

**AONTÚ**   
LIFE • UNITY • ECONOMIC JUSTICE

**24**

**Forógra • Manifesto**

Toghcháin Áitiúla 7 Eorpacha  

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Local & European Elections

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**Peadar TÓIBÍN TD**



**Euro Candidate**

**MIDLANDS N-WEST**

**Patrick MURPHY**



**Euro Candidate**

**IRELAND SOUTH**

**Aisling CONSIDINE**



**Euro Candidate**

**DUBLIN**

**Sarah BEASLEY**



**Mayoral Candidate**

**LIMERICK**

**Vótáil** 

**Cllr JIM CODD**



Rosslare

**WEXFORD  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**MICHAEL O'DOWD**



Drogheda Urban

**LOUTH  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Cllr EMER TÓIBÍN**



Navan

**MEATH  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**FRANCIS O'TOOLE**



Navan

**MEATH  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**MELISSA BYRNE**



Newbridge

**KILDARE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**BRANDON SCOTT**



Ashbourne

**MEATH  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CIARÁN HOGAN**



Bray East

**WICKLOW  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**PETER WHELAN**



Laytown  
Bettystown

**MEATH  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**UNA O'CONNOR**



Clane

**KILDARE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**PETER DEVIN**



Kells

**MEATH  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**AUBREY CLAFFEY**



Birr

**OFFALY  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**LAURA O'NEILL**



Kinnegad-Delvin

**WESTMEATH  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**DAVE BOYNE**



Trim

**MEATH  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**JOSE CYRIAC**



Navan

**MEATH  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**LIAM REICHENBERG**



Dundalk  
Carlingford

**LOUTH  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**MARTHA RYAN**



Portlaoise

**LAOIS  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Vótáil**



**Cllr SARAH O'REILLY**



Bailieborough  
Cootehill

CAVAN  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**PAUL LAWLESS**



Claremorris

MAYO  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**GRÁINNE McPHILLIPS**



Ballyjamesduff

CAVAN  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**LUKE SILKE**



Tuam

GALWAY  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**MARY T. SWEENEY**



Letterkenny

DONEGAL  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**PÁDRAIG LENIHAN**



Galway City  
Central

GALWAY  
CITY COUNCIL

**FAYIZ ALSANI**



Boyle

ROSCOMMON  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**TINKO TINEV**



Cavan · Belturbet

CAVAN  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**MICHAEL HARKIN**



Glenties

DONEGAL  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**TOMMY HORAN**



Swinford

MAYO  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**JAMES DUFFY**



Carrickmacross  
Castleblayney

MONAGHAN  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**OLIVIA LARKIN**



Ballybay · Clones

MONAGHAN  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**REBECCA McDAID**



Lifford · Stranorlar

DONEGAL  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**LIAM MULLIGAN**



Buncrana

DONEGAL  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**GRAHAM MONAGHAN**



Sligo · Strandhill

SLIGO  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**PATRICK BROGAN**



Donegal

DONEGAL  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**CORMAC Ó CORCORÁIN**



Galway City East

GALWAY  
CITY COUNCIL

**KATHLEEN DEENEY**



Milford

DONEGAL  
COUNTY COUNCIL

**Vótáil**



<p><b>ANNA DALY</b></p>  <p>Cork City South Central</p> <p>CORK CITY COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>BECKY KEALY</b></p>  <p>Kanturk</p> <p>CORK COUNTY COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>FINIAN TOOMEY</b></p>  <p>Cork City North-West</p> <p>CORK CITY COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>JOANNE MURPHY</b></p>  <p>Cork City South-West</p> <p>CORK CITY COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>LORRAINE DEANE</b></p>  <p>Skibbereen</p> <p>CORK COUNTY COUNCIL</p>
<p><b>MICHAEL RYAN</b></p>  <p>Cappamore &amp; Kilmallock</p> <p>LIMERICK COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>MONA STROMSOE</b></p>  <p>Midleton</p> <p>CORK COUNTY COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>PADDY SCULLY</b></p>  <p>Mallow</p> <p>CORK COUNTY COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>PATRICK MURPHY</b></p>  <p>Bantry - West Cork</p> <p>CORK COUNTY COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>ROSARIE O'LEARY</b></p>  <p>Macroom</p> <p>CORK COUNTY COUNCIL</p>
<p><b>SONNY FORAN</b></p>  <p>Listowel</p> <p>KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>CÁIT NÍ RÍORDÁIN</b></p>  <p>Castleisland</p> <p>KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>ERIC NELLIGAN</b></p>  <p>Limerick City East</p> <p>LIMERICK COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>SARAH BEASLEY</b></p>  <p>Limerick City North</p> <p>LIMERICK COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>JOHN HAUGH</b></p>  <p>Shannon</p> <p>CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL</p>
<p><b>RONAN CLEARY</b></p>  <p>Tramore - Waterford City West</p> <p>WATERFORD COUNTY COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>CATHERINA O'SULLIVAN</b></p>  <p>Kenmare</p> <p>KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>Vótáil</b> </p>		

<b>JAMES MORRIS</b>  Clontarf DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL	<b>MAIRÉAD TÓIBÍN</b>  Dún Laoghaire DÚN LAOGHAIRE RATHDOWN COUNTY COUNCIL	<b>PROINSIAS Ó CONARÁIN</b>  Donaghmede DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL	<b>ELLEN TROY</b>  Castleknock FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL	<b>LIAM COUGHLAN</b>  Dundrum DÚN LAOGHAIRE RATHDOWN COUNTY COUNCIL	<b>IAN NOEL SMYTH</b>  Cabra - Glasnevin DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL
<b>AISLING CONSIDINE</b>  South West Inner City DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL	<b>EDWARD MacMANUS</b>  Ballymun · Finglas DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL	<b>SAOIRSE NÍ CHÓNARÁIN</b>  Tallaght Central SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL	<b>COLM QUINN</b>  Palmerstown Fonthill Sth. DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL	<b>HELEN DUIGNAN</b>  Blackrock DÚN LAOGHAIRE RATHDOWN COUNTY COUNCIL	<b>ALAN HEALY</b>  S.E. Inner City DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL
<b>GERARD SHEEHAN</b>  Ongar FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL	<b>MARGARET McGOVERN</b>  Howth-Malahide FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL	<b>ROBBIE LOUGHLIN</b>  Blanchardstown Mulhuddart FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL	<p><b>Vótáil</b> </p>		

## Introduction

Ireland is a deeply divided country, not just North/South but in many other ways also. We have an overheating capital with the worst congestion in Europe where people cannot get housing or access to schools.

We have a sprawling commuter belt where workers spend 2 or 3 hours a day commuting, some from as far as Munster, Connacht and Ulster. And we have rural Ireland that is emptying out of its young people. This divide is accelerating in part because of the attack on farmers and fishermen who are being scapegoated by a government failing on their environmental commitments.

Despite all of these issues we have a political system that is simply not listening to the people. The referendums showed that the government and most of the opposition are not listening to the people. The political establishment are distracted by the culture wars and have forgotten about the bread-and-butter issues concerning the people.

In many ways Ireland is being ruled by a political cartel, a metropolitan elite, making decisions oblivious to the needs of the people. The constant feedback loop between political parties, some NGOs and some within the media is drowning out the voices of the people.

One of the major crisis at the heart of the governance of Ireland is the lack of accountability. Accountability is a key element of Aontú's platform. Leo Varadkar stated that the National Children's Hospital would be complete by 2020 at a cost 700 million save an asteroid hitting the planet. Its 2024, there is no opening date, and the cost is €2.25 billion.

€300 million has been spent on metro north and not a shovel has been put in the ground. The government spent €22 on ventilators that have never worked and are now being stored at a cost of €50,000 a year.

Over 100 electric buses sitting idle in Dublin for 18 months the lack of charging points. Roderic O'Gorman has bought 37 buildings to house asylum seekers and only 1 of them is in use. The people of Midleton were promised flood defences in 2015 and yet the planning permission for the projected has not been even completed.

Imagine how transformative it would be if there was real accountability. There must be a cost, if a person does not do their job. Spending public money should not involve taking less care than spending your own, it should involve more care than your own. Aontú will inject accountability at all levels government.

The government is not listening to the people on other issues too. Immigration is prime among them. Aontú has long sought a compassionate and commonsense approach to immigration. Most of the information in the public domain on the issue has been achieved by Aontú. But in truth the government's management of immigration has been a shambles. The government is also leading the country towards a European Military Union which could see Irish sons and daughters fighting in wars. This is not what the people want.

Aontú is listening to the people. We have been the only party that has stood with the people on a range of different issues. We are not just the best organised opposition to this government. We are in many respects the only opposition to this government. We are launching our largest candidate offering yet with 66 excellent candidates in the Locals Elections, three brilliant European Elections candidates and a Limerick Mayor candidate. Aontú is on the cusp of breakthrough in many areas in the country. We will put the voice of the people back in the heart of local, national and European governance again.

## Executive Summary

### **Immigration:**

Aontú opposes the EU Migration Pact. We seek a 12-week limit to the initial application process and a special court for application appeals with a 12-week limit. We seek an Irish sea border at the airports and ferry ports in the North of Ireland. Aontú are advocating for the creation of a single Border Agency that will be responsible for the management of applications, enforcement of decisions, accommodation, community consultation and border security.

### **Defence and Foreign Policy:**

The biggest threat to Irish security is this government. Aontú support the Tripple Lock as key to our neutrality. Aontú oppose treaty change that will reduce the Irish veto on military affairs. Aontú oppose any moves towards a military alliance. Aontú will not support Ursula Von Der Leyen's campaign to be elected President of the EU Commission.

### **Agriculture and Fishing:**

Aontú seek a change in European competition law to check the oligopoly power of factories and supermarkets in the food supply chain. Aontú oppose the Mercosur Trade Deal and we support an all-Ireland import ban on Brazilian and South American beef and Agri-produce which would dilute food quality and undercut farmer income. We will fight to retain the Nitrates Derogation. We will oppose any reduction of incomes associated with the Nature Restoration Regulation. Aontú seek to increase CAP funding and ensure that there is a link to productivity within the CAP going forward. Aontú will seek a comprehensive review of fishing policy that has not addressed the unequal sharing opportunities for over 50 years.

### **Regional Development**

Aontú seek to create a new international city in the western seaboard of Ireland to help rebalance Irelands lobsided spatial development. Infrastructure would be front loaded into this city in future so that it would grow to a critical mass and draw down international investment in its own right. It would operate as a counterweight to Dublin. Aontú also seek to develop a Border Innovation Zone. This would be supported by infrastructural investment and derogation on European grant funding rules for a 10-year period to kick start investment.

### **Local Government:**

Aontú seek the development of strong Regional Assemblies with designated budgets. Regional Assemblies would be created for Dublin, the rest of Leinster, Munster and Connacht/Ulster. After reunification an Ulster Assembly would be created based in Stormont. Aontú seek to rebalance Local Authority power to give councillors more power than unelected officials. We seek to increase the power and resources of SIPO to be able to properly investigate corruption in Local Authorities. Aontú seek to return Councils to towns and cities with a population of over 20,000 people.

### **Accountability**

Senior Civil Servants in government departments and Local Authorities who do not fulfil their contract and job specification will have a disciplinary process initiated up to an including dismissal from their job. Aontú seek three Public Inquiries with statutory powers into approval of the National Children's Hospital tender, into the actions of the Government during the Covid Crisis including the shocking deaths that happened in Nursing Homes and the misleading of the general public by Ministers during the so-called Care and Family referendums. Aontú will use the EU petitions committee if the government fail to deliver.



## Immigration

The government's policy on immigration is in chaos. It was Aontú who first raised the massive problems in the government approach. Until opinion polls started to show that 70% of the Irish people are deeply uncomfortable with the government's policy, the government was oblivious to what was happening.

Aontú Parliamentary Questions have shown that it is taking years for the first asylum decision to be made for thousands of applicants. It often takes 10 years for an asylum applicant to exhaust all of the appeals before a final decision is made.

Then incredibly, according to another Aontú PQ, only 15% of deportation orders are actioned. We asked the Minister where the other 85% people were, who had received a deportation order. She could not say. Last year 5,000 people came through Dublin airport without a travel document or a passport. And the Minister did nothing.

Last year Aontú asked the Minister how asylum seekers got into Ireland. Incredibly the Minister responded that 75% of asylum seekers are not asked how they came to Ireland.

This is breath taking incompetency. The Minister for Justice is now stating that 80% of asylum seekers are coming across the border from the north of Ireland. We told her that 2 years ago when she was not asking the right questions.

1. Aontú opposes the EU Migration Pact
2. Aontú seeks a 12-week time limit to the initial application process.
3. Aontú seeks a special court to hear application appeals within a 12-week time frame.
4. Anyone purposefully destroying travel documents should not enter the state.
5. All those who receive a deportation order should be deported, except in rare instances on humanitarian grounds. Aontú would significantly increase the numbers of deportations.
6. Social welfare offerings for migrants should be equalised across the EU.
7. No one should get housing ahead of anyone else. Accommodation should be based on length of time on the housing waiting list and need.
8. The government must send communications out internationally in numerous languages that there is enormous pressure on housing in Ireland.
9. We want an Irish sea border at the airports and ferry ports in the North of Ireland. We were the party that made this proposal and a poll in the Belfast Telegraph has shown that a majority of the people of the north favour it also.
10. There must be a mutually beneficial deal with Britain, France, and Ireland to ensure the flow of migrants can be managed fairly.

Aontú seek compassion and common sense. All citizens must be treated equally. We oppose discrimination of any citizen. The colour of a person's skin is of no more significance than the colour of their eyes. Many immigrants make a valuable contribution to Irish society and this must be recognised.

## A New Border Agency

Aontú are advocating for the creation of a single Border Agency that will be responsible for the management of applications, enforcement of decisions, accommodation, community consultation and border security.

At present, a disparate group of agencies such as the Department of Justice, IPAS, the Department of Integration, the Border Management Unit and the Garda National Immigration Bureau undertake a

range of responsibilities. However, the number of personnel available to them and the mismatch of oversight have contributed to the current crisis.

We want to see one single agency responsible for the entire border and migration policy of the State. Other European countries such as Croatia and Lithuania who have similar border situations to ours, such as a land border with a non-EU country, with a comparable population.

In context, the current resources available to the State for migration and border control is less than 400 people – whereas Lithuania for example has just under 5,000 staff dedicated to it.

A one-stop shop for migration and border policy, we believe, can get a hold of the current situation, put resources where they need to be and bring accountability to a situation that has been long bereft of leadership.

Aontú will:

- Seek the establishment of an Irish Border Agency that will have responsibility for applications, deportations, enforcement, accommodation, and community engagement in relation to the current migrant crisis.
- Recruit thousands more staff to oversee border management and enforcement of an Irish Sea Border for people.

## Defence

The biggest threat to Irish security is this Government. The Irish Defence Forces are in major difficulties. Decades of underspending and a refusal by the government to pay staff an adequate salary has led to a collapse in the number of soldiers within the Army, and the inability of the Naval Service to float more than one Naval Service ship at a time.

Aontú Parliamentary Questions found out that the government was spending more in press releases in the Dept of the Taoiseach than on the National Cyber Security Centre in the year before the HSE cyber-attack. This cyber-attack could cost the state as much as €100m and has cost dozens of lives in delayed treatments. Yet no one has been held to account.

### Military Neutrality

Aontú is a party of military neutrality. Small countries have rightly been sceptical of the intentions of military blocks. Military blocks often orientate their military actions around their own economic objectives. We have seen that with the US in the Middle East. Small countries such as Ireland would have little or no influence on the decisions of large military blocks. Having young Irish men and women fight in wars in which we would have little, or no influence would be a grave mistake.

There is a “clamour” to exploit the Ukrainian crisis to “move Ireland away from its traditional position of military neutrality and to move closer to NATO and to the project of European militarisation.

Ursula Von Der Leyen has stated that she seeks to develop an EU Defence Union in the next EU Parliament term. This could mean a permanent Command and Control HQ, a new EU Defence Budget and Defence Research Programme paid for by member-states and an obligation to allocate 2% of GDP on defence spending. It must be remembered that Ursula von der Leyen has significantly distorted Irish foreign policy in terms of the heartbreaking attacks on Palestinian civilians by the IDF. Ursula Von Der Leyen does not speak for Ireland. What makes us think that a new European Defence Union will represent Ireland either?

Last year the Tánaiste Micheál Martin said he is open to European Union treaty change on foot of proposals to overhaul the working of the union. This treaty change would remove Ireland’s veto on

military policy. The Triple Lock blocks Ireland's involvement in a European Defence Union. The Taoiseach has stated that he wants to end the Triple Lock.

1. Aontú support the Triple Lock as key to our neutrality.
2. Aontú oppose treaty change. Aontú oppose any moves towards a military alliance.
3. Aontú seeks adequate spending on our army, naval and cyber defences.
4. Aontú will not support Ursula Von Der Leyen's campaign to be elected President of the EU Commission.
5. Aontú seek to devolve Foreign Policy back to the nation states.
6. Aontú is not in favour of EU enlargement at this moment in time.
7. Aontú opposes EU federalism and the outsourcing of further power to the EU. We seek greater national self-determination and the devolution of more powers to the nation states.

## Farming

There are over 160,000 farms in Ireland. That figure has been falling continuously over the last number of generations. 1/3 of farmers are making a living from their farms. 1/3 of farmers are only making a living because someone in the household is working off the farm in another role and a full 1/3 of farmers are making a loss and/or in poverty.

This is happening in large part due to the economic difficulties involved in farming. Farming is a key sector of Irish society. It is key to our food security. It is the backbone of our rural communities, and it generates significant economic activity and employment.

In recent years the government and most especially the Green Party has focused the blame significantly on the farming community for Ireland's contribution to global warming. Farmers are being unfairly targeted and scapegoated by the government. Farmers realise that they have obligations and the majority want to see progress on these obligations. However, there can be no environmental solution that does not include a fair living for farming families.

We were one of the few parties to stand by farmers in opposition to the EU-Mercosur Agreement that will undermine the quality of produce sold in this country. This deal will place Irish farmers who have attained the highest in global standards at a disadvantage.

Aontú seek:

- An increase of farmer incomes to end the exodus of young farmers and the need for many farmers to 'double job' to supplement their income from the farm.
- A minimum price ensured for the produce of beef, sheep pig, poultry and vegetables that covers the cost of production for a two-year period until there is reform of the competition structures within the sector.
- To rebalance the product supply chains right through the agricultural sector to ensure that the profits earned are distributed fairly among farmers.
- To increase the microgeneration of electricity on farms.
- An all-Ireland import ban on sub-standard Brazilian and South American beef and Agri-produce which would dilute food quality and undercut farmer income – just to sell more German cars.
- To retain the Nitrates Derogation.
- To oppose any reduction of incomes associated with the Nature Restoration Regulation.
- To increase CAP funding and ensure that there is a link to productivity within the CAP going forward.
- To reduce regulation and paperwork on farmers.
- To ease loneliness of elderly people in Rural Ireland: expand Meals on Wheels programme.

## Fishing

There is a real prospect of Irish waters no longer being fished by Irish boats leading into 2025. Ireland has lost 15% of its fishing quota following Brexit and all of its quota on some species of fish, pushing fishing communities to breaking point. Our government has simply given away the livelihoods of fishermen in this country.

Despite having some of the richest fishing grounds in Europe, Irish boats have consistently been given lower quotas of fish than those from other European countries in Irish waters. Currently, Belgian boats have a higher quota of Black Sole – a staple of the Irish industry – than Irish fishermen do – an issue consistently raised in Europe by Ireland South candidate and fishery industry leader, Patrick Murphy.

At the moment, fishing communities such as Castletownbere, Dingle and Killybegs are being left with no choice but to decommission their fleet. This is destroying the legacy of fishing families and having a devastating knock-on effect on Irish supply chains and local businesses.

Fish landed in Irish ports by those fishermen are bypassing local co-ops and bring transported straight to their home country. There is no cumulative benefit to this country whatsoever.

Each year, the French and Spanish fleets fishing in Irish waters don't catch their full quota – and Aontú will fight in Brussels for the Irish fishing industry to be given that excess to keep the trade alive.

Failure is not an option – those communities that are being hammered by these practices are now exporting their young people who are leaving to find work. They may never come back.

Aontú will be working hard in the lead up to the 2026 Brexit fishing agreement renegotiation for fair play in our fishing industry – for Irish boats in Irish waters to be able to thrive, not just survive.

Aontú will:

1. Instigate a comprehensive review of fishing policy that has not addressed the unequal sharing opportunities for over 50 years.
2. Spearhead an EU strategy to entice new young entrants into the industry.
3. End the importation of fish products that undermine the CMO regarding the protection of our processing sector with tariff free products.
4. Work to end the over regulation of the industry that contradiction in its interpretation leads to confusion and loss of fishing opportunity in forcing vessels to return to port in small infringement breaches.
5. Address the uneven distribution of EU funds between the member states, the European maritime fisheries aquaculture fund.
6. Push for the introduction of a strategic plan to assist all sectors, prioritising the polyvalent section of our fleet starting with small scale fishermen.

## Housing: A Generational Crisis

The housing crisis has defined the last decade of Irish politics and threatens to define the future of our nation for years to come. Up to 1 million people are being forced to live in misery due to mortgage distress, homelessness, waiting lists of many years and or grossly unaffordable rents and mortgages. It has been far too long since any Irish government has lived up to their responsibilities.

The record of, at least, three successive governments on housing and homelessness in Ireland has been nothing short of shameful.

### Social and Affordable Housing

An increase in the supply of housing is the key to resolving the housing crisis. Firstly, the supply of social and affordable housing needs to be increased. In the 30s, the 50s, and the 80s in tough economic times social and affordable housing was built at far higher rates.

In 2023, the number of people living in homelessness exceeded the number of social housing units built. Out of a target of 9,100 new build social homes, just 8,100 were delivered last year. Last year the target for affordable purchase and cost rental homes was 5,500 homes. 1,500 affordable purchase and cost rental homes were delivered.

- Aontú will use councils to address the approval, tendering and procurement process for the building of public housing. Local Authorities must be tasked with the development of mixed income public housing estates with affordable purchase homes, affordable cost rental and social housing.

### Rental Crises

The average rent in Dublin is more than €2,390 a month. Annually this is a full €3,000 more than the before tax income of a person working full time on the minimum wage. The HAP Support scheme can't keep up with the rate of rent increases. Young couples and families are moving back in with their parents for years to try cobble together a deposit. People are having to live further outside of Dublin to afford a home. This is adding to the urban sprawl, commuting hell and air pollution.

Aontú proposes a number of reforms to begin solving the rental crisis:

- There are 3,500 empty Local Authority Homes, each empty for on average 8 months. Aontú will turn around empty local authority homes for relet within 2 months. Reduce the turn around renovation spec so that families can get in faster to homes.
- Create, develop and implement an immediate plan to renovate/rejuvenate the interiors of social housing throughout the country.
- Upgrade the heating systems of older local authority homes.
- Establish a task force to urgently and immediately fix/repair minor works in all flat complexes.
- Accelerate the retrofitting of older council housing stock.
- Establish liaison groups in all local authority areas/communities to engage with senior management of each Council to establish strong community/council relations.
- Those in rural areas who own land, but cannot afford to build, or whose current housing is run down, should be permitted to sign over a site to the local authority on which a social house can be built and rented back to them.
- Ensure the 2 per cent Rent Pressure Zone (RPZ) cap is adhered to.
- Ease "over shop" accommodation regulation to allow for empty commercial properties to be used to accommodate families.
- We seek to end the interference of the EU on the ability of the Irish Government to regulate Airbnb's.
- End the eternal regulation change. The current housing minister has changed building regulation several times. As a result, many builders expect further change which will allow more units to be achieved per site. This has the effect of slowing down the building of houses.

## Homelessness

### Recording of Homeless Deaths

There were 400 homeless deaths on the streets of Dublin over the last 5 years. The recording of homeless deaths is confined to Dublin. What does it say about the broken and callous nature of our political system that we cannot even figure out how many have died on the streets of Ireland?

- Aontú will ensure that there is a standardised reporting of homeless deaths in each Local Authority area.

### Emergency Housing

Over €2.1 bn has been spent by Local Authorities on services for households experiencing homelessness between 2009-2022. Most of this money has gone to commercial hotels and B&Bs.

- Our proposal repurposes that funding towards emergency accommodation to be allocated to housing associations and local authorities.

### Tenants' Rights

Due to the dysfunction within the market and the lack of tenants' rights within the law, many tenants are living in poor conditions, paying exorbitant rents and suffering due to the precarious nature of contracts. Indeed, most of the people presenting as homeless are coming from the private rental sector. A number of reforms in this sector will stem this human tide.

- Greater security of tenure must be provided. Tenancies of indefinite duration must be provided for.
- The grounds of sale should be removed from the Residential Tenancies Act. "Buy to Let" landlords who achieved tax breaks from the state should be prevented from issuing vacant possession "Notices to Quit".
- We need Councils to increase the number purchases of 'tenants in situ' house sales in Ireland.
- We need to ensure that the Traveller Accommodation Budgets are spent appropriately by each Local Authority.

Many small Landlords around the country have found themselves landlords by circumstance, with high mortgages and difficulties with a minority of tenants who do not fulfil their contracts or their obligations.

- It should be made easier to remove tenants who wilfully damage property or do not live up to their agreed tenancy agreement.

### Ending the Cosy Relationship

At a European level Aontú seeks to implement policies which will end the cosy relationship between vulture funds, developers and the government parties. The housing policy of the Irish government should not give a blank cheque to international investors and pit young families against vulture funds.

- Aontú will introduce amendments to EU law to delete advantages that FF/FG give to international investment vehicles which allows them a competitive advantage over families seeking a home.
- Aontú proposes a carrot and stick approach to mandate utilisation of the land – grant funding and vacant house tax to get the 1 in 33 empty homes in the state back into use.

## The Environment

Aontú aims to build a sustainable and environmentally friendly nation. But we oppose the policy of the Green Party to use a stick instead of a carrot. The constant use of the Green stick has led to the environment becoming a contentious wedge issue that is now splitting the nation.

Last year saw a General Government Balance of €8.3 billion (2.9 per cent of GNI\*). The government has set up two Rainy Day funds in which over €8 billion will be lodged.

There is a massive public purse that could be put to work on energy use reduction and sustainable energy and public transport development. But so far the government have not put their money where their mouth is.

Under the Paris agreement, the EU committed in 2015 to cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the EU by at least 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. In 2021, the target was changed to at least 55% reduction by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050. Ireland will achieve a reduction of 29 per cent in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 compared to a target of 51 per cent.

### The Government is Failing.

The number of retrofits on buildings last year was only around 10% of the annual target, leaving building stock still dependent on fossil fuel heating. According to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, for the first three years just 80,000 or 16 per cent of the 500,000 retrofit targets will be achieved. The average homeowner needs €40,000 after grant aid to bring their home to an A standard of energy efficiency.

Electric buses are lying idle. Electric car sales are falling off a cliff. There have been more offshore Wind Turbine conferences held by the government for the last 10 years than there are off shore wind turbines. The Western Rail Corridor and the Navan to Dublin Rail Line are still not at planning stage. €300 million has been spent on the Metro North project without a shovel put in the ground. And the lopsided spatial development of the island continues apace leading to long distance car commuting as a norm.

## Ireland's Public Green Bank

Aontú proposes to apply to EU Climate and Innovation Funds to help the creation of a publicly owned Irish Green Bank. This new initiative would be instrumental in ensuring that families, communities and small businesses are afforded the necessary financial supports as part of a just transition to a green economy. People throughout Ireland want to do the right thing for the environment in all areas of their lives. Unfortunately, the cost of living means that many environmentally friendly options are off-limits for too many people.

A publicly owned Green Bank would provide the necessary finance to enable individuals, families and businesses to contribute towards environmentally friendly outcomes without bearing the additional financial burdens that are too often associated with a green future. For example, Ireland's Green Public Bank would pursue the public and environmental interest by providing finance for small-scale wind, solar and bio digestion projects, home retrofitting, electric cars and other environmentally friendly and emission-reducing initiatives.

For-profit banking is not compelled to take sufficient account of the positive externalities that green projects represent when deciding how to allocate their funds. Ireland's Green Public Bank will play a key role in lowering emissions, ensuring that the goals of the climate action plan are met, and building up a new green economy for Ireland.

## Accountability

Accountability is a key element of Aontú's platform. Leo Varadkar stated that the National Children's Hospital would be completed by 2020 at a cost of 700 million save an asteroid hitting the planet. Its 2024, there is no opening date, and the cost is €2.25 billion.

€300 million has been spent on metro north and not a shovel has been put in the ground. The government spent €22m on ventilators that have never worked and are now being stored at a cost of €50,000 a year.

Over 100 electric buses sat idle in Dublin for 18 months due to the lack of charging points. Roderic O'Gorman has bought 37 buildings to house asylum seekers and only 1 of them is in use. The people of Midleton were promised flood defences in 2015 and yet the planning permission for the project has not even been completed. The delivery of key public transport is grinding to a halt and the budgets are ballooning and no one is ever held to account.

Imagine how transformative it would be if there was real accountability. There must be a cost if a person does not do their job. Spending public money should not involve taking less care than spending your own, it should involve more care than your own. Aontú will inject accountability at senior levels of the civil service in government.

- Senior Civil Servants in government departments and Local Authorities who do not fulfil their contract and job specification will have a disciplinary process initiated up to and including dismissal from their job.
- To increase the power and resources of SIPO to be able to properly investigate corruption in Local Authorities.
- Aontú seek a full public inquiry with statutory powers into the misleading of the general public by Ministers during the so-called Care and Family referendums.
- Aontú seeks a full public inquiry into the actions of the Government during the Covid Crisis including the shocking deaths that happened in Nursing Homes. We will use the EU petitions committee if the government fail to deliver.
- Aontú seek three Public Inquiries with statutory powers into approval of the National Children's Hospital tender.

## Small and Medium Enterprises

Business Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have always been the 'poor relation' of FF/ FG enterprise policy. This even though SMEs employ most of the workers in this state. Covid turbo boosted online shopping and many shops, restaurants and pubs were forced to close. Online shopping is still gutting the retail trade and many of our town centres are blighted with shuttered shop fronts.

Aontú will:

- Lobby the EU to separate out hotels from restaurants and pubs for the purposes of VAT. We will seek to reduce the VAT rate in this new sector to 9%.
- Campaign to transfer 50% of the responsibility for sick pay to the state.
- Push the government to reduce the Carbon Tax on Fuel until 2026 when businesses have had an opportunity to install sustainable electricity micro generation.
- To force the EU to allow nation states to decouple the price of electricity from the price of gas during the ongoing cost of living crisis.



- Ensure at local Authority level that businesses have a consultation rights for all new road and traffic changes in towns.
- Push for a Single Market for financial services such as Insurance.
- Lobby for the introduction of a fair rates revaluation system that is based on size and profitability of a business.
- Develop an Internet Business Rate for large firms such as Amazon.
- Push CEOs to help all small business online either in a marketing or eCommerce fashion.

## Road Safety

Heartbreakingly road deaths have soared by 31pc in the last year. All of us have been stopped in our tracks over the last few months by the heart-breaking loss of life that has visited so many families. The law is not being implemented. Aontú research has shown that traffic Garda numbers have fallen from 1046 to 630 in 13 years.

Many roads are in a dangerous state. Some rural roads are like a moon scape with the number of potholes in existence. Accident blackspots are a regular feature in some locations and towns and villages waiting decades for traffic calming measures. Ireland has the third-highest level of deaths on rural roads in the EU with more than two-thirds of all road fatalities occurring outside built-up areas and motorways.

Disqualified drivers in their thousands refuse to adhere to the law and surrender their driving licences. Thousands more do not even have a licence when they are disqualified by the courts.

Aontú will:

- Seek an immediate audit of dangerous road intersections around the country.
- Demand a nationwide 5-year plan to install traffic calming measures at all towns and villages where they can be implemented safely.
- Spearhead an increase in Traffic Gardaí recruited and will fight for better terms and conditions if necessary to promote recruitment.
- Ensure that Gardaí have the technology to check the records of each driver instantaneously.

## Childcare

By European standards, Ireland is one of the lowest investors in childcare. This is a sector that is crucial to the development of our younger generations, but we neglect to fully invest or resource their development. Aontú has been to the fore in fighting for Childcare providers around the country. Childcare Providers and Early Years Education providers are closing on a weekly basis as a result of Roderic O’Gorman’s Core Funding policy. This policy is making it impossible to make ends meet. This is having a devastating effect on the lives of the owners of these businesses and its making it increasingly difficult for families to get the Childcare and Early Years Education that they need.

Aontú will

- Seek greater funding for private and public childcare providers.
- Demand a decent wage for professionals in the sector.
- Seek more resources for City/County Childcare Committees located around the country.
- Campaign for a 20% increase in funding for the Access & Inclusion Model to benefit children with special needs.

## Local Democracy

Ireland is one of the most centralised countries in Europe in terms of power. This is contributing to the lopsided spatial development of the country. Too many local authorities are run directly by unelected officers. Often elected Councillors are required only to rubber stamp proposals. We believe that the closer decisions are made to those affected by them, the better those decisions will be.

- Aontú seek the development of strong Regional Assemblies with designated budgets. Regional Assemblies would be created for Dublin, the rest of Leinster, Munster and Connacht/Ulster. After reunification an Ulster Assembly would be created based in Stormont.
- Aontú seek to rebalance Local Authority power to give councillors more power than unelected officials.
- We seek to increase the power and resources of SIPO to be able to properly investigate corruption in Local Authorities.
- Aontú seek to return Councils to towns and cities with a population of over 20,000 people.

## Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

It's quite clear that we have reached a dangerous tipping point in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour in towns and villages across the country. Under your government Ireland is becoming a more violent and dangerous place. Rape has doubled in the last 10 years. Sexual Assault has doubled in the last 10 years. The murder rate is soaring.

Theft from a person has increased. Theft of vehicles show a significant increase. Assault or obstruction of Gardaí shows an increase. Human trafficking is increasing. Harassment and stalking are increasing.

There's a sharp correlation between violent crime and collapsing garda numbers.

### Collapse in Garda Numbers

The spike in violent crime unfolding in towns and villages across the country has not happened by accident. Garda numbers are at their lowest in 5 years. Rank and file garda numbers are at their lowest in 6 years. Indeed, Ireland has now one of the smallest per capita police forces in the whole of the EU.

Garda recruitment is on the floor and retirement and resignations are on the increase. It has been reported to Aontú that in the month of October, that out of the 25 people who left the Gardaí, 13 of them resigned. This is startling. Resignations were the majority cause of exit from the force that month. Gardaí are voting with their feet and leaving well before their retirement date.

Gardaí are being attacked every day. As numbers of Garda fall, remaining Garda become more exposed and vulnerable to violent assault.

Despite all the talk by the government. Despite all the photo shoots of the Minister for Justice walking the street with Garda, the Garda force in Ireland is still shrinking. The bottom line is that under this Government more Gardaí are leaving the force than are joining.

### **Laws mean nothing unless they are enforced.**

But the government is strategically forgetting one thing. All the laws in the world mean nothing unless there is enforcement.

- Aontú seeks an increase in the pay, pensions, terms and conditions for Gardaí. We have introduced a Bill that would ensure a mandatory sentence for individuals who injure a Gardaí purposefully. Aontú seek to retain and strengthen Councillors roles on Joint Policing Committees.

### Safety on Public Transport

Anti-social behaviour on public transport is a matter of growing concern.

- Aontú is seeking to set up a Public Transport Garda unit to protect passengers on trains, buses and Luas. Iarnród Éireann has logged 2,300 incidents of antisocial behaviour in the past year. This is an increase from 700 in 2017 – despite a reduction in passengers due to Covid. Anti-Social Behaviour on Public Transport is a significant barrier to many people using Public Transport.

### Invest in Drug Rehab and Detox Rehab

Villages, towns and cities throughout Ireland are awash with drugs. In an eleven-year period there were a total of 6,697 poisoning deaths and deaths among drug users. Drug related deaths increase while government investments decrease. Ireland has now one of the highest rates of drug use in Europe and rising as resources go down.

- Aontú is calling for investment in drug rehabilitation and detox services, to combat this humanitarian disaster.

### Invest in Local Communities Blighted by Gangs

Ensure that there are real economic alternatives for young people who are being preyed upon by drugs gangs. Economic investment must be weighted to reduce deprivation and inequality.

- Aontú seek a Local Government Fund to get empty buildings back into community use. There are so many publicly owned buildings not in use. Throughout Ireland there are empty school buildings due to excessive red tape and insurance issues.

## Children's Welfare

Growing up in Ireland in 2024 is not easy for many of our young people. Information and communication are available 24/7 with no breaks, families are stretched and left unsupported when they need it most and the State increasingly outsources its responsibilities to children and young people to unregulated placements.

Aontú will:

- Strengthen families and give them the resources to raise their children.
- Ban unregulated state child facilities and properly fund regulated residential providers.
- Ban smart phone sales to children under the age of 13.
- Ban the provision of and access to hard-core violent pornography to children.

## Healthcare

The health system is broken. Aontú is pledged to work to fix what is a national crisis, a crisis for which Fianna Fáil-Fine Gael – Green Party has abdicated responsibility. Medical, nursing and allied healthcare professionals struggle to keep the health system functioning, yet Fianna Fáil-Fine Gael – Green Party have demonstrated time and time again an inability to engage positively and proactively with professionals to strengthen the system, to increase productivity and to improve its capacity to deliver better health, social and economic outcomes. These developments reflect deeper structural problems that have not been properly addressed.

Aontú will use the new Regional Health Fora to push for the following:

- Proper workplace planning for positions such as doctors and nurses etc. The majority of undergraduate medicine places in Irish Universities are for non-EU Students, many of whom never work in Ireland. This is happening because of a funding deficit within universities. Aontú will increase the funding for Universities in Ireland and seek to increase the number of medical places for Irish students to 75% of total undergraduate places.
- 24/7 Cardiac Care in University Hospital Waterford.
- Reopen at least one of the three closed EDs in the Mid-West.
- A ban on the closure of further EDs.
- The protection of Navan ED.
- Activity led funding for the health service to replace block funding, thus ensuring that funding is prioritised for front line services.

### Primary Care

We know that investing in primary care leads to better health outcomes at lower costs. The Sláintecare Report aims for people to receive 70% of their healthcare needs in their community, rather than in hospital. However, only 4.5% of the current Health Budget is spent on primary care.

The staff needed to deliver integrated care in the community are simply not in place. Aontú believes this will require resolving issues relating to the training and location of GPs, especially in areas of greatest social need.

- Aontú will consult closely with GPs who have established innovative and socially responsive practices in order to replicate, so far as possible, such models more widely.
- Aontú will press for 10% of the current health budget being assigned to the development and delivery of Primary Care in communities.

GPs interact with every individual and every family. They should be at the heart of a responsive, proactive and cost-effective health system. A more balanced and responsive Healthcare system will require greater integration of Primary, Secondary and Tertiary care.

### Acute Care

Ireland has 2.8 acute hospital beds per 1,000 of the population, compared with the OECD average of 4.3 per 1000. Even with a significant increase in day-case surgery there is still a significant shortage of beds out of line with best international practice. Around 1,600-1,800 hospital beds were lost in austerity-era cutbacks overseen by a Fine Gael/Labour Coalition government. These cutbacks were implemented despite evidence that such cutbacks are counter-productive, both in terms of health and the long-term costs of rebuilding the system.

ED services are not functioning as they should – the same cycle of “crises” occur year after year. We know that being on a trolley often leads to delayed diagnosis, delayed treatment and patients who have an increased risk of morbidity and mortality. According to the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine “some 300 to 350 of our citizens die avoidably every year as a direct result of the failure to address this issue”. This is a wholly unacceptable situation.

### ICT

The HSE has not embraced Information Communications Technology (ICT) to the necessary levels. The Health Service needs to have the ability to manage all aspects of the delivery of healthcare in a digital environment. One of the oldest truisms of management is; what can't be measured cannot be (effectively) managed, and this remains of compelling relevance to Healthcare. This includes staffing and administration, the digitising and transferability of patient records electronically across different domains and developing the capability to align to rapidly evolving E-medicine.

## Staff Retention

One of the many damaging consequences of austerity on our Healthcare system was the migration of thousands of health professionals. The effects are still evident on service provision, difficulties in retaining existing staff and attracting much needed consultant and specialist staff. There has been a breakdown of trust in relation to contractual arrangements, including the first strike by our nursing profession in more than a generation. Aontú believes that rebuilding the health system requires rebuilding trust between government and the health professions.

- The health sector now operates internationally. To retain and recruit staff means competing internationally on pay and conditions and ensuring parity across equivalently qualified staff.

## Healthcare Dedicated to Protecting Life

Aontú believes in maintaining a Healthcare Service dedicated to protecting life, not ending it. Covid-19 demonstrated the extraordinary work of our healthcare professionals to save and preserve life. We must not let the imposition of abortion and euthanasia alter the fundamental ethos of our healthcare service which is to protect and preserve life. Aontú will continue to oppose euthanasia and abortion within our healthcare service and protect fundamental rights such as conscientious objection.

## Mental Health

### Children's Mental Health

The under-resourcing of CAMHS has become a national scandal, with over 4,361 on waiting lists. This is particularly concerning as the delay in treatment of mental illness is associated with poorer long-term outcomes.

- We in Aontú would allocate an additional in €10 million in funding to establish 12 additional CAMHS teams.
- Existing provision for specialist mental health staff in Hospital A&Es, prisons and on-campus medical centres in universities needs to be expanded, including mental health nursing cover out of hours available to respond to mental health challenges and crises as they arise. The cost of this additional cover is estimated to be approximately €4 million.
- Aontú would also aim to hire 40 additional specialist nurses in the areas of mental health, intellectual disability and suicide prevention. These nurses would help to boost existing frontline staff and be transferred to hospitals and centres where they are most needed.

## Regional Development

Ireland is developing into a city state. Continuous lopsided spatial development mean that hundreds of thousands of people are condemned to a commuter hell. Dublin is overheating. People are commuting from Ulster, Connacht and Munster into Dublin on a daily basis and much of regional Ireland is emptying of its young people. The establishment parties are increasingly Dublin based.

### **Aontú will:**

- Aontú seek to create a new international city in the western seaboard of Ireland to help rebalance Irelands lopsided spatial development. Infrastructure would be front loaded into this city in future so that it would grow to a critical mass and draw down international investment in its own right. It would operate as a counterweight to Dublin.

- Aontú also seek to develop a Border Innovation Zone. This would be supported by infrastructural investment and derogation on European grant funding rules for a 10-year period to kick start investment.
- Aontú will harness the SEUPB for border counties and the EU Regional Development Fund to address the infrastructure deficit across the midlands.
- Prioritise the opening of Waterford airport to an international carrier.
- Reopen the Western Rail Corridor and the Navan to Dublin Line of provincial rail lines.
- Expand public transport in rural towns and villages.
- Increase investment into the resurfacing of roads that have been neglected.

## Irish Unity

Aontú seeks the independence of the Irish people. We believe in self-determination.

Brexit has highlighted the drastic cost of allowing Westminster to determine the future of the people of the north of Ireland. Tory MPs know little and care even less about society here. Yet they determine the future of everyone in Ireland, north and south. Ireland's future, north and south, ought to be determined in Ireland. Westminster's sway remains a millstone around the neck of our country.

Aontú will:

- Call on the EU Commission to develop a whitepaper on Irish Unity.
- Call on all Local Authorities to develop Memorandums of Understanding with the closest Local Authority on the other side of the border in order to improve service delivery and reduce costs.

## The Use of Cash

Aontú are the party that has robustly defended the use of cash, especially for public services. Too many older people in particular do not use contactless services for payment, and we took on the NCT who had decided to move away from cash and therefore limit its services until they u-turned. We have also been active in campaigning for the GAA to revert back to ticket sales at their grounds for all games rather than their online ticketing service which in many cases have excluded those that keep clubs going year after year.

Aontú will:

- Ensure that every Council we sit on keep cash as an option for all its public services and continue to campaign for the retention of cash as a valid payment method across the public sector.

## North South Interconnector

Aontú will use every political office at our disposal to ensure that the North South Interconnector is undergrounded. We will ensure passage of the Aontú North-South Interconnector Bill to force the government to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the full cost and damage of over grounding the cables, to ultimately compel the undergrounding of the cables.

## A Liberal Democracy

Aontú supports freedom of speech and opposes Hate Speech Laws that are used to censor democratic debate. We abhor hate and urge citizens to engage respectfully. We support the scientific definition of gender that defines a woman as a female adult. And we believe that children who suffer from gender dysphoria should be treated with care and compassion and that any treatment they receive should be based on science and not ideology. In line with best medical practice, we oppose the policy of gender affirmation in the education system. We will defend democratic norms in Europe and on councils throughout the country.