

**RANDALL'S**

» Political monitoring with a human touch



# Welsh Labour Leadership Election 2024: Background Briefing

7 March 2024

## Introduction

Exactly five years to the day since he was appointed First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford announced on 12 December 2023 that [he will resign](#) as First Minister and Welsh Labour Leader in March the following year. This will not come as a surprise to any follower of Welsh politics, given his [numerous public comments](#) in the past of his intention to step down around this point in the Senedd term. He made clear his intention to remain as First Minister for the COVID-19 Inquiry hearings in Wales throughout early 2024, commenting that he [owed it to families](#) of those who died during the pandemic to remain in post to be held accountable for his decisions at the time. With approximately two years until the next Senedd election, his successor will have time to stamp their authority on the position. They will, however, also face challenges around some parts of Drakeford's policy legacy, notably the 20mph speed limit proposals and reforms to increase the number of Senedd members.

Another key angle to consider in this election is the potential for the next Welsh Labour Leader to take office mere months before a General Election, in which a newly elected Labour Government is a very real possibility. While any relationship between a Labour First Minister and Prime Minister would instantly be a marked improvement on relations between Drakeford and the likes of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, it is important to question the possible benefits and tensions of such a relationship. For example, will the 20mph speed limit policy come into direct conflict with Labour messaging in England? And what of the now infamous arguments between each constituent part of the UK that accompany each PISA publication on educational attainment? This demonstrates that regardless of whoever the next Leader of Welsh Labour and First Minister of Wales will be, they will have to fight on multiple fronts if they are to maintain the party's generations-long dominance in Wales.

## Election procedure

The new leader is elected using the one-member-one-vote system, [following changes](#) approved ahead of the most recent Welsh Labour leadership election. Candidates require a minimum of six (including themselves) Members of the Senedd supporting their candidacy in order to appear on the ballot. Only MSs are allowed to stand in the election. Alternatively, candidates can also be included in the ballot if they receive the support of three MSs in addition to 20% of local Labour parties; or three affiliated groups including two trade unions; or three MSs and 20% of Welsh Constituency Labour Parties.

The two candidates who made it onto the ballot were confirmed on 29 January, with the hustings period beginning on the 30 January and concluding on the 21 February. During this period the candidates have participated in several debates across Wales and have fielded questions from party members. The deadline for Parliamentary Labour Party and Labour Group Leader supporting nominations was 9 February, and while these nominations are not decisive in any way, the nominations of an MP or a Group Leader are often considered influential by candidates due to the momentum they can carry, particularly if they get the backing of a well-known figure. The ballot opened on 16 February and will close on 14 March, with the result expected on Saturday 16 March.

## Candidate profiles

### Jeremy Miles

Jeremy Miles has been the Labour and Co-operative Party member of the Senedd for Neath since 2016. Swansea [born and bred](#), he is a fluent Welsh speaker. While he remains almost wholly unknown to the broader Welsh electorate, he has [featured in the 2023 Pinc List](#) of the 40 most influential lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people in Wales. If elected, he will be the first openly gay head of state in the UK. Growing up in the 80s as a gay man in a working-class family in Pontarddulas, Miles [openly talks about](#) how this experience drove him to fight for equality and inclusivity. In line with this, he has pledged an [equal gender split](#) in his cabinet.

A late starter to politics, Miles first pursued a career in law, lecturing in Warsaw and practising in London. However, he has not let the late start hold him back. Since 2016, he has served in the Welsh Government as Counsel General for Wales and Minister for European Transition, leading Wales's recovery from COVID-19. Most notably, he is currently the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language. Critics of Miles are keen to highlight his record as education minister; during his tenure, [PISA rankings have fallen](#) in almost every category. Not one to avoid controversy, as a minister, he led the charge on lowering the voting age to 16, publicly supports trans rights, and has [taken the UK Government to the Supreme Court](#) twice.

To understand Miles' candidacy, it helps to take a broader perspective of the Welsh Labour movement. Welsh Labour has been the dominant political force in Wales because it is both "Welsh" and "Labour". These two traditions can pull in different directions. Liberal, nationalistic [tendencies born out of non-conformism](#) in rural Wales butt against a central class-driven motivation, which finds its bedrock in industrial towns and cities. The tendencies [co-exist in Welsh Labour](#) but ultimately, the balance is determined by the party leader and, often, their familiarity with Westminster.

Miles characterises his six policy priorities as: a green economy stimulus; investing in education; cutting NHS waiting times; improving access to housing; remodelling transport services; and strengthening Welsh democracy. Based on the candidate's manifestos alone, Miles and his opponent Vaughan Gething find a lot of common ground in the political centre. Against this backdrop, Miles' passion for a liberal Welsh identity and a Welsh language is defining. He grew up in a Welsh-speaking community and, as education minister, has committed to ambitious targets for teaching Welsh in schools. He doubled down on these commitments, even when schools struggled with PISA scores in essential areas such as maths and English. Miles [cites Jim Griffiths as his political inspiration](#), a Welsh politician renowned for parking the tank on Plaid's front lawn. Remembering Griffiths, former Prime Minister Jim Callaghan [stated that](#) "it was the place of his birth, deep in the heart of Wales, that essentially shaped his life and actions". Following in Griffiths' footsteps, Miles [backs Welsh devolution](#) to the hilt, a position which makes Plaid uneasy to this day.

Miles was unable to secure the backing of the most prominent unions. [Amid allegations](#) of a "stitch-up", he was disqualified from consideration by Unite the Union because, unlike Gething, he has never been a union representative. The technicality only came to light after both candidates had been interviewed by and campaigned for the support of Unite. As such, these allegations of union interference threaten to destabilise the Welsh Labour Party should Gething succeed.

One of the few divergences in the manifesto policies of the two front-runners is their stances on the 20mph speed limit. Introduced under Drakeford, this controversial policy causes unease for the Westminster Labour Party, which sees the policy as an electoral liability. Unlike Gething, Miles [explicitly backs the policy](#) with a view to ensuring more public engagement on future developments in the policy. Following Drakeford's footsteps, Miles characterises his position as the centre-left of Welsh Labour. A nation more comfortable with left-wing politics, this is a position which would locate him noticeably to the left of a centrist in the Westminster party. With Miles' unyielding [enthusiasm for extending devolution](#) and strengthening a separate Welsh identity, he is a candidate undoubtedly committed to a new UK Labour Government, but also one perhaps more open to friction with the Westminster Labour Party.

## **Manifesto**

[Jeremy Miles: Our mission for Wales' future](#)

## **Profiles and interviews**

[I found it hard coming out, now I might be about to become the UK's most senior gay politician](#) – Mirror, 11 Feb 2024

[‘People should feel they belong’: Jeremy Miles reveals inclusive vision for Wales](#) – The Guardian, 1 Feb 2024

[Nomination 'stitch-up' allegations in Welsh Labour leadership contest](#) – Sky, 26 Jan 2024

[Jeremy Miles interview: M4 relief road, 20mph and more](#) – South Wales Argus, 16 Jan 2024

[Read: Full text of Jeremy Miles' 'vision for Wales' speech](#) – Labour list, 8 Jan 2024

## **Vaughan Gething**

Vaughan Gething has been a member of the Labour Party [since he was 17](#), when he joined in 1992 to help campaign in the general election. After serving as a [councillor for Butetown](#) ward for Cardiff Council between 2004 and 2008, Gething won his Cardiff and Penarth Welsh Parliament seat in 2011, and has held it ever since. He was made Minister for Health and Social Service in 2016 and held this role throughout the COVID-19 pandemic until 2021.

[Born in Zambia](#) to a Welsh father, David, and Zambian mother, Beritha, at a young age Gething moved with his family to Monmouthshire in Wales. The family [reportedly faced a racism when they moved to Wales](#), with his father even losing a his job as a vet for having a black family, which led to them moving to Dorset. As a child, he developed a kidney disease that was [treated with an NHS trial drug](#); this has apparently contributed to his determination to save and support the NHS. After qualifying as a solicitor in 2001, he decided to specialise as a [trade union lawyer](#), representing workers who had been mistreated by employers. He was chair of the [Right to Vote](#), a cross-party project to encourage greater participation from black minority ethnic communities in Welsh public life, from 1999 to 2001. At the age of 34 he became the youngest and first black President of the Wales TUC and is [currently a member](#) of the GMB, UNISON and Unite. He now [lives in Penarth](#) with his wife, Michelle.

In 2018, Gething [ran for Leader of Welsh Labour](#) for the first time against Baroness Eluned Morgan and Mark Drakeford, and after losing to Drakeford in the race he reportedly remained on good terms with his former opponent. Drakeford went on to reappoint Gething as Minister for Health and Social Care and then to Minister for the Economy in 2021. In 2020, Gething

was caught mouthing “What the [expletive] is the matter with her?” [on a zoom session of the Welsh Assembly](#), after Labour MS Jenny Rathbone asked about the Welsh Government's COVID-19 response. Gething is the [first black Welsh minister](#) of devolved administrations, and currently the only black member of Senedd.

Gething didn't support Jeremy Corbyn as Leader of the Labour Party in 2015 and 2016, but in 2017 [told BBC Radio Wales](#): “I want a Labour prime minister [...] I don't think it matters whether I'm a fan or not”. His [political views align more closely](#) with those of the current Labour leader, Keir Starmer, who both hold more pragmatic social democratic stances. Gething has been quoted as highlighting the importance of [unity within Welsh Labour](#) and strongly believes in “[the depth of Wales' socialist grassroots](#)”, highlighting the importance of working with trade unions – something that would be particularly important to him if he were made First Minister.

In December 2023, Gething announced that he would be [running for the role of First Minister](#). While his opponent Jeremy Miles has garnered more support from Labour Senedd members, Gething can expect to [win support from among Welsh trade unions](#) due to his links to the movement. His endorsements have led to some criticism that if he were to win, it would be reportedly “corrupt”; [accusations have been made](#) that the unions are messaging their members with material that promotes Gething while his opponent, who lacks access to the unions' membership details, cannot make direct contact with the majority of members and affiliates that are entitled to vote.

His relative popularity has come with political liabilities. He recently [received a political donation](#) of £200,000 from a waste disposal run by David Neal. For context, Miles has received only £36,000 in donations in total. Neal received a suspended prison sentence in 2013 for illegally dumping waste on environmentally sensitive land and is something of a repeat environmental offender. Neal also submitted planning proposals (on the same day that he made a £100,000 donation to Gething) to develop environmentally sensitive land. The controversy has exemplified underlying themes in the leadership debate, notably the implications of environmental action, Gething's flexibility with principles, and allegations of unfairness which threaten to undermine Welsh Labour should Gething win.

Gething has made various pledges about what he would introduce if he became Leader; including promises of [increased green jobs](#), a [review of the controversial 20mph speed limit policy](#) in Wales, and the expansion of [free childcare](#). If he wins the leadership race, Gething will be the first black leader in a European country, but has stressed that he wants people to agree that “[It's not about being black, but about being good enough](#)”.

## ***Manifesto***

[Vaughan Gething: For Wales, for Labour, for you](#)

## ***Profiles and interviews***

[Pressure mounts on Drakeford to order investigation into Gething's £200k donation from a criminal](#) – Nation Cymru, 26 Feb 2024

[Vaughan Gething accepts £200k from environmental offender's company](#) – BBC, 21 Feb 2024

['You can't deny the historic nature': Wales' Vaughan Gething aims to become first black leader of a European country](#) – Guardian, 14 Feb 2024

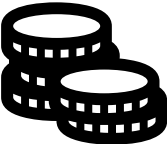
[Vaughan Gething on his Wales Labour leadership punt](#) – Western Telegraph, 21 Dec 2023

[Vaughan Gething 'ready to serve and ready to lead' as Welsh Labour leadership race begins](#) – ITV, 17 Dec 2023

[Welsh Labour's Vaughan Gething: 'It's not about being black, it's about being good at what you do'](#) – Guardian, 31 Oct 2023

[The Vaughan Gething interview: The racism I faced growing up, my family and why I'd be the best First Minister](#) – Wales Online, 7 Nov 2018

## Candidates' policies

	Jeremy Miles ( <a href="#">manifesto</a> )	Vaughan Gething ( <a href="#">manifesto</a> )
<b>Economy</b> 	<p>Refocus capital investment and procurement spend into a <b>Good Green Growth economic stimulus package</b></p> <p>Introduce Marcora-inspired legislation and guidance that supports <b>employee ownership</b></p> <p>Invest in the <b>Welsh steel industry</b></p> <p><b>Create a new National Economic Council</b> to advise the government on strategic policies to deliver sustainable economic prosperity and solidarity</p> <p>Make the case for Wales to have <b>enhanced borrowing powers</b>, and seek to negotiate joint funding partnerships with local government</p> <p>Consider the case for economic development to be <b>delivered at arms length from government</b></p> <p>Extend the Development Bank for Wales' remit for supporting <b>green investment</b></p> <p>Support <b>deeper cross-border economic co-operation</b> in particular in north east Wales, and capitalise on the investment in the Heads of the Valleys</p> <p>Ensure that <b>universities and colleges, the investor community, businesses, entrepreneurs and the Welsh Government are closely aligned</b> on national economic priorities, including innovation</p> <p>A new <b>"Make it in Wales" campaign</b> to attract talent to Wales and bring Welsh diaspora home</p>	<p>Create a <b>Fair Work Fund</b></p> <p>Accelerate the roll out of <b>banking hubs</b></p> <p>Review <b>inward investment pathways</b></p> <p>Supporting local authority <b>pension funds divesting from fossil fuel</b></p> <p>Create a <b>National Manufacturing Institute for Wales</b> and deliver new <b>Clean Growth Hubs</b></p> <p>Extend <b>Green Business Loans</b></p> <p>Introduction of a <b>living wage for agricultural workers</b></p> <p>Direct more public procurement <b>spending towards co-operatives and social enterprises</b></p> <p>Empower workers and their unions through initiative as diverse as greater support for <b>remote and flexible working</b></p> <p>Implement a key recommendation of the recent TUC Devolution and Work in Wales report by <b>creating a fair work milestone</b></p> <p>Aim to double the number of <b>worker-owned businesses in Wales</b></p>



## Education

Progressively increase the share of the Welsh Government **budget spent on schools**

Bring forward an **updated education technology strategy**

Expand the **Childcare Offer and Flying Start provision** progressively towards the goal of universal provision over time

Support the work of the newly established multi-agency **National Attendance Taskforce** to improve attendance in schools

Progress the review underway of **additional learning needs reforms** implementation

Expand further **routes into teaching**

Extend the reach of the **Robert Owen programme** on the role of cooperatives

Simplify and strengthen further the **professional learning offer** to education professionals

Increase funding to **support lifelong learning** over time

Streamline and refocus **school improvement services** across Wales

Align **economic policy, skills policy and vocational qualifications reforms** in one coherent continuum

Work towards an **Adult Literacy and Numeracy Guarantee**, backed up with funded basic skills provision

Restore funding to **apprenticeship programme**, and expand degree and higher apprenticeship provision

Maintain commitment to the most progressive student support programme in the UK and **explore reform to post-16 student support**

Renew focus on the **first 1000 days of a child's life**

Work with local authorities, schools and parents to **promote access to Welsh medium education** and to support children and young people with **Additional Learning Needs**

**Expand the Tech Valleys Hive** to more schools in the Valley

**Promote the Wales TUC Unions** and the World of Work programme and reform the Specification of Apprenticeship Standard for Wales to include an **online module on working rights for all apprenticeships**

Ensure pupils gain a wide experience and **understanding of diverse communities**

Reinvest in **more apprenticeships**


Develop a strategy on strengthening Wales' **vocational and technical training offer**

Support further education colleges to **train people in green skills**

Raise awareness and increase access to the full **Adult Community Learning partnerships** offer and **promote value of multilingualism**

Bolster work-based learning opportunities and **promote green career pathways**

Prioritise **free, flexible learning for workers on low pay**

	<p>Foster greater <b>collaboration between universities and further education institutions</b></p> <p>Ensuring access to music through the <b>National Music Programme</b></p> <p><b>Welsh medium education</b> available for anyone who chooses it</p> <p>Encourage <b>greater collaboration between higher education and further education</b> to ensure flexible, accessible provision for learners</p>	
<p><b>Equalities</b></p> 	<p>Develop a <b>Human Rights in Wales Bill</b>, with a view to protecting human rights in Wales as they apply to devolved powers</p> <p>Work with public bodies in Wales to ensure a culture of <b>respect and equality for women</b></p> <p>Appoint a government where at least <b>half the ministers are women</b></p> <p>Take steps to <b>ban conversion practices</b> and develop ambitious new targets for the LGBTQ+ Action Plan</p> <p>Co-develop a stretching next set of targets for the <b>Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan</b> and expedite work to ensure public appointments in Wales are more representative of our black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.</p> <p>Develop equivalent programmes to the <b>Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning programme for schools</b>, to support other areas of inclusive practice.</p> <p>Incorporate the United Nations Convention of the <b>Rights of Disabled People</b> into Welsh law and redouble our efforts to close the disability employment gap.</p>	<p>Support the <b>anti-racist action plan</b> until June 2024, and then make a renewed set of ambitious actions. Support the work of <b>Gwaith Teg (Fair Work Fund)</b> to take action to tackle racial and disability discrimination and the gender and ethnicity pay gap</p> <p>Make Wales the most <b>LGBTQ+ friendly nation</b> in Europe by continuing to support the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, the new RSE curriculum, the right of self-identification for trans people</p> <p>Continue to assess the feasibility of implementing the United Nations Convention on the <b>Rights of Disabled People</b></p> <p>Commit to having a <b>gender-balanced cabinet</b></p> <p>Revisit the <b>Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act</b> to ensure this encompasses safer workplaces</p> <p>Consult on plans for <b>higher standards in public offices</b>, placing a stronger standard on sexual harassment and discrimination on a statutory basis</p> <p>Retain Wales' <b>Nation of Sanctuary</b> status, welcoming refugees fleeing war and persecution</p>

## Health



Establish dedicated **orthopaedic surgery centres** for knee and hip replacements to clear backlogs

Reject any proposals to privatise provision

Lay out a strategy for health and social care which establishes **parity for mental and physical health**

Simplify targets to focus on **fewer, purposeful measures** of the patient experience and outcomes

Turn the Welsh NHS into a “beacon of innovation and sustainability”

Work in social partnerships with unions and employers to **address staff pay and conditions**; make the case that funding for pay settlements in England should lead to consequential funding to Wales

Progressively increase the health service’s focus on **digital services** and personalised data-driven prevention strategies

Incentivise positive behaviours and prioritise a **cross-government and local government effort** to improve Wales’ public health over a generation.

Explore encouraging social enterprises such as community benefit societies as **alternatives to private practices** for NHS dental services.

Establish a **dedicated sub-committee of the Cabinet** chaired by Miles to focus on cross-government work to address health inequalities

Use data to identify health inequalities and act rapidly to address them

Introduce a new **Wesh NHS Covenant** based on Bevan’s principles and a new ambition for the health service

Reject any proposals to privatise the NHS

Commitment for Health and Social Care spending per head never to fall below English levels

Work with universities, third sector and commercial partners to **promote innovation** in healthcare

Invest in a new cutting-edge **digital pathology centre** to speed up diagnosis

Extend **digital monitoring of specific health conditions** including COPD, heart failure and glucose monitoring

Take decisive action on racial **health inequalities**, creating gender sensitive and culturally competent health system; this begins with examining outcomes in maternity and mental health services, as well as reviewing disciplinary processes for staff and including data collection


Introduce a **women's health plan**



Continue the programme of **dental reform**, increasing the number of dental therapists

Make further progress towards a fit-for-purpose **national care service**

Explore the expansion of **community-led care models**, such as social care co-operatives

Ensure **unpaid workers** are valued and supported, with guidance for NHS professionals to identify and signpost support networks

	<p>Provide a <b>guaranteed menopause consultation</b> at your local surgery at the age of 40</p> <p>Establish a <b>National Care and Support Service for Wales</b>, with parity of esteem with the NHS. Exploring funding models for this service will be an early priority.</p> <p>Expedite the integration of health and social care</p> <p>Create an independently verified <b>long-term workforce plan</b> for health and care in Wales, with clear accountability for delivering it.</p> <p>Involve <b>unpaid carers</b> more closely in the design and delivery of services</p> <p>Strengthen accountability in the NHS, looking at the roles of the Welsh Government, NHS Wales Executive and health boards, informed by the findings of the <b>Accountability Task and Finish Group</b></p> <p>Support local authorities to <b>extend direct public provision</b> and co-operative care</p> <p>Maintain and progress work on eliminating profit from the care of <b>looked after children</b></p>	<p>Extending the use of <b>digital monitoring</b> for care home residents, enabling early intervention and reducing unnecessary hospital admissions</p> <p>Prioritise investment in <b>mental health</b></p> <p>Build a nationwide 24/7 '<b>111, press 2 for mental health</b>' service and a whole-school approach to supporting children's and young people's mental health</p> <p>Developing <b>early years services</b> for babies and children</p>
<p><b>Housing</b></p> 	<p>Encourage “decent” housing in Welsh communities by <b>expanding cooperative housing</b></p> <p>Remove barriers to the provision of social houses</p> <p>Improving house conditions as a way of <b>removing health inequalities</b></p> <p>Encourage the building of <b>green homes and retrofitting</b></p> <p>Protect housing support services</p>	<p>Increase the number of <b>social houses</b> being built</p> <p>Make sure that the homes that are being built <b>are sustainable</b></p> <p>Improve existing social homes through <b>retrofitting</b></p> <p>Increase the <b>production and installation of heat pumps</b></p>

	<p>Preventing homelessness in Wales</p> <p>Deliver <b>20,000 homes</b> in the social sector for renting</p> <p>Reusing empty homes</p> <p>Helping people <b>buy their own home</b>, especially in areas where second homes are common</p>	
<p><b>Energy and environment</b></p> 	<p>Increase <b>renewable energy production</b> and renewable energy projects in Wales</p> <p>Making Wales as <b>renewable energy global centre</b></p> <p>Increasing use of <b>hydro, tidal, wave and offshore wind</b> energy</p> <p>Encourage environmentally sustainable <b>steel making</b></p> <p>Strengthen environmental governance</p> <p>Securing environmental protections into Welsh law</p>	<p>Enforce <b>strict penalties</b> on those who break environmental rules</p> <p>Create well-paid jobs in the green sector</p> <p>Make Wales at the very forefront of the <b>green revolution</b></p>
<p><b>Infrastructure and transport</b></p> 	<p>Introduce <b>simpler, fairer bus fares</b> and <b>re-regulate the bus network</b> to improve connections</p> <p>Expedite delivery of <b>Metro and Burns Commission proposals</b> to relieve pressure on the M4 and the North Wales Corridor</p> <p>Move forward proposals for <b>integrated bus and rail services</b>, such as the Swansea project</p> <p>Keep the <b>electric vehicle charging infrastructure strategy</b> under review</p> <p>Support people to proactively choose <b>active travel</b></p>	<p>Keep the default <b>20 mph speed limit</b> in built-up areas, but introduce a <b>review of the guidance</b> given to councils on which roads to exempt</p> <p>Empower councils to <b>give residents a say</b> on the delivery of 20 mph speed limits</p>

For further information, please email [team@randallsmonitoring.co.uk](mailto:team@randallsmonitoring.co.uk)