

Welsh Senedd election 2026: Manifesto comparison for builders



This guide compares the main parties' manifesto commitments for the Welsh Senedd elections against the priorities of the Federation of Master Builders (FMB).



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Small and medium-sized builders play a vital role in delivering new homes, improving existing housing, and supporting local economies.

The policies set out in party manifestos will directly shape the environment in which builders operate, from skills and training to planning, procurement, and standards.



WHAT THE GUIDE COVERS

We focus on five key areas identified by the FMB:



Skills & Training



Standards & licnesing



Retrofit & energy efficiency



Planning & housebuilding



Public sector procurement



WHY THIS GUIDE MATTERS

Builders are facing a range of challenges, including:

- Shortages in skilled trades
- Inconsistent standards across the industry affecting trust and quality
- Growing demand for retrofit
- Barriers for SMEs accessing work
- Delays in the planning system

In this guide, we set out how FMB proposes to address these challenges, alongside what each party is proposing, highlighting where policies align with FMB priorities and where gaps remain.

Skills & training



WHAT THE FMB IS CALLING FOR:

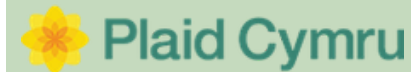
- ✓ A targeted construction skills strategy to address workforce shortages
- ✓ Increased funding for apprenticeships in the trades
- ✓ Stronger links between industry, colleges and training providers
- ✓ Action to address long-term labour shortages

SUMMARY:

Skills and training are recognised across manifestos as important for economic growth and employment. Several parties propose apprenticeships, training strategies, or links between skills and industry.

However, there is limited focus on construction-specific workforce challenges. In particular, there is little detail on addressing trade shortages or supporting the role of SMEs in training delivery.

HOW THE PARTIES COMPARE:



- ✓ Propose aligning skills and training with employer and industry needs
- ✓ Focus on creating well-paid jobs and strengthening local economies
- ✗ No construction-specific skills strategy
- ✗ No targeted action on trade shortages
- ✗ No clear role for SME builders in training delivery



- ✓ Commit to training for green jobs, including construction-related sectors
- ✓ Invest in skills for retrofit and sustainable construction
- ✗ No construction-specific skills strategy
- ✗ No targeted action on trade shortages
- ✗ Limited focus on SME builders in training delivery



- ✓ Focus on equipping young people with skills for the jobs market
- ✓ Emphasise economic growth and workforce readiness
- ✗ No construction-specific skills strategy
- ✗ No targeted action on trade shortages
- ✗ No clear plan linking training to construction industry needs



- ✓ Focus on helping people into work and improving skills across the economy
- ✓ Link skills to economic opportunity and public services
- ✗ No construction-specific skills strategy
- ✗ No targeted action on trade shortages
- ✗ No clear role for SME builders in training delivery



- ✓ Deliver 100,000 apprenticeships across sectors including construction
- ✓ Introduce a new vocational education and training strategy
- ✓ Align skills policy with industry and economic needs
- ✗ No construction-specific skills strategy
- ✗ No targeted action on trade shortages
- ✗ No clear role for SME builders in training delivery



- ✓ Link skills to economic growth and workforce development
- ✗ No construction-specific skills strategy
- ✗ No targeted action on trade shortages
- ✗ No clear plan for construction training



Shortage of skilled workers is one of the biggest barriers facing the construction sector. Without a strong pipeline of trained workers, builders cannot meet demand for new homes or deliver retrofit at scale.

Standards & licensing



WHAT THE FMB IS CALLING FOR:

- ✓ A licensing scheme for builders to ensure competence
- ✓ Consistent standards to improve quality and safety
- ✓ Stronger consumer protections
- ✓ Effective enforcement of standards

SUMMARY:

Standards and regulation are referenced across manifestos in a general sense. However, there is no clear commitment to builder licensing or construction-specific competence standards.

In some cases, there is a focus on reducing regulation rather than introducing new oversight, with limited engagement with the risks of unregulated building work.

HOW THE PARTIES COMPARE:

Plaid Cymru

- ✓ Support stronger public sector standards and accountability
- ✓ Use regulation to improve outcomes in housing and services
- ✗ No builder licensing scheme
- ✗ No construction-specific competence standards
- ✗ No response to risks from unregulated building work

Plaid Werdd Green Party

- ✓ Support stronger regulation and enforcement across sectors
- ✓ Emphasise quality standards in housing and retrofit
- ✗ No builder licensing scheme
- ✗ No construction-specific competence standards
- ✗ No response to risks from unregulated building work

Welsh Conservatives

- Focus on reducing regulation and red tape
- Aim to remove barriers affecting business
- ✗ No builder licensing scheme
- ✗ No construction-specific competence standards
- ✗ No response to risks from unregulated building work

Welsh Liberal Democrats

- ✓ Support fair standards and accountability in public services
- ✗ No builder licensing scheme
- ✗ No construction-specific competence standards
- ✗ No response to risks from unregulated building work

Welsh Labour

- ✓ Emphasises quality, safety and standards in housing and public services
- ✗ No builder licensing scheme
- ✗ No construction-specific competence standards
- ✗ No response to risks from unregulated building work



- Focus on reducing regulation and bureaucracy
- Propose removing oversight structures
- ✗ No builder licensing scheme
- ✗ No construction competence or safety standards
- ✗ No response to risks from unregulated building work



Inconsistent standards across the construction sector are a major challenge, affecting quality, safety, and consumer confidence. Without clear regulation and accountability, reputable builders can be undercut by poor-quality work, damaging trust in the industry.

Retrofit & energy efficiency



WHAT THE FMB IS CALLING FOR:

- ✓ A clear national retrofit strategy
- ✓ Targets for upgrading existing homes
- ✓ Long-term funding (e.g. grants and loans)
- ✓ A defined role for SME builders in delivery

SUMMARY:

Parties take different approaches to energy efficiency and net zero, with some placing less emphasis on retrofit.

While several set out ambitions to improve housing and reduce emissions, there is limited detail on how retrofit will be delivered in practice.

HOW THE PARTIES COMPARE:

Plaid Cymru

- ✓ Support improving housing quality and energy efficiency
- ✓ Link retrofit to wider economic and environmental goals
- ✗ No detailed retrofit delivery framework
- ✗ No clear targets for upgrading homes
- ✗ No explicit role for SME builders

Plaid Werdd Green Party

- ✓ Strong focus on large-scale retrofit and low-carbon homes
- ✓ Commit to funding and programmes for energy efficiency
- ✓ Link retrofit to jobs and economic activity
- ✗ Limited detail on delivery targets
- ✗ No explicit role for SME builders

Welsh Conservatives

- ✓ Focus on reducing energy costs for households
- ✗ No retrofit or insulation programme
- ✗ No energy efficiency strategy for existing homes
- ✗ No link between construction and retrofit delivery

Welsh Liberal Democrats

- ✓ Support energy efficiency and reducing energy costs
- ✓ Link this to environmental and economic goals
- ✗ No detailed retrofit strategy
- ✗ No clear delivery framework or targets
- ✗ Limited focus on SME builders

Welsh Labour

- ✓ Strong focus on clean energy and energy efficiency
- ✓ Links housing improvements to reducing energy costs
- ✗ No comprehensive national retrofit strategy
- ✗ No clear retrofit targets
- ✗ No explicit role for SME builders



- ✓ Link energy policy to economic growth
- ✗ No commitment to retrofit existing homes
- ✗ No energy efficiency programmes
- ✗ Reject key net zero policies driving retrofit



Improving the energy efficiency of existing homes is key to reducing emissions and energy costs. For builders, retrofit represents a major area of future work, but delivering it at scale requires clear policy direction, funding, and a skilled workforce.

Planning & housebuilding



WHAT THE FMB IS CALLING FOR:

- ✓ A simpler and more efficient planning system
- ✓ Increased housing supply across all tenures
- ✓ Improved access to land for SME housebuilders
- ✓ Greater support for small builders to deliver new homes

SUMMARY:

Housing supply and planning reform are key priorities across manifestos.

However, there is limited detail on how SME builders will be supported, particularly in relation to access to land and delivery.

HOW THE PARTIES COMPARE:



- ✓ Propose a National Development Agency to support growth
- ✓ Use planning and procurement to support Welsh businesses
- ✗ Limited focus on SME housebuilders specifically
- ✗ No clear action on access to land



- ✓ Target to build 60,000 homes
- ✓ Strong focus on social housing and planning reform
- ✗ Limited focus on SME builders
- ✗ No clear action on access to land



- ✓ Focus on simplifying planning and supporting development
- ✓ Emphasise home ownership and economic growth
- ✗ No clear housing target
- ✗ No support for SME builders or access to land



- ✓ Focus on increasing housing supply
- ✓ Support planning reform
- ✗ Limited focus on SME builders
- ✗ No clear action on access to land



- ✓ Target to deliver 100,000 homes
- ✓ Focus on planning reform to speed up decisions
- ✗ Limited focus on SME builders
- ✗ No clear action on access to land



- ✓ Support increasing housing and infrastructure
- ✓ Focus on simplifying planning
- ✗ No clear housing target
- ✗ No support for SME builders



Delivering more homes depends on an effective planning system. Delays, complexity, and limited access to land can restrict development and limit the role of SME builders in meeting housing demand.

Public sector procurement



WHAT THE FMB IS CALLING FOR:

- ✓ Simpler and more accessible procurement processes
- ✓ Reduced barriers for SMEs bidding for contracts
- ✓ Fair and transparent selection criteria
- ✓ Greater opportunities for local builders

SUMMARY:

Public procurement is recognised as a tool to support wider economic and social goals.

However, there is limited detail on how systems will be made more accessible for SME builders, with little focus on reducing barriers in practice.

HOW THE PARTIES COMPARE:

Plaid Cymru

- ✓ Aim to increase procurement from Welsh businesses
- ✓ Link procurement to economic development
- ✗ No specific measures for SME builders
- ✗ No construction-specific reform

Plaid Werdd Green Party

- ✓ Link procurement to social and environmental goals
- ✓ Support fair and ethical procurement
- ✗ No clear plan to improve SME access
- ✗ No focus on construction sector barriers

Welsh Conservatives

- ✓ Propose making contracts more accessible to small businesses
- ✗ Limited detail on implementation
- ✗ No construction-specific measures

Welsh Liberal Democrats

- ✓ Support fair and effective public spending
- ✗ No clear procurement policy detail
- ✗ No focus on SME builders

Welsh Labour

- ✓ Strong focus on socially responsible procurement
- ✓ Link procurement to fair work and local outcomes
- ✗ No clear plan to improve SME access
- ✗ No construction-specific procurement reform



- Focus on reducing bureaucracy in government
- ✗ No procurement policy detail
- ✗ No focus on SME access



Public sector contracts are a major source of work, but can be difficult for small builders to access.

Complex processes and requirements can limit SME participation, reducing competition and opportunities across the sector.