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It's time to Electrify Cymru: An open letter to party leaders in Wales

Party leaders in Wales are racing across the country to connect with the public, explaining why their vision is right for the nation's future. It's exhausting work at a time of immense challenge and uncertainty.

At every stop, the families, businesses and communities you visit are spending a huge amount of their time worrying about energy bills. Again. The shocks hitting prices are coming round more often than Senedd elections and the solutions can feel too difficult. But the positive news is that costs are higher than they need to be.

Why? Because the technology needed to crack this problem is not novel or untested. Solar panels, heat pumps and electric vehicles are more cost effective than ever and they are already lowering bills for those who can access these benefits.

We can be confident that the next Welsh Government will be judged on whether it did everything it could to ease the pressure that energy costs are loading onto everyday life. The answer to that question will be visible in the scale of action taken to bring the benefits of electrification to everyone.

Time and again the public has shown it backs action, understands the need for trade-offs, and is impatient for home grown energy in an era of conflict and instability. Bringing down the cost of energy bills is now the number one voting issue for this Senedd election; 44% of Welsh voters put it among their top three concerns, ahead of NHS waiting times (43%) and growing the economy (30%). Demand for solar panels has rocketed and almost 90% of those who own them are recommending that others follow suit.

If political parties underestimate that support and make major judgements based on the wrong reading of public opinion, families, businesses and communities up and down Wales will lose out. Wales cannot afford a decade that ends with a government that ducked the big calls on electrification because it misjudged the mandate for change.

Electrify Cymru is about more than campaigning asks of leaders, we want to build the partnerships that prove what is possible. Our partnership with the Bridgend Ravens as official stadium partner of the Electric Brewery Field is about helping to lower the running costs of an iconic but fragile community institution. As the club approaches its 150th anniversary, the cost of

keeping the lights on, running the bars and the showers is damaging the club's future. This famous club relies on volunteers to sustain it, but every energy crisis makes their job more difficult than it needs to be.

Over the next Senedd term, a club like Bridgend could save hundreds of thousands of pounds through electrification. But it needs to be much much easier and more affordable for them to plug in and pay less. Action at scale can make that a reality and we want to work with the next Welsh Government to make it happen.

The question for every party leader is whether the decisions you take over the next five years make it easier or harder for families, businesses and community spaces like the Electric Brewery Field to make ends meet?

We are ambitious about what an electrified future could mean for Wales and want to work with leaders who share that vision.

So here are our two asks:

1. Will you commit to meet with Electrify Cymru at the Brewery Field to discuss how your plans to embrace electrification at the scale needed to bring down costs for families, businesses and community institutions across Wales? We recently brought together investors, small businesses and charities for a conversation with the UK Government's Climate Minister to explore what role they can play in supporting this work. We would like to convene a similar session with you focussed on the positive solutions that can be realised with partners who are willing to engage and deliver at pace.
2. If you become First Minister, will you put electrification on the agenda for your first meeting with the Prime Minister in order to turn a conversation about the energy crisis into an urgent focus on how we address it? The levers that can unlock the scale of change Wales needs sit across both governments. That conversation cannot wait.

It's time to plug in to pay less. We hope you will work with us to make that happen for everyone in Wales.

Yours sincerely,

Camilla Born MBE

Chief Executive, Electrify Britain