



Safeguarding standards

Why Wales should lead the way

Emma Rose

February 2021

 /uncheckeduk
 @unchecked_uk
www.unchecked.uk



unchecked.uk
LET'S PROTECT WHAT MATTERS MOST

Contents

About Unchecked UK	p.5
Introduction	p. 6
The environment	p. 8
Employee protections	p. 11
Public health and well-being	p. 14
Conclusion	p. 18
References	p. 20



GVA
To Let
Former bank
premises
(o2 consent)
0207 911 2727
gva.co.uk

Ye
Olde Goleg

M
THE MIDLAND

GEORGE
& DRAGON

CORE

COFFEE
CORE

MJ69 DZH

3175
ARRIVA
EX14 BXO

About Unchecked UK

Unchecked UK makes the case for common-sense protections which help keep people safe and allow businesses to thrive.

We are a rapidly growing network of leading and diverse [civil society organisations](#) who see sensible, properly enforced protections as the framework for a decent society - where the food we eat and the things we buy can be trusted, the natural environment is protected, our homes and workplaces are safe, and our rights are safeguarded.

We carry out research and investigations to highlight the loss of protection for the UK public that results from the erosion of important regulations and of the public bodies which enforce them. Through public insights research, we shape new positive narratives about our shared protections and the enforcement teams who work hard to keep us safe. We run campaigns to show how important strong rules are to everyday life, and work with our civil society partners to develop policy alternatives to the deregulation approach.

Ultimately, Unchecked UK aims to shift the political dynamic around regulation, and to build momentum for proper investment in strong rules and the public bodies which defend them. We are a non-partisan organisation, incubated as a project of The Ecology Trust.

Find out more about our work:

www.unchecked.uk

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those who contributed to or provided feedback to this briefing, in particular Rachel Sharpe, The Wildlife Trusts Wales; Joe Allen, TUC Cymru; Kate Thompson, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Wales; and Katie Palmer, Food Sense Wales.



Introduction

Since the 2016 EU referendum, the Welsh Government has provided welcome assurances of its intention to keep domestic regulatory standards high, regardless of the terms of the UK's exit. In areas of reserved policy, the Welsh Government has remained consistent in its position that the UK should not diverge from EU regulatory standards, advocating a dynamic alignment approach with Europe. It has also called for continued participation in EU regulatory bodies and agencies, including the European Chemicals Agency.

Unfortunately, the terms of the trade deal agreed on 24th December 2020 fall short of Welsh Government ambitions. While the text contains a clause which commits the UK and EU to “not weaken or reduce” current levels of protection, this only applies if any reduction in protections affects trade or investment between both parties – an outcome which can be extremely hard to prove.

The Welsh Government has long been clear in its view that sensible, properly-enforced regulations can deliver diverse social, environmental and economic benefits, and protect Welsh interests. Notably, the rhetoric from the Welsh Government has differed significantly from that of the Westminster government, in the context of the Brexit standards debate.

Despite the Welsh Government's clear commitment to keeping standards high, a number of factors risk undermining Welsh environmental, employee protections, and public health and well-being standards going forward. Clearly, outside of devolved policy areas, many of the levers for change lie with the UK government. But even within areas of devolved competence, there remain concerns which, if left unaddressed, may compromise the achievement of ambitious social and environmental goals for Wales. The decision of the Welsh Government to take its own approach to tackling the Covid-19 pandemic shows there is strong political appetite for uniquely Welsh responses to the big problems of the day. This move has very likely heightened public awareness of devolution.

As people become more attuned to the roles and responsibilities of the Welsh Government, it is even more important that the Welsh Government makes the right (and popular) decisions on regulation in those areas they control.

In this briefing we look at environmental standards, employee protections, and public health and well-being standards, highlighting the ways in which these risk being undermined in Wales, and highlighting the opportunities to ensure these standards are protected.

It should be noted that, across several of the areas we look at, enforcement-related data is not available on a ‘Wales only’ basis, making it very difficult to analyse trends over time. This is a problem which should be addressed as a matter of priority, with the Welsh Government pushing for better data sharing and transparency agreements with the UK-wide regulators.



SECTION 1

The environment

Environmental standards in Wales

The domestic environmental legislative framework in Wales is, in many ways, much more progressive and ambitious than that of the Westminster government. The Well-being of Future Generations and Environment Acts set out a robust framework to embed social, environmental, cultural and economic well-being into decision-making. Recent regulatory developments indicate a welcome commitment on the part of the Welsh Government to tackling big environmental issues. These include the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations, introduced in January 2021, which aim to address the ongoing effect of agricultural pollution on the health and quality of Welsh water bodies.² More generally, the Welsh Government has placed far less political emphasis on deregulation than Westminster, meaning that deregulatory initiatives are much less embedded within Welsh environmental policy-making.

However, while Wales has set itself apart from the rest of the UK with regard to its environmental ambitions, there is still some room for improvement.

The White Paper on Agriculture in Wales, which was published in December 2020 and paves the way for the Welsh Agriculture Bill, outlines ambitious proposals to maintain higher food safety, environmental and animal welfare standards, underpinned by a new enforcement regime. The proposals have been broadly welcomed by green groups, although many have called for a faster transition to the sustainable farming scheme set out in the proposals, citing concerns that specific targets have not yet been set, with no detail on how they will be enforced.

Similar concerns have been voiced in response to the new White Paper setting out proposals for a Clean Air (Wales) Bill, published in January 2021. The proposed new legislation is unlikely to come into force until at least 2023 (despite promises by the First Minister to deliver a Clean Air Act before this year's election).

The Welsh Government's commitment to improving biodiversity is welcome, as is the recent budgetary allocation for nature restoration delivery work. However, the Welsh Government has resisted calls to set statutory biodiversity targets in domestic law, instead pointing to the provisions included in the Well-being of Future Generations and Environment Act as being sufficient.

This is disputed by environmental groups, many of whom are calling on the Welsh Government to go further by committing to embed biodiversity restoration targets in domestic law.³

The enforcement gap

Natural Resources Wales (NRW), formed in 2013, was created to oversee environmental protection and regulation across Wales. Its work includes monitoring the health of Wales' rivers, regulating the waste industry, overseeing and designating important natural sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and taking action against those who breach environmental regulations.

NRW's grant-in-aid funding from the Welsh Government has been substantially reduced over the years, accompanied by a decline in staff numbers. This is undermining the regulator's ability to enforce important environmental laws. For example, Unchecked UK research finds that:

- £ NRW funding has fallen in real-terms by **35%** from 2013-20
- 📄 NRW prosecutions of environmental offences fell by **61%** from 2014-20
- 📄 Last year there were 7,677 environmental incidents reported, but NRW brought just 62 prosecutions – amounting to less than **1%**
- 📄 NRW employs **53** fewer permanent staff than it did six years ago
- 📄 Between 2010-2017, NRW responded to just **15%** of slurry pollution incidents by issuing formal cautions, prosecutions or notices

Welsh councils are also scaling back on environmental protection work, after years of cuts to budgets and staff:

- £ Welsh councils' spend on environmental services fell by **13%** from 2009-2020
- £ Welsh councils' spend on national parks fell by **29%** from 2009-2020
- 📄 Welsh council fly-tipping enforcement actions fell by **72%** in the last three years
- 📄 Farm inspections carried out by Welsh local authorities fell by **35%** in the last three years

While there have undoubtedly been some steps forward in environmental protection in Wales in recent years, the general trend across biodiversity, species and habitats health and natural resources is one of decline.⁴ 17% of species in Wales are threatened with extinction. 63% of all freshwater courses are failing to achieve the necessary status, and just one in six freshwater habitats are considered to be 'favourable' for wildlife. And yet, NRW appears to be struggling to prevent ongoing water pollution incidents in Welsh rivers, with repeated well-publicised incidents of soil, fertiliser and slurry as well as industry waste entering watercourses, killing fish and aquatic insects.

Over half of Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation – key sites for important species and habitats – are in unfavourable condition. As to the condition of the 1,000-plus SSSIs in Wales (covering around 12% of the country's surface area), the lack of a comprehensive monitoring programme by NRW means that a proper assessment of these important natural assets cannot be made.

Clearly, the capacity of the Welsh Government to fund regulatory services is heavily impacted by the decisions on devolved settlements made in Westminster. However, with many environmental indicators flashing red, many would agree that budget cuts have now gone too far.

The Brexit risk

The Welsh Government has committed to retaining EU environmental protections post-Brexit. The Welsh legal framework is already much more aligned to the EU than the rest of the UK, and most of the environmental principles from EU law are captured within the Well-being of Future Generations and Environment Acts, and will therefore retain legal force. Nonetheless, Brexit continues to pose a risk to environmental standards in a number of ways.

Many campaigners have voiced concern over a potential environmental governance gap in Wales, now that the UK is no longer under the direct jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). While the Welsh Government has confirmed the appointment of an 'interim environmental assessor', they will not have the same powers as the ECJ to hold public bodies to account on environmental law (i.e. to investigate complaints). There has been considerable delay in confirming post-Brexit governance arrangements, meaning the necessary legislation will not be put in place until after the May 2021 elections. It is crucial that the Welsh Government prioritise the setting of permanent and statutory arrangements for a new governance body and principles, and that the new watchdog, when it is finally established, is granted sufficient funding, powers and independence to properly police environmental laws.

Meanwhile, the new Internal Market Act has been met with dismay by the devolved administrations. Aimed at ensuring frictionless trade within the UK after Brexit, the Act threatens to curtail the ability of devolved governments to set their own standards and regulations for products and services within their territories, which originate from elsewhere in the UK. As such, the Act may give the Welsh Government less flexibility to fully carry out its own policy agenda than previously afforded by EU rules.⁵

The UK government has provided repeated assurances that it will not weaken environmental regulations and standards post-Brexit. However, decades of deregulation under successive governments undermines public confidence that these promises will be kept. The Welsh Government must honour its commitment to upholding and enforcing the very highest standards of environmental protections, and continue to call for collaboration between the constituent nations of the UK on the environment and other areas.



SECTION 2

Employee protections

Employee protections in Wales

In the UK, statutory labour standards provide certain protections for employees. These include the right to a minimum wage, equal pay and paid holiday, protection from discrimination, and the right to breaks between shifts. Many of these derive from EU regulations such as the Working Time Directive, the Parental Leave Directive, the Temporary Workers' Directive and the Equal Treatment Framework.

Legal responsibility for employment protections and rights lies with the UK government. Employee protections in the UK are, on many counts, inadequate. A combination of deregulation, restrictive trade union laws and poor regulatory enforcement (see section 2.2) have left gaping holes in the protections afforded to employees in the UK. Brexit may well serve to exacerbate these issues (see section 2.3) potentially leaving Welsh workers vulnerable to a watering down of employment rights.

While the means by which the Welsh Government can effect legislative change are limited, it has a number of tools at its disposal to improve compliance with labour laws and to ensure employees are protected from abuses at work. Many of these have been explored under the framework of the Fair Work Commission, which set out key policy steps towards strengthening workplace protections, including recognising the central role of unions and collective bargaining in achieving fair work outcomes.⁶

A number of domestic provisions to protect workers exist in Wales, including the 2017 voluntary Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains, which sets employment standards for public sector contracting (and also covers Welsh third sector organisations paid through the public purse).⁷ The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 requires employers in the social care sector to provide care workers with alternatives to zero-hours contracts.⁸ More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has seen the Welsh Government adopt new controls over health and safety laws, such as a law requiring companies to practice social distancing.

The new 'Rights and Responsibilities' campaign, launched in 2020 alongside civil society and business

partners, is one recent laudable effort to increase awareness of the rights and protections available to workers. Another is the forthcoming Social Partnership Bill, which will, among other things, place a duty on public bodies to actively involve workers (through their unions) in policy decisions which will affect their working lives.

However, more could be done to fully realise Wales' position as a 'fair work nation'. For example, action to improve trade union representation within individual workplaces would help to raise employee awareness of their statutory rights, increase the likelihood of identifying labour abuses, and help victims to find access to justice through strategic litigation.

Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 places duties on public authorities to consider the way in which their decisions (i.e. payment of the National Minimum Wage) may increase or decrease socio-economic inequality. While this has not been implemented by the UK government, it has been brought forward by the Welsh Government; contained within the Wales Act 2017. This, and the forthcoming socio-economic duty, provides scope for the Welsh Government to do more to protect labour standards via devolved Welsh authorities, working to address inequalities through ensuring compliance with labour laws.

The Economic Contract, under which businesses seeking Welsh Government support must commit to responsible business behaviours and driving fair work, is welcome in principle, but many feel that it could play a much stronger role in driving behaviour change in practice. Civil society organisations have criticised the absence of strong conditionality agreements, the lack of clarity around enforcement of non-compliance, and the failure to measure and communicate the impacts of the policy. The Economic Contract should be strengthened to ensure it drives genuine improvements to how employees are treated, for example by requiring employers to pay the Living Wage for Wales.

Finally, ensuring that frontline advice groups such as Citizens Advice Cymru are adequately funded would help to raise workers' awareness of the rights and protections they are entitled to.

The enforcement gap

Arguably, the greatest barrier to achieving decent standards of workplace protection is the chronic lack of enforcement of employment regulations. In the UK, emphasis is placed on individuals pursuing violations of their statutory rights through tribunals, with less weight given to the role of the state in enforcing compliance. This is compounded by years of budget cuts to the agencies tasked with enforcing employee protections, which has had a hugely detrimental effect on enforcement capacity and activity. Unchecked UK research finds that:

- £ Equality and Human Rights Commission funding fell in real-terms **74%** from 2009-19
- £ Health and Safety Executive funding fell in real-terms by **58%** from 2009-19
- 👤 Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate staff numbers fell by **57%** from 2009-19
- 📄 Proactive health and safety inspections by local authorities in England and Wales fell by **93%** from 2009-19
- 📄 National Minimum Wage investigations completed by HMRC fell by **17%** from 2009-19
- 📄 Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority compliance inspections fell by **36%** from 2009-19
- 📄 Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate targeted inspections fell by **12%** from 2009-19
- 📄 There have been **no** National Minimum Wage prosecutions in Wales from 2007-18

The erosion of enforcement capacity is particularly concerning in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, with evidence suggesting that local councils and the Health and Safety Executive are failing to properly enforce Covid-19 rules in the workplace.⁹

Poor enforcement is having a hugely detrimental effect on workers in Wales. Wales has the highest proportion of workers in minimum wage jobs of any region in the UK, meaning these workers are disproportionately affected by non-compliance with the law.¹⁰

Unfortunately, again illustrating the gaps in Welsh-specific data, HMRC does not publish figures on minimum wage enforcement in Wales, although available data does show that there have been no National Minimum Wage prosecutions in Wales from 2007-18,¹¹ despite widespread reports of non-compliance.¹²

The Welsh Government has repeatedly voiced its support for stronger enforcement of employee protections. With control over enforcement and inspection regimes handled by Westminster, the Welsh Government must strongly make the case for more resources for enforcement agencies, and for transparent reporting of Wales-specific enforcement activities and compliance, so that an accurate assessment can be made of current trends. Where enforcement activity is found to fall short, the Welsh Government must make the case for new strategies which specifically address the needs of workers in Wales.

The Brexit risk

The Welsh Government clearly opposes any diminution of employment rights; stating, in the 'Securing Wales' Future' white paper: "the current suite of employment protections...are crucial to the maintenance of the economy and society that we want to promote. Exit from the EU must not lead to 'a race to the bottom' in workers protection based on the fallacy of promoting competitiveness."¹³

Nevertheless, key employee protections remain vulnerable to the Westminster deregulatory agenda, with the UK-EU deal containing only a weak set of commitments for safeguarding employee protections. Various members of the UK government have expressed their frustration with workplace regulations over the years.

Some politicians on the right have long been ideologically opposed to EU employment rights,^{14 15} and have moved to dilute various protections over the years. The future direction of the UK government has the potential to significantly impact devolved policy on employment law, and undermine the achievement of the well-being goal of decent work in Wales, as set out in section 4 of the 'Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015'.

The Welsh Government must continue to hold Westminster to account on this issue, scrutinising decisions on employee protections, appraising them against the standards set out in UK-endorsed international agreements and treaties and calling out the UK government where they fall short.



SECTION 3

Public health and well-being

Public health and well-being standards in Wales

Public health and well-being can be interpreted as encompassing a wide range of policy areas. Here, we take a look at food standards, consumer protection, and health and safety law.

Food, including food labelling and food safety, is a devolved policy area in Wales. This has allowed the Welsh Government to set its own rules around how food law (much of which derives from EU law) is implemented. The Welsh Government has also passed its own laws relating to food safety, such as the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013, which establishes a mandatory food hygiene rating scheme for all food establishments (this goes further than the voluntary scheme which exists in England), and nutrition, such as the Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and requirements) (Wales) Act 2013.

Many other laws have a more indirect bearing on food production, supply and consumption - such as the Environment (Wales) Act 2006, the Animal Welfare Act 2006, and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 makes provision, among other things, for a national strategy on tackling obesity, and requires the setting of regulations obliging public bodies to carry out health impact assessments. The Welsh Government has also recently published a white paper on agriculture in Wales, which paves the way for a new Agriculture (Wales) Bill, to be introduced later in 2021.

The Welsh Government's clear commitment to a sustainable, healthy, resilient food system is welcome. However, systemic problems remain. Currently, 160,000 children in Wales are living in households where a healthy diet is unaffordable, 70,000 children live in poverty but are ineligible for free school meals, and food bank use is escalating.¹⁶ None of Wales' ecosystems have all the attributes required for resilience, with unsustainable agricultural management remaining

the single largest driver of biodiversity decline.¹⁷ Meanwhile, farm workers face insecure pay and poor protections at work.

There is certainly room for improvement, particularly with regard to the integration of different policy areas across the food system; including sustainable food production, access and affordability, animal welfare, nutrition and public health, food sector jobs, and farming. The appointment of a cross-sector Food System Commission, as recommended by the Food Policy Alliance Cymru coalition, would greatly help to develop a joined-up approach to delivering a food system fit for future generations.¹⁸

A number of domestic levers could also be more fully explored in order to address food system problems; including strengthening the duties placed on public authorities, embedding public health and sustainability criteria into public procurement, and developing Wales-specific reporting that effectively measures progress against targets, and compensates for the often patchy data published by UK-wide regulators.

Consumer protection is a reserved policy area, meaning the levers for policy change are limited, although the Welsh Government has established its own enforcement priorities for trading standards work, which local authorities must have regard to. Health and safety is also reserved (with the exception of most aspects of fire safety regulation). The Welsh Government has, however, passed its own legislation which seeks to build on existing health and well-being regulations, such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which brings together a number of public health and environmental bodies to improve public health (among other social outcomes).

The enforcement gap





Food safety and quality, consumer protection and health and safety regulators across England and Wales have suffered huge cuts in recent years. Funding for food safety in Wales, however, far exceeds funding levels in England, and the mandatory Food Hygiene Rating System means that food safety is afforded a degree of protection in Wales.

Environmental Health services in Wales, which undertake a number of public duties, such as infectious disease control, (including playing a major part in the Covid-19 response, particularly in Wales), raising standards in the private rented sector, and inspecting food businesses to ensure that food is safe, have seen significant reductions in budgets and staff levels, as documented by the Wales Heads of Environmental Health Group.¹⁹

Local Trading Standards services have experienced similar declines, as have local food law staff, and local health and safety officers. Huge numbers of experienced officers have left as a result – taking their technical and legal expertise with them. The same story can be told for the national regulators which enforce important laws around public health and well-being in Wales.

As a result, frontline staff tend to work reactively rather than proactively, at which point the damage – be it fraud, health and safety violations, or food safety breaches – has often been done.

The erosion of enforcement capacity comes against a backdrop of a general decline in the resources available to Welsh councils. Council funding from the Welsh Government has fallen by nearly 20% in the last 10 years, and the number of people working in councils across Wales fell by 37,000 between 2009 and 2018. This has had far-reaching effects on local authorities' ability to carry out their duties. Unchecked UK research finds that:

-  Just **six** Welsh councils tested consumer products for hazardous chemicals in the last three years
-  Local health and safety inspections in Wales fell by **45%** from 2015-20
-  Food allergen sampling by Welsh councils fell by **15%** from 2016-2019
-  Local authority Environmental Health Officers in England and Wales fell by **32%** from 2009-18

-  Local Trading Standards prosecutions in England and Wales fell by **72%** from 2010-15
-  Food Standards Agency unannounced inspections of cutting plants in England and Wales fell by **39%** from 2013-19
-  Food Standards Agency meat hygiene inspectors in England and Wales fell by **53%** from 2009-19
-  Local health and safety inspections in Wales fell by **45%** from 2015-20
-  Food product sampling by local authorities in England and Wales fell by **59%** from 2009-19

There are also concerns that the standards of food served in schools are not being adequately monitored, leading to food of poor nutritional quality, especially in secondary schools. Welsh councils have been vocal about the far-reaching negative impact of ongoing cuts to their budgets, most of which have come from the Welsh Government in response to a decade of austerity from the UK government.²⁰ These pressures have significantly increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

With big gaps in the data regarding the extent and impact of the erosion of enforcement capacity, it is hard to ascertain just how bad the damage is. In order to make an honest appraisal of the situation, and to establish a strong evidence base from which to argue for a more generous settlement from Westminster, the Welsh Government should conduct a proper review into the extent and impacts of this enforcement gap.

Clearly, a number of these vital services are struggling due to lack of funding. In order to ensure resilience for the future, the Welsh Government should put a working group together to look at the future resourcing of key public protection services, including Environmental Health, which has played a particularly important role during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Brexit risk

The UK-EU trade deal confirms tariff-free access to the EU market for most UK food products, providing much relief to food producers who rely heavily on the EU export market, and who had increasingly feared a no-deal outcome in the run up to December 2020. For Welsh producers, for whom the EU represents three quarters of total Welsh food and drink exports, the achievement of a deal is particularly welcome. Nonetheless, challenges remain in the form of non-tariff barrier costs (expected to rise by up to 8% for Wales),²¹ uncertainties around new trade deals, and access to labour.

Food standards remain at risk. In October 2020 MPs voted to reject House of Lords amendments to the Agriculture Bill, which proposed to enshrine food safety and animal welfare standards into law. This move, opposed by NFU Cymru,²² leaves the door open to imports that have been produced to standards that would be illegal in the UK. What's more, it remains to be seen whether the Trade Bill will provide Parliament with the necessary scrutiny of trade deals before they are ratified.

With dozens of trade deals set to be struck in the coming years, it is vital that the Welsh Government continues to highlight the importance of high food standards and ensure the voices of Welsh farmers are taken into account within UK trade policy. NFU Cymru must use its influential position as a member of the new Trade and Agriculture Commission to ensure that the high standards of food production practised by Welsh farmers are not undermined by future trade deals.

Leaving the EU also has huge consequences for consumer protection with regards to non-food products. While many EU-based rules on product safety are already transposed into UK law, the UK government has stated that it will seek regulatory divergence from EU rules in some areas,²³ a move which may be encouraged by downward pressure from countries seeking to trade with the UK. Other concerns include the loss of access to product safety intelligence networks previously provided by the EU, and the UK's withdrawal from the EU REACH regime on chemical safety.

Furthermore, Trading Standards teams, responsible for enforcing swathes of EU-derived rules on product safety and market standards, are now tasked with overseeing the effective operation of new consumer protection regulations and legal frameworks. Underfunded and overstretched, Welsh Trading Standards teams may well be unable to deal with this increased workload, meaning the market could be flooded with unsafe goods and scams.

With regards to health and safety protections, the UK government has made no secret of its intention to reduce the business costs associated with health and safety law compliance, much of which derives from EU law. In the longer term, it is extremely likely that the UK's approach to health and safety will diverge from that of the EU. Under the terms of the UK-EU trade deal, health and safety rules protecting workers, for example, could be repealed if the EU fails to prove that this would affect trade or investment.

Decisions made by Westminster will need to be closely scrutinised to ensure that food standards, health and safety protections and consumer rights are not watered down as a result of the UK's new-found freedom from EU rules.

Dystafell Fwyta Bedwar a Ch



IND COOPE
& ALLSOPP



Conclusion

More than any other event since the advent of devolution, the Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the ability of the Welsh Government to follow its own path, and craft distinctly Welsh solutions using its devolved powers. This in turn has led to an increased awareness amongst Welsh citizens of what powers reside in Cardiff Bay, as opposed to Westminster. This new understanding means it is more important than ever that Welsh Government makes the right - and the popular - decision on regulation in those areas they control.

The Senedd elections in 2021 will mark the start of a new epoch in Welsh life, as the nation seeks to emerge from the Coronavirus pandemic, navigate the ongoing challenges of Brexit, and tackle the economic consequences of the past twelve months. We believe that sensible, properly-enforced regulations can be at the heart of the Welsh recovery, and deliver diverse social, environmental and economic benefits.

Ours is a call that cuts across the political divide, north and south, urban and rural. It is modest, sensible and enjoys overwhelming public support. It is good for business, good for workers, and good for both our built and natural environment.

Ahead of the 2021 elections, we call on Wales' political parties to commit to do all in their power to:

- In areas of devolved policy, to use all available levers within its control to improve public standards and protections
- Continue to make the case for maintaining and strengthening public standards after Brexit, and to oppose any moves by Westminster to deregulate vital public protections
- Advocate for (and in areas overseen domestically, implement) strong enforcement of regulations, underpinned by properly-resourced regulators and transparent reporting
- Consciously adopt a narrative approach which portrays regulation as an integral part of Wales' future as a prosperous, thriving and fair economy and society



References / Cyfeiriadau

- 1 <https://gov.wales/the-future-uk-eu-relationship-negotiating-priorities-for-wales-html>
- 2 <https://gov.wales/written-statement-control-agricultural-pollution-regulations>
- 3 https://www.waleslink.org/sites/default/files/manifesto_english_full_version.pdf
- 4 <https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/the-state-of-natural-resources-report-assessment-of-the-sustainable-management-of-natural-resources/?lang=en>
- 5 <https://www.centreonconstitutionalchange.ac.uk/news-and-opinion/internal-market-bill-implications-devolution>
- 6 <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/fair-work-wales.pdf>
- 7 <https://tiscreport.org/wales>
- 8 <https://socialcare.wales/hub/regulation-and-inspection>
- 9 <https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/health-and-safety/the-hse-in-the-pandemic-astoundingly-invisible-or-making-a-difference-26-01-2021/>
- 10 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693853/Welsh_Government_2.pdf
- 11 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/742668/nmw-nlw-enforcement-compliance-report-2018.pdf
- 12 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-40954518>
- 13 <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/white-paper-securing-wales-future.pdf>
- 14 <https://beergbrexit.blog/2019/03/09/has-uk-led-on-workers-rights/>
- 15 <https://theconversation.com/tory-attack-on-working-time-directive-signals-a-post-brexit-race-to-the-bottom-89395>
- 16 <https://www.childreninwales.org.uk/news/news-archive/food-poverty-south-wales-call-action/#:~:text=160%2C000%20children%20in%20Wales%20are,35%2C403%20went%20to%20children.>
- 17 <https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/the-state-of-natural-resources-report-assessment-of-the-sustainable-management-of-natural-resources/?lang=en>
- 18 https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/pdf/FPACManifestoEnglish_091120.pdf
- 19 <http://www.ehn-online.com/news/article.aspx?id=14208>
- 20 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-49552933>
- 21 <https://nation.cymru/news/welsh-farmers-expect-costs-to-rise-by-up-to-8-per-cent-in-eu-trade-deal/>
- 22 <https://www.nfu-cymru.org.uk/news/latest-news/nfu-cymru-voices-dismay-at-setback-in-agriculture-bill-food-standards-debate/>
- 23 https://www.tradingstandards.uk/media/documents/news--policy/brexit_think_tank_full_report.pdf