

What do the parties say? Comparing key humanist issues to party positions in the 2016 National Assembly for Wales elections

Wales Humanists question	Labour	Conservatives	Plaid Cymru	Liberal Democrats	UK Independence Party	Green Party (Eng & Wales)
Manifesto link	https://humanism.org.uk/NAW2016Lab *	https://humanism.org.uk/NAW2016Con *	https://humanism.org.uk/NAW2016PC *	https://humanism.org.uk/NAW2016LD *	https://humanism.org.uk/NAW2016UKIP *	https://humanism.org.uk/NAW2016Green *
‘Would you support non-religious worldviews such as Humanism being taught equally alongside religions in schools?’	Have proposed replacing RE with a new subject of ‘Religion, Philosophy and Ethics’. ¹ This will quite possibly involve more teaching about non-religious worldviews.	No. In England has opposed inclusion of Humanism when recently reviewing GCSE and A level RE syllabuses, beyond a few mentions. But did require schools to study two religions at GCSE level for the first time. ²	When contacted by the BHA before the 2015 UK general election, said ‘Following the Donaldson review into the school curriculum, we believe that there should be less micro-management of schools. However, it’s important that schools don’t favour one perspective over the other.’	Yes. When contacted by Wales Humanists, said ‘We would support all worldviews, both religious and non-religious being taught in schools. It is important that religious and cultural education teaches children about a broad range of beliefs, and doesn’t privilege particular belief systems.’	No stated policy, but its 2015 UK general election Christian manifesto says ‘teaching about Christianity will be a core part of religious education. RE shouldn’t be disparaging towards Christianity, or to any other religion, but taught in a neutral manner explaining the reasons why some people believe and others don’t. Children should be taught about all religions’. ³	Yes. Party policy states ‘Education should encourage critical engagement with, and non-dogmatic exposure to, diverse, sometimes competing, worldviews and beliefs – whether based on culture, religion or spirituality... [Faith-based] Religious instruction... may only take place outside of school curriculum time.’ ⁴
‘Would you support fully inclusive admissions with no religious selection in all state-funded schools, including “faith” schools?’	No. Supportive of ‘faith’ schools and have not committed to reducing the percentage of places which they are able to select in admissions.	No. Will ‘Provide free school transport to more pupils attending their nearest faith... school.’ The UK Government is supportive of ‘faith’ schools. ⁵ It ‘supports inclusive admission arrangements’, ⁶ but has no plans to reduce the degree of religious selection.	When contacted by the BHA before the 2015 UK general election, said ‘We don’t have a specific policy on this but we believe that parents have the right to decide upon an appropriate education for their children. Faith schools are funded by the state should be properly scrutinised for public benefit.’	Yes. When contacted by Wales Humanists, stated support for ‘faith’ schools, but also moves towards inclusive admissions policies: ‘No child should be prevented from attending a good school simply because of their parents’ religion.’ ⁷	Its 2015 UK general election Christian manifesto says ‘UKIP backs faith schools provided they are open to the whole community... [and] do not discriminate against any section of society’. ⁸ But have also said that employment discrimination ‘should be a matter for the schools and no one else’. ⁹	Yes. Party policy states ‘No publicly-funded school shall be run by a religious organisation.’ ¹⁰

* All party policies come from the respective party manifestos unless a specific reference is given.

¹ BHA news item ‘Welsh Government wishes to replace “Religious Education” subject in schools with “Religion, Philosophy and Ethics”’, August 2015: <https://humanism.org.uk/2015/08/03/welsh-government-wishes-to-replace-religious-education-subject-in-schools-with-religion-philosophy-and-ethics/>

² New GCSE Religious Studies subject content, February 2015: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-religious-studies>

³ UKIP Christian Manifesto, April 2015: http://www.election2015.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/UKIPChristian_Manifesto-1.pdf

⁴ Green Party education policy: <http://policy.greenparty.org.uk/ed.html>

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⁵ Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron comments to the *Lancashire Telegraph*, March 2015:

http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/11861293.GENERAL_ELECTION_2015_Prime_Minister_David_Cameron_s_free_schools_plan_triggers_debate/

⁶ Conservative Schools Minister Lord Nash comments in Parliament, July 2013: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldhansrd/text/130722-0001.htm#st_2

⁷ Also told Wales Humanists, ‘The Federal party supports ending the opt-out from employment and equalities legislation for staff in faith schools, except those principally responsible for religious instruction, and repealing the existing legal requirement for all state-funded schools to hold acts of collective worship.’

⁸ UKIP Christian Manifesto, April 2015: http://www.election2015.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/UKIPChristian_Manifesto-1.pdf

⁹ Paul Nuttall Q&A in *The Guardian*, March 2015: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/mar/17/ukip-education-policies-schools-paul-nuttall>

¹⁰ Green Party education policy: <http://policy.greenparty.org.uk/ed.html>

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‘Would you support making a high-quality, comprehensive personal and social education and sex education curriculum statutory in Welsh schools?’	Has not legislated to this effect in the Welsh Government, but is campaigning to this end in England. ¹¹ The <i>Donaldson Review</i> of the Welsh National Curriculum, which the Government has accepted, has ‘Health and wellbeing’, which includes ‘sex and relationships’, as one of its six Areas of Learning and Experience. ¹²	No. Does not support making PSHE and SRE statutory, as they ‘trust schools to provide the right education for their pupils’. ¹³	‘All schools will teach a healthy relationships agenda... Schools will promote a positive attitude towards other pupils’. In the 2011 Welsh election pledged to ‘ensure schools deliver preventative education about domestic violence, gender equality, healthy relationships and self-esteem’. ¹⁴	Yes. When contacted by Wales Humanists, said ‘We support the creation of a stronger and more inclusive sex and relationship curriculum in Wales which properly deals with issues of gender identity, sexuality, consent and healthy relationships at the earliest appropriate age.’	No. ‘UKIP will: ensure all parents are made fully aware of sex education teaching materials before they are used’ and ‘continue to respect their right to withdraw children’. Does not support making PSHE and SRE statutory, and wants to scrap all SRE for primary school children. ¹⁵	Yes. Its 2015 UK general election manifesto supports making ‘PSHE (including sex and relationships education, and also first aid) compulsory.’ SRE will be ‘age-appropriate and LGBTQ-inclusive – in all schools from primary level onwards’. ¹⁶
‘Would you support an end to the archaic policy of reserving seats for Church of England Bishops in the House of Lords?’	Yes. Its 2015 UK general election manifesto says ‘Labour is committed to replacing the House of Lords with an elected Senate of the Nations and Regions, to represent every part of the United Kingdom, and to improve the democratic legitimacy of the second chamber.’ ¹⁷	No plans to do so in the UK Government. Its 2015 UK general election manifesto says ‘While we still see a strong case for introducing an elected element into our second chamber, this is not a priority in the next Parliament’. ¹⁸	Yes. ‘[We] propose the following structure for a new settlement: ...the House of Lords to be abolished and replaced by a new Second Chamber, the Council of Nations’.	Yes. When contacted by Wales Humanists, said ‘we support a fully elected second chamber with no reserved seats for Bishops.’ In 2012, proposed legislation in Westminster to reform the House of Lords that increased the proportion of bishops, but party policy is that there should be a fully elected second chamber. ¹⁹	No stated policy.	Yes. Party policy states that the House of Lords ‘should be abolished and replaced by a second chamber directly elected by proportional representation’. ²⁰
‘Would you support the legalisation of humanist marriage in Wales, which has been hugely popular in Scotland since its legalisation in 2005?’	Yes. Committed to giving legal recognition to humanist marriages if returned to power in Westminster. ²¹	The Prime Minister’s Office blocked the legal recognition of humanist marriage in 2014. ²² The UK Government instead asked the Law Commission to review wider marriage law, ²³ and is now considering again whether or not to legalise in light of the review’s outcome.	When contacted by the BHA before the 2015 UK general election, said ‘We don’t have a party policy on this issue.’	Yes. When contacted by Wales Humanists, said ‘Our manifesto in 2015 contained a commitment to permit humanist weddings... our colleagues in Westminster fought to legalise humanist marriage [by amending the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013]... but were prevented by the Conservatives.’	No stated policy. Its 2015 UK general election Christian manifesto says ‘UKIP opposed same-sex marriage legislation because it impinged upon the beliefs of millions of people of faith’ but ‘We will not repeal the legislation, as it would be grossly unfair and unethical to ‘un-marry’ loving couples or restrict further marriages’. ²⁴	Yes. ‘Clearly the law should allow those who wish to have a humanist marriage ceremony the same rights as couples who want a religious ceremony with the celebrant of their choice. The Green Party is committed to ending the current discrimination as soon as possible’. ²⁵

¹¹ Labour press release on Shadow Education Secretary Lucy Powell committing to SRE and PSHE, March 2016: <http://press.labour.org.uk/post/141478207064/labour-commits-to-compulsory-pshe-as-david>

¹² *Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*, Professor Graham Donaldson, February 2015: <https://hwbplus.wales.gov.uk/schools/6714052/Documents/Donaldson%20Report.pdf>

¹³ Conservative Schools Reform Minister Nick Gibb comments in Parliament, March 2015: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm150310/halltext/150310h0002.htm#150310h0002.htm_snews3

¹⁴ Plaid Cymru’s 2011 Welsh Assembly manifesto: http://www.english.plaidcymru.org/uploads/Manifesto_2011/Main_manifesto_English_SP.pdf

¹⁵ Press release from UKIP education spokesperson Paul Nuttall, February 2015: http://www.ukip.org/labour_sex_education_plans_a_disgrace

¹⁶ Green Party 2015 UK general election manifesto: <http://humanism.org.uk/GE2015Green>

¹⁷ Labour Party 2015 UK general election manifesto: <http://humanism.org.uk/GE2015Lab>

¹⁸ Conservative Party 2015 UK general election manifesto: <http://humanism.org.uk/GE2015Con>

¹⁹ Liberal Democrats 2012 Federal Conference report motion on ‘Reform of the House of Lords’: http://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/libdems/pages/2012/attachments/original/1390841944/Conference_Report_Brighton_2012.pdf

²⁰ Green Party public administration policy: <https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/pa.html>

²¹ Labour Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities Baroness Thornton comments to the BHA, December 2014: <https://humanism.org.uk/2014/12/18/labour-pledge-legalise-humanist-marriages-government-blocks-proposals-disappointing-thousands-couples/>

²² *Sunday Times* report, December 2014: <http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/Politics/article1496012.ece>

²³ Outcome of Government consultation on humanist marriage, December 2014: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388986/marriages-by-non-religious-belief-organisations.pdf

²⁴ UKIP Christian Manifesto, April 2015: http://www.election2015.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/UKIPChristian_Manifesto-1.pdf

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'Would you oppose any moves in Westminster to weaken our human rights settlement, including pulling out of the European Convention on Human Rights – which is essential in protecting fundamental human rights and freedoms?'	Yes. Has been campaigning against the repeal of the Human Rights Act. ²⁶	No. The UK Government is currently pursuing its manifesto commitment to 'scrap the Human Rights Act, and introduce a British Bill of Rights. This will break the formal link between British courts and the European Court of Human Rights'. ²⁷	Yes. Its 2015 UK general election manifesto states 'We support the Human Rights Act and the European Convention on Human Rights, and will oppose any moves by a UK Government to withdraw from those.' ²⁸	Yes. When contacted by Wales Humanists, said 'We have fought in Wales and in Westminster to protect our human rights legislation, including membership of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act. We are firm believers in human rights and always will seek to uphold them.'	No. Its 2015 UK general election manifesto states, 'UKIP will withdraw from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. We will repeal the Human Rights Act and replace it with a new British Bill of Rights.' ²⁹	Yes. Party policy states 'The Green Party supports the Human Rights Act... fully supports the right of appeal to, and the primacy of, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg... [and] will seek the incorporation into law of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.' ³⁰
'Would you support the legalisation of assisted dying for people who are terminally ill or are permanently and incurably suffering, in order to protect their right to autonomy and self-determination?'	No plans to legalise. Party leaders support a free vote on the issue. ³¹ 56% of Labour MPs that voted on the issue in Westminster in 2015 voted against legalisation. ³²	No plans to legalise. The Prime Minister supports a free vote on the issue, but told MPs that he was 'not convinced that further steps need to be taken. I worry about legalising euthanasia because people might be being pushed into things that they don't actually want for themselves'. ³³ 88% of Conservative MPs that voted on the issue in Westminster in 2015 voted against legalisation. ³⁴	When contacted by the BHA before the 2015 UK general election, said 'We don't have a party policy on this issue.'	When contacted by Wales Humanists, said 'We regard this as a matter of conscience for individual party members or parliamentarians. Our Federal party policy supports legislation providing for medical assistance to die to be available to patients in particular circumstances, subject to rigorous safeguards to prevent abuse.' 50% of Lib Dem MPs that voted on the issue in Westminster in 2015 voted against legalisation. ³⁵	No. Its 2015 UK general election Christian manifesto says 'UKIP has no plans to change existing legislation on euthanasia or the "right to die." ³⁶	Yes. Party policy supports assisted dying for both the terminally ill and incurably suffering, given appropriate safeguards. ³⁷

²⁵ Green Party Leader Natalie Bennett blog entry on the Green Party website, December 2014: <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/leaders-blog/2015/01/11/humanist-marriages-of-course/>

²⁶ Then-Leader of the Opposition Harriet Harman speech, September 2015: <http://press.labour.org.uk/post/121664291859/in-defence-of-human-rights-speech-by-harriet>

²⁷ Conservative Party 2015 UK general election manifesto: <http://humanism.org.uk/GE2015Con>

²⁸ Plaid Cymru 2015 UK general election manifesto: <http://humanism.org.uk/GE2015Plaid>

²⁹ UKIP 2015 UK general election manifesto: <http://humanism.org.uk/GE2015UKIP>

³⁰ Green Party rights and responsibilities policy: <http://policy.greenparty.org.uk/rr.html>

³¹ *Guardian* report on progress of Lord Falconer's Assisted Dying Bill, January 2015: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/17/assisted-dying-bill-held-up-in-the-house-of-lords>

³² House of Commons Assisted Dying Bill vote results, September 2015: <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/division.php?date=2015-09-11&number=69>

³³ David Cameron statement to Parliament, July 2014: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm140716/debtext/140716-0001.htm#140716-0001.htm_spm34

³⁴ House of Commons Assisted Dying Bill vote results, September 2015: <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/division.php?date=2015-09-11&number=69>

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³⁶ UKIP Christian Manifesto, April 2015: http://www.election2015.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/UKIPChristian_Manifesto-1.pdf

³⁷ Green Party health policy: <https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/he.html>

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About Wales Humanists

Wales Humanists is part of the British Humanist Association. The BHA is the national charity working on behalf of non-religious people who seek to live ethical and fulfilling lives on the basis of reason and humanity. We promote Humanism, support and represent the non-religious, and promote a secular state and equal treatment in law and policy of everyone, regardless of religion or belief. Founded in 1896, we have around 40,000 members and supporters, and over 90 local and special interest affiliates.



Wales Humanists and the BHA are independent of all political parties and do not support, fund or advocate any particular political party.

All party policies come from the respective party manifestos unless a specific reference is given. Where policies are not stated we contacted the parties to seek further clarity and the table incorporates any replies we received. If you spot something where you think we've got it wrong, or have missed a piece of information, then please do contact us.

Some of the issues we discuss are not devolved to Wales and so the parties' policies are aimed at the UK Government in Westminster, and not the National Assembly for Wales.

You can find out more about our election work at www.humanism.org.uk/NWA2016

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