

# towards 2030

a decade of change  
volume II

Green Party Manifesto 2024



greens  
deliver.









# green party 2024 general election manifesto

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Our 2020 election manifesto warned that “the next ten years are critical if we are to address the climate and biodiversity crisis which threatens our safe future on this planet”. That sense of urgency has driven us every day during our time in Government and it continues to drive us as we approach the second quarter of the 21st century.

We enter this election with a track record of delivering on our policies and providing stable government during turbulent times. Working with coalition partners but always pushing our distinctive Green policies, we have shown that we know how to deliver change.

The manifesto in your hands is a map for the next five years. It lists our ambitions to address the climate and biodiversity crises and at the same time, improving life for people and families across our country.

Almost every page is a reminder that climate change is our generation’s existential challenge – a challenge that must be overcome if we are to survive. No party has better understood the dangers of climate

change, and no party has done more to tackle this problem here in Ireland. Carbon emissions are now at their lowest point for 30 years while our economy continues to grow.

We all played a part in this. It is an achievement that all Irish people can be proud of. But it is not guaranteed that we will continue on this progressive path. Without a Government that has a deep commitment to preventing climate breakdown, we risk back-sliding when we need to go forward.

In continuing to make these changes to tackle climate change, we need to support families and businesses at every step. We must help people while we are helping the planet. We need to continue the solar revolution by installing free solar panels on thousands of low-income homes. We need more financial supports for retrofits, so more people can enjoy warmer homes that are cheaper to heat. In Government, we have made public transport more affordable. Now we need to make it better – ensuring that services are more reliable and that commuters feel safe on their



bus or train.

Many of the promises in this manifesto are powerful and effective solutions to long-standing problems in our society. We offer real solutions to ensure we have more homes in the right places. We promise to invest in water and electricity infrastructure so the houses we need can actually be built. We will develop land close to our existing towns and villages so that people can live in sustainable communities. This manifesto proposes to breathe life into our towns and villages by restoring vacant houses because this is a cheap and environmentally friendly solution to the housing crisis.

But it is not enough to be pragmatic and principled. It is not enough to build a pleasant country that is protected against future shocks. Change must also be fair. Social justice has always been one of the Green Party's fundamental beliefs. Over the past four and a half years, we have done more than any previous government to improve the lot of children, parents and survivors of domestic violence. There are ideas and policies to make life fairer on almost every page of this manifesto. We are committed to fairness because it is the right thing to do but also because a fair society is a socially cohesive and safe one.

Supporting families and children has been central to the Green Party's work in Government. We have worked to ensure that every child, no matter where they come from, has the very best start in life. We've cut the cost of childcare for parents and improved rates of pay for childcare professionals. But now we need an even bigger change. If we are part of the next Government, the Green Party commits to introducing a public model of childcare, where the State becomes a direct provider of early learning and care. This would be backed up by giving every child a legal right to two years of the ECCE pre-school scheme, putting a stronger obligation on the State to provide necessary childcare places where the private sector cannot. We will also ensure that parents can care for their new-born across the first year of life by increasing paid leave and the rate at which it is paid.

The out-going Government has achieved a lot in the face of considerable challenges. It is tempting to sit back and rest, but the truth is that we cannot afford to do this. The years ahead are critical. We must use every day of the next Government to protect us all from climate change while ensuring that we continue to build a fair and just society for everyone regardless of age, ability or background.

**Roderic O'Gorman**



# 01

# More and Better Homes

Too many people are still struggling with the cost and availability of housing. Rents remain too high, homeownership is still out of reach for too many young people, and people are still living in emergency accommodation.

But there have been positive changes in recent years – changes which the Green Party in Government has been proud to deliver. These reforms, such as the introduction of cost rental housing, the vacant property refurbishment grant, and the new land hoarding tax, are essential to solving the problems of a historically dysfunctional housing market. Our insistence on abolishing the Strategic Housing Development process, co-living, and build-to-rent models of housing has been in the best interest of our people.

## Building More Homes in the Right Places

Our policy focuses on building as many high-quality homes and neighbourhoods as possible in the right places – close to work, school, college, and public services. Only the Greens can be trusted to deliver the housing we need without resorting to sprawling, isolated suburbs with long, car-dependent commutes.

With that in mind, we propose to deliver an average of 50,000-53,000 new homes per year over the next five years. This target will include:

- 15,000 state-backed affordable/cost rental homes,
- 12,000 social homes, and
- At least 4,000 renovated vacant and derelict homes.

These targets will be broken down by local

authority, in line with the Housing Need and Demand Assessment.

We will:

- Appoint a powerful Super-Junior Minister for the Regional Cities, responsible for the balanced development of our country. Their job will be to ensure that public capital investment is directed towards our regional cities.
- Revise the National Planning Framework to increase our ambition for delivery in towns and cities outside of Dublin.
- Deliver affordable and cost rental housing via local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), and the Land Development Agency in every part of the country, including rural towns and villages.
- Continue the successful policies helping to deliver thousands of new homes in our

### A green take on housing:

- **We will bring a focus to the renovation of vacant and derelict stock, recognising that the most sustainable way to deliver a new home is to bring an existing building back into use.**
- **We will implement a new EU law on the energy performance of buildings and expand our policy of supporting home retrofits. This will reduce people's need to burn polluting fossil fuels to heat their homes.**



towns and cities, such as Croí Cónaithe (Cities) and the Land Development Agency's Project Tosaigh.

- Make the development levies waiver permanent for the construction of apartments in our towns and cities, provided that they are sold to owner-occupiers.
  - Establish a National Citizens' Housing Fund as a new State Savings product to allow the public to make safe investments in affordable housing construction with a steady rate of return. This will provide much needed additional capital investment for homebuilding.
  - Penalise land hoarding with the new Land Hoarding Tax and the proposed Land Value Sharing mechanism.
  - Prioritise housing development around
- areas with good public transport links, safe walking and cycling routes, and safe routes to school.
  - Target the Help-to-Buy scheme at those who need it by aligning it with the property price caps of the First Home Scheme.
  - Introduce measures to support those who have returned to Ireland within the past five years and may not yet qualify for the Help-to-Buy Scheme.
  - Establish a working group within the Department of Housing to support community-led housing organisations, housing co-operatives, and community land trusts.





## Filling Every Vacant Home

Bringing vacant properties back into use is the perfect way to increase housing supply. It breathes life into run-down, derelict areas in our villages, towns, and cities with a much lower environmental impact. While great strides have been made in the last few years, more can be done. This will be a key priority for us.

Our policy rests on three pillars.

First, we need to reduce the administrative and regulatory barriers that prevent people from bringing vacant and derelict homes back into use.

We will:

- Establish a national online register of derelict sites, containing details such as the condition of the buildings, the site's planning history and zoning objective, and any outstanding levies due on the land.
- Put a single permitting system in place for fire, accessibility, and planning while retaining high standards and ensuring independent oversight of works.
- Produce simplified technical guidance on converting two- to four-storey,

above-shop or commercial structures to residential use.

- Target an eight-week turnaround time for completing both conveyancing and probate, and prioritise the digitisation of both processes, so that properties are not left vacant for too long.

Second, we need to continue providing financial support to people doing this work.

We will:

- Make it easier to secure the vacant property refurbishment grant by providing staged payments and reviewing the rate of grant funding.
- Amend the Repair-and-Lease and Buy-and-Renew Schemes so they provide cost rental as well as social homes and set local authorities output targets for each of them.
- Provide greater powers and resources to local authorities to CPO derelict buildings.
- Finally, we need to discourage owners from holding on to these properties without improving them. We will:
- Increase the vacant homes tax and expand

its scope to include homes currently excluded because they are deemed uninhabitable.

- Consider transferring the collection of the derelict sites levy from local authorities to Revenue, potentially merging it with the land hoarding tax.

- This work will take time. In the short term, we will publish a 'meanwhile use' policy, ensuring that vacant sites are temporarily used for community gardens, growing spaces, and artistic venues before being developed for housing.

## Defective Housing

For too long, the under-regulated Irish construction industry was free to build defective houses and apartments, prioritising profit over homeowners' safety and wellbeing. Whether it's poorly insulated homes, apartments with fire, water ingress, or structural defects, or houses built with pyrite or mica, many owners have faced decades of stress. The state is rightly stepping in to help them.

We will continue this by:

- Rolling out a full statutory apartment

defects scheme and continuing to advocate for homeowners facing difficulties with defective dwellings.

- Introducing regulations for Owners' Management Companies to establish sinking funds and fairly use annual service charges under the Multi-Unit Developments Act 2011.
- Establishing a regulator for Owners' Management Companies.
- Progressing the enhanced Defective Concrete Blocks Grant scheme for households affected by mica.

## Renters' Rights

We have significantly strengthened protections for renters. Existing renters benefit from tenancies of indefinite duration, caps on rent increases and new tax credits to help them pay their rent. We have also introduced policies to prevent evictions when landlords are selling up. New renters will soon see the benefits of affordable rental tenure, which the Greens have long championed. We now want to go further.

We will:

- Make the Help-to-Buy scheme available to

hard-pressed renters seeking to purchase their home from their landlord.

- Protect renters by resourcing local authorities and AHBs to make the Tenant-in-Situ and Cost-Rental-Tenant-in-Situ schemes as effective as possible.
- Extend the Rent Pressure Zone legislation.
- Increase the renters' tax credit in line with rental inflation.
- Introduce a renters' deposit protection scheme where deposits are securely held by a public body such as the Residential Tenancies Board.

## Homelessness

Everyone should have a roof over their head. The homelessness crisis we're experiencing in

Ireland is the result of a housing market that is not supplying enough homes at an affordable





price. However, in addition to building more of the right homes in the right places, we think that a package of smaller reforms will help us to bring the number of people living in emergency accommodation down.

We will:

- Establish a Homeless Prevention Office in every local authority, with input from the housing section, the HSE, local AHBs, and homeless services. This office will work with individuals to source housing and prevent homelessness.
- Continue to support the financial sustainability of AHBs through the Capital

Advance Leasing Facility, the Cost Rental Equity Loan and the Capital Assistance Scheme. We will resource AHBs focused on long-term homelessness prevention.

- Increase investment in the Housing First programme to ensure those with complex needs receive supported housing with necessary wraparound services.
- Ensure the additional supports under the Homeless HAP scheme are provided to all who need it.
- Hold a referendum on changing the constitution to guarantee a right to housing, based on the Housing Commission's draft wording.

## Homeownership

Delivering our housing targets will require over €20 billion in public and private investment in housing per year. It is important that we don't shut the door on private development finance. However, we must manage it to ensure that prospective homeowners are not crowded out by institutional investors.

We will:

- Retain the higher rate of stamp duty of 15% on the bulk purchase of houses and duplexes, and the 6% rate on transactions over €1.5 million.
- Retain the owner-occupier guarantee set out in planning law.



## Greener Buildings

Residential buildings account for nearly 10% of our greenhouse gas emissions. While substantial progress has been made in reducing the scale of this challenge, more needs to be done. Alongside renovating the existing building stock, we need reforms to ensure that new homes are environmentally friendly.

We will:

- Implement the new EU Directive on the energy performance of buildings by raising the minimum energy standards for new buildings and requiring the installation of solar panels where feasible.
- Introduce a Building Information Modelling system to assess and manage embodied carbon in planned developments.
- Get the public sector to take a leading role in measuring embodied carbon.
- Introduce regulations and changes to public procurement to minimise embodied carbon in construction, including by promoting the use of cross-laminated timber (CLT).
- Encourage the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund and Enterprise Ireland to support the scaling up of a domestic industry in modern methods of construction (MMC), including 'design-and-build' contracts, CLT, and rapid-build modular units.
- Amend the building regulations to facilitate and encourage greater levels of CLT use in public and private construction projects.

## Warmer, Healthier Homes

Our ambition is to end fuel poverty by 2040 by continuing to use carbon tax revenues to retrofit low-income homes.

We will also:

- Introduce an equity release scheme for retrofitting so that older people can live in warm homes.
- Extend the tax deduction for retrofitting works on rental properties beyond 2025 and increase it from €10,000 to €30,000 and make this conditional on the provision of long and secure tenancies.
- Cut red tape to make it easier for people to retrofit their homes and businesses.
- Ensure that every home, including older ones, has access to retrofits.
- Increase the new 80% grant for attic and cavity wall insulation to 100%.

## Planning

Given the scale of the challenges we face in building housing, electricity grids, public transport, and water infrastructure, we must significantly scale up our planning system. Our vision is for a modern system that can meet these demands while preserving the rights of residents, NGOs, and other interested parties to be heard.

We will:

- Implement a major recruitment drive for planners, architects, and ecologists for local authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála, including provision of more training places in further and higher education institutions, and staging recruitment events in other jurisdictions.
- Simplify the Development Plan process



by using 3D and digital plans to facilitate meaningful public participation.

- Make development plans more detailed, ensuring that more public debate occurs when plans are being made, and less occurs when applications are submitted.
- Establish Citizen Engagement Offices within each local authority to engage proactively with the public on development plans, planning submissions and cross-sectoral community issues.
- Develop a compulsory public register of all land and land transactions.
- Establish a Brownfield and Infill Register within the Office of the Planning Regulator to facilitate their development and to ensure compact growth of urban centres.
- Allow An Coimisiún Pleanála inspectors to adjudicate on minor appeals, such as for garden sheds, with proper oversight. This will allow the Commission to maximise its resources.
- Exempt bicycle sheds in front of houses from planning permission.
- Implement the legal costs scheme

proposed in the new Planning and Development Act to ensure that costs are not a barrier for those seeking to take action against a planning decision.

- Better align regional and local development plans with transport, electricity grid, and water infrastructure planning.
- Mainstream sustainable planning requirements for new residential schemes, such as infrastructure for rainwater harvesting, natural ventilation, and green roofs.
- Plan our towns and cities to be 'safer by design', so that our public spaces discourage and prevent crime. This can be done with better lighting, fewer narrow passageways, and passive surveillance.
- Review planning application and first-party planning appeal fees to reflect the administrative work involved. We will remove the fee for planning observations.
- Support and facilitate the making of Tree Preservation Orders in urban areas.



# Heritage

In addition to being precious in its own right, and part of our inheritance as a nation, the protection of our heritage delivers numerous economic and social benefits to many areas like tourism, the quality of the urban environment and the preservation of traditional skills.

We will:

- Maintain a unified built and archaeological heritage unit led by a dedicated Minister of State for Heritage.
  - Review and amend the 1995 Heritage Act
- so the definition of heritage encompasses areas like biodiversity, heritage at risk from climate change, multicultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage.
- Fund heritage teams in local authorities, including archaeological conservation officers, archaeologists, and archivists.
  - Develop a National Centre of Excellence for Traditional Skills.
  - Strengthen the role of the Heritage Council in providing evidence-based independent policy advice to government, including via the establishment of a heritage research unit in the Heritage Council.



# 02 Support for those that need it

**We believe that while the greatest support should be directed to those most in need, the social welfare system should have broad application. That is why we in Government have delivered both targeted cost-of-living measures and universal ones such as energy credits and one-off child benefit payments.**

## Progressive Budgets

As we have done in each of the last five budgets, despite very difficult global conditions, we will continue to deliver progressive budgets that help the most vulnerable in society.

Specifically, we will:

- Increase social welfare payments in line with earnings and inflation.
- Work to merge the Working Family Payment and the Increase for a Qualified Child Payment into a single anti-child-poverty payment, to be made available alongside Child Benefit. Eligibility for this payment will be based on household income, not employment status.
- Reform the social welfare system so that eligibility for social assistance payments is determined by income, not by employment status, guaranteeing a basic income for everyone.
- Over the term of Government, increase the Home Carer's Tax Credit to €4,000 and make it available to unmarried but cohabiting parents.
- Recognising the challenges faced by people with disabilities and the value of care in Irish society, prioritise increases to Disability Allowance and Carer's Allowance in annual budget negotiations. This will include introducing a new €50 weekly cost-of-disability payment.
- Provide an annual payment of €3,800 for every parent of a child with a severe disability, by replacing the existing Incapacitated Child Tax Credit with a refundable Child and Adolescent Disability Tax Credit.
- Make the annual Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance of up to €285 per child available to all households with children.
- Prevent future pensioner poverty by advancing the planned system of pension auto-enrolment and retaining the Future Ireland Fund.
- Enact the Employment (Restriction of Certain Mandatory Retirement Ages) Bill 2024 to ban mandatory retirement before the state pension age in most circumstances.
- Reform the operation of the Social Welfare Appeals Office, including increasing the publication of important decisions to promote transparency, and consider whether it would be better established as an independent body outside the Department of Social Protection.

## Maternity, Paternity and Parent's Leave

Building on a strong record of advancing the availability of paid leave for new parents, we will continue to expand access to these leaves to bring them up to 52 weeks, or to cover the first year of a child's life.

We will:

- Increase maternity leave from 26 weeks to 28 weeks.

- Increase paternity leave from 2 weeks to 4 weeks
- Increase parents leave from 9 weeks to 10 weeks per parent.
- Provide for a 50% top up of parents leave for those leading one-parent families.
- Increase maternity, paternity and parent's benefit by €40 per week.

## Tackling Energy Poverty

The best way to tackle energy poverty is to ensure that Irish households have access to renewable energy generated at home.

We will:

- Provide 100% grants to low-income households at risk of energy poverty for the installation of rooftop solar panels.
- Building on the remarkably successful pilot Warmth and Wellbeing Scheme, enable healthcare professionals across the country to designate households for free energy-efficiency upgrades on health grounds.
- Establish a Community Energy Advice Service in every local authority, to assist households in applying for SEAI grants and to ensure those at risk of energy poverty are prioritised for retrofitting.
- Update the SEAI's mandate to focus on supporting those most at risk of energy poverty.
- Work with the Commission for Regulation of Utilities to ensure they provide advice on the best energy tariffs for households at risk of energy poverty.

## A New National Means Testing Agency

While most financial supports to households are provided by the Department of Social Protection, these interact with several means-tested payments made by other departments and agencies. New advances in technology, primarily from the recent modernisation programme in Revenue, have made real-time earnings data available to policymakers.

We will establish a centralised means-testing agency to determine eligibility for supports across a range of sectors, including social protection, housing assistance payments, medical and GP visit cards, the National

Childcare Scheme, cost rental housing, the Warmer Homes Scheme, SUSI grants for students, and legal aid. In our view, this would deliver four distinct benefits. First, it would simplify the process for people seeking to access public services. Second, it would allow for better targeting of grants and social assistance payments. Third, it would inform future policy development by fostering joined-up thinking in the design of means-tested policies. Finally, it would achieve significant administrative savings, freeing up resources within the public service for more pressing tasks.



# 03 Protecting and restoring nature

We have transformed the nature agenda in Ireland from a very low base and taken significant steps to protect and restore habitats and species across the country. We led a root and branch review of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and renewed the organisation, increasing its budget by 170% and almost doubling its staffing levels. We also funded a biodiversity officer for every local authority to ensure that regional and national policies connect to local action.

We fought for the Nature Restoration Law in Europe, and won – a huge achievement against powerful odds – and we are now developing an inclusive and participative national Nature Restoration Plan that puts communities and stakeholders at its heart. We also published Ireland's fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan, our most ambitious yet, and put it on a statutory footing with new legal obligations for public bodies to play their part in implementing it. The plan has been rated by the World Wildlife Fund as one of the best in the world.

Our National Parks and National Nature Reserves are some of Ireland's most precious places for nature, home to old ecosystems and habitats of immense ecological value. After years of underinvestment, many are degraded, requiring intensive care to recover. We increased investment in them by 300%, facilitating the implementation of large-scale restoration works, long term conservation planning at landscape scale and better public engagement. For the first time in over 25 years, we've also created new ones: Brú na Bóinne National Park in Co Meath and Páirc Náisiúnta na Mara, Ciarraí.

We have also overseen unprecedented investment in the conservation of unique habitats like blanket bog, reintroduced white-tailed eagles and ospreys to Irish

skies, and protected vulnerable species like the corncrake, natterjack toad, curlew and other breeding waders. We also took a strategic approach to tackling wildlife crime by establishing a dedicated directorate, substantially increasing resources, and partnering with An Garda Síochána to share expertise. It's paying off – prosecutions are up. But we need to do more, so we instigated a major review of Ireland's wildlife legislation to make it more effective and more enforceable. Last but not least, we empowered people, young and old, urban and rural, from all walks of life, to engage with the challenge, explore the solutions, and use their voice through a Citizens' Assembly and world-first Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss. The recommendations and calls to action that emerged from these parallel processes will shape Ireland's approach to biodiversity for a generation.

And it is a generational perspective that is needed. We will redouble our efforts, taking a long-term view to restore degraded ecosystems at scale, protect iconic species (as well as the less well known, but equally important ones), stop crimes against wildlife and habitats, designate more protected areas, and collaborate meaningfully with farmers, fishers and foresters to promote and incentivise high nature value land management.

As well as providing vital habitats for wildlife, Ireland depends on healthy nature for everything from food, fuel, fibre, clean water and air, carbon sequestration and flood regulation, to health, wellbeing and a sense of wonder. It is priceless. We will strive to ensure that Ireland's biodiversity is healthy and resilient, so that we can all continue to benefit from the ecosystem services that it provides, both today and into the future.





We will:

- Develop, implement and fully resource an ambitious Nature Restoration Plan for our lands, rivers, seas, and urban areas, that puts communities at the heart of the action for nature.
- Advocate for a European Nature Restoration Fund in the EU's next budget that is separate to the Common Agricultural Policy, to ensure that farmers, fishers and foresters are rewarded for delivering on the Nature Restoration Law's targets.
- Fully resource and implement the fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan to ensure that Ireland's biodiversity is conserved and restored.
- Continue to grow NPWS human and capital resources, building capacity in line with international comparators with a target of 1,100 full-time equivalent staff in the lifetime of the next Government.
- Tackle wildlife crime by continuing to resource the NPWS and ensuring that strategic engagement with An Garda Síochana is expanded. Complete the ongoing review of Ireland's biodiversity legislation and enact the relevant amendments.
- Expand the remit of the EPA to include biodiversity and undertake a major national programme of biodiversity data collection, analysis and monitoring. We will legislate to ensure that all biodiversity data collected by private industry for the purposes of ecological assessments is publicly available.
- Develop a habitat map for Ireland to Fossitt Level 3 that is freely available to the public and resource the CSO to develop a full suite of ecosystem accounts by 2030. We will use the information gathered to report on the value of Ireland's natural capital and ecosystem services to our society and economy.
- Mainstream all EU LIFE Nature and Water programmes, after the schemes end.
- Pilot biodiversity net gain in at least three local authorities, building on the results of the Department of Housing's review of international approaches.



## Land

Our approach to supporting nature on our land will be a collaborative one. We have already begun the process of planning how to engage with farmers and landowners on the new Nature Restoration Plan, as required under the EU Nature Restoration Law. We are determined to put in place a strategy that delivers mutual benefits for landowners and nature.

We will:

- Allocate the Climate and Nature Fund to support large scale nature restoration projects. This will include at least €150 million for measures on public land such as national parks, nature reserves and other high nature value sites, as well as €200 million for capital measures on private land.
- Create new national parks and nature reserves in areas of high nature value and pass legislation to define what a national park is, how it should be managed, and its role in the wider community. We will also publish management plans for all our national parks.
- Enable national parks to generate income through activities such as merchandise and non-commercial tree felling, with revenues ring-fenced for on-site biodiversity restoration projects.
- Deliver the National Conservation Volunteering Programme in partnership with external groups to support nature conservation efforts on public land.
- Reform the mandates of Coillte and Bord na Móna to require both agencies to deliver 'nature positive' outcomes and to balance this objective with the performance of their respective operations in sustainable commercial forestry and renewable energy.
- Promote urban nature initiatives, including tree planting, sustainable urban drainage and green space provision. We will implement planning rules to protect urban trees, including by supporting the use of Tree Preservation Orders and by setting canopy cover targets at regional and city level, and prioritise the treatment and management of trees over cutting them down.
- Legislate to empower councillors and communities to designate Locally Important for Environment sites (LIFEs), providing a level of protection to important local nature areas without hindering the development of much-needed housing and local infrastructure.
- Establish a system of trading 'nature credits' to reward genuine nature restoration efforts on private land. We will also establish an associated nature restoration standard to prevent the risk of greenwashing.

## Freshwater

We have taken significant steps towards the restoration of freshwater ecosystems. We published a national Water Action Plan that puts accountability at the centre, ensuring that communities and citizen scientists have an important role to play in the protection of their rivers, lakes and coasts. We established new programmes to improve river connectivity and incentivise 'water-friendly' farming and secured a key agreement to future-proof Ireland's approach to flood management through a review of the Arterial Drainage Act.

We will:

- Fully resource the implementation of the Water Action Plan and support the achievement of good ecological status in our rivers, lakes, estuaries, coasts and groundwaters.
- Deliver an ambitious programme to let more rivers run free by removing physical barriers to fish migration, helping species like salmon, eels and lamprey.
- Establish a scheme to support existing



community river trusts and create new ones.

- Complete the review of the Arterial

Drainage Act, as committed to in the Water Action Plan, and enact the amended legislation.

## The Marine

We designated vast new strictly protected areas for birds and habitats in our seas, bringing us from 2.3% to almost 10% marine protection in Irish waters under EU law. We also made significant progress on the development of a Marine Protected Areas Bill to increase this further and achieve our 2030 targets. To ensure that our seas are clean, healthy, biodiverse and sustainably used, we will:

- Aim to end raw sewage discharges into the sea, making it safer to swim at every beach. We will implement regular monitoring and year-round testing of bathing water quality, with a 24-hour turnaround for tests.
- Publish the Marine Protected Areas Bill and enact it to progress Ireland's objective of achieving 30% protected areas in the marine by 2030.
- Consider how best to protect nature around offshore wind energy developments, including examining requirements around biodiversity net gain.
- Ban trawling by vessels over 18 metres within the six nautical mile zone and stop bottom-trawling and pair-trawling by 2030.
- Support an end to the licensing of offshore salmon farming.
- Move aquaculture planning to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority.



# 04 Leading on Climate Action

We went into Government in 2020 on a promise to turn Ireland from a laggard into a leader on climate action. We set ourselves some of the most ambitious emissions reduction targets of any country on earth, and we put them into law.

This was the central commitment of our promise to initiate a decade of change.

We were told that it couldn't be done – that the people of Ireland wouldn't be up for the challenge. But halfway through this decade of change our people have proven those naysayers wrong. Working together, households, businesses, and farmers have delivered key wins on climate across every sector. In 2023, emissions fell by 6.8%, bringing them to levels last seen in the early 1990s.

But there is still so much more to do. We will maintain a relentless focus on delivering further reductions across our electricity, agricultural, land use, transport, built environment and industrial systems in a way that improves people's every-day quality of life.

We will target a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030, a 90% reduction by 2040, and a net-zero economy by 2050. This will require an all of Government approach. That is why you will find climate policies woven through almost every chapter of this manifesto. In this chapter, we summarise our broad approach.

## Climate Governance

Our new climate law has succeeded in orienting Government Departments, local authorities, and state agencies towards a single national climate objective. As we further develop policy in this area, we will:

- Fill gaps to target in existing Climate Action Plans by advancing policies for additional electricity interconnection and long-duration storage, shifting freight from road to rail, and supporting farmers to produce food as sustainably as possible.
- Set targets for the land-use sector based on the EU framework and engage with the Commission on an EU-wide approach to emissions reduction in this sector. This should be informed by an analysis of how agricultural emissions could be included in the EU emissions trading scheme.
- Work to clear bottlenecks in the public sector around planning and licencing and fill skills gaps in local authorities and state agencies.

## Investing in Climate Action

We have consistently backed-up our climate ambition with our budgets, and we will continue to do so. Many of the investments we need to make are covered by the 2021 National Development Plan – our €165 billion programme for capital investment. But given

the scale of the challenge, we made the case in Government that there was a need for additional capital above and beyond this. So, earlier this year, we established a €3.15 billion Climate and Nature fund, which can be deployed from 2026 onwards. And we know

what we need to spend it on:

- €1.2 billion on the retrofit of public buildings.
- €200 million on energy efficiency measures for businesses.
- €250 million to support the development of district heating.
- €300 million to support a new biomethane industry.
- €200 million for a programme of research and innovation for clean technologies.
- €100 million for new infrastructure required for offshore wind and microgeneration.

- €650 million for supports to farmers and other landowners to meet their nature restoration and water quality objectives.

It is no longer a question of whether we should transition to climate neutrality, it's a question of when and how. A decade of inaction prior to our entry into Government means that without sustained rapid action on decarbonisation, we will face billions in EU fines and other compliance costs. These costs will only grow with every year of delay. By minimising these costs, our climate policy effectively pays for itself.

## Electricity

We will turn Ireland into a renewable energy superpower. We will deliver a zero-carbon electricity system by 2035 and develop 20GW of offshore wind, 10GW of onshore wind, and 15GW of solar by 2040.

This will significantly lower energy bills, bring money to our regions, provide good-quality jobs, incentivise new investment in multinational and indigenous businesses, enhance competitiveness, and protect us from large price shocks, like those following Russia's brutal and unlawful invasion of Ukraine. To achieve this vision, we need to make the following investments:

- **Grid:** We commit to selling more AIB shares and using the proceeds to further increase exchequer investment in Eirgrid. This will further reduce energy bills for households and businesses, ensuring that the energy transition is a just one.
- **Wind:** We will continue the wind energy revolution, committing to making it a new pillar of our future economic development.
- **Solar:** More than half of all solar power in Ireland was installed in the last 12 months. We will continue this trend through grants, planning exemptions, and the provision of free solar panels to schools, community centres, and sports clubs. We will continue to grand aid solar installation for farmers via Targeted Agriculture Modernisation

Schemes (TAMS) and will make solar panels free for low-income households.

- **Energy Storage and Interconnection:** Under this Government we have advanced two new interconnectors with the UK and France. In the next Government, we will promote two new interconnectors with the UK and two new interconnection points with the continent, including new hybrid interconnections with offshore wind projects in the DMAP development zones. This will allow renewable energy to flow across Europe, reducing prices for consumers, and ensuring a zero-carbon electricity system by 2035.
- **Planning for renewables:** We will implement a new spatial policy to ensure onshore wind and solar farms are situated in the right places, delivering real benefits to communities.
- **Community Wealth:** We will guarantee that local communities can benefit from the growth in clean energy by improving the conditions of the Community Benefit Fund. We will ensure that every community in Ireland can set up its own clean energy scheme locally through a cooperative structure. Furthermore, we will make the €400 microgeneration tax credit available to people who invest in renewable energy cooperatives.
- **Microgeneration:** We will continue the pilot non-domestic microgeneration scheme





to support increased deployment of solar power on commercial and community buildings.

- **Data Centres:** We will only support the development of new data centres if developers can demonstrate that they can be 100% carbon neutral, do not threaten

our security of electricity supply, and do not risk overwhelming the grid. This is the right approach for an important industry that must be sustainable, given that we expect it to account for 30% of our electricity demand by 2030.

## Agriculture

Contrary to the tone of the public debate and media coverage around agriculture and climate change, farmers have shown exceptional leadership on climate action. In 2023, emissions from agriculture fell by 4.6%. We will build on this progress by supporting the vision set out in the recently published Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture, as set out in chapter 8 of this document. This will involve:

- Supporting the diversification of farm

incomes through the growth of organic farming, forestry, horticulture, and anaerobic digestion.

- Rewarding farmers for taking steps to protect nature on farms and for improving water quality in our rivers and in the sea.
- Reducing chemical fertiliser use on farms.
- Supporting research into new environmentally friendly farming practices, and the deployment of new technologies.
- Supporting lower carbon food choices.

## Land use

The science of measuring emissions from land use is complex, so it is difficult to assess exactly how much carbon is being emitted and stored in our forests, soils and bogs. What is not in doubt, however, is that human activity is causing carbon to be lost from our land to our atmosphere. We need to reverse this process and increase the capacity of our land to draw down carbon from the atmosphere. As we set out in chapter 8, this will be done by:

- Planting trees on 8,000 hectares of land ever year in a way that strikes a balance between the need for commercial forests

and the need for forests for nature and amenities.

- Restoring our peatlands. Much of this will be done on state-owned bogs, but we will also support the low-intensity management of private farms on peaty soils.
- Completing and implementing the Land Use Review.

The way we manage our seas also has big impacts on the carbon cycle. We will develop and implement policies to protect and restore marine carbon sinks and stocks.

## Transport

Moving away from a car-dominated system brings numerous benefits. In addition to reducing emissions, it protects lives and health, lowers the cost of living, makes room for affordable housing and improves quality of life. While transport emissions reductions are hard to achieve with a growing population and economy, we have had some important successes. Thanks to fare reductions of 60% for young people and 20% for everyone else, public transport use has rebounded quickly after the pandemic. One million people are now taking public transport every day in Ireland, and passenger numbers on rural public transport services have increased four-fold. As we set out in chapter 7, we will make progress towards our 2030 climate targets in transport by:

- Invest half of the Apple tax case money in major public transport projects in Dublin,

Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.

- Further supporting public transport use for commuting by reforming the tax-saver ticket into a new Climate Ticket.
- Providing low-cost loans and better targeting grants that support the purchase of electric vehicles.
- Investing €500 million a year in walking and cycling infrastructure.
- Making walking and cycling safer by reducing speed limits and improving enforcement of road traffic laws.
- Reducing people's need to drive by planning for new housing developments to be situated near centres of employment and education, and near public transport links.
- Taxing business class flights and private jets.

## Buildings

Even if we weren't living in a climate crisis, it would still make sense to move away from fossil fuels as a source of heat in our residential, commercial and public buildings. Energy efficient buildings mean lower energy bills, more comfort, and better health. As set out in chapter 1, we will decarbonise our buildings by:

- Continuing to use carbon tax receipts to expand our retrofitting programme, including by providing free retrofits for low-income homes and social housing

tenants.

- Making attic and cavity wall insulation free for all households.
- Implementing revised EU energy performance standards for new buildings.
- Improving the tax deduction for retrofitting works in the private rental sector.
- Establishing a Community Energy Advice Service in every local authority to assist households in applying for retrofit grants.
- Using the Climate and Nature fund to retrofit public buildings.

## Industry

Our experience is that businesspeople and investors are keen to gain a competitive edge by becoming early movers in this transition to a climate neutral economy. That is partly because some industrial facilities are subject to the EU Emissions Trading Scheme – an

effective tax on carbon. We want to continue to support businesses large and small on that journey, by helping them to make investments that benefit both the climate and their bottom line. As we set out in chapter 5, we will do this by:





- Expanding the roll-out of existing energy efficiency grants for small businesses.
- Using the Climate and Nature fund to support the decarbonisation of industrial heat via electrification, biomethane, and green hydrogen.
- Using regulations and changes to public procurement rules to incentivise a switch from cement to more sustainable materials, such as cross laminated timber, in construction.

## Ireland in a Climate Neutral Europe

The EU is responsible for approximately 7% of global emissions, a share large enough to materially influence our prospect of keeping global temperature rises within the limits set by the Paris Agreement. It is therefore critical that we fully support all the existing and forthcoming legislative measures contained within the European Green Deal.

We will:

- Advocate for an EU target of a 90% reduction in emissions by 2040.
- Implement the Renewable Energy Directive.
- Undertake reforms to support the Energy Efficiency Directive, while seeking amendments to allow us to maximise our renewable energy generation potential.
- Support reforms to the Energy Tax Directive to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies.



## Liquified Natural Gas (LNG)

We will always stand firmly against the development of a commercial LNG facility in Ireland. We will implement and strengthen existing policies designed to make sure that commercial LNG does not become part of our energy mix.

The rupture of the Nord Stream and Baltic gas pipelines highlighted a concern about our own security of gas supply. We commissioned research to investigate what would be the best way to cover that risk. The resulting analysis in 2022 suggested that a temporary strategic gas storage unit would be needed. We now

believe that greater investment in electricity interconnection, short- and long-term battery storage, and the use of back-up distillate oil reserves in the event of an emergency will be the best and most cost-effective means of improving our energy security.

We have commissioned detailed analysis in this regard in the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and if returned to Government we will look to deliver these mechanisms, which do not require additional gas infrastructure, to provide for our energy security.

## Climate Adaptation

Unfortunately, no matter how much progress we make on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, society is going to need to adapt to climate change to a certain extent. We will demonstrate leadership in this regard by prioritising investments that bring multiple benefits.

We will:

- Under a new, single flooding agency, bring together the different strands of flood management (fluvial, pluvial and coastal), with responsibility for long-term adaptation, insurance and immediate disaster response. Ensure that every local authority has a Nature Based Solutions plan in place to deal with urban water runoff and flooding.
- Develop land use management plans for every river catchment with a view to attenuating flooding.
- Use nature-based solutions such as afforestation and the restoration of upland and blanket bogs to store stormwater runoff.
- Mainstream sustainable drainage systems nationwide.
- Increase the number of sensors measuring rainfall and river water levels.
- Develop a warning system for floods.
- In addition to incentivising multispecies swards and agroforestry, develop catchment-specific guidance for farmers on planting riparian woodlands to minimise flood risks. All costs of these interventions will be covered, and annual premiums will be paid under the Native Tree Area Scheme.
- To reduce the risk of increased rainfall leading to nutrient runoff and leaching from slurry storage, promote and incentivise alternatives to slurry-based systems for winter animal housing, such as composting barns, through targeted research funding and pilot projects.
- Continue to fund local authorities to maintain roads, cycle lanes, and footpaths damaged by storms and heavy rainfall.
- Prepare a National Heatwave Plan, establishing early warning systems and protocols for protecting the most vulnerable, such as elderly or homeless people.



# 05 5. The Economy of the Future

The Irish economy's focus on excellence in a small number of economic sectors has served us well. Unemployment is near an all-time low; inflation has come down and the public finances are in an exceptionally strong position.

However, with this success comes vulnerability. Experts have consistently warned about external threats to our prosperity from changes in technology, demographics, climate and global trade

patterns. Our approach to these risks is threefold.

We will:

- Support small businesses to grow and thrive.
- Make the economy more resilient to external threats.
- Make Ireland a global leader in clean energy.

## A green take on enterprise policy:

- **We will use a portion of the €3 billion climate and nature fund to help businesses cut down on fossil fuel use, encouraging them to switch heat pumps and zero emissions gas.**
- **We will develop new industries on the back Ireland's enormous offshore wind energy potential.**

## Helping Small Businesses

Small businesses form the backbone of our society. Yet many are struggling with recent cost increases.

We will:

- Introduce a rates rebate for small businesses. Businesses with a rateable value of up to €15,000 will qualify for a full refund on their final rates bill, while businesses with a valuation of between €15,000 and €20,000 will benefit from a 50% refund. Furthermore, we will roll out rates rebates for businesses that can demonstrate actions towards mitigating climate change, as has been done successfully in Waterford.
  - Ensure that businesses are facilitated in transitioning to a green and digital future, through grants, peer advice, and support.
- We will expand and increase the Energy Efficiency Grant to include water, energy, and circular economy supports, and continue the Innovation and Trading Online voucher schemes.
- Work with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland to ensure that our SMEs have access to low-cost finance to help cover upfront grant costs.
  - Retain incentives that are important to help to scale new start-ups such as the Key Employee Engagement Programme and the Employment and Investment Incentive.
  - Pass the modernised Co-operative Societies Bill to unleash the potential of new and existing co-operatives.
  - Clarify eligibility criteria so that social enterprises are eligible for Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland support. We

- will address a major cost issue in the social enterprise sector by increasing the audit threshold from €250,000 to €500,000.
- Extend Illness Benefit to the self-employed.
- Support greater representation of small businesses on the Low Pay Commission and on the Labour Employer Economic Forum.

## Building Resilience

We will continue to work with the private sector to ensure that businesses, investors, and the Government take a strategic and coordinated approach to the challenge of decoupling emissions from economic output. We will also ensure that the digital industries headquartered in Ireland are subject to robust, coherent and strongly enforced regulatory framework.

We will:

- Use a portion of the Climate and Nature Fund to drive the decarbonisation of heat in the public and private sectors.
- Ensure that heating processes are electrified where possible. Where that is not feasible, we will seek to deploy low emission gases, such as biomethane. In the hardest to abate sectors, such as cement, we will facilitate the use of carbon capture and storage.
- Continue to resist investment in commercial Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facilities, recognising that this kind of investment is inconsistent with our climate goals.
- Implement EU regulations such as the Digital Services Act, Digital Markets Act, and AI Act. We will make Ireland a leader in the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence by scaling up national digital regulators such as Coimisiún na Meán, ComReg, and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC).
- Invest in the basic infrastructure needed to support a dynamic economy. Factories and offices will need clean electricity and water and workers will need public transport and homes close to centres of economic activity.
- Ensure future competitiveness through appropriate participation in Important Projects of Common European Interest in areas such as hydrogen, batteries, microelectronics (computer chips), and healthcare.
- Hold a referendum on the Unified Patent Court.

## Making Ireland a Global Leader in Clean Energy

We will:

Develop 20GW of offshore wind energy by 2040.

Mandate the IDA to service large parcels of land near sources of renewable electricity to add economic value to it. This could include manufacturing green hydrogen and sustainable aviation fuel, powering 100% clean data centres, and using waste heat for other industrial processes or for residential district

heating. A portion of this energy could also be directly exported via interconnectors. Avail of opportunities that emerge for upstream activities, such as manufacturing and maintaining high-tech equipment needed for the development of renewables. Push for the establishment of National Offshore Wind Clusters in areas with offshore wind opportunities, co-located with training and education centres to allow local people to benefit from jobs and investment opportunities.





## Further, Higher and Adult Education

Our vision is to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach to further and higher education. The system must be flexible enough to adapt to people's varying needs and abilities. We must recognise that a university degree is not suitable for all our school leavers, and that people should be empowered to engage in upskilling and reskilling throughout their lives. Some of this work has already begun, and we will continue it with another term in office.

We will:

- Examine the possibility of creating a new university that teaches all classes online, similar to the UOC in Spain or the Open University in Britain. This 100% online university would grant degrees and allow people in Ireland and abroad to learn new skills from home while working. It would focus on the Irish language, Irish heritage, and the skills needed for the Irish economy.
- Progress the delivery of a unified tertiary education system to allow more students to access higher education without going through the CAO system.
- Tackle grade inflation caused by Covid by calculating adjusted and unadjusted grades for students who took the Leaving Cert since the onset of the pandemic.
- Extend the bike-to-work scheme so that the purchase of bicycles and cycling equipment can be supported by a reduction in third-level fees or a top-up to the SUSI grant.
- Provide financial support to higher education institutions to build student accommodation, including Technological Universities. We will implement legislation that grants legal protections and fair treatment to students living in digs, ensuring their safety and security.
- Work to expand third level campus health services, including sexual health care, to better support students' needs. We will ensure that universities can provide adequate mental health services by expanding counselling teams, reducing waiting times, and ensuring that every student has timely access to mental health support.
- Increase apprenticeships, especially in careers needed for construction, the digital economy, the green economy and any new areas as they emerge during the term of Government.
- Improve coordination between state agencies to ensure that secondary and further education, upskilling programmes, and retraining address the economy's needs as we transition to green and digital futures.
- Roll out the SOLAS/ETB Nature Skills Training pilot programme for the staff and contractors of public bodies working in sensitive environments and ensure certification is a component of relevant public sector procurement.

## An 'IDA for Skills'

A shortage of skilled workers is holding back almost every sector of the economy. We will not succeed in the changes we need to make in healthcare, transport, energy and homebuilding unless we can find more doctors, nurses, bus drivers, engineers, and builders. We will take a strategic approach to this challenge by establishing an agency to attract skilled workers from abroad, copying

the IDA's model for attracting investment. This 'IDA for skills' will help people to find a job in Ireland, with a particular focus on public service positions, and support with re-location costs. It will operate globally, attracting people from diverse backgrounds, but will also be a key mechanism for helping Irish people living abroad to return home.

## Adult Education

We will:

- Divert a portion of the National Training Fund into a French-style system of Personal Training Accounts, where workers are allocated money to spend on their

- professional and skill development.
- Implement the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy to support people's full participation in Irish society and increase funding for adult and digital literacy.

## Workers' Rights

Workers must continue to benefit from our strong economic performance. We have already introduced some reforms to benefit employees, including a new Bank Holiday, a new statutory sick pay scheme, and automatic pension enrolment. Many of these reforms just brought us into line with other European countries. We will explore going further, including by:

- Convening a Citizens' Assembly on the four-day work week to examine impacts on productivity, wellbeing, and cost.
- Introducing an additional bank holiday.
- Reforming remote working tax reliefs into a simple, generous daily tax credit awarded for each day worked remotely.
- Continuing to fund new remote working hubs, prioritising areas with above-average commuting times.
- Expanding the right to request flexible working to all workers, not just those in

- caring roles.
- Supporting the implementation of a living wage in Ireland, to ensure that all workers earn a wage that allows them to maintain a decent standard of living.
- Working to promote collective bargaining. To do so, we will transpose and legislate for the provisions of the EU Pay Transparency Directive.
- Regularly updating the Critical Skills Occupations List to ensure that we have enough workers for essential sectors of the economy.
- Recognising that some small businesses in certain sectors are struggling with the introduction of crucial new worker's rights, including sick pay and auto enrolment, devising a targeted support scheme to meet the needs of these employers while also protecting these important advances in worker's rights.



## Consumer Rights

We will work to enhance consumer rights to redress by examining changes to the law that would give the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) the power

to impose larger fines for serious offences, for example, fines that are a percentage of a business's turnover.

## Trade

The EU must ensure global trade supports solutions to the world's most pressing problems such as climate change, biodiversity loss, human rights abuses, conflict, and global poverty.

We will:

- Oppose the Mercosur trade deal in its current form, recognising it as a bad deal for farmers and the environment.
- Ensure that any trade deal including an

investor court system gives states the right to pass laws to support environmental protection, labour rights and other Government priorities without having a chilling effect.

- Work with the new UK Government to minimise friction in North-South and East-West post-Brexit trade arrangements.
- Seek to avoid trade wars that would hinder the deployment of relatively low-cost climate mitigation technologies.

## Financial Services

We will get post offices involved in the provision of financial services as part of a broader move towards a system of public banking. This system would direct lending to local communities, guaranteeing access to finance throughout the country and preventing financial exclusion. We will implement the 2022 Retail Banking Review recommendations to improve credit reporting and regulatory processes.

To give people a stake in the climate transition, we will design and issue citizen green bonds.

This will allow people to invest directly in, and make a return from, the transition in their local area. They will fund community-owned renewable energy projects, local public transport infrastructure, and water management.

We support efforts to discourage speculative cryptocurrencies, recognising them as inherently unsustainable with low utility. This does not preclude support for an EU-level digital currency that does not share the same immense energy usage issues.

## Making Tourism Sustainable

Tourism is a vital industry for the Irish economy, employing more than 200,000 people with 67% of expenditure in regional and rural areas. Tourism is at particular risk from climate impacts, and we need to ensure that the sector has a truly just transition that

protects workers, while ensuring it plays its part in meeting our climate action ambitions.

We will:

- Ensure that tourism contributes to meeting

# Nature friendly farming



- our climate targets.
- Invest in and strongly support place-based tourism, with an emphasis on 'domestic-first' holidays for Irish holidaymakers.
- Support affordable tourism offerings and restorative eco-tourism.
- Build effective climate adaptation supports for tourism communities that are most impacted by extreme weather events and new climatic conditions; co-design just transition pathways with communities that wish to reduce their dependence on tourism.
- Introduce robust regulations for the short-term letting market to ensure an appropriate and sustainable balance with the residential housing market.



# 06 The best start in life

**Our children are at the core of our communities. Their future is the future of our country and our planet. We have a responsibility to give them the best possible chance to thrive, grow, and build families and communities of their own.**

## Further Progress on Childcare

We have always believed that early years care and education is a vital public good that must be guaranteed by the state – providing the best service possible, readily accessible to everyone, equally. Fundamentally, it must offer every child in Ireland an equal start in life to ensure better outcomes in the future. We were the first party to make this public vision for early years a reality.

Over the last four years, we have transformed the early years sector in Ireland. Thanks to the largest-ever year-on-year increase in investment, the state has been able to play

a much stronger role in the delivery of this essential public good. We have halved average costs for parents, stabilised the outlook for providers, and agreed the first-ever pay deal for employees. We expanded the National Childcare Scheme to include childminders, and introduced Equal Start, a new DEIS-inspired model of support for children experiencing disadvantage. We've doubled investment in the sector from €600 million to €1.2 billion.

This has transformed the landscape for the better, and we are only getting started.

## A New Public Model

We can now move towards a new public model of early years education. Central to this are three core commitments to be delivered within the next five years:

1. Guaranteeing access to early years education for every child, regardless of where they live. We will give every child a legal right to early years education by placing access to two years of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) on a statutory footing.
2. Directing the state to provide early years education and care directly. Under this
3. model, the state will work alongside existing private providers, focusing initially on filling critical gaps in provision across the country. New publicly delivered services will provide ECCE along with full-time, part-time, and after-school care. Ensuring that early years professionals are valued and recognised for their extraordinary work through a process to increase pay and improve working conditions.



## Supporting Parents – Quality, Affordability, Choice

We will:

- Expand the Equal Start programme introduced by Minister O’Gorman, delivering early years support to children experiencing disadvantage, including Traveller and Roma children, and children from refugee backgrounds.
- Increase hours under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to ensure all children with disabilities can access early years education.

## Supporting parents – quality, affordability, choice

In addition to providing a new public model and expanding existing schemes to support disadvantaged children and children with disabilities, we recognise the need to further reduce cost pressures on parents, regardless of how and where they source childcare.

- We will introduce a single national fee structure for public and private providers, guaranteeing fees at low, accessible levels set by the state.
- We will build on the success of the National Childcare Scheme, ensuring that the state increases its financial assistance to parents – through both universal and income-assessed supports.
- Through these combined measures, we will ensure that:



- Early years education and care will be provided free of charge to families on lower incomes.
- Beyond this, families will be charged no more than €200 per child, per month. This will be implemented through phased reductions, commensurate with increased year-on-year investment.
- We will reintroduce a mid-year access point to ECCE to ensure that all children can benefit from a full two years of the programme.
- We will work with childminders to implement the Childminding Action Plan in a way that increases the number of registered childminders and allows parents using their services to benefit from the National Childcare Scheme.

## Availability

We will:

- Support the delivery of a public model of early years education and care by mandating and resourcing the national network of Education and Training Boards to develop childcare facilities.
- Increase capital funding for early learning and childcare to support private, community, and public operators. This will include a new start-up fund for early years services to get off the ground.
- Place a legal obligation on primary schools, regardless of patronage, to make rooms available for after-school care, and provide the necessary support to facilitate this.
- Ensure that existing regulations requiring the development of childcare facilities in housing developments are enforced.

## Supporting Our Early Years Professionals

We will:

- Enhance pay and improve working conditions for early years professionals and advance the process of aligning their pay scales to other state educators.
- Continue to increase provision for Core Funding, copper fastening the state's role as the primary funder of early years education.
- Ensure the current process to simplify the administrative burden on providers is completed and that recommendations are implemented.

## Caring for the Most Vulnerable Children

We will ensure that Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, can continue to deliver the best possible service to vulnerable children in care. In Government, we will:

- Extend the pilot Barnahus model of care nationwide.
- Progressively increase capital provision to implement the Tusla Estates Plan, delivering Tusla-owned residential capacity at greater scale and reducing reliance on third-party professional care arrangements.
- Implement the Review of Special Care with a view to hiring more therapists and providing the necessary capital for new special care facilities.
- Further support measures to increase the number of social workers, examining pay and conditions.

- Provide long-term foster carers with access to pension entitlements to

recognise the key role their care plays for vulnerable children.

## Care Leavers

Young people leaving the care system experience particular vulnerabilities. Developing from the Care Experienced Research Project initiated by Minister O’Gorman, we will:

- Ensure that Tusla’s aftercare budget is ring-fenced within its wider alternative

care budget.

- Raise eligibility for aftercare supports to all care-leavers under the age of 23.
- Reform social housing capital supports like the Capital Assistance Scheme to make them more attractive for Approved Housing Bodies to build housing for care leavers.

## Youth

We will:

- Progressively increase funding to both the UBU: Your Place Your Space and Youth Services Grant Scheme, ensuring the latter is expanded nationwide.
- Establish a mechanism that links salary funding for youth organisations with public sector pay rates.
- Create a capital fund for new youth services, taking opportunities to co-

locate services with other community infrastructure where possible.

- Increase funding for youth work services and strengthen youth representation in government decision-making.
- Develop an updated national play policy with particular focus on creating inclusive play spaces for girls and children with disabilities.
- Develop more play and hang out spaces for teenagers, who are often underserved.

## A well-Resourced, Modern Education System

Our education system generally performs well in international comparisons, but it faces challenges in the years ahead responding to demographic, technological and climate change. Our goal is to ensure that our schools and universities evolve and deliver high quality, affordable services to people at every stage of life.

We will:

- Increase capital investment for the Department of Education to provide for new primary and secondary schools, and new ASD/special education classes attached to mainstream schools.
- Create a capital funding stream for

older primary and secondary schools to refurbish or rebuild these as modern and climate efficient buildings.

- Reform the model for assessing demand for new schools, by reforming the Forward Planning Unit in the Department of Education.
- Increase the number of multi-denominational schools and Gaelcholáistí. Reform and revitalise the process of transferring viable schools to Community National Schools.
- Amend legislation to require schools to ask parents to opt-in to religious instruction, ensuring that families do not feel pressured to opt-out.
- Immediately establish a Citizens’ Assembly



- on the Future of Education, centring the views of both children and adults in education, as well as their teachers.
- Establish centralised application processes for secondary schools in each regional city and for special schooling in each school district.
- Phase out the use of homework in primary schools.
- Publish, as a priority, a separate policy for the Irish language in the education system to bring teaching in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and to double the number of students learning through Irish.

- Address the shortage of teachers by making the profession an attractive option for those considering it as a career and for those returning from abroad, including by examining salary scales.
- Introduce incremental credit for teachers who temporarily moved abroad to teach in private secondary schools outside the EU.
- Provide funding for a Deputy Principal in all DEIS schools with over 600 pupils, and three quarters of a Deputy Principal position in smaller DEIS schools. We will provide for increases in middle leadership teams in schools.

## Affordable, Green Schooling

To make schooling greener and more affordable for parents, we will continue to expand on the programmes introduced in recent years, including:

- Continued rollout of free solar panels for schools.
- Transferring responsibility for school transport from the Department of Education to the Department of Transport. We will merge the school transport scheme with the public bus network. In rural areas, we will give every primary school child living at least 1km from their school, and every secondary school child living at least 2km from their school, a seat on a bus. We will also raise the maximum age of school bus drivers beyond 70 to prevent service disruptions caused by labour shortages.
- The establishment of a new biodiversity scheme for schools to implement nature-friendly measures on their campuses.
- A pilot 'forest school' – a model of schooling for young children which has proven to be successful in Scandinavia.

## Wellbeing in Schools

Addressing well-being in schools can help prevent social problems developing later in life.

We will:

- Introduce social cohesion and inclusion programmes in all schools to address racism and discrimination, while increasing children's sense of belonging and cultural connection.
- Building on pilot schemes initiated by this Government, ensure that every child has access to mental health supports by developing and expanding mental health teams that work across several schools.
- Provide well-being training for schools and run a public awareness campaign aimed at parents about online dangers for children.
- Proceed with the new Government policy on restricting the use of mobile phones in schools.
- Support the implementation of the new SPHE curriculum, covering issues such as mental health, breastfeeding, consent, and sexuality.
- Implement the Action Plan on Bullying, introducing much stronger policies on tackling bullying, including cyberbullying.



## Access to Education for Every Child

We want to ensure that every child with a disability has access to an appropriate school place and engage with teaching and learning in the way that best supports their needs.

We will:

- Ensure better planning of the need for ASD/special education classes at primary and secondary level and for special schools. We will remove any barriers between state bodies and agencies that act as a barrier to this.
- Fund an SNA in every classroom with a child who has additional needs.
- Complete the review of the Education for Persons with a Special Educational Needs Act 2004.
- Improve the provision of special education training within teacher training courses at both primary and secondary level and increase places on specialist courses.
- Enhance the ability of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to directly support teachers working in special schools and ASD/special education classes.
- Working with the HSE, ensure that additional therapeutic interventions supporting education and health outcomes are provided by children's disability network teams onsite in all special schools.



# 07 Helping You Move Around

Over the last four years, we have made significant progress in moving towards a clean, safe, and modern transport system. Supported by fare reductions of 60% for young people and 20% for everyone else, the number of people using public transport has reached one million per day. We have invested in safe cycling and walking like never before, the Metro has been submitted to An Bord Pleanála, BusConnects is being designed and progressed in every city, Cork commuter rail is underway, and the Shannon-Foynes line is being reopened as the start of a revival of rail freight on our lines.

However, it was always intended that our switch to a more modern and sustainable transport system would be a ten-year project. Only a Green Minister for Transport can be trusted to oversee the delivery of this vision in the next five years. We need to keep going green so we cut our greenhouse gas emissions, resolve the gridlock that a car dependent transport system brings, and create a more efficient way of us all moving around.

While we have delivered a dramatic increase in funding for public transport and walking and cycling infrastructure, we know that we need to go further if we're going to meet our targets on climate, housing and balanced regional development. We estimate that an additional €10 billion will be needed for public transport between now and the end of 2030. We propose that €7 billion of that should come from the Apple corporate tax lump sum with the remainder coming from the next revision of the National Development Plan.

## A green take on transport:

**We will make the switch to a sustainable transport system by making it easier, safer, and more comfortable for people to walk, cycle and take public transport. Where people need to use a car, we will scale up supports for them to access electric vehicles. This support will be tailored to provide the greatest level of assistance to low-income households.**

## Public Transport

This will be a pivotal Government for public transport in Ireland. With the wrong party in Government many of these projects will be delayed or postponed. The Green Party will

prioritise spending on public transport by allocating half of the Apple tax case funds for this purpose.

## Dublin

In Dublin we will:

- Complete the introduction of a new city centre traffic management plan that has already started along the quays, transforming the environment right across the city centre.
- Over the lifetime of the next Government, complete the roll out of the new Dublin BusConnects network. This will involve building the 12 quality bus corridors that are now emerging from planning and further advancing the cycle and greenway network that will transform the city. There is no reason why we cannot follow the examples of cities in the Netherlands, Denmark and France, which are showing how urban mobility in less car-dominated cities can work.
- Start the construction of Dublin Metro, the

Luas to Finglas and the DART+ programme, including an extension to Wicklow town which will see the tripling of the carrying capacity of the DART fleet. We will progress a new rail line to Navan and design the other Luas extensions we will need to Lucan, Poolbeg and Bray.

- All of these projects in Dublin will be critical for the development of the capital. However, our country will not reach its maximum potential if all of the major development is focused on the east coast, and we don't have similar investment plans for our other cities. We need to advance similar metropolitan rail, bus, and cycleway plans in each of our other main cities, which can provide a stimulus for 'transport led development' so that large scale and high-quality housing can be built close to public transport links.

## Cork

In Cork we have already started this radical change by investing in a new passing loop around Kent station and widening the old Cobh line so we can build six new train stations on the north side of the city and run new battery electric carriages between Mallow and Middleton, allowing services to come fast and frequently.

We have designed the BusConnects system for Cork and it too must be delivered by the next Government, along with the new light rail line from Mahon to Ballincollig, which will transform the city.



Rail map of Cork and its surroundings.

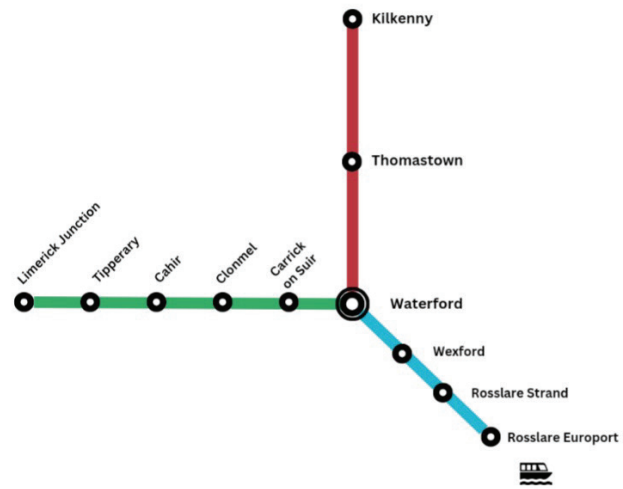




## Waterford

In Waterford we have already started the transformation by moving Plunkett station down to the north quays and building a new sustainable transport bridge over the River Suir.

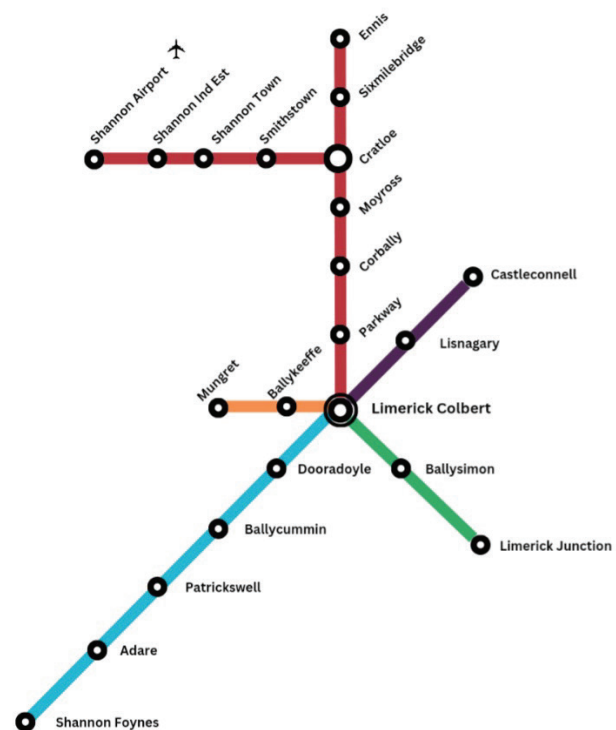
Our vision is to build a new metropolitan rail system for the south-east by reopening the rail line to Wexford and upgrading the existing lines to Limerick and Kilkenny. This will enable us to open shuttle services between Waterford and Kilkenny city and to several of the major towns in the Southeast.



Rail map of Waterford and its surroundings.

## Limerick

We can grow Limerick city dramatically by extending a rail line to Shannon and opening new stations in Moyross, Ballysimon, Adare, and Raheen and creating a metropolitan electric rail service that extends between, Ennis, Nenagh, Foynes, Limerick Junction and all stations in between.



Rail map of Limerick and its surroundings.

## Galway

We believe Galway city can best develop along public transport corridors and greenways rather than motorways. We will construct the first high quality bus corridor from Knocknacarra to the industrial estates to the east of the city in the next two years, building up patronage so the route can become the same route for a new light rail system for the city.

At the same time, we will reopen the Western Rail Corridor and upgrade the lines from Athenry and Ennis so that we see much faster and more frequent services. This will make major new housing developments viable around Ceannt station and in areas such as Ardaun.



Rail map of Galway and its surroundings.

## Towns and rural areas

Our towns and rural areas must also be at the forefront of this transition. In the lifetime of this Government, we have rolled out new town bus services in Athlone, Carlow, and Navan. New services in Mullingar and Ennis are now about to be introduced. We will also continue the Pathfinder initiative, which has promoted

35 sustainable mobility projects right across the country and expand new integrated school and public transport bus services to help increase the frequency of rural public transport services.

## Infrastructure

To achieve this level of ambition, we will need to reform the system of delivery.

We will:

- Ensure that every major public transport infrastructure project is fully funded, enabling it to progress without delay.
- Reform the Infrastructure Guidelines and the Public Spending Code to halve the time it takes for critical public transport projects to move from inception to construction.
- Provide strategic coherence to transport planning by transferring approving authority from Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) to the National Transport Authority (NTA), retaining TII as an agency purely focused on delivery.
- Extend the statutory remit of the NTA across the country and broaden the scope of Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies to include the wider region.
- Continue to invest in the basics, such as town, village, and rural bus shelters, up-to-date information, coordinated schedules for smooth transfers, and lighting and age-friendly seating at bus stops.
- Invest in train and bus stations, ensuring they are accessible, clean, safe, well-maintained, and attractive centrepieces of our towns and cities.





## Services

While we have succeeded in making public transport cheaper, we now need to make it work better for everyone. To do this, we will:

- Provide ring-fenced budgets to each of the transport operating companies, solely for improving reliability and punctuality. Key goals will be to eliminate 'ghost buses' and improve train punctuality.
- Establish a new Office for Punctuality and Reliability in the NTA to oversee improvements by providers of public transport services.
- Deliver next generation account-based ticketing across the PSO network.
- Increase the public service obligation budget by at least 20% per year and set it on a multi-annual basis to facilitate better planning.
- Continue to deliver new Connecting Ireland and Local Link services at a rate of one per week.
- Fund a town bus and bike share schemes for all towns with a population of at least 10,000.
- Establish new late-night and early-morning bus and rail services across the country.
- Establish a dedicated Public Transport Safety Unit in An Garda Síochána (AGS), starting with routes and services where the need is greatest.
- Task the new 'IDA for skills' with hiring more bus drivers to allow for higher service frequency for Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann.
- As much as possible, we will ensure that public transport timetables are aligned with each other, so that bus, rail and ferry transfers are smooth and timely.

## Fair Fares

We will guarantee affordable fares that make public transport a competitive and attractive alternative to driving.

- Building on Austria's experience, we will reform the TaxSaver ticket into a 'Climate Ticket', making it easier to access and delivering genuine savings for regular

public transport users, including for those who commute fewer days per week while working from home.

- We will introduce contactless payments on all services, improving bus journey times and work towards a fully integrated ticketing system across all public transport services.

## Electric Vehicles (EVs)

We had a good deal of success in encouraging people to switch to electric vehicles (EVs) in the first few years of this Government. However, the global EV market has slowed down, and Ireland has not been immune to this trend. This presents a challenge to our ambition to halve carbon emissions by 2030, and deprives people the opportunity to drive better, cleaner cars.

We will implement a new policy to get us back on track. It will ensure that new EVs are always cheaper than the equivalent internal combustion engine car. Specific measures will include the following:

- One of the first tasks of our new National Means Testing agency (see chapter 2) will be to scale EV grants by household income, ensuring that every household sees an increase in the grant, but that the greatest level of support is provided to lower income households.
- Extending the low-cost retrofit loan scheme to the purchase of EVs.
- Making EV grants available for smaller, cheaper electric vehicles which are

commonplace in other European countries. These vehicles, which typically have a top-speed of 45kph, are a suitable option for some households in urban areas.

- Ramping up investment in charging infrastructure in our cities, towns and villages and on our motorways, including the introduction of 200 new smart mobility hubs which have integrated car and bike sharing and charging facilities.
- Facilitating vehicle-to-grid electricity transmission. Households with smart meters will be able to run their homes off the battery in their EV. This allows them to charge up on cheap night-rate electricity, or on home-grown power from rooftop solar panels, and use that cheap electricity throughout the day. One day of electricity usage will typically use less than 15% of the battery capacity of a mid-range electric vehicle.
- Introducing advertising regulations to limit greenwashing around vehicle emissions and raise awareness of alternative modes of transport.

## Walking and Cycling

Wider, brighter footpaths and a joined-up, high quality cycling network are vital for road safety and for bringing a sense of life back to our streets. We will continue to invest in this infrastructure to improve air quality and reduce congestion and noise nationwide.

Specifically, we will:

- Increase investment in walking and cycling infrastructure to €500 million per year.
- Establish a new €75 million maintenance fund for cycle lanes and footpaths.



- Fund greenway projects with a separate annual allocation of €100 million.
- Expand local authority active travel teams to ensure they have in-house competencies in urban design, transport planning, public health, community engagement, accessibility, and construction project management.
- Establish a national league table of local authorities to measure success in delivering walking and cycling infrastructure. The most successful local authorities will receive additional funding for their transport budgets.
- Fund the design of detailed active travel network plans for all towns with a population of at least 15,000.
- Prioritise pedestrians and cyclists at traffic lights.
- Explore how we can extend the Bike-to-Work scheme to those who can't currently access it.
- Expand the Safe Routes to School programme and, subject to a feasibility study, implement zero-emission zones around schools and childcare facilities.
- Expand existing bike sharing schemes and support their roll-out to all towns with a population of at least 10,000.
- Champion the introduction of annual car-free days in specific areas, towns and villages to facilitate local markets and festivals.
- Establish sustainable transport offices within the HSE, An Garda Síochána, and the Fire Services to ensure that new walking and cycling infrastructure projects align with the needs of emergency service providers.
- Support the provision of secure bike, e-bike, and non-standard parking facilities for apartment and above-the-shop living in town centres.

## Road Safety

Our ambition is to cut road deaths in half by 2030. We will achieve this by changing the composition of the vehicle fleet, improving infrastructure, better enforcing road safety laws, and reforming the Road Safety Authority.

We will:

- Introduce incentives for the purchase of smaller and lighter vehicles without dampening demand in the EV market, recognising that steadily increasing vehicle size has impacted on road safety, especially for children.
- Oversee the roll out of lower default speed limits.
- Fund 50 average speed cameras on national roads across the country.
- Roll out the use of camera enforcement technology at junctions.
- Examine the use of interlock breathalysers for commercial drivers who have been caught drink-driving.
- Introduce speeding fines based on a percentage of the offender's disposable income, as is done in Finland.
- Split the Road Safety Authority into two entities, one for car and driver testing, and a new Road Safety Office for education, advocacy and research tasked with implementing a Safe Systems approach to road safety.

## New Roads and Road Maintenance

We will make sure that spending on new roads prioritises projects that take traffic out of our towns and urban centres and on road upgrades that improve road safety.

We will also ensure that road maintenance

and repair is properly funded so that local authorities are able to address the problems that more extreme weather conditions will bring.



## Micro and Shared mobility

New technologies such as electric scooters are opening up new opportunities for sustainable urban mobility. We will ensure that users of these technologies and the other members of the public they interact with are kept safe through investment in safe, segregated infrastructure and the enforcement of clear and consistent regulations.

- We will support the roll out of shared mobility services and examine the extension

of the new 'Climate Ticket' to cover shared services for bikes, e-bikes, e-scooters and electric vehicles.

- We will restore the ability to carry e-scooters on public transport once the higher standards established under the Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023 are in place.
- We will implement regulations regarding the commercial use of drones in Irish airspace, including height of flying, noise level and privacy issues.



## Inclusive Transport

We will ensure that the principle of universal design is front and centre when putting new transport infrastructure in place. This will include:

- Adopting an access-for-all approach to transport and spatial planning, urban design and the built environment.
- Streamlining and improving access to mobility aids, adaptive wheelchairs and non-standard cycles for a rights-based approach to mobility independence.
- Expanding Dublin City Council's 'continuous footpaths' pilot, ensuring pedestrians can move along without a drop in pavement height.
- Enforcing of disability parking rules, providing additional disabled car parking spaces, and ensuring access to towns and villages to those who need it.

## International Travel

Aviation is one of the most difficult sectors of the economy to decarbonise. The development of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) will be critical to our success in this area. Biological sources of SAF come with their own land-use related challenges, so we must act now to develop a future pipeline of e-fuels. Our airports are essential pieces of state infrastructure, connecting Ireland to the rest of the world. The passenger cap at Dublin airport was put in place by Fingal County Council because of fundamental land transport access challenges. Modelling has shown that without the Metro, we could see tailbacks of two miles were the airport to continue to grow. Ultimately this is a matter for the planning system to resolve. We supported our regional airports through Covid and they are continuing to grow and

provide valuable connectivity. Shannon and Cork airports are particularly well placed to grow substantially and provide additional capacity to the state. We will seek to develop Shannon as the lowest carbon landing place for aviation between North America and Europe and to re-establish Waterford Airport under public ownership as a centre for new battery electric flights from Ireland to the UK. We will work with our neighbours to support people who want to travel abroad without flying. We will seek to establish and subsidise a single rail-air ticket to cover entire journeys to and from continental Europe across multiple transport modes. We will work with ferry companies to ensure foot passenger access on international sailings.

## Freight

Ireland has the lowest level of rail freight of any country in Europe because of the deliberate decision to run down our use of rail freight and rail more generally in recent decades. An ever-increasing number of HGVs on our roads doesn't work for congestion, for health and for the environment. We have begun to deliver the infrastructure required to facilitate the shift to rail freight. The rehabilitation of the Shannon-Foynes

line is expected to be completed next year, facilitating new rail freight business through Waterford Port. If we are returned to Government, we will oversee a dramatic revival of rail freight in the next five years, taking vehicles off the road and bringing our emissions down.

We will:



- Support the development of the east wall marshalling yard as a freight depot in Dublin Port.
- Build marshalling yards to the west, south-west, north-west, and south-east of Dublin to facilitate a twenty-fold increase in rail freight in Ireland.
- Purchase 150 new freight wagons.
- Work with Waterford Port to introduce direct sailings to Europe.
- Accelerate the electrification of road freight, by streamlining the installation of charging technology through a one-stop-shop approach.
- Streamline the issuance of Irish Residence Permits and Irish Drivers Licences for HGV and bus driver work permit holders to enter the workforce more efficiently.
- Pilot an urban freight and last-mile delivery plan with urban consolidation centres in towns over 15,000 in population.
- Fund a scrappage scheme to replace end-of-life Light Commercial Vehicles with e-Cargo Bikes.

## Ports

Our Ports are critical for our economy and for the development of offshore renewable energy. Ambitious plans have been put in place, and we will implement them.

We will:

- Support the 3FM project in Dublin Port, recognising the need to free up space for housing by moving the new car storage area to a location outside the city. We will support the expansion of the Poolbeg nature reserve, recognising the value of Dublin Bay's status as a UNESCO biosphere.
- Fully support the major development of Rosslare Port for offshore renewable energy and rail freight.
- Move Tivoli docks to Ringaskiddy.
- Reopen rail freight facilities at Marino Point.
- Develop Shannon as an integral strategic hub for the development of offshore renewable energy with a view to becoming a hub for floating wind energy infrastructure.
- Support the further development of Killybegs and Rossaveel, Derry and Belfast ports.



# 08 Our Land, Our Food, Our Future

How we use our land is of enormous consequence for our society, our environment and the rural economy. It impacts on our landscapes, waterways, soil health, habitats, biodiversity and farm incomes. These multi-dependencies will be recognised in an all-of-Government Land Use Policy, which we will introduce based on the conclusions of the ongoing Land Use Review.

The recently published Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture – A shared prospect for farming and food in Europe (the Strategic Dialogue), which was unanimously adopted by stakeholders from across European agriculture, business, environment, and civil society, sets out a shared vision of the contours of European agri-food systems in 10 to 15 years' time.

The vision set out in the Strategic Dialogue is one we support, recognising that we can and must work towards a future in which it is profitable to be a farmer, and in which our agriculture sector flourishes within the limits of planetary boundaries, produces a diverse range of food, and protects and restores the natural environment.

## A green take on agriculture

**We will promote new innovations and policies in agriculture and forestry which allow farmers to earn more money while restoring nature and reducing emissions. This will involve an increase in organic farming, a reduction in chemical fertiliser use, and a switch to continuous cover, close-to-nature forestry**

## Paying Farmers Properly

Agriculture has huge potential to deliver for farmers, for the environment and for the rural economy. We want to enable a farming sector in which farmers receive a better income for their work and where farming and nature restoration go hand in hand.

We will:

- Deliver on the Strategic Dialogue
- recommendation to bring an end to area-based payments in the next Common Agricultural Policy, instead targeting greater support towards the activities and farming systems we wish to incentivise most, such as tillage and organics.
- Use the new Climate and Nature Fund to put in place attractive financial incentives for farmers to deliver positive environmental outcomes.

- Double the area of agricultural land being farmed organically to 10% by 2030, with a further target of 15% by 2035. This will be funded by scaling down the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme.
- Support the establishment of an organic mill in Ireland, and increase capital supports for organic processors to ensure maximum added value.
- Increase the minimum proportion of organic food in public procurement contracts from 10% to 20% by 2030.
- Ringfence funding for Bord Bia to continue to promote the consumption of organic food domestically and across Europe.
- Expand the rollout of locally-led, results-based agri-environmental schemes both under the CAP Strategic Plan and under the European Innovation Partnership model, so that farmers are rewarded financially in proportion to the results they achieve for biodiversity, water quality and emissions reduction.

## A Diverse and Environmentally Friendly Farming System

The application of synthetic nitrogen fertilisers over recent decades has enabled the intensification of food production in a way that has had negative effects for water and air pollution. Nitrogen fertilisers are also a major source of nitrous oxide emissions – a potent and very long-living greenhouse gas. We propose that a more proactive and urgent approach should be taken to ensure that we meet our Climate Action Plan target of reducing emissions from agriculture by 25% by 2030.

We will:

- Reduce climate harmful emissions by increasing funding and advisory support for diversification options for livestock farmers who wish to pursue additional and/or alternative income streams through organic farming, tillage, forestry and biomethane feedstock production.
- Take immediate action to accelerate the measures outlined by Teagasc in its Marginal Abatement Cost Curve as being necessary to achieve the 25% emissions reduction target.
- Increase supports for multi-species and clover swards that can perform without additional nitrogen.
- Increase resources and schemes to advise, guide, support and enforce the Nitrates Action Programme.
- In parallel with fully resourcing and delivering on the agriculture measures in the Water Action Plan, establish a cross-departmental taskforce to plan in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders for the eventuality of the Nitrates Derogation coming to an end.
- Promote and support dry manure systems for housed livestock, recognising that manure in dry systems produces up to 40% less CH<sub>4</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O than liquid systems.
- Examine the feasibility of smaller on-farm anaerobic digestion systems to complement the National Biomethane Strategy.
- Conduct a national assessment of the value of natural capital and ecosystem services to the Irish economy and society, with a view to considering how best to reward those providing currently unaccounted value to the country.

## Soil health and biodiversity

Soil is host to more than a quarter of the biodiversity on earth and is the fundamental

component of any healthy ecosystem. There is growing national and international interest



in regenerative farming, conservation farming and zero-till arable systems. The common theme to all is a soils-first approach, which to varying degrees substitutes alternative management techniques to significantly reduce and in many cases entirely displace the need for artificial fertilisers and pesticides.

We will:

- Support a significant increase in research by academics and farmers into the measurement and classification of soil carbon and biological health and into novel grazing and arable management techniques that enhance soil fertility and biodiversity.
- Develop a methodology to assess the impact of pesticides and animal health products on soil health.
- Support farmers in the transition from fertiliser-dependant grassland swards to more resilient, self-fertile varieties which promote soil health.
- Support farmers who undertake on-farm trials to reduce their dependence on pesticides.
- Prepare a farmland biodiversity strategy following an assessment of current farming systems.
- Expand the Farm Plan Scheme, delivered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, to 10,000 farmers by 2030, to protect habitats and species as well as to find novel win-win approaches for farmers and nature.
- Introduce environmental training schemes for agri-contractors to include hedge-cutting courses in addition to introducing grant support for finger bar hedge cutters.

## Peatlands

Peatlands are a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. While drained peatlands can be of significant agricultural value, that agricultural activity itself can lead to huge carbon losses. Creating habitats and managing land specifically to benefit biodiversity, with appropriate rewards for landowners, may provide an opportunity to better underpin the local rural economy than low output farming.

We will:

- Actively promote and support the low-intensity management of farms with peaty soils in a way that permits the continued use of the land for farming.
- Introduce pilot a scheme to support farmers to trial paludiculture methods.
- Ensure that Bord na Móna and Coillte are adequately funded to restore state-owned peatlands at scale to the highest ecological standards.

## Horticulture and local foods

Our vision for Irish horticulture is of a thriving sector where Irish fruit, vegetables and plants are in plentiful supply both for domestic consumption and for export, and where growers' businesses are resilient and expanding, with a greater proportion of the Irish diet grown at home rather than abroad. Ireland produces dairy and meat products for millions of people, yet we import many of our basic foodstuffs. In an unstable world,

it is important to be food secure, so we will support greater access to locally produced food through a number of measures.

We will:

- Implement the National Horticulture Strategy and increase horticulture capital grant funding to ensure Irish fruit and vegetable growers can consolidate and

- expand their businesses.
- Provide financial support to growers to assist with the transition to a peat-free future, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the horticulture sector.
- Increase support for the development of short, efficient routes to market which connect the producer to the consumer.
- Assist small-scale food producers with the food safety compliance costs of running their businesses.
- Introduce dedicated capital supports for

- the development of local food processing and preparation facilities such as flour mills, bakeries, and community kitchens.
- Introduce supports for the formation of community-owned markets in all towns, showcasing foods from local farmers.
- Fund a pilot mobile abattoir service.
- Incentivise farmers to lease land for allotments and community gardens.
- Provide supports for small-scale local producers of native seeds, plants and trees.

## Young farmers

Young farmers will be key to a resilient and vibrant agriculture sector in the future. Farming must be an attractive, financially viable career option for young people. Without generational renewal in farming, our capacity to produce food and to protect and enhance our natural environment will be gravely compromised.

- We will develop a Young Farmers for Nature Programme, to be funded by the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund, that explores novel mechanisms to help agriculture graduates access land to farm

it in line with biodiversity, water and climate objectives.

- In addition to favouring young farmers and tillage farmers in reforms to land leasing taxation reliefs, we will accelerate the work of the Commission on Generational Renewal to identify options for a retirement scheme for farmers within the first six months of the next Dáil term.
- We will introduce agroecology and organic farming classes as core modules in second- and third-level agricultural science curricula.

## Forestry

Forestry has a vital role to play in meeting our climate targets, as well as having enormous potential to support biodiversity, water quality, recreation, rural economies and to produce timber for the construction sector and for biomass. After significant policy development over the past five years in a challenging regulatory environment, we now have a significant opportunity to support landowners to plant more trees, allowing the sector to deliver on its potential.

We will:

- Work towards the Climate Action Plan afforestation target of 8,000 ha, now that the licensing backlog has been cleared and the new forestry programme is in place

with full State Aid approval, backed by a €1.3 billion budget.

- In meeting that target, we will ensure appropriate balance between new forests designed primarily for wood production and new forests designed primarily for nature.
  - We will further increase the financial incentives for continuous cover forestry at both afforestation and reforestation stage, as well as increasing financial incentives for agroforestry, the Native Woodland Conservation Scheme, and the Native Tree Area Scheme.
  - We will continue to uphold the Habitats, Birds, Water Framework, and EIA





Directives in meeting our targets and will implement the outstanding recommendations of the Independent Regulatory Review of Forestry Licensing.

- Introduce a scheme to offer financial and operational support to facilitate private and public landowners to remove diseased ash trees that are posing a health and safety risk in the wider countryside.
- For native woodland projects of 10

hectares or more, working with Ordnance Survey Ireland, allow people to officially name their woodlands.

- Implement the Deer Management Strategy Group recommendations in full to support the establishment of native woodlands through natural regeneration and afforestation.
- Fund local authority urban reforestation and pocket forests projects.

## Animal welfare

Animals should be recognised as sentient beings to be protected from maltreatment and

abuse, and to live within their natural instincts and needs.



## Pets

Pets provide companionship and comfort to so many people across Ireland and are an important aspect of home living for many families. The vast majority of pets are well cared for and enjoy fulfilled lives with their owners. Others are less fortunate, and these are the ones we need to consider in our decisions.

We will:

- Establish a national inspection team for dog breeding establishments.
- Introduce a centralised database for microchipped dogs.
- Further increase funding for approved/registered animal welfare organisations.
- Promote responsible pet ownership through the school curriculum.

## Farm Animals

Farm animal welfare standards are generally high in Ireland. Nevertheless, standards can vary significantly across different sectors within agriculture. The 'factory farming' model is coming under increased scrutiny, and the relationship between this type of farming practice and the use of animal health products (such as antibiotics), the impact on human health, disease transmission, and the nature of the forced confinement of these animals is a source of significant concern.

We will:

- End live animal exports to non-EU

countries for fattening and slaughter and phase out export of unweaned calves to EU member states.

- Implement the EU Pig Directive 2008/120 in full, to prevent cruelty to pigs such as routine tail docking.
- Support the introduction at an EU level of 'honest labelling' for animal products, so consumers can make an informed decision on the animal products they are buying.
- Support a scheme for 'zero-movement' beef bred cattle which are born, raised and slaughtered from the farm of origin.
- Improve monitoring of all slaughterhouses.

## Other Animals

We will:

- End fox hunting during the term of Government.
- Implement a ban on hare coursing.
- End badger culling and support alternative measures to minimise the spread of tuberculosis, including improved testing and better hygiene on farms.
- Establish a funding programme for the wildlife rehabilitation sector to support those who help sick and injured wild

animals, and develop codes of conduct for practitioners to ensure best practice.

- Ban all non-medical animal experimentation.
- Following further revelations of cruelty, decouple funding for the horse and greyhound industries and phase out public funding for the greyhound sector by 2030. We will ensure fair compensation and re-training opportunities for affected workers.
- Establish a dedicated animal welfare unit within An Garda Síochána.

# 09

## Strong Communities in a Healthy Environment

**Strong communities and a healthy environment go hand in hand. Both are required for people to flourish in their lives. That is why community development has been a central pillar of our policy for the past forty years, and the past five years in Government have been no exception.**

### **A green take on community development:**

**We will continue to roll out new rounds of the Community Climate Action Programme to help community groups to deliver climate and biodiversity projects such as community gardens, solar energy, EV charging, and community composting.**

## **Building Sustainable Urban and Rural Communities**

Climate action and sustainability will only work if local communities are empowered and supported to drive change from the bottom up.

We will:

- Implement the recommendations of the Dublin City Taskforce, prioritising safer streets and transport, delivering pedestrianisation and cycling plans, and eradicating vacancy and dereliction. A Directly Elected Mayor for Dublin is the best way to achieve the goals of this report.
- Continue to support the Rural Development Investment Programme. After 2027, we will advocate for the LEADER programme to focus more on the green economy, the development of cooperative enterprises, and climate change adaptation.
- Open up new rounds of funding under the Community Climate Action Programme, supporting local authorities to partner with community groups to deliver projects such as community gardens, solar energy, EV charging, and community composting.
- Continue to use the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund to deliver on the Town Centre First policy, promoting compact development and economic activity in towns and villages.
- Deliver a remote working hub and a playground in every village and town where there is demand. In suburban areas, we will aim to increase the number of municipal and community spaces to keep up with the growing population.
- Oversee a scaling up of community gardens nationwide. We have legally required local authorities to reserve land for community gardens and will expand this by mandating them to publish a strategy for increasing the space allocated to community gardens and to maintain waiting lists for those interested in using them.
- Expand NPWS/Community Foundation Ireland's Biodiversity Fund to support communities to protect their local ecology.
- Support Tidy Towns groups and work with them to increase the positive impact



communities can make on biodiversity and climate.

- Build on the success of the expanded

National Walks Scheme to position Ireland as an international walking and hiking destination.

## Public Participation for a Better Life

Involving the public in local decision-making has the potential to improve overall wellbeing for people of all ages.

We will:

- Ensure Public Participation Networks (PPNs) continue to play a vital role in activating climate action at the community level. To enhance this potential, each PPN will be assigned resources for a Community Engagement Worker to help engage the public and community groups in local climate action.
- Task Community Development Officers with holding public meetings in every village and town to assess the funding needs of each community and to support them in applying for relevant grants. This will ensure an equal distribution of funding around the country.
- Support community centres in facilitating regular meetings for over-65s groups.
- Ensure communities are adequately supported to celebrate their history, culture, and diversity, and to hold festivals for St Patrick's Day and Pride.

## Community Development to Tackle Disadvantage

Strengthening communities is the best way to address the root causes of socio-economic disadvantage. We support a community work-based approach to help the public access the services they need. To this end, we will:

- Significantly increase the number of community workers on the ground in the most disadvantaged areas, aiming to cover 40 communities by 2026 as part of the Empowering Communities Programme.
- Tackle food poverty by significantly expanding the successful caseworker approach.
- Increase the top-up payment for Community Employment, TUS, and RSS participants by €50 per week.
- Mainstream and expand the Community Development Pilot Programme, given its success to date.

## Using the Law to Protect Nature

The law and access to the courts are essential for environmental oversight and accountability. In Government we delivered a specialist environmental court. However, the high cost of taking a case and the lack of meaningful civil legal aid mean the specialist court will not be accessible to many people. To address these issues, we will:

- Introduce reforms in relation to costs and legal aid, class actions, and rules of standing to ensure the new environmental court can be accessible and efficient as possible.
- Pursue the recommendation of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss

to provide constitutional amendments to ensure a right to a clean, healthy, and safe environment; a right to a stable and healthy climate; and rights of future generations to these and other environmental rights.

- Implement another recommendation of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss to recognise nature as a holder of legal

rights. There are international examples of giving legal rights to nature so that it can be protected from pollution and harm, so that those responsible for pollution can be held accountable, and so that nature can be fully considered in decision-making where rights are likely to be impacted.

## Water Services

Water and wastewater infrastructure are among the most fundamental services a Government can provide. As evidenced by the recent decision to allocate funding from the proceeds of the sale of AIB shares and the Apple tax ruling to Uisce Éireann, investment in water infrastructure is a priority for us. We need it to protect public health, open up land for housing development and ensure that our rivers, lakes and coasts are pollution-free and safe for everyone to enjoy.

We will:

- Cover the cost of well water testing for everyone and make it easier to access septic tank inspections. We will increase

the grant for drinking water treatment systems to 100% and improve accessibility of the grant application system. We will also run a public campaign to highlight the importance of testing for private domestic wells.

- Reverse the trend of increasing long-term boil water notices.
- Continue record levels of capital investment to improve drinking water and urban wastewater treatment plants.
- Trial grey water harvesting and integrated constructed wetland wastewater treatment in housing projects.
- Mainstream phosphorus removal and pilot the removal of pharmaceuticals in wastewater treatment plants.

## Waste and the Circular Economy

We need to move from a throwaway economy to one in which the things we buy go back into circulation when we're finished with them. We know from the experience of past crises such as wars and pandemics that long supply chains are fragile and put us at risk. Keeping things in circulation – either by re-using them, repairing them or recycling them – makes us more resilient as a country.

We will:

- Introduce a Repair Voucher Scheme, with a grant from the government to fix your products, drawing on the experience of France and Austria. We will combine this with a new repair skills programme and a register to ensure that only those with the

relevant skills can partake.

- Introduce a system for reusing glass beer bottles as is done in Germany and the Netherlands.
- Impose an extended producer responsibility on mattress makers, requiring them to accept returns from customers in exchange for a small fee. This will support the recycling of 500,000 mattresses per year.
- Phase-in a requirement for cafés to separate out the price of a disposable cup from the price of a drink and set a minimum price for the cup in regulations. This will bring down prices for users of keep-cups.
- Oversee the ban on disposable vapes.
- Install more public water fountains to cut down on the use of plastic bottles.



- Move to a 'franchise model' of waste collection, ensuring that there will only be one service provider in each area.
- Proactively work towards meeting EU recycling targets.
- Support local authorities to keep recycling centres open for longer at weekends.



# 10

## A Safe and Fair Place to Live

It is unacceptable in 21st century Ireland that anyone is made to feel unsafe in their community. Our priority is to end violence in all its forms. Whether it is women suffering from abuse at home, asylum seekers being threatened outside accommodation centres, or simply people feeling generally unsafe walking down their street, we must put an end to it. It is also critically important that where crimes or injustices have been committed victims are cared for and perpetrators are brought to justice.

### Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

In Government, we have taken huge steps in tackling the epidemic of violence perpetrated against women in Irish society. But so much more needs to be done to fundamentally change the culture that allows any boys or men believe that gender-based violence is acceptable in a modern society. Preventative measures matter just as much as the provision of services and supports for women and girls who are experiencing or at risk of physical or sexual violence.

- **Education:** The education system has a crucial role to play in alerting young people to the problematic social norms that can support harmful gender stereotypes and lead to violence against women being normalised. We will ensure that the revised SPHE curriculum for the Junior Cycle is taught appropriately and effectively across all second-level schools in the country. We will expedite the revision of the SPHE curriculum for Senior Cycle to ensure that age-appropriate education about healthy relationships is available to all students.
- We also need to ensure that what is taught in the classroom makes it out into the corridor – we will work with schools so that their policies are fit for purpose to prevent harmful attitudes and behaviours in schools.
- **Domestic Violence Orders:** The servicing and policing of domestic violence orders by An Garda Síochána is not consistent across all Garda divisions, leaving some victims in vulnerable circumstances. We will ensure that all Garda divisions are mandated to provide up to date and regular training to members on the timely and effective serving and policing of these crucial orders. We will also amend legislation to strengthen the response to breaches of domestic violence orders.
- **Family violence death review:** We will implement a zero-tolerance approach to Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) and will establish a domestic and family violence death review process.
- **Refuge Spaces:** While progress has been made under the auspices of the new agency tasked with tackling DSGBV, Cuan, the number of available refuge spaces in Ireland remains well below the Istanbul Convention mandated target of 675 places. Working with partners in the sector, we will expedite the identification of further sites to allow for the provision of 675 refuge spaces by 2030 with a particular focus on counties that currently have no refuge provision. We will also amend the Domestic Violence Act 2018 to give the Gardaí emergency powers to address violence against women and girls at times when

- court protections are not available.
- **Coercive Control:** We will ensure that victims of coercive control are given the

same protection as victims of domestic violence when attending court.

## Modernising the Justice System

Our priority is to deliver an end-to-end programme of modernisation of the entire justice system. Whether you are visiting your local Garda station, attending court as a witness or visiting a relative in prison, we

want to ensure that you can benefit from a 21st century justice system that treats the public with dignity and respect.

## An Garda Síochána (AGS)

We will:

- Seek to increase the availability of front-line Gardaí to keep our communities safe. This will take a range of measures, including hiring more civilian administration staff and technical experts, reforming training, rebuilding Garda Reserve numbers, reviewing the role of Gardaí as court presenters and addressing factors that are driving early retirement by
- Garda members. We aim to increase the overall number of Gardaí to 15,500 by the end of a term of office.
- Restrict the use of facial recognition technology by AGS to the detection of the most serious crimes, with appropriate safeguards in place, in accordance with the EU Artificial Intelligence Act.
- Expand the Garda Youth Diversion Programmes to include those aged 18-24.

## The Courts and the Judiciary

We will:

- Implement the recommendations of the Judicial Planning Working Group to hire more judges and court registrars to drive down delays in cases being heard.
- Accelerate the modernisation and digitalisation of the courts service, particularly their proposed move away from paper-based processes.
- Increase the income thresholds for
- accessing Civil Legal Aid and expand the areas of law which qualify for it, to ensure fair access to justice for all. We will protect and enhance Criminal Legal Aid.
- Expedite the development of a new family court and incorporate the Guardian ad Litem service within it.
- Review the operation of all quasi-judicial decision making to ensure it is properly resourced, operating to the highest standard, to meet the needs of citizens.

## The Courts and the Judiciary

The Irish Prison System has modernised significantly in recent years, but problems of overcrowding, recidivism, mental health, and

addiction persist. We will continue to work towards a prison system that is modern, safe and dignified for those who live and work there

alike.

We will:

- Reduce overcrowding through the increased use of non-custodial sanctions for non-violent crimes. Community sanctions and models of restorative justice offer the dual benefits of lowering the numbers in our prisons while also reducing levels of recidivism.
- Support the rollout of in-cell technologies to improve educational opportunities for prisoners.
- Explore the use of the 'house of detention'

model for building in extra capacity to the system.

- Reduce the numbers of people held on remand, starting with a pilot programme supporting bail service for women prisoners.
- Continue to improve circumstances for those working and living in the Irish Prison System by supporting the prison psychology and counselling services and by piloting a dual diagnosis programme.
- Expedite the legislation necessary to ratify the Optional Protocol on the Convention on Torture.

## Ireland's Institutional past

We will:

- In line with the recommendations of the O'Leary Scoping Report, establish a Commission of Investigation to examine abuse in day and boarding schools, at every step prioritising the wishes of those affected by the abuse.
- Convene an expert group to develop proposals for redress for victims of abuse in day and boarding schools.
- Continue to deliver the Action Plan for

Mother and Baby Homes Survivors, in particular delivery of the Records and Memorial Centre, which will stand as a site of conscience for future generations in relation to the history of institutional abuse.

- Pass legislation requiring religious orders to hand over individual records from institutions to a centralised repository.
- Consider the scope of the Mother and Baby Institutions Redress Scheme following the two-year review of its operation.

## Equality in Irish life

A country in which every individual can participate equally is a more cohesive, healthier society for us all. That fundamental, centuries old principle of liberal democracy has been under attack recently, rounded on by uninformed demagogues thriving in a space of reckless online misinformation. Worse, some elected politicians have sought to profit politically from knowingly amplifying false and spurious arguments.

We will always stand against this. We will always stand up for the rights of vulnerable minorities.

We will:

- Modernise incitement to hatred legislation.
- Create a new discrimination ground by adding socio-economic status to the Equality Acts.
- Work to develop and implement the next National Strategy for Women and Girls.
- Implement the recommendations of the Citizens Assembly on Gender Equality.
- Continue to implement the national Anti-Racism Strategy and the recently published National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.
- Enact legislation to disregard historic convictions for homosexuality.
- Ensure legislative protections for trans and intersex people.





# 11

## Thriving Arts, Culture and Sport

Over the past five years, and in particular during the difficult days of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have showed our commitment to supporting Ireland's artistic, sporting and cultural communities. We have backed up our promises with key funding supports – increased by over 95% for Arts & Culture and 83% for Sport - demonstrating our commitment to sectors that in addition to providing enormous economic benefits, enrich our lives in a way that is truly priceless. We will continue this positive work with further policy innovations.

### A green take on the arts:

**We will expand support for the Creative Climate Action Fund, which funds creative, cultural and artistic projects that raise awareness of climate change and help citizens to live sustainably.**

## Supporting our Artists and valuing Culture

Supporting a vibrant creative and cultural landscape in Ireland has been a major priority for the Green Party in Government. Arts Council funding is now at record levels and our innovative Basic Income for the Artists pilot scheme has demonstrated a path to a new future of stability and security for the sector. We will continue to build on these successes:

- Retain and expand our flagship Basic Income for the Arts pilot programme.
- Continue to increase Arts Council funding, now at record levels.
- Introduce a new arts capital and equipment programme.
- Maintain strong support for the Creative Ireland Fund.
- Roll out new supports for greening the arts, ensuring in particular that venues can reduce their energy bills and their emissions, in addition to enhancing support for the Creative Climate Action Fund.
- Support local authorities to provide more studios, practice spaces and workspaces for the creative community. We will also increase local government arts grants.
- Provide funding to ensure the continuation of the Safe to Create and Minding Creative Minds programmes.
- Establish a National Women's Museum to highlight the achievements of women from all walks of life, both contemporary and historical.
- Establish a national popular music archive.
- Ensure tax incentives, such as those under Section 481, are adequate to support and expand our successful VFX, film, and animation industries.



## A Vibrant Nighttime Economy

The Green Party is committed to supporting all communities to have a diverse and vibrant nighttime cultural environment. We will support the nighttime economy and provide opportunities for a broad range of social, artistic and expressive events and businesses.

We will:

- Enact the Intoxicating Liquors Bill 2024 to revitalise the nighttime economy and modernise our licensing laws. This will allow for longer opening hours and will enable us to reform event licensing.
- Provide financial incentives for live venues to support the development of new creative acts.
- Increase funding for policing, emergency services and nighttime public transport.
- Mandate all local authorities to develop nighttime action plans.
- Provide funding for additional nighttime advisors.
- Increase departmental funding for nightlife to €10 million.

## An Ghaeltacht agus an Ghaeilge

Is acmhainn thábhachtach chultúrtha do phobal na hÉireann í an Ghaeilge, ach is acmhainn leochaileach í ar ghá í a chosaint. Tá ár dtiomantas don Ghaeilge láidir agus leanfaimid ag tacú lena borradh ag gach leibhéal den Rialtas.

Tá rún againn:

- Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú) a chur i bhfeidhm go hiomlán agus acmhainní a chur ar fáil don Choimisinéir Teanga le go gcosnófar cearta teanga;
- Córas nua tacaíochta do lucht Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht a chruthú. Cuirfimid le maoiniú eagraíochtaí ar nós Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta, mar thaca do thuismitheoirí ar mian leo a gclann a thógáil le Gaeilge;
- Straitéis Chomhtháite Gaeltachta a fhoilsiú a ailíneoidh le chéile ranna Rialtais agus forais stáit. Mar chuid den straitéis, ciorfar deonú feidhmeanna tithíochta d'Údarás na Gaeltachta.
- An Bille um Údarás na Gaeltachta (Leasú) a rith, a cheadóidh córas úr chun baill an Údaráis a thoghadh;
- Ciste nua a chur ar bun faoi Scéim Dheontais Fhoghlaimoirí na Gaeilge chun cúrsaí le cáilíocht tríú leibhéal a sholáthar sa Ghaeltacht. Cabhróidh sé sin linn chun an sprioc dlíthiúil a bhaint amach, Gaeilge líofa a bheith ag 20% d'earcaigh nua sa tseirbhís phoiblí faoin mbliain 2030;
- Tús áite a thabhairt d'athbhreithniú cuimsitheach ar sholáthar sheirbhísí na meán Gaeilge agus an ábhair Ghaeilge sna meáin, agus tacú le seirbhís neamhspleách nuachta laistigh de TG4;
- Ciste piolótach a mhaoiniú do chomhlachtaí chun pacáistíocht dhátheangach a úsáid.

## Sport for all

Major funding increases by the Green Party in Government to sports funding have generated unprecedented success at every level, as evinced by Ireland's success at the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. An 83% increase in sports funding since 2019 has

led to greater inclusion of young women and people with disabilities in sport. Building on our success, we will:

- Prioritise the participation of women and girls in sport through targeted investment



and by supporting media coverage for women's sports. We will bridge the participation gap for women in sport, ensuring equal participation by 2027.

- Develop sporting infrastructure that is accessible for all and work to improve access to sporting infrastructure for those with disabilities via the Changing Places and other schemes.
- Support the provision of more free gym exercise equipment in parks.
- Support the climate adaptation of local sports clubs through the expansion of the

successful Outdoor Biodiversity initiative.

- Address the participation drop in sport in adolescent age groups through targeted interventions.
- Build upon Team Ireland's incredible successes at the 2024 Summer and Paralympic Games through the accelerated implementation of the High Performance Strategy.
- We will treat certain exercise-related costs as health expenses that can be claimed through Income Tax Returns.

## Media and Online safety

A vibrant and diverse media landscape is at the heart of a robust democracy. We will strengthen supports for public service media while ensuring the protection of online media users, with a particular emphasis on the safety of children.

We will:

- Build on the robust protections of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act, introduced by the Green Party in Government, by continuing to be agile in updating our laws to protect children from harm online.
- On completion of the current 3-year funding cycle for RTÉ and recognising the

value of public interest content across the public service and independent media sectors, introduce a large scale multi-annual Media Fund for the full sector, with Coimisiún na Meán to make recommendations in relation to funding allocations.

- Enact legislation to bring RTÉ back under the statutory remit of the Comptroller and Auditor General for greater transparency.
- Support independent production companies through the delivery of funding from the content levy on streaming services and broadcasters operating in the Irish market.
- Pass the Defamation Bill to tackle attacks on media freedom.

## Data Protection

Proper enforcement of data protection is essential to protect basic rights. Breaches of data protection law are fuelling online hate and misinformation. Ireland's Data Protection Commissioner (DPC) is responsible for holding tech companies across Europe to account and therefore must be appropriately equipped to deal with the magnitude of this task.

We will:

- Seek an independent review of the DPC,

including its operation and resourcing, to ensure its proper function. This review will form the basis of a programme of strengthening and reform.

- Examine national security data hazards, including the online advertising industry and internet-connected CCTV cameras linked to foreign states.
- Support European digital public infrastructure development by public procurement preference for open and public technologies.



- Establish an independent pool of digital regulation experts to support enforcement of the AI Act and other relevant legislation by all Irish regulators involved in digital policy.
- Establish an advisory forum on AI involving human rights experts, trade unions, and teachers who have experience with the harms of AI.
- We will work with the major international technology companies registered in Ireland to reduce the volume of data being stored, including considering how best to coordinate a data amnesty with the aim of deleting unused data more than 10 years old
- We commit to independent data protection and human rights scrutiny of Garda surveillance device procurement and operation.

# 12

## A Welcoming Nation

People around the world are moving in significant numbers - displaced by conflict, persecution, gender-based and sexual violence, and increasingly because of how destructive changes to natural environments are fuelling instability. Like so many Irish people over the last two centuries, people also move to escape poverty. In the last four years we have seen a marked increase in the number of people seeking international protection, or asylum, here. Although a recent development for our country, it is a decade-old phenomenon across Europe.

We entered government in 2020 with a recognition that the asylum processing, accommodation and reception system that was in place since the late 1990s was profoundly unfit for purpose, even with the comparatively lower numbers of applicants at that time. We committed to overhauling the system and began to implement changes.

Then the Russian invasion of Ukraine triggered the largest mass displacement event in Europe since the Second World War. At the same time, the number of international protection applications throughout Europe rose sharply, reaching 1.1 million applications in 2023. Ireland was not immune to these events. Going by previous years' trends, we would have expected approximately 11,500 additional refugee arrivals in the three-year period 2022-2024. The actual number was 146,000. This external shock required an emergency response, drawing from a limited private supply, and severely straining the state's ability to both respond to the demands of the day, while planning to build a system fit for the realities of the 2020s.

We have responded to this challenge by publishing a new Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy. At the same time, many political parties offered contradictory soundbites and easy answers; few put forward workable responses.

We will always stand for Ireland's moral and legal duty to provide refuge to those who need it, working hand in hand with our neighbours to deliver a human-rights based, fair and timely system that works: one that everyone can have confidence in.





## A New Asylum and Integration Agency for Ireland

The reality of asylum movements in the twenty-first century demands a better organised, more efficient and much better resourced capacity on the part of the state. This can only be delivered by a **dedicated Asylum and Integration Agency** which brings together the functions currently carried out by the International Protection Office and the International Protection Accommodation Service, working closely with the Garda National Immigration Bureau, other key departments and with state agencies, local authorities and civil society.

The Agency will have statutory requirements to ensure all asylum requests are processed humanely, fairly and expeditiously to set time limits, working within the framework set out by the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Agency will also be responsible for the provision of accommodation and material reception conditions, with standards specified in law, and for ensuring that those requesting international protection receive a high standard of psychosocial and integration supports, with a particular emphasis on supports for the most vulnerable.

## Implementing the Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy

We will continue to implement the Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy, delivering 14,000 state-owned beds by building on state-owned sites and purchasing large scale buildings for conversion. This will

save the state money in the medium term and the phased and planned nature of the strategy will allow for better planning for the provision of key public services in areas where accommodation is located.

## Working with the UK Government

Beyond the European Union, we will place a high priority on working closely with the UK government with whom we share an indispensable Common Travel Area. We will

build new structures and bilateral processes to ensure common approaches to cross-border migration and asylum issues.

## Supporting Communities to Welcome People Seeking Refuge

The emergency nature of the increase in number of people seeking refuge in such a short period of time strained the state's ability to properly plan for the establishment of new accommodation centres in communities. No community has the right to exercise a veto on who lives where. However, the Government can take steps to ensure every community is supported in providing a welcome and to build links between those seeking asylum and those welcoming them.

Government can also work towards a more balanced distribution, ensuring that accommodation centres are not over-located in some areas.

To that end, we will

- Rapidly implement the Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy, which, as new provision is delivered, gives Government far greater control over the distribution of centres around the country.
- Enhance the role of the Community Engagement Team (CET), creating an expanded team from across key departments, but also recruiting integration specialists from the community sector. Ultimately, the role of the CET would become a formal, statutory function of the new Asylum and Integration Agency.
- Enhance the role of the Local Authority Integration Teams (LAITs), ensuring a team is deployed in every county in the state.
- Further develop the Community Integration Fund.

## Supporting Those Seeking International Protection

We will work to ensure that those who have

applied for International Protection and are

awaiting a decision are provided the supports they need, in line with our EU obligations. Specifically, we will ensure that as part of the wider reform of the system the new Asylum and Migration Agency has a mandate to:

- Provide integration supports from day one to all those awaiting assessment, delivered within Reception Centres.
- Ensure vulnerability assessments are carried out and that they inform supports

provided to applicants.

- Provide dedicated specialist accommodation for victims of trafficking and other vulnerable cohorts for the duration of their application assessment.
- Provide education supports, including English language assistance, to ensure a transition to independent living for those who obtain a positive decision.

## The Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP)

We will work to fulfil our IRPP obligations. Critically, we will task the Department of Housing and local authorities with establishing expedited pathways into independent accommodation where needed.

We will work to support and expand the Community Sponsorship model of accommodation, to provide new pathways into independent living.

## People with Status

Almost 6,000 individuals who have been granted asylum in Ireland remain living in IPAS accommodation. As Irish residents with a housing need, we will require the Department

of Housing and local authorities to establish new supports and pathways for all people with status to move towards independent living beyond the IPAS system.

## Integration

Ireland is a welcoming country. We proved that in providing shelter to over 100,000 people from Ukraine. We prove it in the support we maintain for the humanitarian principles of International Protection.

We will ensure that the new Asylum and Integration Agency supports the integration not only of those who have come through the international protection process, but of all migrants to Ireland, including those Ukrainians who may opt to stay and build lives here. We want to ensure that people coming to live and work in Ireland are treated equally, can live full lives with their family and in their community, free of the threat of exploitation.

- Currently immediate family reunification is only open to workers who come here on Critical Skills Permits. We propose to end this discriminatory practice by extending immediate family reunification rights to all General Employment Permit (GEP) holders in full time employment.
- GEP holders must currently stay in the same job for five years which can lead to exploitation by employers and poor working conditions. We propose to extend the right currently afforded to critical skills permit holders to all GEP holders, giving them the freedom to change employer after a two-year period.



# 13

## Ireland on the Global Stage

We are proud of and will continue to build on Ireland's outsized influence on global and EU affairs. As a priority, we will focus our attention on supporting the defence of Ukraine and, having finally recognised the State of Palestine, we will push for an end to the invasion of Gaza and a lasting two-state solution. We will work with our EU colleagues to bring about a fairer, greener Europe, while supporting countries in need.

### Unwavering Support for the people of Palestine, Lebanon and Ukraine

The conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East have demonstrated that international law is increasingly under attack. We strongly condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Israeli genocide in Gaza and recent attacks in Southern Lebanon. We fully support the use of sanctions against Russia and Israel for these brutal violations of international law.

We will:

- Continue to provide non-lethal military aid for Ukraine, with a particular focus on demining and cyber defence.
- Continue to use our diplomatic power to push for an immediate ceasefire in the Middle East, an end to the invasion of Gaza by Israel, and an end to the attacks and settlement expansion in the West Bank. We will continue to push for a lasting, peaceful two-state solution.
- Immediately enact the Occupied Territories Bill and suspend dual use export licences to Israel.
- Continue to push for the European Commission to review Israel's compliance with its human rights obligations in the EU-Israel Association Agreement, and act accordingly to amend or suspend the agreement.
- Seek regular reviews of the NTMA's policy of divestment from businesses operating in illegally occupied territories to ensure that it remains relevant and current.
- Further support UNRWA and defend its right to operate in Palestine, recognising that it is essential to the provision of social services for Palestinians.
- At every step in the process, continue to support the work of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice to document war crimes and to bring perpetrators to justice.
- Stand ready to support physical reconstruction and institution building in warzones.

### Shaping a Green and Social Europe

- We support the European Green Deal and will resist any efforts to water it down. To ensure a Just Transition, the EU should create a Green and Social Transition Fund of at least 1% EU GDP funded by joint borrowing.
- We also support an expansion of the EU's long-term budget so that we can support



Ukraine, make the environmental and technological transition and effectively manage migration.

- We cannot allow EU funds to be used to finance the regimes of autocrats in the EU. We support the European Commission in their efforts to strengthen the rule of Law within the Union, and in particular the triggering of infringement procedures against Hungary.
- The European Union needs to continue to reform if it is to function effectively in a more uncertain world. We largely

support the recent reform proposals of the Conference on the Future of Europe but note that civil society in Ireland and across the Union must be involved in the shaping of the outcome.

- A more effective Capital Markets Union is essential to unlocking the EU's economic potential for greening the global economy. We support efforts to advance this project as long as sustainability and green investment are at the heart of its design.
- We broadly support the implementation of the Draghi and Letta reports.

- We recognise the EU's role in advancing gender equality and support the establishment of a Council configuration on women's rights.
- We will continue to push for the most humane and fair implementation of the Migration and Asylum Pact. We support the extension of the Ukrainian temporary protection order and an EU migration system that recognises the inherent dignity of all.
- We support all efforts to improve EU-UK relations.
- Ireland's proud history of service within the EU's institutions is at some risk due to declining staff numbers. We will encourage more Irish people to seek employment in the EU institutions. We will also bid for new EU institutions to be established in Ireland.
- We will encourage engagement in EU institutions by the civil service through secondment arrangements and initiatives to promote foreign language skills.

### **A green take on global development:**

**We will continue to push for positive outcomes at global climate negotiations which deliver climate justice.**

**We will lead by example by progressively scaling up our efforts to support climate adaptation in developing countries through our international aid budget.**

## **Championing Global Development and Climate Justice**

The countries least responsible for climate change are likely to endure its most severe consequences. We have an obligation to support them by championing international efforts to reduce emissions in wealthier nations and providing financial assistance to help developing countries adapt. By cutting our own emissions and expanding our aid programmes, we will lead by example and contribute to a global solution that addresses both mitigation and adaptation.

- In international climate negotiations, we commit to pursuing an approach founded on climate justice, by focusing on protecting the countries most affected by the climate crisis and reducing the emissions of the countries most responsible for it.
- We will participate in the Global Solidarity Levies Taskforce to explore options

for the financing of climate action and development in the Global South.

- We commit to spending 0.7% of our national income on overseas development aid, and to increasing climate finance to €500 million. Our focus must be on empowering communities to build resilience and adapt to a changing climate without incurring unsustainable debt or tying aid to trade.
- We support using a portion of the revenue from the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism for overseas development aid.
- Nationally and internationally, we will mainstream the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our policy. We will ensure that all aid supports the achievement of the SDGs.
- We support Ireland's Accession to the Treaty of Antarctica.



## Defence

We reaffirm our commitment to military neutrality, our strong support for peacekeeping and our commitment to political independence. We also recognise the need to enhance the protection of our skies and seas and improve defence interoperability and capabilities, as outlined in Level of Ambition 2 (LOA2) from the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces. In doing so we recognise the many roles of the Defence Forces including supporting civil authorities in crisis and disaster response.

We will:

- Continue to oppose Ireland joining NATO.
- Support a reform of the global multilateral system to make it relevant to today's world. In particular, we will push for the expansion of the UN Security Council membership and for the removal of the veto by a single member of the UN Security Council.
- Implement LOA2 by 2028. A position of Minister of State for Defence will also be created, with responsibilities within the Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs, tasked with coordinating Ireland's peacekeeping efforts. As a priority, we will progress retention initiatives under the Strategic Framework to maintain and expand the number of personnel in the Defence Forces.
- Where it is effective and does not impinge on Ireland's status as a neutral country, support limited continued engagement in PESCO, the European Defence Union, and other structured cooperation initiatives on a case-by-case basis.
- Implement the EU Working Time Directive for Defence Forces personnel, where appropriate, to improve conditions and retention.
- Fully implement the Independent Review Group's recommendations on dignity and equality issues through the new High-Level Command and Control structure, establish a Veterans' Affairs Office and publish a comprehensive Veterans' Policy.
- Prioritise the development of military radar capability to detect jets, drones and shipping traffic.
- Support the development of naval bases in Dún Laoghaire and Galway.
- Increase the monitoring and surveillance of threats to subsea cables and introduce rigorous security screenings for companies that maintain and operate them.
- As extreme weather events and natural disasters become more frequent and severe in Ireland, ensure that

## Cyber-security

The recent attack on the HSE exposed significant cyber-security vulnerabilities in the public sector. Work is ongoing to address this threat going forward.

We will progress this by:

- Investing further in threat intelligence and analytical capabilities for both the Defence Forces and the National Cyber Security Centre and holding more national practice exercises for simulated cyber-attacks involving state agencies and private actors.
- Establishing a national centre of excellence for cyber-security in a higher education institution.
- Rolling out the Cyberwise programme across all schools to educate children about online risks.
- Encouraging girls and children from minority backgrounds to pursue a career in cyber-security.
- Addressing the issue of fraudulent communications by strengthening regulations to protect the public from scams and distressing communications.

# 14

## A Healthy, Happy People

To deliver a health service fit for a growing and ageing population, we must ensure that the right interventions are delivered at the right time and in the right place. The people of Ireland can live better and longer if we implement a vision rooted in timely and holistic care throughout life. Achieving this requires reforming the system to support wellbeing beyond just hospital beds, recognising that our health journey begins in our homes, in our schools, and in our workplaces.

More than any other party in the Oireachtas, we have focused on strengthening our national approach to preventative healthcare and increasing productivity in the health service through new technology. Repeated cost overruns in our hospitals are unacceptable, but so is the shortfall in badly needed services. While funding for the Department of Health has increased from €17.5 billion in 2019 to €22.8 billion in 2024, waiting lists and trolley counts remain too high. Clearly, this money is not being invested in a way that delivers sufficient benefits to patients.

A core element of our approach to optimising access and efficiency is significant investment in modern technology. From patient-focused apps and reformed data collection to cohesive IT systems, this initiative would free up frontline doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals to focus on what they do best – caring for people.

In line with the Sláintecare strategy, we will bring a relentless focus to providing healthcare at the appropriate level and monitor the new

### A cutting-edge Health Service

We will:

- Roll out a comprehensive e-health strategy, starting with a digital system for prescriptions and culminating in a nationwide programme covering primary care, elective hospitals, acute hospitals, and emergency services.
- Invest in community diagnostic equipment and ensure its usage is maximised.
- Deliver the National Genetics and Genomics Strategy, with a specific focus on staffing.
- Ensure the Department of Health publishes an annual HSE national workforce plan and a review of the use of agency staff.
- Increase college places for doctors, nurses and dentists.

## Acute Healthcare

We will:

- Expand capacity in acute healthcare settings by developing new elective hospitals and surgical hubs in Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford, and Dublin.
- Continue to roll out the public-only consultant contract.
- Implement the recommendations of the recent and forthcoming reports examining capacity and overcrowding at University Hospital Limerick.
- Deliver on the commitment that no child should be on the scoliosis waiting list for more than four months and create a multi-year action plan for urgent and continued care for patients.
- Ensure ring-fenced, multiyear funding for the National Cancer Strategy from the first Budget introduced by the new Government.
- Enhance community-based service provision to care for more people with palliative care needs at home and expand out of hours palliative care provision in the community. We will ensure that each region has access to sufficient Level 3 Hospice beds. We will develop, fund, and implement a new national policy on palliative care for children with life-limiting conditions.

## Primary Care

We will:

- Expand the GP visit card to all children under the age of 11.
- Improve the integration of different levels of healthcare following the establishment of HSE regions, aiming to alleviate pressure on acute services by boosting primary care and training more GPs.
- Optimise supports to GPs in growing new practices by establishing a regionally focused taskforce to consider registration waiting times for GP services. We will support expansion of the public health service, including recruitment of public health nurses.
- Legislate to protect patients against illegal dentistry and expand access to publicly provided orthodontic treatment for children.
- Expand Treatment Benefit Scheme to include free hearing tests.
- Empower pharmacists to provide sick leave certification for minor ailments, reducing costs and strain on the health service.

## Women's Health

We have led on women's health in government. We have expanded free contraception for women, made progress on period poverty, rolled out free Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), improved breastfeeding rates, and funded women's health clinics and the Women's Health Taskforce. We aim to continue this work by:

- Introducing free bi-annual gynaecological appointments for women aged 16-40.
- Overseeing the rollout of free HRT and ensuring that vaginal oestrogen is made available without prescription.
- Beyond HRT, make non-hormonal medical supports for menopause free, and ensure that women can access personalised treatment plans and holistic care options such as nutritional advice and mental health counselling.
- Appointing a Menopause Employment Ambassador, following the UK's example,



to work with employers to support women experiencing the menopause, with the aim of incentivising menopause-friendly policies and developing a certification system for menopause-friendly employers.

- Continuing the expansion of the free contraception scheme.
- Working to end period poverty by providing free access to menstrual products in schools, workplaces, and communities.
- Delivering and renewing the National Maternity Strategy. We will swiftly implement screening of spinal muscular atrophy as part of the national newborn bloodspot screening programme and support further expansion of the programme.
- Increasing access to perinatal mental health supports, including a mother and baby unit for mental health.
- Expanding publicly funded reproductive assistance by increasing funding for IVF and other supports.
- Building on our considerable policy work in Government, legislating for paid leave for

pregnancy loss in all its forms for up to 20 days.

- Supporting the recommendations of the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative. We will run an information campaign on accessing supports for breastfeeding and restrict advertising of breastmilk substitutes. We will fully implement the WHO Code of Marketing of Breastmilk substitutes.
- Increasing the number of lactation consultants and midwives.
- Expanding and resourcing the milk bank service across the island, in cooperation with the NHS.
- Supplying free breast pumps to mothers of sick or preterm babies discharged from hospital to help them maintain breastfeeding.
- Appointing a national clinical lead for FGM treatment services in primary care to provide guidance and support for appropriate service expansion around the country.

## Access to Reproductive Healthcare for all

In 2019, Ireland legislated for the termination of pregnancy on foot of the historic Repeal the 8th referendum in 2018. The Termination of Pregnancy Act provided for a review three years after its implementation. The review found that there remain some difficulties with the legislation which leads to many women still finding themselves in the incredibly difficult situation of having to travel abroad to have their pregnancies terminated.

We will:

- Remove the obligatory three-day waiting period before termination medication can be prescribed.
- Remove the criminal sanction attached to medical professionals who provide care outside of the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.
- Continue to work to ensure that geographic location is not a barrier to reproductive healthcare and that termination of pregnancy services are widely available across every county in both hospital and general practice settings.

## Care and Carers

Family and professional care are crucial roles in Irish society and will become even more so in the future. Shortfalls in state support can cause undue economic and personal stress, particularly for women, older carers, and

young carers. For frontline staff, job demands often lead to burnout. The state must value care, creating a society where we care for our carers.

We will:

- Building on the basic income for artists trial, bring in a non-means-tested basic income for all carers.
- Publish an updated National Carers Strategy to provide clarity on the Government's approach to carers across departments.
- Fund the Carers' Guarantee, implementing a statutory right to the home support scheme and to respite care and improving the coordination of healthcare, employment and support services.
- Further expand respite provision and develop greater alternative respite options.
- Reinstate a 'young carers programme' for those under the age of 18 who care for elderly family members and family members with disabilities.
- Extend the Public Service EV grant to low-paid, car-dependent workers, such as home support providers.
- Support parity of pay between Section 38 and Section 39 workers.

## Healthcare for a Diverse Population

We will:

- Invest in dedicated LGBTQI+ health services, including HIV supports, PrEP, PEP, and rapid HIV testing, with the goal of ending new HIV transmissions.
- Implement a community-based, person-centred model of trans healthcare, ensuring universal access to evidence-based care. Our policy will be guided by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health.
- Roll out targeted health assistance for migrants, including language supports, with a special focus on non-Irish women to tackle the higher incidence of maternal death and pregnancy-related issues.

## Vindicating the rights of people with disabilities

We have worked to improve provision for people with disabilities in Ireland by taking responsibility for disability out of the Department of Health and placing it in its own department, ratifying the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD and implementing the Disability Action Plan.

In Government, we will:

- Review the Disability Act 2005, with a focus on the assessment of need process to streamline access to health and education supports, and to incorporate disabilities that are not currently recognised such as foetal alcohol syndrome and severe ADHD (with comorbidities).
- Implement the new National Disability Strategy and ensure through the Cabinet Subcommittee on Children and Disability that all Government departments are fully implementing assigned actions under the mainstreaming approach adopted in the strategy.
- Implement a ten-year workforce strategy for disability, indicating the number of health and social care professionals needed across the disability sector. We will work with higher and further education institutes to additionally increase the number of places in courses for each of these professions. We will recognise and incorporate the role of assistant therapist grades.
- Increase funding by 25% in the first year and by 15% in every subsequent year for





community-based disability services in line with the Action Plan for Disability Services.

- Establish a Disability Information and Support Centre in every Community Health Organisation as a one-stop-shop for people with disabilities and their families seeking to engage with public services. The centre will provide support and information relating to education, healthcare, respite, social protection and therapeutic services.
- Review the Long-Term Illness Scheme.
- We will put the Autism Innovation Strategy on statutory footing, incorporating recommendations from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Autism's report and the Same Chance report.
- Ensure that the HSE, private service providers and the Department of Education collate all relevant data on autism. We will request that the CSO include a question on autism in the next census.
- End the situation whereby children with dual diagnoses who experience both mental health issues and have a disability such as autism are denied access to mental health services.
- Seek to end the practice of under-65s being placed in nursing homes.
- Support independence among people with a disability by increasing the number of personal assistant hours by 300,000 per year.
- Tackle the persistent levels of poverty experienced by people with disabilities by introducing a Cost of Disability payment of €50 a week.
- Complete and evaluate the personalised budgeting pilot and make decisions about further implementation of a personalised budgeting policy.
- Introduce a new monthly subsidy for people who are blind or vision impaired to cover taxis and other private travel expenses and expand the current pilot on mobility and orientation in schools across the country.
- Support and fund Approved Housing Bodies that provide tailored housing solutions to people with disabilities.
- Raise the upper limit on the housing adaptation grant to match construction cost inflation.



## Public Health

In line with our longstanding commitment to preventative healthcare, we will maintain a focus on environmental factors such as air quality, water quality, access to exercise, and the availability of healthy food.

We will:

- Enact the recently published bill to ban

single use vapes and regulate e-cigarette advertising and flavours.

- Establish a research-focused all-island obesity taskforce with a nursing support system.
- Promote the benefits of social prescriptions, recognising that factors like poverty, isolation, and the quality of the environment heavily influence health.

## Elder Care

Our goal is to support ageing in place, allowing elderly people to access community supports and reducing the need for people to enter retirement homes.

We will:

- Introduce a statutory support scheme for home support services.

- Require one-fifth of new housing developments to meet universal design standards, ensuring appropriate housing options for older people and those with disabilities.
- Continue to increase the Living Alone Allowance on an annual basis.

## Assisted Dying

We will introduce legislation which allows for assisted dying in Ireland, based on the recommendations of the Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Dying. This will

only apply where a terminally ill, mentally competent adult makes the decision of their own free will, within strict legal safeguards.

## Drug Use

We support the decriminalisation of all drug users and the legalisation and regulation of cannabis. To deliver on the operational recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Drug Use, we will:

- Pursue a health-led approach to drugs policy.
- Retain a dedicated Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Taoiseach, to ensure a whole-of-government response.

- Engage with drug users and stakeholders in policy design and implementation.
- Prioritise disadvantaged communities and prisoners in drugs policy.
- Focus on harm reduction by introducing drug-checking facilities at festivals and providing for safe consumption rooms.

# Mental Health

Good mental health is essential for everyone to thrive, engage in daily life, and build fulfilling relationships. Yet, mental health challenges impact us all – either directly, or through friends, family, and colleagues. We recognise that mental health struggles are just as significant as physical health issues, and it's crucial that Government services are equipped to support people at every stage. Our commitment is to expand access to compassionate, effective mental health resources, ensuring that no one faces these challenges alone and that everyone has the opportunity to lead a full and balanced life.

We will:

- Appoint a national mental health champion within the HSE.
- Invest heavily in suicide and self-harm

prevention services.

- Implement the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Pass an amended version of the Mental Health Bill.
- Collaborate with schools to identify long-term and undiagnosed conditions.
- Ensure HSE regional authorities' staffing and capital investment plans are aligned with national mental health policies.
- Support NGOs such as Jigsaw that take an early intervention approach to mental health services.
- Fund additional trainee psychological posts across professional doctoral programmes to meet current and future demand for experienced professionals in our health services.







## Loneliness

Loneliness is a hidden epidemic in Ireland, with effects on physical health comparable to smoking, obesity, and inactivity.

We will:

- Appoint a Super-Junior Minister with responsibility for reducing loneliness and improving social connectivity.
- Establish a commission of experts on loneliness and isolation to report to Government recommending best practices and necessary legislative changes. These recommendations will then be implemented through an Action Plan on Loneliness.
- Ringfence community and voluntary group funding for loneliness initiatives, working with groups like Men's Sheds.
- Build vibrant communities to prevent loneliness through sports clubs, choirs, voluntary work, and education, and expand public transport, especially in rural areas.
- Recognise loneliness as a reason for home help.
- Focus on the groups most affected by loneliness – the young and the elderly – by supporting mental health teams in schools and services such as ALONE.



# 15

# Changing Politics in a Changing Country

**A political system that fails to keep pace with a changing society will not deliver for its people. We will progress a set of reforms at local and national level that are appropriate for a modern Ireland.**

## Political Reform

Our ideas for political reform cover the themes of voting and elections, engagement with the public, institutional reform and inclusion and wellbeing in politics.

We will:

- Direct the Electoral Commission to redraw Dáil constituency boundaries so that each constituency returns four, five or six TDs. This will support proportional representation.
- Extend voting rights to the diaspora for Presidential Elections.
- Lower the voting age to 16.
- Limit posters to specific areas within towns and villages, to cut down on waste.
- Hold an 'Ireland We Want' national conversation, so that we can design a shared vision of the future that people across the country want for Ireland, based on the successful 'Wales We Want' campaign. This will inform the work of our Ombudsman for Future Generations.
- Push for less bureaucratic and more effective public consultation on new policy developments, requiring public bodies to justify their decisions to citizens.
- Expand trials of local participative budgeting, so that people can have a say in what amenities are built in their communities.
- Ensure that there is greater diversity and gender balance at all levels of Irish politics. We will implement a 40% gender quota for candidate selection, cabinet appointments, and Oireachtas committee chairs.
- Continue to support the democratisation of Seanad Eireann through reform, including delivering the recommendations of the 2018 Seanad Reform Implementation Group.
- Restore town and borough councils.
- Give all towns and cities above 30,000 population the power to decide whether they want a Directly Elected Mayor.
- Review the progress being made by the Directly Elected Mayor for Limerick by end of 2026, with a view to substantially increasing central government funding for this new office to support the implementation of the Mayoral programme.
- Rollout a comprehensive programme of safety measures, training and support services for elected representatives and their staff to deal with abuse. At the same time, we will work with social media companies and the Gardaí to clamp down on the issue.
- Mandate that all TDs and Senators undertake regular, comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment training. We will also introduce an enforceable code of conduct for all politicians and senior staff.
- Require all political parties to provide training on child protection.
- Request the Electoral Commission to develop a set of supports to engage Travellers in the electoral process with particular emphasis on Traveller women.
- Mandate the Electoral Commission to advise governments in less developed countries on strengthening democratic

- structures.
- Provide more secretarial and policy assistance, as well as independent

financial, planning, and legal advice to councillors.

## E-Government

Our ambition is to deliver convenient services that are accessible to everyone regardless of their digital skills, in a way that respects people's privacy. We have made significant progress on some fronts, including the online systems for managing passports, social welfare payments, and tax administration.

We will:

- Extend this work by seeking to make all the services people need when undergoing major life events, such as the birth of a child, moving house, moving home from abroad, or starting a new job, available in

one place online.

- Deliver these projects to the same standard as large e-commerce firms, with a single username and password for all Government services.
- Start with a major programme of digitalisation of personal health records covering viewing and renewing prescriptions, viewing medical test results, viewing records of vaccinations and delegating healthcare decision-making authority to family members.
- Progress the digitalisation of driving licences and motor insurance, motor tax and NCT discs.

## A Shared Island

Recognising the evolving political and demographic landscape across the island of Ireland, we are committed to inclusive dialogue in shaping any shared island policy. This includes safeguarding the rights of all groups and ensuring their active participation in the policy process.

We will:

- Work towards achieving consensus on the future of our shared island. We believe that a shared island, built on respect and tolerance, has the potential to provide real benefits to people across many aspects of life.
- Support an all-island Citizens' Assembly which would both review current governance mechanisms in terms of inclusivity and fair representation and generate and refine options for new governance structures. We will ensure there is diverse representation at the Citizens' Assembly and make use of mechanisms such as the 'modified de

Borda' process to build optimal consensus.

- In the event of a border poll, we will advocate for meticulous, evidence-based preparation.
- Support the work of the Shared Island Unit by increasing its capacity and resources, focusing on sustainable infrastructure, energy, biodiversity, built and natural heritage, and shared environmental approaches that benefit everyone on the island. We will ensure enhanced cooperation on shared services along the border region and, where appropriate, establish all-island specialist centres or provisions, such as in health.
- Fully implement the All-Island Strategic Rail Review.



## Wellbeing Framework

It has long been acknowledged that GDP is a flawed measure of economic performance. We need to shift our thinking towards a framework that focuses not solely on material throughput, but also on human flourishing within the planetary boundaries that define our sustainable future.

Positive progress has been made during our time in Government in developing a wellbeing framework, which takes a broader view of how the economy functions and what it should deliver for society. However, this framework needs to be fully integrated into our budgetary process.

We will:

- Strengthen the role of the Budgetary

Oversight Committee within the Oireachtas to examine each budget's adherence to the wellbeing framework.

- Drawing on the examples of New Zealand and Wales, strengthen the framework by incorporating indicators on linguistic diversity and cultural participation.
- Align the framework more closely with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Facilitate the scrutiny of wellbeing indicators in the policies of all public bodies, departments, and local authorities, ensuring alignment with national goals through the existing Oireachtas committee structure.
- Hold annual debates in the Dáil and Seanad on updates to the framework.



## Ombudsman for Future Generations

To address the challenges facing our society – whether dealing with the existential crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, or the large-scale infrastructural needs in housing, health, transport, and more – we must create a political system that looks beyond the next electoral cycle and makes decisions for the long term.

We will establish an Office of the Ombudsman for Future Generations, learning from the Welsh example of the Commissioner for

Future Generations and shadowing the European Commission's decision to appoint a Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness. The Ombudsman's remit will include overseeing the meaningful integration of the wellbeing framework into the budgetary process and monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Its role would extend not only to decisions taken by Government but also to influencing the mandate and mission of public sector bodies.

## Structure of Government

To better address the evolving challenges facing our country, we believe the structure of Government needs to be reviewed. We propose the following Ministerial positions:

1. Minister for Agriculture and Food
2. Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
3. Minister for Defence and Foreign Affairs (responsible for two departments)
4. Minister for Education and Higher Education (responsible for two departments)
5. Minister for Enterprise, Employment, Trade and Digital Communications
6. Minister for Finance
7. Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform
8. Minister for Health and Wellbeing
9. Minister for Housing, Heritage and Local Government
10. Minister for Justice
11. Minister for Social Protection, Means Testing and Rural and Community Development (responsible for two departments)
12. Minister for Climate, Nature, Natural Resources and Planning
13. Minister for Transport
14. Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
15. Taoiseach

The following 'Super-Junior' ministerial positions should also be established:

1. Minister of State for the Regional Cities – across the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government; and the Department of Climate, Nature, Natural Resources and Planning.
2. Minister of State for Wellbeing, Mental Health and Loneliness – across the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; the Department of Health and Wellbeing; and the Department of Rural and Community Development.
3. Government Chief Whip and Minister of State for Disability across the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; the Departments of Education and Higher Education; and the Department of Health and Wellbeing.

# 16

## Investing in a Modern Ireland

Ireland's real economic constraint is a deficiency of basic infrastructure – housing, public transport, water and energy. Notwithstanding the substantial success we have had in making progress on these issues, further progress has been consistently frustrated by arbitrary budgetary rules imposed by the Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure.

### Reforming the Spending Rule

To address this issue, we will examine the impact of allowing investments which yield direct and measurable savings to the exchequer in the future to be funded outside of the spending rule. Examples of this might include:

- The tenant-in-situ scheme, which saves the state money in foregone Housing Assistance Payments;
- The public sector retrofitting programme - which saves the state on future energy bills; and
- The Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy, which by developing IPAS accom-

modation on public land saves the state from high rents charged by private sector providers.

We believe that these investments should be treated as balance sheet transactions. In other words, they should be viewed as an exchange of one form of asset – cash – for another – buildings and equipment.

The examination of this policy shift will include an assessment of any impact it could have on inflation. It can be accommodated within the new EU fiscal rules.

### Saving for the Future

We will stick by our commitment to transfer excess corporation tax receipts into the new Future Ireland Fund and Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund, and to use these funds to support the transition to a zero

carbon, biodiversity rich economy, and to respond to challenges such as demographic change and artificial intelligence.

### Public Procurement

We will work at national and EU level to create a clause in procurement law that allows contract performance on past projects to be

taken into account when a company bids for a new publicly funded contract.

# Taxation and Spending

To meet the challenges we face today, the state needs to expand as a share of the economy. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael Ministers for Finance have pursued a policy of using the proceeds of new tax raising measures exclusively to fund other tax cuts. We will end

this practice and instead use a portion of the proceeds from new tax measures to support enhanced delivery of public services.

## Tax changes

We want to rely less on taxing your wages and rely more on taxing consumption and wealth. People and businesses creating value should not have to subsidise economic actors that hoard assets and collect a return for no work. We will continue this Government's policy of increasing tax bands and credits to prevent people from being hit by higher income tax bills as their incomes rise.

However, we realise that to improve our public services and basic infrastructure, we need to keep looking at new ways to raise money for the exchequer. We will be guided by the advice of the Tax and Welfare Commission on how to do this in the medium to long term. Examples include:

- Restricting the PRSI exemption for share-based remuneration to micro and small and medium sized enterprises. Paying staff through shares is a useful cash-saving mechanism for SMEs, especially start-ups, and it is right for the Government to support that via a PRSI exemption. However, there is a concern that this provision is now being used by larger, more established companies as a way of reducing their tax bills. It costs the exchequer over €200 million per year. Restricting it to smaller companies that need it would deliver significant savings.
- Removing the Capital Gains Tax exemption on death. Currently, if an individual sells an asset during their lifetime, they pay capital gains tax on the uplift in the value that happened during the time that they owned it. However, if the person dies in possession of the asset, their estate does not have to pay CGT on the uplift in value.

This provides a perverse incentive for people to hold onto assets rather than passing them on to the next generation. To deal with this incentive, various reliefs have been put in place, at significant cost to the exchequer. The Commission on Tax and Welfare recommend that the Irish Government should examine the possibility of removing this exemption, and we support that view.

- Excluding wealthy farmers and business owners from agricultural and business relief. Agricultural and Business relief from Capital Acquisition Tax, commonly known as inheritance tax, subsidised fewer than 2,500 people to the tune of over €400 million last year – a subsidy of almost €170,000 per claimant in one year alone. ESRI research has highlighted that these claimants tend not to be owners of small family farms and businesses – some of whom are currently struggling to stay afloat – but owners of larger enterprises. We would restrict this relief to assets worth three times the value of the average farm.

We will also implement a series of other changes to advance other public policy goals, such as:

- In line with another recommendation of the Tax and Welfare Commission, replacing commercial rates with a site value tax.
- Extending agricultural tax reliefs to land leased for solar power.
- Imposing a landing charge on private jets.
- Applying an air passenger duty on business class seats.
- Increasing excise duty on cigarettes and



- e-cigarette liquid.
- We also propose that Ireland's next Government lead the way on negotiations

for a coordinated minimum effective taxation standard for ultra-high net worth individuals in line with proposals from the EU Tax Observatory Report of 2024.

### A green take on tax policy:

**Building on the success of the carbon tax in supporting the scaling up of a domestic retrofit industry, as well as tax cuts on solar panels and heat pumps, we will seek to leverage the tax system to support the transition to a climate neutral economy.**

**This will include taxes on private jets and business class flights..**

## Budgetary Strategy

The table below compares our budgetary strategy to that set out in the 2024 Summer

Economic Statement.

€bn		2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
	GNI*	348.30	365.75	383.60	400.98	419.20
<b>SES</b>						
A	ELS, NDP, public pay	4.3	2.8	3.9	4	4.1
B	New measures	2	1.4	1.6	1.7	1.9
A+B	Budget expenditure package	6.3	4.2	5.5	5.7	6
C	Budget net tax package	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
A+B+C	Total budget package	7.5	5.4	6.7	6.9	7.2
<b>GP manifesto</b>						
A	ELS, NDP, public pay	4.3	2.8	3.9	4	4.1
B	New measures	5.5	5.2	6	6.5	6.5
C	Expenditure reclassification	-0.7	-0.7	-0.7	-0.7	-0.7
A+B+C	Budget expenditure package	9.1	7.3	9.2	9.8	9.9
D	Budget net tax package	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
A+B+C+D	Total budget package	9.7	7.9	9.8	10.4	10.5
	Difference in budget package (€bn)	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.3</b>
	Difference in budget package (% GNI*)	<b>0.63%</b>	<b>0.68%</b>	<b>0.81%</b>	<b>0.87%</b>	<b>0.79%</b>

The highlights of a typical annual budget directed by this manifesto would include the following:

	€m
<b>Tax measures</b>	
Indexation of income tax credits and bands	810
Progress towards home carer tax credit rising to €4,000 by end of Government	35
Replacement of the incapacitated child tax credit with a refundable child and adolescent disability tax credit	150
Roll out of climate ticket	15
<b>Discretionary Revenue Measures</b>	
Restricting PRSI exemption on share-based remuneration to SMEs	-200
Capping agricultural and business CAT relief	-60
Business class passenger duty	-105
Excise on cigarettes and e-cigarette liquid	-45
<b>Net tax package</b>	<b>600</b>
<b>Social Protection</b>	
Annual increase in social welfare rates	790
Progress towards making the back-to-school clothing and footwear allowance universal	65
Annual improvements to maternity, paternity, adoptive and parents leave	30
<b>Housing</b>	
Additional social housing units, beyond existing targets	700
Additional affordable and cost rental housing units, beyond existing targets	1290
Development levies waiver for private owner-occupier apartments	20
<b>Children and Families</b>	
New public model of childcare	95
Simplified, progressive scale of childcare fees	375
Improved pay for childcare workers	30
<b>Climate and nature</b>	
Increased capital investment in new public transport infrastructure	600
Transport punctuality and reliability funding	100
20% increase in PSO budget	190
Establishment of new low-cost loan scheme for purchase of EVs	75
Scaling of EV grants by household income	75
Roll out of free solar panels for low-income households	120

Expansion of organic farming scheme - funded by reallocation of ANC scheme	0
Expansion of farm plan scheme - half funded by ICNF	15
<b>Health, disability and carers</b>	
Community disability services	370
Progress towards a basic income for carers	75
Progress towards a €50 cost of disability payment	125
Expansion of free GP care to all children under the age of 11	130
Free gynaecological appointments for women aged 16-40	30
<b>Arts</b>	
Expansion of the basic income pilot	15
Increase in Arts Council funding	15
<b>Overseas Aid</b>	
Progress towards 0.7% of national income and at least €500m climate finance	200
<b>Other</b>	
New DSGBV strategy	250
Small business bonus scheme	175
Well-water testing and treatment	15
Establishment of system of national training accounts	30
<b>Total NDM</b>	<b>6000</b>
<b>Expenditure Reclassification</b>	
Tenant-in-situ scheme	-525
Public sector retrofit	-125
Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy	-50
<b>Total expenditure reclassification</b>	<b>-700</b>
<b>Maintaining existing levels of service, public pay, NDP</b>	<b>3900</b>
<b>Indicative budget package</b>	<b>9800</b>





