

I live in North Wales where I first moved as a teenager in 1982. I met my wife, Julie, in Rhyl 20 years ago, and we raised our three children in Prestatyn, where we live today. In 2005 I established a business in Rhyl, which now employs 10 people.

As a business owner and employer in North Wales the core of my 'manifesto' is very much focused on the benefits to the whole region, and to individual communities, that a vibrant and strong economy can bring. From a policy perspective, therefore, I bring the pragmatism of business to the many issues we face in our region.

I have been involved in extensive assessment of the economic landscape of North Wales through consideration of policies, including possible Brexit scenarios, and how they impact businesses. This is especially so where micro businesses and SMEs are concerned. I know the importance of ensuring policy maintains a healthy consideration of the small businesses in our region, and, for this reason, this is a key principle of my aims in political life.

According to the Welsh Government (Statistics for Wales), SMEs (Small and Medium sized Enterprises with fewer than 250 employees) made up 99.4% of all businesses in Wales in 2018 with so called 'Micro Enterprises' (with fewer than 10 employees) themselves accounting for 94.9% of the total. SMEs also accounted for 62% of the employment total in 2018.

As an example of my own policy thinking I would like to see considerable reform to the current system of business rates. The present approach is discouraging enterprise and is a self-defeating tax when stimulation to our high streets and employment prospects is what is needed. I would like to develop better policies that extend the building exemption and small business relief schemes to include new ventures occupying empty shop premises. I would like to see a more sophisticated sliding-scale rating system that enables new ventures to get up and running before having to meet such a severe tax burden.

I would like to see the business rates exemption rules extended to allow community-based ventures, like CICs, to occupy vacant shop premises at much lower cost with new community focused services and facilities.

I am a great believer in community enterprise and CICs and have previously proposed policies to provide a three-year guaranteed basic income facility for qualifying Community Interest Companies that meet a standard of classification as 'Community Contributing Enterprises'. The enormous social benefit being created by CICs is very evident as is their effectiveness as tools for social change and citizen empowerment. My policy is one of 'socialisation' to encourage better approaches to local and regional services with far more direct – but also more supported – community involvement in service improvement.

In this vein, the political 'community' also has much to offer through more collaboration and this is a further key aim of my approach to new policy. I think more should be done to incorporate the views of other thinkers from cross-party perspectives when reviewing options for change. I would propose more diverse 'focus groups' to address many regional issues, with these specifically including people of alternate political views if they have related expertise. We should not be blind to input from other perspectives when assessing the needs of our communities.

Finally, I feel that business, economy and community are all interlinked and we must develop better policies for the people who want to live and work in our communities but who struggle to afford housing and the basic costs to live in our region. I would like to see an improvement in access to the help-to-buy scheme for housing with the 5% deposit perhaps being reduced, ideally to zero, where people are trapped in high-rent difficulties but can show that a purchase with the right support would be affordable.