

Liberal Democrats call for postcard policies

Shame Wales. There are one or two rational voices in my home country but the rest act like sheep following a few professional activists from Amsterdam. They will never keep Wales beautiful if they cover it with ineffective 300-foot high wind mills. One would think that the excellent experience of Wilfa and Trawsfynydd nuclear plants over the past 30 years would have some effect.

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Liberal Democratic National Assembly leader Mike German yesterday urged members to send him ideas on a postcard as the party looked to find policies before next year's election.

Mr German told the party's spring conference in Wrexham the party must "leave no stone unturned" in finding policies likely to go down well with voters. He said: "I challenge all of you here to go home and ask your friends and neighbours how they would improve Wales. What laws would they change to make life better? "And when you have those ideas, write them on a postcard or send me an e-mail." He suggested the party should promise more choice over schools and that new powers for the Assembly could be used to scrap council tax and reform the electoral system in Wales.

The Liberal Democrats, who currently have six Welsh Assembly Members (AM), are hoping to get into a position next year where they can revive the Lib-Lab coalition, which ran Wales from 2000 to 2003. Mr German hinted at a possible coalition deal for next year when he said Labour had "broken promises" when "left to their own devices".

The party agreed one policy yesterday, voting to oppose any new nuclear power stations in Wales. Delegates overwhelmingly supported a motion calling for a nuclear-free Wales, despite opposition from some leading party members.

Liberal Democrat MP Roger Williams said delegates should not "tie down" their AMs and Members of Parliament to an anti-nuclear policy. "It might actually prevent them taking a decision on it should an opportunity be presented in Wales," he said. He also laid into the Tories, accusing them of doing a "U-turn" by coming round to the idea of devolution. And he ridiculed Plaid Cymru's recent image change, which has seen it drop its three-peaks logo in favour of a yellow poppy. "How appropriate. Because there's a fourth peak that's also behind them - their electoral peak," he said.

On Friday night, new party leader Sir Menzies Campbell addressed a Welsh rally for the first time, telling activists the party needed to be "pragmatic" to make gains. "If radicalism is to offer change, it must always be married to policies that can work," he said. He said: "This is the party of devolution, of home rule. We're determined as a party that the Welsh Assembly should have a legislative parity with Scotland and we'll be arguing for that."