
CaSE Analysis of Core Commitments – Welsh Elections 2011

CaSE wrote to each of the main political leaders in Scotland, asking them to set out their policies on science and engineering ahead of the 2011 elections. All of the parties responded. We have analysed the responses, and taken further detail from the party manifestos, to set out what we think their key commitments on science and engineering are.

We do not claim that this analysis is definitive, and we have focused on policies affecting science and engineering, rather than their use – this excludes details on transport, energy, and health infrastructure, for instance. We would therefore recommend that you read the party manifestos and letters for a comprehensive policy overview.

Science, Engineering & Policy-Making

1. What commitments will your party make to ensure that science and engineering advice is at the heart of evidence-based policy making within government?

Welsh Conservative Party

- Science and engineering should always be at the heart of evidence based policy and we are committed to ensuring that it is under a Welsh Conservative Assembly Government. (Letter to CaSE)
- Continue to work on addressing the challenge of climate change by bringing our commitments closer to the science and aiming for an even higher carbon emission reduction. (Manifesto, page 29)

Welsh Green Party – no details

Welsh Labour Party

- Take a science-led approach to evaluate and review the best way of tackling Bovine TB. (Manifesto, page 88)

Welsh Liberal Democrats

- We will create a single, pooled budget for science so that Government departments, especially the health and environment departments, will have to prove that their scientific research is commissioned from leading institutions and has real scientific merit. In difficult economic times, that is the best mechanism for ensuring that the Welsh government commissions quality research. (Letter to CaSE)
- We will make Welsh communities safer for everyone by: ... carrying out an Impact Assessment of drugs policy to ensure that treatment options are based on scientific evidence. (Manifesto, page 40)

Plaid Cymru – no details

2. What are your plans for setting out a long-term strategy for science and engineering in Wales?

Welsh Conservative Party

- We are committed to publishing a manufacturing and technical innovation strategy, and encouraging international partnerships. (Letter to CaSE).

Welsh Green Party – no details

Welsh Labour Party

- Working with the CSA and the Advisory Council, a new science policy for Wales is being developed to supersede the one published in 2006. If elected, we will consult on these new proposals later this year, setting out the strategic direction needed to build and develop a sustainable knowledge-based economy in Wales. (Letter to CaSE)

Welsh Liberal Democrats- no details

Plaid Cymru

- We will establish an Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, which will work with the Welsh Government and the already established Science Advisory Council for Wales, bringing together internationally acclaimed scientists, academics and experts, to develop new science policy for Wales. (Letter to CaSE)
- A Plaid government would strive to ensure that the figure for public expenditure on research and development in Wales is increased from 2% of the total UK spend to 5% over the next Assembly term with a greater focus on the digital economy, low carbon technologies, health and biosciences and advanced engineering and manufacturing. (Letter to CaSE)

3. Will you commit to appointing a dedicated Science Minister, and recommit to a Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA)?

Welsh Conservative Party– no details

Welsh Green Party – no details

Welsh Labour Party

- We will promote engagement in these subjects across the curriculum and age range into Higher Education and at postgraduate level, through the new National Science Academy (NSA) which will be linked to the wider science agenda and the work of the new Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales. (Manifesto, page 18)

Welsh Liberal Democrats

- Most politicians do not have a thorough understanding of science, so it is crucial that the Government, and the National Assembly, need to forge links with people who are spearheading science. So we would continue to employ a Chief Scientific Advisor. (Letter to CaSE)

Plaid Cymru – no details

4. Other

Welsh Conservative Party

- Move the skills and HE portfolios to the Minister for Economy and Transport so that the employability of graduates and young people is promoted. (Manifesto, page 6)

Education & skills

1. How will your party make sure that all children in Wales have access to a stimulating education in science and mathematics taught by appropriately qualified teachers?

Welsh Conservative Party

- Welsh Conservatives will improve science and mathematics education by introducing 'Teach Wales', a two year programme encouraging highly talented people into STEM subject teaching. (Letter to CaSE)

Welsh Green Party – no details

Welsh Labour Party

- Through the [National Science Academy for Wales], we will promote the take-up of science, technology, engineering and mathematics at all levels to ensure Wales has a continuous pipeline of people graduating from colleges and universities with the appropriate qualifications and skills to support the industries and technologies of tomorrow, to drive forward innovation in business, to stimulate research and development in universities and attract investment to Wales. The Academy will have 5 hubs in different parts of Wales. (Letter to CaSE)
- We will encourage the increased study of STEM subjects through innovative projects such as STEM Cymru and Technocamps. ... We will also enhance the links between schools and STEM employers. (Letter to CaSE)
- As well as encouraging the take-up of these subjects we will help young people overcome any barriers – perceived or real – that discourage learners from studying them. We will continue to support the growth of after-school science clubs in Wales, which do a tremendous job in this area. (Letter to CaSE)
- Use European funds to support the training of young people in STEM subjects through a STEM skills project. (Manifesto, page 18)
- We will continue to invest in improving professional development opportunities for teachers in Wales. (Letter to CaSE)

Welsh Liberal Democrats

- The biggest problem facing Wales is the spending gap with England in our schools. Our schools receive £604 less per person per year than over the border. It is inevitable that teaching across all subjects, but particularly more expensive subjects such as science will suffer. Our number one priority for education is to tackle the spending gap, [...] This will support all subjects in Welsh schools, including science. (Letter to CaSE)
- Our proposals to scrap the General Teaching Council for Wales to pay for more appropriate professional development and training – ensuring that science teachers are able to keep up with the latest developments. We have also proposed changing the curriculum to make sure that teachers have the freedom to teach in the way that best suits them. (Letter to CaSE)

Plaid Cymru

- The Plaid-driven Welsh government has also established the £3 million project STEM Cymru, to encourage young people to study STEM subjects, and to improve qualifications, skills and career prospects. Led by the Engineering Education Scheme in Wales (EESW), the project gives youngsters from 12-19 years the chance to participate in industry linked technological and engineering activities such as hands-on activities and career related programmes. STEM Cymru will be re-establishing the Year in Industry programme, placing youngsters in quality, paid work experience, and the F1 in Schools Challenge, giving pupils the opportunity to design F1 cars using the industry standard CAD (Computer Aided Design) software, to make real working models to compete against teams from different schools. (Letter to CaSE)
- ... we will review the National Curriculum to ensure that it meets our aims of raising attainment in basic skills and improving Wales' performance in STEM subjects. (Letter to CaSE)
- At the heart of our education campaign is also to make IT a core subject at GCSE level to give young people a solid base upon which to advance their careers in an increasingly digitalised world. (Letter to CaSE)
- To help link young students with further and higher education, we will work in partnership with the education sector and industry to develop new and innovative apprenticeships and Learning Pathways courses. We will also support 30,000 apprenticeships and we will extend the Young Recruits programme, which provides a wage subsidy to employers taking on additional young apprentices. (Letter to CaSE)
- We will increase attainment in the skills that will develop Wales's potential for economic growth – in subjects such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics – and we will use European funding to support scholarships and apprenticeships through the new National Science Academy. (Manifesto, page 23)

2. How will you sustainably fund science and engineering courses in Welsh universities?

Welsh Conservative Party

- Welsh Conservatives will implement a fair and sustainable fees system for Higher Education in Wales. HEIs will be permitted to raise fees to a maximum of £9,000 subject to WAG approval. (Letter to CaSE)

Welsh Green Party – no details

Welsh Labour Party

- Welsh Labour is already committed to keeping fee levels as low as possible and we will only allow fees at Welsh Universities to rise above £4000 where institutions are able to demonstrate that they are improving the student experience and widening access. (Manifesto, page 39)
- Use the full range of our powers, including legislative powers, to ensure that by 2013 no university in Wales is operating on a turnover that is less than 75 per cent of the UK average. (Manifesto, page 39)

Welsh Liberal Democrats

- We will strengthen Welsh universities by:... Paying any additional tuition fees or graduate contributions above the present level for students from Wales, wherever they choose to study in the UK. (Manifesto, page 28)
- Reforming the bursary regime to incentivise science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects as well as tackling financial hardship. (Manifesto, page 29)
- Plaid Cymru – no details
- Plaid, in principle, supports moves to reorganise the Welsh university sector so that scarce funding may be concentrated on front-line teaching and research rather than bureaucratic duplication. (Manifesto, page 24)
- A Plaid Government will meet the extra cost of top-up fees for Welsh-domiciled students, whether they study in Wales or elsewhere within the UK. We will not support any further increases in tuition fees for our higher education students and we will seek the abolition of tuition fees as and when public finances allow. We will develop options for part-time study by increasing flexibility in higher education and we will provide tuition-fee loans to part-time students. (Manifesto, page 24)

3. Other – Diversity

Welsh Liberal Democrats

- We will promote innovation, science and technology in our economy by ... addressing the gender imbalance in scientific professions by encouraging more women to train as scientists and engineers. (Manifesto, page 14)

Research

1. What will your party do to ensure that excellent researchers from around the world see Welsh universities and research institutes as the most attractive place to base their work?

Welsh Conservative Party

- We will set a target of Cardiff University to be within the Top 50 universities in the world by 2020, and world class specialist departments in other institutions. (Letter to CaSE)

- We will encourage partnership between commercial companies, industry experts and the universities to increase targeted applied research output. (Letter to CaSE)
- Encourage the growth of the Research and Development sector, including HE–private sector partnerships. (Manifesto, page 12)
- We will maximize EU funds for [renewable energy] R&D, and for testing sites for renewable marine technologies (Manifesto, page 16).

Welsh Green Party – no details

Welsh Labour Party

- We are committed to taking forward the recommendations of the Research & Development Review panel, established by the Labour-led Assembly Government, which set out ways to help Wales perform better in attracting R&D external funding. (Letter to CaSE)

Welsh Liberal Democrats

- We are adamant that proposed university governance reforms must not erode the academic independence of institutions – only academics themselves should be deciding where research should be directed. (Letter to CaSE)
- We are also concerned about relatively lower levels of UK Research Council funding that comes to Wales. With some support from the Welsh Government, we hope to increase this percentage and ensure that Welsh-based scientists have access to a fair amount of funding. (Letter to CaSE)
- Supporting science and research by protecting overall investment in science in real terms, emphasizing excellence and cutting inefficiencies to ensure that science funding is effectively used for research and development, and working more closely with universities, the UK research councils and the European Commission to increase research income to Wales. (Manifesto, page 14)
- We will strengthen Welsh universities by ensuring that resources are used effectively to support excellence research in Welsh universities, and working with universities so that Wales continues to produce world-leading research in the sciences... (Manifesto, page 28).

Plaid Cymru

- Research Councils will be called to account over persistent complaints that proposals for Wales-focused research are not being funded. If there is no improvement, we will seek the devolution of research funding on a per capita basis. We will ensure that the Research Excellence Framework also takes Wales-focused research seriously. (Manifesto, page 25)

Innovation and growth

1. What will your party do to provide an environment that encourages industries based on science and engineering to locate in Wales, and that encourages higher levels of private-sector investment in research and development?

Welsh Conservative Party

- Welsh Conservatives have pledged to publish a manufacturing and technical innovation strategy and to promote Wales in an integrated way overseas. (Letter to CaSE)
- A Welsh Conservative Assembly Government will deliver The Enterprise Reform Bill that will:
 - Reform procurement to make more contracts SME friendly.
 - Provide incentives for enterprise: scholarships, greater scientific and technical training;
 - R & D support and Enterprise Zones. (Manifesto, page 29)

Welsh Green Party – no details

Welsh Labour Party

- We will work to ensure that businesses in Wales benefit from these investments [in sophisticated equipment to drive forward R&D] and can maximise opportunities to increase innovation and commercially exploit ideas. (Letter to CaSE)
- We will continue to build strong links and develop strategic relationships with our anchor companies, embedding them in the Welsh economy through developing close links with further and higher educational institutions and maximising supply chain opportunities. (Letter to CaSE)
- We will continue to build the innovation capacity of businesses and provide financial support through Innovation Vouchers, which enable small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales to access specialist support and expertise from universities and colleges, or the private sector. (Letter to CaSE)

Welsh Liberal Democrats

- Welsh Liberal Democrats will focus on tackling the skills gap and making sure that Wales is a good place to do business. We can reshape the economy of Wales and our work and investment will start immediately. At the heart of this must be a programme to modernise the Welsh economy in order to develop new businesses in hi-tech sectors so that Wales can compete in the 21st century. (Letter to CaSE)
- We will commit £20 million a year in a fund to create jobs by stimulating innovation in the economy. This money will be used to make sure that we have the resources to develop hi-tech businesses, funding a programme of developing projects such as match-funding university funding for developing intellectual property, knowledge exploitation and additional post doctoral positions. Our plans for training grants to encourage employers to take unemployed young people will help build skills in Wales as well. (Letter to CaSE)
- To create new jobs we need to ensure that Welsh scientists have the support to develop great ideas and businesses have the freedom to expand markets and re invigorate manufacturing. (Manifesto, page 14)

Plaid Cymru

- We will press for the devolution of the Crown Estate so that our research into alternative energy directly pays dividend to the Welsh economy, thus providing an incentive for any

future government to maintain our focus on science and engineering in Wales. (Letter to CaSE)