

Bethan Jenkins Column

It has been a significant week as we marked the anniversary of Plaid entering the Government of Wales and becoming part of the One Wales coalition.

Plaid Cymru's presence in the Assembly's coalition Government has forged a new Welsh agenda. Before the party came to power there were no proposals on how to take forward a referendum to create a proper Parliament for Wales; no plans to review the way our nation is funded by the Treasury and no intention to legislate on the Welsh Language.

The new Welsh agenda means that issues which were once ignored in the Assembly, because they weren't devolved, are now central to political debate. Plaid Cymru's presence in government has ensured that matters such as the future of public service broadcasting and the criminal justice system are being openly debated.

Being at the forefront of this new politics means putting an end to tribalism, that cancer in Welsh politics, and being prepared to see not what divides us but what we have in common. Plaid has shown that we can work with others at every level of government; we have shown that we can put differences aside to work for Wales. Maybe the other parties will start to follow our lead: after all, everyday life, real life, is about working together and surmounting differences.

We now see the emergence of a new Welsh Agenda. It is a forward-looking, progressive agenda for building a modern, just and prosperous nation. How do we know? Because others are responding to what we have been saying. It is an agenda which has changed the colour, the debate, the very conduct of Welsh politics. It's grown-up European politics. You can hear its echoes rebounding off the wall of the Senedd chamber.

We are much more confident as a nation.. Wales is finding her own way. We're forging a different path to the London parties. Devolution is about making a real difference. People want us to use our position in government to press for that new Welsh way. People want us to implement those changes which will improve their day-to-day lives.

The new Welsh Agenda is about a realisation that we are no less capable of realising the ambitions of our people than any other country in the world. It's about a new found confidence to set our own direction. It's not about banging drums; it's about doing what's needed in the interest of good governance in Wales.

Another important anniversary is the 60th year of the National Health Services existence.

I am proud to pay tribute to the dedicated staff of the NHS and the service that they give to the people of the communities they serve.

Our hospitals and health services would be nothing without the staff at all levels who give an unequalled level of commitment to ensuring our health and wellbeing.

I am proud that now that Plaid is in government we have succeeded in reversing the centralising tendencies of previous administrations and are now committed to providing services as close as possible to patients' homes. I am also proud that the One Wales Government has committed to not use PFI in health, that it is ending hospital car parking charges, and is taking basic services such as cleaning out of the hands of private firms and handing control back to ward sisters. For rural areas add in something welcoming the one Wales commitment to a rural health plan that will protect and enhance services in our rural communities.

The anniversary is a chance for us to celebrate the last 60 years and to look forward, while acknowledging the challenges to come, to a bright future for our NHS. In doing so, let us remember with gratitude the staff who have served our communities so well and those who, 60 years ago, had the courage of their political convictions and took the bold step of establishing this service of which we are all so proud.