare workers.⁷⁷ Wales should also invest in targeted recruitment and retention strategies, explore innovative funding models and publish transparent childcare budget data.



By recognising childcare as essential infrastructure, Wales can promote fairness for families, security for workers and a strong foundation for every child's future.

A fair care system also means protecting workers' rights. Wales should establish a dedicated process to monitor and enforce employment rights, publish regular data on the gender pay gap in the care sector and strengthen protections against discrimination and harassment. Embedding international standards, such as ILO Convention 189 on decent work for care workers, would provide the necessary framework to ensure fair treatment and dignity at work.⁷⁸ **By valuing and investing in the paid care workforce, Wales can deliver better jobs, stronger services and a more just society.**

5.

Improve the early education and childcare system

Wales' childcare system needs a significant overhaul. Access to childcare remains patchy, unaffordable and unsustainable, while the workforce is undervalued and underpaid.⁷⁹ The next Welsh Government must introduce a single, streamlined application process for all childcare support, and expand provision to offer 30 hours of funded childcare from the end of parental leave, with eligibility extended to unemployed parents, part-time workers, and asylum seekers.⁸⁰ A national plan must also guarantee inclusive childcare, ensuring disabled children and those with additional needs are fully supported.

In the long term, all parties represented at the Senedd should engage in exploring alternative models, such as a childcare guarantee – proposed by Pregnant Then Screwed and the New Economics Foundation – that caps childcare costs at 5% of family income, reducing costs for the majority of families and enabling more parents to work.⁸¹ This should form part of a pathway towards universal, free childcare of up to 50 hours per week for all children from six months and above, ensuring childcare delivers for children, parents and the economy alike.

6.

Recognise and value care in the National Wellbeing Indicators

Whether paid or unpaid, care is the foundation of our society and economy, yet it remains invisible in Wales' National Wellbeing Indicators.⁸² The next Welsh Government must introduce a dedicated wellbeing indicator on care – covering childcare, social care and unpaid care – to properly measure and value its contribution.



Robust indicators should track both the experiences of those providing care and those receiving it, driving greater investment and reforms across the system. Putting care at the heart of Wales' wellbeing goals is essential for ensuring dignity, equality and security for current and future generations.

7.

Embed human rights and equality mainstreaming across policy and spending decision-making

Human rights are not abstract ideals – they are the foundation of dignity, equality and security. Yet too many people in Wales are denied these rights, from access to food to the ability to secure a safe home, with the most marginalised communities hit hardest. Wales must commit to a bold rights-based approach to policy and spending, embedding international law into Welsh legislation and holding public bodies accountable for delivery.

Equality mainstreaming must also be placed at the heart of all decision-making.⁸³ This means moving beyond 'tick-box' impact assessments to meaningful analysis of how policies affect different groups, ensuring services are responsive to diverse needs and resources are allocated to address systemic inequalities. **By embedding human rights and equality into every stage of policymaking, Wales can build a fairer, more inclusive society where no one is left behind.**



CLIMATE JUSTICE

Photo: Mitchell Orr. Wales, Unsplash

CLIMATE JUSTICE

The climate emergency and rising inequality are twin crises, both driven by an economic system that exploits people and the planet.

The climate emergency and rising inequality are twin crises, both driven by an economic system that exploits people and the planet. While the wealthiest few are most responsible for emissions, it is people in poverty and marginalised communities – particularly in the Global South – who bear the heaviest burden.



Wales, with its Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and legacy of being the first nation to declare a climate emergency,⁸⁴ has the tools and the responsibility to lead a **just transition** that leaves no one behind.

Climate justice means more than cutting emissions and decarbonising the most polluting sectors. It means tackling the deep inequalities around who causes the problem, who suffers its impacts and who has the resources to respond, while addressing the social, economic, gender and racial inequalities that are both the causes and symptoms of the climate crisis. Current policies too often fail to integrate social justice, leaving low-income households excluded from retrofitting schemes, disabled people and carers cut off from low-carbon transport and workers in carbon-intensive industries uncertain about their futures.

Wales must accelerate climate action while ensuring fairness, participation and equity are embedded at every stage. **We cannot afford another unjust transition, such as the devastation caused by coal mine closures in the 1980s. Wales must avoid the mistakes of the past, and instead unlock co-benefits – warmer homes, cheaper bills, cleaner air, affordable public transport and good green jobs.**

Yet progress in Wales has stalled. Ambitions have been rolled back in critical areas like transport, agriculture and housing, with the 2035 emissions reduction target abandoned and no Just Transition Strategy published by the Welsh Government despite consultation.⁸⁵ Without faster action, net zero by 2050 will be out of reach.



At the heart of climate justice is meaningful participation. Workers, carers, communities, young people and all those most affected must not be passive recipients of change but active shapers of it.

Photo: Wellbeing Economy Conference, Swansea, 2024. iNNOVATIONphotography

If the transition is done *to* people rather than *with* them, public trust will erode. Climate justice must therefore be a guiding principle for every decision – embedding human rights, reducing poverty, tackling inequality and ensuring a fairer, greener future for all.



To help deliver climate justice, we call on political parties currently represented or seeking election to Senedd Cymru to commit to:

1.

Set ambitious domestic carbon targets



The Climate Change Committee (CCC) Progress Report 2023 highlighted that Wales' largest carbon budget progress has been in areas under UK Government control, while devolved areas like agriculture, waste and road transport have lagged.⁸⁶ The next Senedd must be bold and accelerate efforts in these sectors.

Wales should fully adopt the Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group's recommendations, embedding equity and justice in all targets.⁸⁷ Ambitious, evidence-based carbon targets that drive real action must be set rather than relying on offsetting. This means enshrining the Climate Change Committee's Fourth Carbon Budget of at least a 73% reduction in emissions by 2031–35, explicitly including aviation and shipping.⁸⁸

Wales should commit to a 0% cap on international carbon credits, ensuring every reduction is delivered domestically through strong, on-the-ground decarbonisation.⁸⁹ Transparent, sector-by-sector emissions accounting must continue to underpin policy, providing clarity, accountability and fairness. By delivering real emission cuts within Wales, we can lead on climate action while creating jobs, improving health and building a truly sustainable future.

2.

Ensure that reducing inequality is a central objective of all climate policies and actions

The Senedd and all political parties and stakeholders must commit to putting equality at the heart of Wales' climate agenda. Reducing inequality must stand alongside cutting emissions as a central national goal. Climate justice demands recognising and empowering those most affected, ensuring communities have real influence over decisions, sharing benefits and burdens fairly, and addressing both past and present injustices.⁹⁰ Wales must pursue this with transformative ambition – tackling the root causes of social and environmental inequality through bold, systemic change that delivers a fairer, greener future for all.

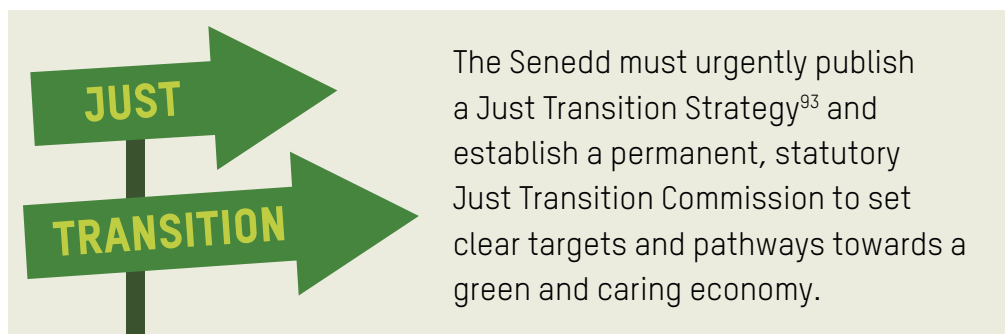
3.

Broaden the green economy and embed justice at its core

The definition of the green economy should be expanded beyond high-emission sectors to include foundational areas such as education, health, and care – recognising them as vital low-carbon sectors that sustain wellbeing and resilience.⁹¹ These sectors must be prioritised for investment within Wales' economic strategy, ensuring they are treated as essential to a just and sustainable future. In parallel, the next government must deliver a targeted anti-poverty strategy and action plan that tackles the root causes of inequality, fully integrating poverty reduction into the just transition. By embedding social justice and building a caring economy alongside decarbonisation, Wales can achieve a green economy that works for people and planet alike.⁹²

4.

Publish a Just Transition Strategy with clear targets



This must include interim milestones up to 2050 with annual tracking, robust scrutiny and the use of equality and human rights impact assessments to ensure the transition actively reduces rather than entrenches inequalities. By embedding collaboration across the UK and sharing knowledge, Wales can lead the way in building a fair, fast and accountable transition that delivers both climate action and social justice.

5.

Expand concessionary travel, on a pathway to free bus travel for all

The next Welsh Government must deliver a transport system that is fair, accessible and sustainable.⁹⁴ This means investing in affordable, accessible public transport; tackling rural transport gaps; and making

active travel options – walking, cycling, wheeling – safe, reliable and fully integrated across government policies. Transport planning must also address gender and caring inequalities: research shows women are more likely to accept lower pay for shorter commutes, limiting their career progression and widening the gender pay gap.⁹⁵

As immediate actions, the concessionary and companion travel scheme should be extended and all children and young people should travel free. By prioritising accessible, safe and inclusive transport, Wales can cut emissions, reduce inequality and ensure everyone – wherever they live – can connect to jobs, services and opportunities.

6. Deliver a just energy transition

The next Senedd must ensure Wales' transition to renewable energy is both fast and fair. This means requiring defined community benefits and mandatory shared ownership for all new renewable projects, so that local people and communities directly share in the gains.⁹⁶

// A just transition must also tackle inequality: *climate justice is social justice.*

This requires proactive measures to support women and people from marginalised and underrepresented groups to enter the clean energy sector, alongside funding for workplace culture change to build truly inclusive industries.

7. Embed meaningful participation in the just transition

A just transition can only succeed with the trust and participation of people and communities. The next Welsh Government should establish comprehensive and inclusive cross-party and grassroots participatory processes, with mechanisms for responsive feedback to shape policies that directly affect lives and livelihoods. Public support is a vital enabler: perceptions of fairness and impact must be monitored and reported transparently to ensure the transition is not only delivered, but experienced, as just.

8.

Make the biggest and richer polluters fund fair climate action

Wales cannot deliver climate justice without fair and sustainable funding. Those most responsible for the climate crisis must contribute the most to the solutions. This means collaborating with the UK Government on progressive taxation⁹⁷ – such as implementing an excess profits tax on fossil fuel producers and a *frequent flyer levy* and taxing *luxury travel* – while exploring devolved control of the Crown Estate⁹⁸ to fund green energy development in Wales. Concrete measures must be established to generate substantially more revenue and incentivise reductions in emissions by making the biggest and wealthiest polluters pay for the damage they cause. This approach acts on the evidence that the wealthiest pollute the most and ensures climate action is both fair *and* adequately funded.

9.

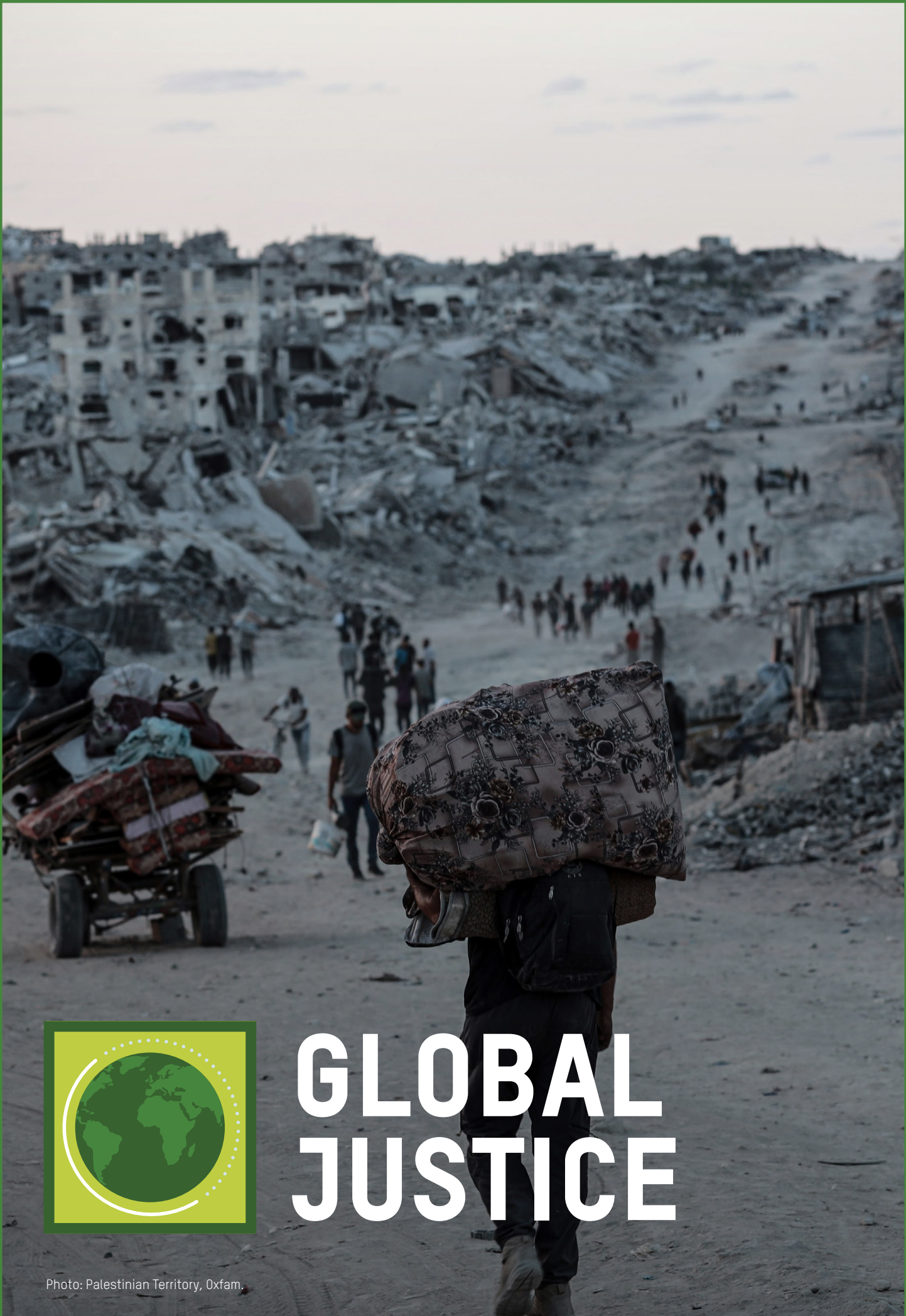
Play an active role on the global stage



Wales must demonstrate bold global leadership on climate justice by embedding equity and justice in all targets and committing to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.

Photo: Oxfam Australia, 2019.

All political parties should actively support international initiatives such as the Race to Zero⁹⁹ campaign and the Wellbeing Economy Governments¹⁰⁰ partnership, positioning Wales as the first Race to Zero nation built on community-led action and solidarity. Crucially, Wales should commit to signing the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty¹⁰¹ – an ambitious international agreement to phase out coal, oil and gas while ensuring a global just transition where no country, community or worker is left behind. By playing an active role on the world stage, Wales can showcase its achievements and drive international momentum for climate justice.



GLOBAL JUSTICE

Photo: Palestinian Territory, Oxfam.

GLOBAL JUSTICE

In an increasingly interconnected world, where crises are transnational, the next Senedd must show real solidarity with people facing poverty, conflict and humanitarian crises and emergencies worldwide.

This means championing and contributing to the UK's international commitments and obligations under international law. Wales has a proud history as a peacebuilding nation – from the League of Nations¹⁰² to the historic Women's Peace Petition,¹⁰³ signed by almost 400,000 women, and the Urdd's Youth Peace Message, published annually since 1922.¹⁰⁴ This legacy was echoed in signing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015¹⁰⁵ into Welsh law, requiring the Government to act in the interests of people everywhere.¹⁰⁶ Wales is a Nation of Sanctuary¹⁰⁷, embedding Welsh culture and values by welcoming and integrating refugees and asylum seekers – despite immigration powers being reserved to Westminster and attempts by far-right rhetoric to undermine Wales' values and commitments.

Vast global inequalities in wealth, power and opportunity persist.



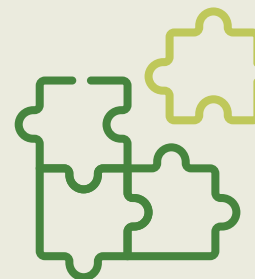
The world's richest countries – enriched through colonialism, slavery and industrialisation – still dominate trade, finance and governance, while the Global South bears the brunt of crises it did the least to cause: from climate disasters and debt crises to health inequality and mass displacement.

These are not accidental, but rooted in centuries-old systems that favour profit over people and perpetuate racial, gender and economic inequalities.¹⁰⁸ Protracted humanitarian crises are now lasting a decade on average, while violations of international humanitarian law – such as in Gaza – continue with devastating consequences.¹⁰⁹ One in five children worldwide, around 400 million, are living in or fleeing conflict, yet global emergency appeals met only half of need in 2024.¹¹⁰

Wales must strengthen its role as a globally responsible nation. This means adequately investing and expanding international partnerships



The historic Women's Peace Petition¹⁰³ signed by almost **400,000** women.



Wales is a Nation of Sanctuary¹⁰⁷, embedding Welsh culture and values by welcoming and integrating refugees and asylum seekers.

through programmes such as Wales and Africa,¹¹¹ Size of Wales¹¹² and Fair Trade Wales¹¹³, as well as its contribution to humanitarian appeals through Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Cymru and supporting peacebuilding efforts – especially those centred on gender equality and women’s rights. It also means speaking out against global injustices and using every domestic lever available to apply pressure for peace. Yet international solidarity funding in the Welsh Government budget has been cut in recent years and must grow in real terms, especially given unprecedented UK aid cuts.¹¹⁴



But global responsibility is not just about money; it is also about dismantling unjust systems, ensuring Wales is not complicit in exploitation and using every domestic lever to advance peace, justice and sustainability.

That requires ethical trade, procurement and investment, with due diligence checks based on human rights and international laws. Wales’ imports of commodities such as palm oil, soy and cocoa drive deforestation and human rights abuses overseas, while Welsh public pension funds hold at least £227.9m in fossil fuels¹¹⁵ and face almost £10bn of deforestation-related risks.¹¹⁶ Public money must not fund abuses, deforestation or climate harm abroad. The Welsh Government’s 2024 Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains¹¹⁷ is a step forward, but it must be matched by robust due diligence and enforcement.

Wales also needs to avoid the creeping militarisation of public policy, ensuring spending decisions do not reinforce conflict or injustice. Instead, our approach must be grounded in human rights, compassion and global justice – from migration policy to climate action.

What Wales does particularly well as a small nation is connect – from diaspora communities, to INGOs and grassroots groups linking with partners worldwide. These voices and networks give Wales a unique opportunity to model what a fair and globally responsible nation that centres care for people and the planet looks like in practice.





To help deliver global justice, we call on political parties currently represented or seeking election to Senedd Cymru to commit to:

1. Embed global responsibility across all policies

Global responsibility must be a guiding principle, not a token gesture.

Every Welsh Government department should align trade, procurement, investment, climate and social justice policies with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, ensuring Wales does no harm overseas and contributes positively wherever possible.

2. Strengthen and resource international development in Wales

Recent cuts must be reversed to provide long-term, sustainable funding for values-driven, community-led partnerships such as *Wales and Africa* and initiatives like *Mbale Trees Programme*¹¹⁸. These schemes – which have already planted millions of trees, reduced carbon emissions, improved livelihoods, and advanced gender equality by training community members to raise awareness of gender issues, empowering women as gender champions, and inspiring Welsh children to become global citizens – should be protected and scaled up.¹¹⁹ Wales should formalise partnerships and work alongside non-governmental partners with strong local relationships, ensuring that development efforts are rooted in community needs and led by trusted voices on the ground.

3. Publish a standalone International Development Strategy

The next Welsh Government should develop and implement an ambitious International Development Strategy rooted in solidarity, climate justice, equity and human rights. This strategy should make an explicit commitment to intersectional feminist development and to supporting Global South partners' calls for reparatory justice, recognising the historic and ongoing harms of colonialism and resource extraction. It must be co-produced with civil society, diaspora communities and Global South partners, shifting power to locally led approaches and providing

flexible, long-term support for women's rights organisations and feminist networks. In doing so, Wales should also learn from Global South communities, ensuring that the Wales and Africa programme is developed through a partnership of mutual exchange and learning.

4. Lead on peace, human rights and climate justice



Wales must use its international voice to champion peace, human rights and climate justice. This means opposing arms sales that fuel conflict, committing to deforestation-free procurement by 2030 and standing alongside marginalised communities facing crises, such as in Gaza.

Photo: Oxfam Cymru

The Welsh Government should consistently uphold international law and human rights, ensuring Wales is recognised as a nation of peace and solidarity.

5. Showcase Wales as a wellbeing nation

Wales should champion the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and its wellbeing economy model on the global stage. By taking a leadership role in initiatives such as the Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo)¹²⁰ partnership and Race to Zero,¹²¹ Wales can demonstrate how a small nation can lead by example in building a values-based, sustainable global economy.

6. Ensure coherence, accountability and scrutiny

The next Welsh Government should establish strong cross-ministerial accountability and Senedd scrutiny mechanisms for international policies. It should formalise engagement with civil society alliances, such as the Wales Overseas Agencies Group (WOAG), and commit to transparent reporting and measurable outcomes for all international activity. These steps are critical to achieving coherent and transparent international policies.

7. Adopt a feminist approach to external affairs

The Welsh Government should deliver on Wales' feminist government commitments by embedding feminist principles in all international partnerships. This means consistently upholding international law, calling out war crimes and breaches of humanitarian law, and sustaining investment in women's leadership in peacebuilding, particularly through Global South-led initiatives.

8. Ensure Wales is in no way complicit in Israel's atrocities in Palestine

The Government of Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza has crossed multiple red lines.¹²² Oxfam reaffirms this based upon extensive evidence from credible official legal analyses, UN experts and our own experience in bearing witness to the humanitarian catastrophe.¹²³ All parties must be held to account for violations of international law. While Oxfam condemns the horrific attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023, everyone has a duty to maximise pressure to help secure a lasting ceasefire and allow unimpeded access for humanitarian aid and commercial supplies.

As per Article IV of the 1948 Genocide Convention, third states are required to take measures to prevent and punish the crime of Genocide. To date, 153 states, including the United Kingdom, are parties to the Convention.¹²⁴



At the very least, Wales must ensure it is in no way complicit in war crimes and crimes against humanity, and do all it can to apply pressure, including demanding action by the UK Government.¹²⁵

Wales must send a clear message: the Government of Israel must observe a permanent ceasefire, lift the siege, guarantee unfettered humanitarian access, release of all unlawfully detained Palestinians, and obey international law, rulings of the ICJ and UN resolutions. Wales must play its part in ensuring Israeli compliance.

The Senedd must also join other nations in calling for all reconstruction and recovery efforts in Gaza to be led by Palestinians, coordinated under the UN framework, and guided by inclusive Palestinian leadership across civil society, government, and the private sector to ensure genuine ownership, accountability, and lasting peace.

9.

Build pressure for Israel to end its illegal occupation of Palestinian territory

The next Senedd must act on the International Court of Justice's ruling that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory is unlawful.¹²⁶ The future government should instruct and publish a due diligence review to ensure neither it nor other actors in Wales are complicit in this occupation. Trade and public procurement must be prohibited from companies based in illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and trade with settlement-linked companies should be restructured to apply clear economic pressure to end these unlawful practices. The next Welsh Government should work with partners to build international pressure for an end to the occupation.

The Senedd should take decisive action to ensure that all public procurement, trade, and investment in Wales fully align with international law and human rights. This includes adopting and implementing legislation that explicitly bans trade, services, and investments with illegal settlements; taking proactive steps to identify and prevent any financial, commercial, trade, diplomatic, military, or logistical support that aids or sustains Israel's unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory; and introducing legislation

requiring all corporations and financial institutions headquartered in Wales to conduct mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence in line with international standards.¹²⁷

The Senedd must ensure that recognition of the State of Palestine is not merely symbolic but part of an irreversible strategy to end the Israeli occupation and dismantle illegal settlements in line with international law. This recognition must support the establishment of full Palestinian sovereignty over its security, economy, and natural resources, while upholding fundamental human rights for all. It should also strengthen Palestinian civil society and democratic governance.

10. Engage the public and business in global justice

Global justice must be more than a principle – it must be a shared practice. Wales should lead by building an informed and active citizenship that understands the links between local action and global impact – from climate justice to migration, racial justice to tax justice. This requires strengthening global citizenship education in schools to equip young people with the knowledge and values to act for a fairer world, deepening Wales’ commitment as a Fair Trade Nation, and supporting businesses to adopt ethical practices through robust procurement and investment standards. By engaging both the public and private sectors, Wales can demonstrate that a small nation can make a big difference—championing fairness, solidarity, and sustainability at home and on the global stage.



Wales can demonstrate that a small nation can make a big difference—championing fairness, solidarity, and sustainability at home and on the global stage.

Photo: Women running a tree nursery in Bumaena, part of the Welsh Government supported Mbale Tree Growing Programme, which has distributed over 25 million trees since 2009, supporting local livelihoods and climate resilience. Photo credit: Size of Wales

DELIVERING FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

This manifesto sets out a bold vision for a fairer, greener and more caring Wales – one that delivers economic, social, climate and global justice for all.

At its core is a commitment to tackling poverty and systemic inequality, redistributing wealth and power, and placing care, dignity and human rights at the heart of policymaking.

The challenges we face are urgent: stubbornly high poverty, deepening inequality, a climate emergency and global injustices. These crises are interconnected and demand a coordinated, transformative approach. Business as usual is not an option.

We have outlined ambitious yet achievable actions across four pillars of justice:



Economic justice: Reform Wales' fiscal framework, adopt fairer taxation, and invest in prevention, care and social infrastructure.



Social justice: Deliver a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy, expand funded childcare, strengthen the Welsh Benefits System and value care as essential infrastructure.



Climate justice: Accelerate a just transition to a low-carbon economy, embed equity in all climate policies and ensure no one is left behind.



Global justice: Strengthen Wales' role as a globally responsible nation, uphold human rights, and ensure ethical trade, procurement and investment.

Realising this vision will require political **courage, long-term thinking and sustained investment**. It means **transparent, accountable governance** and genuine engagement with those most affected by injustice. It also means challenging entrenched interests and making bold choices to prioritise people and planet over profit.

The **2026 Senedd election** is a pivotal moment. All political parties must set out:

- ✓ The policies they will adopt to deliver economic, social, climate and global justice.
- ✓ How they will fund these priorities fairly and sustainably.
- ✓ What measurable outcomes they will achieve by 2031.

This is not just a political choice, but a moral imperative. Wales has the tools, the legal framework and the public appetite for change. What is needed now is the **political will and leadership to act decisively** – to deliver a fairer future for everyone who lives here and to play our part in building a more just world.

We call on all political parties to commit to this vision in their manifestos and clearly set out how they will deliver it—through bold policies, fair funding, and measurable outcomes. Wales has the opportunity to lead by example, showing that a small nation can drive big change. By working together—government, parties, civil society, and communities—we can make Wales a true champion of justice, equality, and sustainability, for current and future generations and for people everywhere.

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Gadewch i ni
uno mewn
HEDDWCH

Let's unite in
PEACE



Mae
newynu
pobl yn
llinell goch

Mae
tardgedu
plant yn
llinell goch

Mae lladd
gweithwyr
cymorth yn
llinell goch

STOP STARVING-
THE CHILDREN

Starving
people
is a red line

Mae lladd
gweithwyr
cymorth yn
llinell goch

Targeting
children
is a red line

Targeting

Starving
people
is a red line

**THE NEXT WELSH GOVERNMENT
MUST ACT DECISIVELY TO
DELIVER DIGNITY, EQUALITY AND
OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL, ENSURING
NO ONE IN WALES IS LEFT BEHIND.**

ABOUT OXFAM

Oxfam is a global movement of people who are fighting inequality to end poverty and injustice. We are working across regions in more than 70 countries, with thousands of partners, and allies, supporting communities to build better lives for themselves, grow resilience and protect lives and livelihoods also in times of crisis. Please write to any of the agencies for further information or visit www.oxfam.org.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email oxfamcymru@oxfam.org.uk

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