

# Senedd Election Manifesto Briefing



## Royal Society of Chemistry – April 2026

As voters in Wales head to the polls in a pivotal election, it is vital that the chemical sciences sector is recognised as a strategic priority for economic growth, skills, innovation and sustainability.

Jobs growth in the chemistry sector is projected to outstrip the wider labour market by 30% across the decade to 2032<sup>1</sup>. The chemical sciences contribute an estimated £1.34bn direct GVA to the Welsh economy, with an average of £99,500 GVA per job for chemistry-using workers.<sup>2</sup> The next Welsh Government and Senedd need to put in place the conditions for the sector to thrive and capture the growth that can help underpin the Welsh economy. A strong pipeline from primary school through to higher education supported by an uninterrupted chain of chemistry experts, a supportive environment for research and innovation and SMEs, and accessible labs across the country developing the capacity the sector needs. Not only can the sector drive the economy, it is also central to tackling key issues around Net Zero and sustainability, finding the solutions to the environmental challenges we all face, and creating a safer, more sustainable, future.

Across the next Parliament the Royal Society of Chemistry wants to see science champions in the Senedd pushing for action on these key areas:

### **Creating the conditions for the sector to thrive**

- Higher education plays a crucial role in delivering the highly skilled chemical science professionals needed for economic growth. The next Government must recognise the strategic importance the chemical sciences play in national resilience, innovation and driving the economy.
- Tackle and prevent potential 'cold spots' in university chemistry provision, ensuring chemistry higher education remains accessible in Wales. Continue to engage with the RSC on the outcomes of the future of tertiary education review, including utilising the findings of the upcoming report from the RSC on the economic impact of chemistry.
- 72% of the Welsh public believe Welsh Government investment in R&D is important<sup>3</sup>. Publicly funded R&D provides a return on investment of £8 for every £1 invested<sup>4</sup>. Ensure the next Senedd and Government protects and develops the Welsh R&D eco-system, putting it at the heart of future economic strategies.
- Expand and diversify the pathways into the chemical sciences workforce, such as via vocational and technical routes, alongside academic routes, including reskilling the workforce through the 'Just Transition'
- Ensure there is sufficient funding and access to financial support for, and investment in, innovative R&D-driven SMEs, particularly at scale-up stage
- Address the critical shortage of laboratory facilities in Wales, ensuring chemical scientists and businesses can access appropriate laboratory space across the country

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rsc.org/policy-and-campaigning/discovery-and-innovation/future-workforce-and-educational-pathways>

<sup>2</sup> Metro Dynamics: 2026 report on the "Economic impact of chemistry" pre-publication – most recent available economic data is 2023. £1.34bn includes the total direct GVA contribution of chemistry-using workers in chemical sciences, plus the GVA contribution of chemistry teachers and HE staff. GVA per worker (£99,500) excludes teacher and HE staff due to methodological differences in the calculations.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sciencecampaign.org.uk/what-we-do/public-opinion/research/case-public-attitudes-to-rd-in-scotland-and-wales-2026/#benefits>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-value-of-public-rd/the-value-of-public-rd>

## Putting the chemical sciences at the heart of tackling sustainability challenges

- Continue the pathway to a circular economy, including embedding a circular economy of materials – improve data collection, support world-class research, invest in and incentivise resource efficient design, invest in infrastructure. To maximise this opportunity the next government must invest in the skills needed to deliver a circular economy, as outlined in the RSC, IOM3 and IChemE ‘Jobs and skills for a circular economy’ report.<sup>5</sup>
- Devise a long-term roadmap and a stable policy environment to enable investment in research, development, commercialisation and manufacture of sustainable chemicals and materials, to benefit communities across Wales and achieve green economic growth. Understand the role the chemical sciences can play in delivering Net Zero, utilising the expert knowledge and skills within the sector.
- Implement comprehensive, transparent and adequately resourced monitoring programmes for Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs) in water, soils, sediments, wildlife and humans. Monitoring is essential to understanding the scale of pollution, identifying hot spots and assessing long term trends. Seek to find a harmonised approach alongside other UK Governments. For example, standardised monitoring methods and contaminants in scope, to help avoid loss of long-term spatial data sets.
- Continue to tackle the ‘Forever Chemicals’ crisis through improved reporting and tracking of PFAS, strengthening environmental standards, and working collaboratively with UK Governments on the PFAS Plan.
- Implement additional wastewater treatment to remove CECs from wastewater streams. This could be funded via the polluter pays principle, where industries that use or produce hazardous contaminants, contribute to the costs of their removal.
- Commit to identifying and tackling the other major diffuse sources of CECs in waterbodies, such as pollution from road run-off, waste emissions and agriculture.

## A world class chemistry education for our young people

- Investment in school-level chemistry and science education is vital to guarantee an effective labour pipeline and maintain the strength of the chemical sciences. This includes ensuring there is sufficient funding for consumables and chemicals so that schools are supported to provide hands-on practical activities.
- Address the ongoing uncertainty and confused landscape of qualifications available in the sciences at 16. We advocate for a ‘single route’ science qualification to the age of 16 following the planned consultation in 2028, giving learners equal opportunity to study science by addressing existing gatekeeping and perception challenges.
- Following the introduction of the revised ‘Made for Wales’ GCSEs, continue to ensure that the science curriculum remains up-to-date and imparts subject knowledge as well as technical and transferrable skills. Utilise the RSC’s “elements of a successful chemistry curriculum” to inform and lead curriculum development in chemistry from 11 to 19 .
- Ensure awarding bodies and schools foster a sense of identity and belonging in the chemical sciences through better use of contexts, examples and role models; ensure students see that a future in chemistry is ‘for people like me’.
- Tackle the teacher recruitment and retention crisis in Wales through improved financial incentives, reduction in teacher workload, investment in subject specific CPD, improved careers guidance, and fully implementing the recommendations of the recent Senedd “Teacher Recruitment and Retention” inquiry report.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rsc.org/policy-and-campaigning/policy-library/job-and-skills-for-a-circular-economy>