

Welsh elections 2016 – Response from the Welsh Green Party

Ahead of the 2016 Welsh elections, the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) wrote to the leaders of all political parties with at least one AM, inviting them to set out their party's policies on science and engineering.

Below is the response from the Welsh Greens

Dear CaSE,

Many thank for contacting me at Wales Green Party.

As you probably know The Green Party is very concerned that the profile of science and engineering is being depressed. Good ideas are often cast aside in favour of powerful influences interested in maintaining the status quo. Whether in renewable energy, zero carbon housebuilding, or tidal lagoons the struggle is always uphill, and we share common ground with all those who are working with developing technologies to enhance our lives and sustainability.

Greens believe in free education, for all, for life. The funding for this has been incorrectly set up, but it is so important that if higher taxes are required (and we are talking a few pence per person) then this is the right price to pay.

Sadly government policy making is guided more by industry lobby groups than sensible scientific advice, and I would ask that our talented engineers and scientists spend more time out of their ivory towers, and talking to ministers, communities and non-industry lobby groups. Sensible campaigns would be all the stronger if our academics would raise their voices and share information on public platforms. I am told they are afraid of losing industry funding if they speak out. If this is the case, then industry funding has to stop.

Yes, more people need to be attracted to the subjects you mention. Maths often holds it all back, and this is where we would start. It takes some people much longer than others to grasp mathematics, but that's not to say the time should not be allocated to teach it more carefully for younger ages. Wales is importing doctors and nurses as well as engineers. The culture does not currently lend itself to these subjects, most helpful would be scientific hero's, living ones, role models championing the low carbon technological future we need to embrace.

The scientific culture is so different in Germany. You can walk into a university and quite eminent people will make themselves available for discussion. This is true across the spectrum of disciplines such as architecture, solar energy, physics etc. My nephew is currently studying for his PhD, and a job offer depends upon him publishing 2 papers. Infuriatingly he has not been able to get a response from his tutors for weeks now. It was the same with my son studying for his masters in music. His paper on

sound engineering required the help of a Cardiff Professor. That person did not respond to a single email or telephone call. How are we to help our students when their tutors have better things to do? One of these youngsters has moved to Germany, the other to Holland. We lost these lively minds, and probably many more. Keeping the brains we have got would be the first step to attracting more of the same.

Yes, we do need to encourage more science and engineering based business to locate in Wales. There are a couple of prongs to this approach. Firstly Wales has to be deeply marketed as a really nice place to be - for people as well as business, then we must push for further sensible devolution to distance ourselves from the hopeless decisions made at Westminster. Tata is sadly illustrative of a government who has done nothing, trying to look as though they are doing something. (Clearly Tata have not been encouraged to invest significantly in Wales for some years, and that is part of the story). Also we should be using more of that celebrated EU money to establish a science and engineering base in Wales. Finally team Wales should be working hard to retain the talent we do have.

Little investments often lead to larger investments. Past failures indicate that we should not be looking for 'big ticket' investors, but investing in smaller business showing the acumen and talent for growth. There is a potential for around £2billion a year to be earned from renewable power generation and sales from Wales. We have the chance to re-cast the mould, and Greens would push for large investments in technology, research and development to further the aims of the lively and innovative Wales we would like to see.

Regards,

Pippa Bartolotti

Candidate for Newport West and lead candidate for SE Wales Regional List