

# SENEDD ELECTION MANIFESTO

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CUT THE CRAP

SURFERS  
AGAINST  
SEWAGE

# 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.



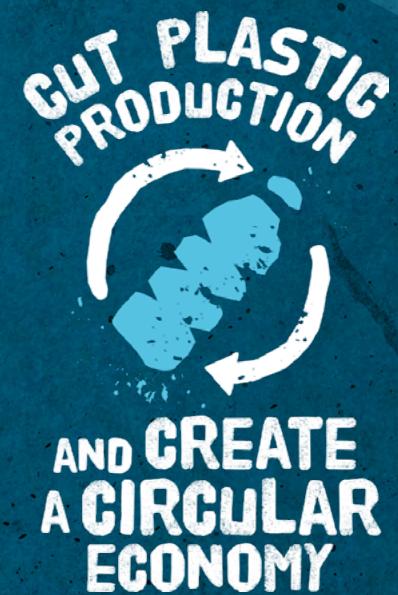
This is a perfect storm of toxic pollution that no monitoring system adequately tracks, and no regulator effectively stops. It's **MAKING WATER USERS SICK** and choking our wild waters.

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:



# PROTECT



# PUBLIC HEALTH

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.



## THE WELSH WATER SYSTEM

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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