**Local Government Elections 2017 – 10 ideas for our well-being**

Local government plays a big role in our lives and our environment – providing essential public services from education to waste, and making decisions on planning and developing our communities. This May’s local government elections in Wales are the first since the ground-breaking Well-being of Future Generations Act came into force. This is an exciting opportunity for councils to look afresh at what they do, and consider how they and partners can improve their area for our social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being, and help shape a sustainable future.

At Friends of the Earth we want to see a healthy environment that provides a flourishing life for current and future generations. In this briefing we therefore outline 10 ideas for delivering locally on, and contributing to, Wales’ well-being goals. We hope that candidates will support these proposals, and that they will help make your area fit for future generations.

Our proposals fall into the following categories:

* Climate Change
* Fossil Free Future
* Warm homes and energy for all
* Pack it in – don’t waste it!
* Bee Friendly – let’s get Wales buzzing
* Clean Air

**Climate Change**

Since the last local authority elections the science of climate change has grown ever stronger. The latest IPCC report revealed accelerating sea level rise, sea ice retreat and glacier melt, and gave us a clearer picture of the impact this is having on the world’s most vulnerable communities and the increasing impact on people and nature all over the world. Global leaders have agreed a way forward to tackle emissions with the Paris Agreement. And in Wales we have a new Environment Act with carbon budgets and targets to reduce our emissions in line with the latest science and international agreement. But we need action across Wales by local authorities as well.

We are calling on local government to help fight climate change in Wales by introducing:

1. Carbon assessments of local authority budgets and major projects, and introduction of a 5 year carbon budget.

**Fossil Free Future**

The world already has more fossil fuel than we can afford to burn if we want to avoid catastrophic climate change. We’re calling on Councils to become fossil-free – to commit not to allow further opencast coal, fracking or unconventional gas extraction in their local authority area.

In addition local authority-controlled pension funds in Wales still have around £750 million invested in polluting fossil fuel companies whose business models rely on actively seeking new fossil fuel reserves. Pension-fund investments could also become exposed to serious financial risk as unburnable fossil fuels risk becoming “stranded assets” in future.

We are therefore calling for commitments to:

1. Commit to becoming a fossil free Council by 2025.
2. Divest Local Authority Pension Funds from fossil fuel companies.

**Warm homes and energy for all**

Wales needs an energy transition – a move away from fossil fuels to renewables. We are lucky enough to have abundant wind, solar, tidal, wave and hydro resources on our doorstep. Much of this lends itself to small-scale community energy and local ownership.

Reducing our energy usage through improving energy efficiency, particularly in our homes, will make warm homes affordable and tackle fuel poverty.

Community renewables and energy efficiency provide the best of all worlds – more local ownership, ending the scandal of fuel poverty, cutting carbon in housing and creating local jobs in the most deprived communities.

We therefore ask that local authorities:

1. Implement an ambitious programme of installing solar panels or other suitable renewable energy systems on all suitable schools and public buildings.
2. Utilise funding schemes and borrowing powers to develop a programme to make cold homes energy efficient - creating jobs, tackling fuel poverty and reducing carbon emissions.

**Pack it in – don’t waste it!**

The things we use and what goes into them are precious and should be treated as such – our global resources are not limitless. Local authorities in Wales have made great strides in increasing recycling and changing collection patterns. We now need to use less unrecyclable materials.

We would like to see local authorities:

1. Commit to phasing out non-recyclable plastics and promoting reusable alternatives within public buildings and events.
2. Work with local take away outlets to ban polystyrene and other non-recyclable food containers.

**Bee Friendly – let’s get Wales buzzing**

In our busy lives it’s easy to overlook the importance of nature and how we need it for healthy food, water, materials, learning, health and well-being. Many people also rely on nature for their livelihoods and ways of life. The Welsh Government’s Action Plan for Pollinators was a direct outcome of Friends of the Earth Cymru’s Bee Cause campaign.

We would like local authorities to:

1. Work towards becoming a Bee Friendly Council under the new Welsh Government Bee Friendly scheme

**Clean Air**

All citizens of Wales should be able to breathe clean, healthy air. However, existing monitoring schemes nationwide have been reporting worrying results. Petrol and diesel vehicles currently emit pollutants that contribute to climate change and air pollution. Better monitoring and action to tackle pollution hotspots and encouraging a shift to electric vehicles can help.

As the serious public health consequences of polluted air become clearer, we are asking that local authorities support and invest in the health of their residents by:

1. Requiring electric car charging points at all suitable public buildings and car parks, and as part of new major developments and redevelopments.
2. Increasing monitoring of air quality, particularly around schools and residential areas, and setting up clean air zones to improve pollution hotspots.