

Protecting Wales' Countryside

CPRW Manifesto for the Senedd Elections 2026



Together, we are the Welsh countryside.

Let your love for it live on.


As Wales approaches the Senedd elections in May 2026, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW) is setting out its priorities for the future of our countryside, its communities, landscapes and the natural environment. This manifesto highlights the urgent actions needed to safeguard Wales' natural heritage while supporting sustainable communities and a resilient economy.



Boost Rooftop Solar
Nationwide Programme



Offshore Wind & Solar
Renewable Energy By 2030



Bury Power Lines
Cables Not Pylons



Support Tidal Power
Harness Tidal Energy



Tackle Water Pollution
Clean Up Our Rivers & Seas



Fund Footpaths
Paths For All



Expand Protected Areas
30% By 2030 Target



Nature & Climate Commissioner
Environmental Champion

CPRW Manifesto for Senedd Elections

May 2026

Wales possesses a dazzling variety of landscapes linking our urban areas to the countryside and coasts, providing a nurturing environment for our people and their culture, as well as an extensive national asset attracting millions of visitors.

Farming is still the backbone of our rural communities, alongside newer industries such as tourism and renewable energy. Our famed network of footpaths girdles the country and has been expanded extensively. Protecting, as well as enjoying, our priceless environment has emerged as a key priority

for successive Welsh Governments, especially as most of the legal powers to conserve our nature and landscapes were devolved more than 30 years ago.

However, the realities on the ground worry an increasing number of voters in Wales – notably the accelerating impacts of climate change, the needless destruction of beautiful local landscapes, pollution of our rivers and coastal waters, and the ongoing emergency facing our wild animals and plants in coping with climate change and other pressures.

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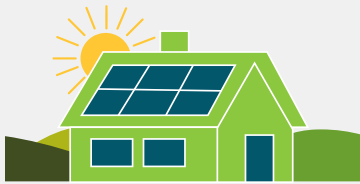
This is why CPRW members, mainly volunteers from communities throughout Wales, have redoubled their efforts to protect the Welsh countryside for the benefit of all our people – an objective which we believe should be shared by all the political parties seeking a share in the next Government of Wales. We shall pass the milestone of CPRW's centenary in 2028 – halfway through the new Senedd's term of office.

As a charity, CPRW has identified seven key areas

outlined below where we believe progress on conservation of the countryside is especially vital.

We hope political parties can endorse them and, in any event, seek common ground in protecting our beautiful country for our citizens, our neighbours and for generations to come in accordance with the ambitious laws passed by the Senedd eleven years ago but regrettably not given prominence in any of the Party manifestos.

Our 8 Requests to the Next Government of Wales are:



1. Boost Rooftop Solar Nationwide Programme

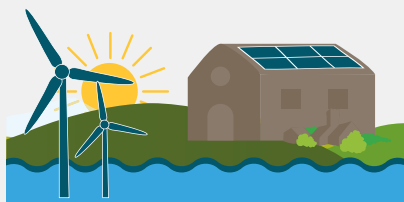
Launch a major nationwide programme to increase the number of rooftop solar panels across Wales

This would focus on domestic houses and public buildings. Government subsidies and planning rules would have to be altered to provide the right framework of incentives.

It is a very straightforward way to generate renewable energy in a way which benefits all residents of Wales through lower electricity costs, while at the same time directly protecting our farmland and rural landscapes from further, pointless destruction through industrial-scale solar power stations and giant wind turbines.

Local authorities and public bodies, including hospitals, should be key partners in the "rooftop revolution". Wales can become a world leader in securing this – just as it did twenty years ago in waste recycling.

An early target could be to aim, as a minimum, to double the number of rooftop panels in each of the four years of the next Senedd Parliament. This could be at the heart of new strategies to promote renewables and community-owned energy.



2. Offshore Wind & Solar Renewable Energy by 2030

Commit to producing the bulk of Wales' internally consumed and exported renewable energy by 2030 from offshore wind turbines and rooftop panels

This would effectively begin to phase out major new renewable projects in onshore wind and countryside solar "farms". Existing planning permissions would be time-limited to accelerate this process.

Tough new rules would be needed to ensure local communities were in a much stronger and fairer position to combat predatory proposals by ruthless outside developers to ride roughshod over the local environment and bully local councils or even Ministers into allowing windfall profits from solar or wind farms which do little for Wales or local communities.



3. | **Bury Power Lines**

Cables Not Pylons

Introduce new rules and, if necessary, laws to require developers to bury new electricity transmission cables and abolish outdated assumptions about using pylons as the primary option

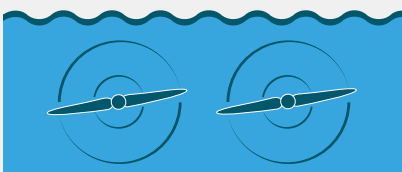
Whilst we accept that additional capacity will be required for Wales' electricity transmission and

distribution systems to utilise renewable energy, most of this will be needed to link the offshore wind farms in the Irish and Celtic Seas to existing systems on land.

Advances in technology such as higher-rated conductors and enmeshed circuits should be used instead of building ever-higher pylons on existing electricity lines.

Buried cables should be used for any new transmission routes unless this is technically impossible, and not on cost grounds.

Existing official advice about using pylons as the first preference must be withdrawn, and the Government should instead support modern guidance such as the Treasury Green Book, which values the natural capital in all landscapes.



4. | **Support Tidal Power**

Harness Tidal Energy

Support tidal energy as the third long-term option for renewable energy in Wales alongside rooftop solar and offshore wind

Wales has some of the best potential locations for tidal power in the UK, particularly the Severn Estuary and tidal lagoons in North and South Wales.

Costs have been the main reason why no tidal schemes have yet been built in Wales.

CPRW supports the proposals for a tidal lagoon development in Swansea / Port Talbot and believes the next Welsh Government should jointly commission with the UK Government a long-term economic and environmental impact study of the options for the Severn Estuary.



5. | **Nature & Climate Commissioner**

Environmental Champion

Appoint a Nature and Climate Change Commissioner for Wales ("NCC Commissioner") as a key post within the new Office for Environmental Protection to be established by the Senedd Environment Bill now in its final stages, which will become law before the May elections

Responsibilities currently included in the large range of duties assigned to the Future Generations Commissioner would be transferred to the new Commissioner, leaving the FG Commissioner to concentrate on health, equality, housing, culture and communities.

The NCC Commissioner should be appointed by the Welsh Government First Minister with the explicit consent of the Senedd, and have a statutory duty to advise all public bodies, as well as last-resort powers to intervene in particular cases (e.g. to halt large developments which would damage the environment for a specific period of reconsideration).



6. | **Expand Protected Areas**

30% By 2030 Target

Natural Resources Wales to be given resources and a Ministerial direction to launch revitalised and re-prioritised programmes to increase the area of protected areas in Wales to meet / exceed the 30% target already set by the UK for 2030 – i.e. by the end of the next Senedd term

In particular the new National Park in North East Wales

must be opened without fail by 1 April 2028 at the latest.

There must be tangible progress towards the promised National Forest of Wales. Strong protected designations should be drawn up for Radnor Forest, the Cambrian Mountains and unique areas such as the Gwent Levels.

Outdated and grotesquely expensive and polluting motorway projects rightly rejected by local communities and Ministers after intensive consultations and campaigning should continue to be filed in the waste paper basket.

Instead we should use taxpayers' money to back new climate friendly policies for transport and start by building the new railway stations in SE Wales promised but so far not delivered by the current Welsh Government. New public transport links between north and south Wales should also be a priority.



7. | **Fund Footpaths**

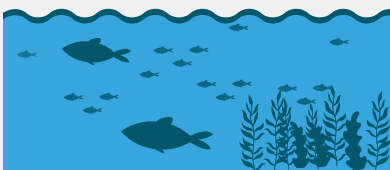
Paths For All

Access to the Countryside and Nature - a special, ring-fenced Fund for Footpaths should be created by the Welsh Government

This new fund would be allocated to local Councils by Natural Resources Wales and reserved solely for the upkeep of public footpaths and bridleways that are falling into disrepair right across Wales.

It is unacceptable that half of our public rights of way are currently blocked or not signposted.

This would be a first step towards modern Rights of Way legislation for Wales, to deliver better enhanced access for all our people to nature, including in their home area.



8. | **Tackle Water Pollution**

Clean Up Our Rivers & Seas

Take tangible action to save our rivers and seas from pollution, including legally binding targets to clean up rivers, lakes, streams and beaches

CPRW seeks a holistic approach to river, estuary, inter-tidal and marine pollution. Changes in agriculture and increasing pressures from the domestic and industrial sectors have increased emissions, effluent,

erosion and environmental degradation.

The data reveals that Wales is home to the worst sewage-pollution in England and Wales. The three worst Top of the PooPs constituencies are in Wales - Ceredigion Preseli, Caerfyrddin and Dwyfor Meirionnydd. NRW figures continue to show that most of our most protected stretches of river are also failing.

There seems to have been minimal progress. All contributors to pollution should become stakeholders in securing improvements by consensus, using collaborative approaches alongside regulation, monitoring and enforcement.

An inclusive Welsh task force on freshwater and marine pollution should harness all available expertise, including the best science, to produce an action plan with specific targets.



Together, we are the Welsh countryside.
Let your love for it live on.

CPRW calls on all political parties and candidates in the 2026 Senedd elections to commit to these practical and achievable priorities. By working together, Wales can lead the way in protecting landscapes, restoring nature and ensuring that future generations inherit a countryside that is healthy, resilient and accessible to all.

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