

UK ELECTION 2015

# Plaid Cymru answers questions from *Nature*

## How would your party ensure that UK science maintains its current position in the world?

To ensure that Wales is in a position to maintain and progress in the field of science, we need to increase our children's ability in mathematics and scientific subjects, and to invest more, through our higher-education establishments, in scientific and technological research. Numeracy alone is not enough in the twenty-first century.

## How do you view the state of UK science compared with five years ago?

UK science has developed in the past five years, but there is always much more that can be done. One area in which this is vital is health. Plaid Cymru will work to ensure that Wales improves its share of health-research funding, attracting high-quality researchers to Wales. We also support the All Trials campaign for publication of all clinical trials to make sure our clinical staff and researchers have the most comprehensive and up-to-date evidence-based information.

## Will your party be making any commitment to the science budget, either to ring-fence it, or to increase or decrease funding?

We believe more investment is needed, through our higher-education establishments, in scientific and technological research.

## Is government-controlled science spending going to the right areas? Where would you change it?

Plaid Cymru affirms that harnessing science and technology in the service of both humanity and the environment is crucial to the long term health of both our local and the global environment. We want to place Wales at the forefront of environmentally sound and socially responsible technical innovations. This means putting a distinct emphasis on scientific research. We would press for Welsh universities to get more UK-based research funding and to get the best investment from the European Union's Horizon 2020 funding. We would use this to enable our universities to work more closely with industry, promoting research and development related to universities such as the Menai Science Park that is being developed as a result of our 2012 Budget deal.

## How should infrastructure funding (that is, capital spending) for science be allocated?

We will press for Wales' fair share of research funding and believe there should be subsidies for students wishing to take up key health-care posts, studying science, engineering and technology subjects in Wales.

## How high would policies on science and research come in your priorities in the scenario of negotiating any post-election coalition agreement?

Science and technology is key in developing the Welsh economy. This is reflected in our policies across the board and we will press for these in any post-election agreements.

## Would you want to change visa rules for international scientists and students?

Plaid Cymru does not believe the current migration laws are fit for purpose in Wales. Wales has a far lower number of migrants from outside the UK than England or Scotland. We are calling for a Welsh Migration Service to ensure that migration meets Welsh needs. Our public services need skilled migrants to work here and help our economy to improve. This includes more scientists and students to ensure the sustainability of our economy. We would also reintroduce a post-study work visa for two years for students who have qualified from Welsh universities so that they can use their skills to contribute to the Welsh economy.

## Does your party support research on genetically modified (GM) crops, and the cultivation of such crops?

We are against the growth of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Wales and support a GMO-free British Isles and Europe on the precautionary principle. We have concerns about the impact of cross-pollination if the UK government pushes ahead with plans to introduce GMO-crops in England.

## Does your party support research on embryonic and adult stem cells? Are there areas of this work that you feel should be off limits?

We support embryonic and adult stem-cell research which may lead to scientific developments.

## What is your party's position on climate change and the measures needed to combat it?

Plaid Cymru is committed to tackling climate change. We will introduce a Climate Change Act for Wales, adopting challenging but achievable greenhouse-gas reduction targets for 2030 and 2050.

## What is your view of the future energy needs of the UK, and the balance of fossil fuel, nuclear and renewable energy?

Our energy policy will focus on increasing energy generation from renewable sources, with particular emphasis on tidal and hydro sources, such as the proposed tidal lagoons, and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels.

## What is your position on university tuition fees? Should they be allowed to rise, be capped or be cut, and how will you account for any resulting changes to university income?

Plaid Cymru believes that, in principle, higher education should be free for all, and we will continue to work towards this aim. We will provide a subsidy to students resident in Wales who wish to study in Wales. Target groups and those studying subjects vital to the Welsh economy and public goals will pay no tuition fees in Wales, including those taking up key health-care posts, studying science, engineering and technology subjects, and students from particularly challenging backgrounds. ■

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