

# SENEDD ELECTION MANIFESTO

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# OUR VISION

We want a Wales where every person can use the water without the fear of becoming ill. We want Wales' world-famous coastlines, rivers and lakes to be protected from pollution and be places where people and nature thrive for generations to come.

But decades of **FAILED REGULATION** and **UNDERINVESTMENT** mean our seas and rivers are being polluted by untreated sewage discharges, plastic waste, and the harmful chemicals both carry.

This is a perfect storm of toxic pollution that no monitoring system adequately tracks, and no regulator effectively stops. It's **MAKING WATER USERS SICK** and choking our wild waters.

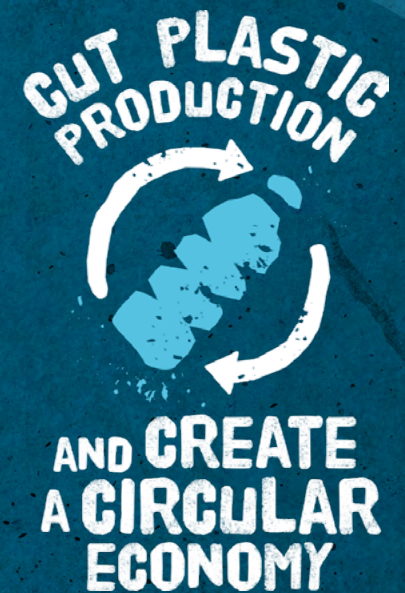
In 2026, Wales will elect a new, expanded Senedd presenting a historic opportunity for change. The next Welsh Government **HAS THE POWER** to deliver our vision of pollution free waters. They can do so by adopting this plan to end the pollution of Welsh waters - for this generation and future generations.





# OUR ASKS

Our priority actions to tackle  
the toxic plastic and sewage  
pollution of Welsh waters:







Water sports are becoming the most popular outdoor pursuit in Wales, but popular places where we surf, swim and paddle are regularly being polluted by sewage, chemical and agricultural pollution.<sup>1-3</sup>

In 2024 alone, Surfers Against Sewage received **260 REPORTS OF PEOPLE BECOMING ILL** from polluted water during recreational activity in Dŵr Cymru's catchment area.<sup>4</sup> Current water quality testing programs fail to protect public health.

Only in 112 officially designated Bathing Water locations in Wales is the water tested,<sup>5</sup> and even then, just for a handful of times between 15<sup>th</sup> May and 30<sup>th</sup> September. When picking new spots for testing, **ONLY SWIMMERS** are counted as water users, meaning places where people surf, kayak, SUP and more go **COMPLETELY UNTESTED**. Testing also covers just two pollutants, *E. coli* and *Intestinal enterococci*, ignoring emerging threats from a toxic chemical cocktail of pollutants including forever chemicals like **PFAS**, **ANTIBIOTIC-RESISTANT BACTERIA**, and **MICROPLASTICS**.

We need policies that protect water users **WHEREVER**, **WHENEVER**, and **HOWEVER**, they use the water.



## THE NEXT WELSH GOVERNMENT MUST:

- ➔ Set **LEGALLY BINDING TARGETS** to end untreated sewage discharges affecting bathing waters and popular recreational waters by 2030.
- ➔ Introduce a world leading water quality **TESTING REGIME** that monitors emerging pollutants and protects water users wherever, whenever and however, they use the water.





Water Companies in Wales released sewage into rivers, lakes and seas for **NEARLY A MILLION HOURS** in 2024.<sup>6</sup> This is the result of a catastrophic failure of the system and the regulators designed to oversee it.

Customers across Wales have the second highest water bills in the UK. Despite its not-for-profit status 41% of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water's revenue, including customers' bills, are being used to pay back debt, not to protect public health.<sup>7</sup>

The underfunded and under resourced environmental regulator – Natural Resource Wales (NRW) – has also **FAILED TO TACKLE SEWAGE POLLUTION**. Rather than strengthening enforcement, NRW announced new plans to adopt “a higher tolerance of risk” when investigating pollution incidents. Such actions, combined with years of underinvestment have led a Senedd committee to conclude NRW does not have the funding it needs to hold polluters to account.<sup>8</sup>

To end the sewage scandal, Wales needs water companies which put public and environmental health first and a **PROPERLY FUNDED REGULATOR** with the **CAPACITY, POWER** and **POLITICAL BACKING** to enforce the law and hold polluters to account.



## THE NEXT WELSH GOVERNMENT MUST:

- ➔ Transform Natural Resource Wales into a **TOUGH, INDEPENDENT REGULATOR** with the resourcing and enforcement powers it needs to protect public and environmental health.
- ➔ Centre economic regulation on **PUBLIC BENEFIT** ensuring customer money is used to deliver environmental and public health improvements.
- ➔ Ensure Welsh Water companies are structured with the focus of **PROTECTING PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**.



# CUT PLASTIC PRODUCTION AND CREATE A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The plastics industry produces more than 450 million tonnes of plastic annually. 99% of this plastic is made from fossil fuels and two thirds are short lived products used very few times before becoming waste.<sup>9</sup> Without bold action, plastic production is set to triple by 2060.<sup>10</sup>

This plastic is polluting Wales coastlines and riverbanks. Beach cleaners registered a **4% INCREASE** in the amount of plastic pollution found on Welsh beaches in 2024 compared to 2023.<sup>11</sup>

Microplastics have also now been found **THROUGHOUT THE HUMAN BODY**, with the impact of these plastics and the toxic chemicals they contain on human health still not fully understood.<sup>12</sup>

Wales has been at the forefront of tackling plastic pollution – it has the **SECOND HIGHEST RECYCLING RATES GLOBALLY, PIONEERED THE PLASTIC BAG CHARGE** and has already committed to circular economy policies, such as a **WORLD LEADING DEPOSIT RETURN SCHEME INCLUDING GLASS**.<sup>13</sup> However, we cannot simply recycle our way out of the problem. Without cutting plastic at source, pollution will continue to blight Welsh coastlines and waterways for future generations.



## THE NEXT WELSH GOVERNMENT MUST:

- ➔ Set **LEGALLY BINDING NATIONAL TARGETS** to cut plastic production.
- ➔ **CREATE A CIRCULAR ECONOMY** by setting legally binding reuse targets, implementing a world leading all-in Deposit Return Scheme, and an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme that holds producers fully accountable for all types of plastic pollution.
- ➔ Ban **HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS** in plastics.
- ➔ **BAN THE EXPORT OF WASTE** and ensure a just transition for workers in the plastics industry.





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info@sas.org.uk • 01872 553 001

Surfers Against Sewage, Unit 2, Wheal Kitty Workshops, St Agnes, Cornwall, TR5 0RD.

Company registered in England & Wales no. 2920815. Registered Charity in England & Wales no. 1145877