



**green
party**

comhaontas glas

**GREEN PARTY
LOCAL ELECTION
MANIFESTO**

2019

THE GREEN PARTY BELIEVES IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES



We believe in livable streets and neighbourhoods where you can walk or cycle to the shops with your children or your parents.

We believe in local healthcare services that won't send you away if you need that hearing test or repeat prescription. We believe that everyone should have access to a park or a green space, that trees and bees deserve our protection and that locally produced food should be available to everyone.

We want communities where your tap water is clean and tastes good, and we believe that almost all household waste could be reduced and recycled.

So much of this is supported by our view that local government should operate as the first and most immediate way of achieving these goals. Your councillors should speak to you and for you. They are your neighbours and friends.

That relationship matters. It is a bedrock for our democracy and we believe in working towards a system of government where local voices are heard; where they carry weight.

They carry the support and knowledge of the people they live amongst.

THE PART YOU CAN PLAY

A VISION FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- We propose to restore Town Councils as new district councils that encompass the rural hinterland of each town in such a way that every rural area is under a district council.
- The creation of a directly elected mayors in major urban centres with significant powers over services and budgets.
- We will work for the adoption of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals throughout local budgets and policy development with a view to achieving social equality and climate justice.
- We propose to implement a Climate Action Plan in every local authority in the country.
- Delegate many of the functions of central government to local and regional authorities including aspects of the administration of health, education, Garda oversight and social welfare based on international best practice.
- Introduce the facility to call a regional or local referendum through the collection of a certain percentage of voters' signatures (at a level set by legislation).
- Avail of the recent changes in local authority planning procedures that allow for participatory budgeting to allow communities to contribute to the development and delivery of local services.
- Propose a Localism Bill enabling Local Authorities to transfer powers and budgets from central government in areas such as Sustainable Transport, Social Housing, Renewable Energy, Waste Management and Health Promotion.
- We will transform the Local Property Tax into a more progressive system of Site Value Tax that will dis-incentivise land hoarding and speculation.
- We propose that every local authority should create a local plan for the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- We believe that funding to Local Enterprise Offices should be ring fenced for a period of five years to allow the community and voluntary sector to develop strategic plans, based on sustainable guaranteed funding.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

We believe that people should feel a sense of security and solidarity with those around them and that they have a significant role to play in their community. The Green Party will undertake a thorough, independent review of how best to support community development activity, and of how the relationship between Government and Community and Voluntary sector might be developed and enriched.

As the Government has a major financial commitment to the largely product-centred SICAP programme until 2022, it would be best to carry out such a review in late 2021 and early 2022.

In the intervening three years the Green Party will:

- Develop a people-centered, community programme, supporting existing and emerging organisations engaged in their communities on specific issues.
- This programme will have a strong social justice focus supporting anti-poverty work and work with people experiencing disadvantage.
- It will also offer support for developing other types of activity, social, political, economic, and environmental in which the concept of community may make a positive contribution.
- The same approach to development will be applied in the promotion of new community energy, food, nature conservation, educational and enterprise support projects referenced in this document.

CLIMATE ACTION

- We will promote small locally generated power, including district heating schemes, and resale of locally generated power back into the grid, giving a return on local investment in renewable energy generation
- We propose that, within a National Strategy for Energy, local authorities have devolved and autonomous powers and resources to develop energy plans for their areas.
- The Green party aspires to the principles of passive solar design in all new buildings as a way of greatly reducing heating demands and the future proofing of existing housing stock.
- We propose that local councils lead the way in sustainable construction by budgeting for embodied energy and actively reducing the use of carbon heavy building materials.
- We will promote public transport and active travel throughout all transport and infrastructure planning decisions in order to tackle climate changing emissions.

- To support active travel and pedestrian space we propose that all urban areas in Ireland develop and implement a monthly car free day.
- We will introduce annual audits of local authority environmental performance and invest in local government environmental enforcement capacity.
- The Green party oppose the incineration of waste, as it is the destruction of what could otherwise be a useful stream of recyclable materials and is at odds to programs of reduction, reuse and recycling.

REGIONAL TOURISM

- We will create an All-Ireland Walkways Development Plan to establish long distance off-road walking and cycling routes as well as promoting sustainable, outdoor/adventure tourism.
- We will develop local Food Policy Councils and corresponding local Food Trails to build on our reputation for high quality produce.
- We will develop youth and child friendly water sports to encourage health based activity and to foster an awareness of our maritime heritage.
- We will develop a 'Livable Cities' framework with traffic-free areas and new parks to benefit residents and tourists. This initiative will link with developments of public and affordable housing in urban areas.
- We will develop and designate at least two new national parks to nurture our nation's ailing biodiversity and revitalise our current parks with strategic funding to enhance indigenous natural features.
- We propose to connect Rosslare to Larne and Rosslare to Galway as two new tourist rail routes.
- Develop multi purpose accessible venues to accommodate both day time and night time cultural and creative activities such as markets and events.
- Elect a Night Czar for the main cities to revitalise and develop our night time culture.
- Support and enhance our creative culture by building studios and works spaces for the creative community, and recognising their social & economic contributions and value.
- Support indigenous and local creative enterprise by actively pursuing platforms to show case their work.
- Strengthen the cultural and creative provisions and objectives in local Development Plans.

THE HOME YOU LIVE IN

The social welfare budget allows us protect people from poverty and reward those engaged in caring work which is not valued by the market.

The introduction of new automation technologies and work practices make the case for reforming our social welfare system and paying people a Basic Income which gives them greater protection and flexibility in mixing caring and working roles.

Reforming the system will not be easy but can be achieved in a step by step approach.

WASTE AND POLLUTION

- We call on the Irish Government to protect Ireland's bee population by removing Bayer's new harmful insecticide (Flupyradifurone) from sale in Ireland.
- We will strengthen the role and membership of the Environmental Protection Agency's Advisory Board and propose additional legislative and funding support to the EPA to increase enforcement.
- We propose to establish a forum of appeal for the Integration Pollution Prevention and Control license system and to provide an independent route to review and redress where the EPA currently has full jurisdiction.
- We propose to resource local authorities to provide 10,000 clean drinking water outlets nationwide in an effort to reduce the use of plastic bottles of water.
- Plastering our roads with election posters clutters our public space and wastefully bombards voters. Candidates, parties and referendum campaigns should be restricted to one poster each in a number of designated areas in each local election area such as outside shopping centres and libraries.
- To deal with flooding we will create a single Emergency Response Agency involving local authorities, Government departments, Gardaí, Defence Forces, Civil Defence and emergency services in coordinated planning and response to emergency situations, particularly in relation to the Shannon Basin.
- We will adopt ecological measures to manage our river catchments to benefit communities who live and work near vulnerable areas. We advocate a regional approach to flood prevention.

- We will develop land use management plans for each river catchment in the State and begin a process of utilising land to attenuate flood waters, build natural revetment barriers and plant broadleaf forestry and willow for coppicing. We will prevent poorly regulated urbanisation which has led to construction on floodplains.
- We oppose plans to build incinerators in any location nationwide. This method of waste treatment simply creates an incentive for waste creation and a centralisation of operation, neither of which are sustainable.
- Air pollution is on the increase. We propose that a system of multiple permanent & continuous air and marine ecosystem monitoring stations be provided to all urban areas and where incinerators have been built or are proposed.
- We support local movements like Repair Café which help people to repair broken or damaged items rather than discard them, both with pop-up café events and internet resources. We propose to support this work through a repair VAT exemption.
- The Green Party proposes to implement a grants scheme supporting infrastructure for the treatment and distribution of water servicing group water schemes and sewerage disposal. We also promote the resource recovery of sewerage as an alternative to treatment and disposal.



CHILDREN AND CHILDCARE

- We propose that each local authority should undertake a review and support service for childcare buildings to ensure that all premises have the correct planning status, the appropriate space and services for childcare and that they meet all requirements for fire safety and air quality.
- We call on Local Authorities to undertake a central role in the direct provision of community based childcare on an affordable and universally accessible basis.
- We propose to make available grant schemes to facilitate the adaptation of suitably located community, youth and sports facilities to operate as after-school service providers which could also be used by community groups operating cooperative childcare.
- We believe that newly built primary and secondary schools should be designed and granted planning permission with appropriate spaces for breakfast club or afterschool/ homework club facilities.

LOCAL HEALTH SERVICES

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EDUCATION

- We propose to work with local communities to create school Health Zones that would move car drop off points to a safe distance.
- We will undertake a review of education services at a regional level in primary, post primary, third level and continued education with specific focus on improving engagement and enrolment, accessibility for vulnerable groups and with a view to reducing fees and administrative costs that act as a barrier to entry for students.
- We will work with Education and Training Boards, and SOLAS to support the participation of people who have a disability in local training, education and activation programmes. All education service providers should appoint a Disability expert to liaise with students.
- At local level we will prioritize better cycle and pedestrian access to schools in urban areas and villages, and take these into account in planning future housing and school locations. Improving healthy travel to and from school. The Green Party strongly supports the Green Flag and “walking bus” initiatives that support students choosing healthy and ecologically friendly transport to school.

A COMMUNITY YOU BELONG TO

The Green Party believes in decision making led by voters at the lowest possible level. This empowers communities and local regions to envision a future that is tailored to their own specific needs.

We advocate that the local community can take a lead in deciding how local services are provided and give them a key role in planning. Thus, decisions are made in a more transparent, accountable and democratic way.

TRANSPORT

- To facilitate multi-leg journeys, we will ensure that both public and private companies use a central bus station for inter-urban routes, located alongside other public transport modes.
- We call for the creation of an independent Public Transport Regulator within the National Transport Authority, whose remit would be to facilitate greater integration between inter-urban and local transport services
- We will push for a requirement for night-time and early-morning business deliveries, to reduce road congestion during peak commuting hours.
- We will seek the creation of local authority 'Street Officers', to issue both parking fines and dog fouling fines and actively patrol communities to ensure that streets and neighbourhoods are accessible to all.
- We will reduce the waiting time to a maximum of 30 seconds for pedestrian signal times and ensure that all pedestrians have adequate time to cross the road.
- We will improve the public realm in our cities, towns and villages by providing wider footpaths with quality materials and design that make it easier for people to walk instead of driving short distances.
- We propose the provision of secure and sheltered waiting spaces to all public transport hubs.
- We propose an increase in the provision of cycling parking at all transport nodes and the facilitation of cycling storage on both coach and rail lines;
- We will provide for longer cycle commutes by considerably increasing the Greenways network alongside canals and National Road corridors.
- We will establish a 'Dublin Transport' office to improve coordination between Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the National Transport Authority

- We advocate an increase in the provision of Park and Ride facilities, a reduction in parking charges in under-utilised Park and Rides, and heavy discounting of tickets for monthly users.
- We propose a progressive reduction in public transport fares until they are free in conjunction with the development of service capacity in public transport. This will include the expansion of free and reduced-fare public transport schemes to more sections of the population, while also prioritising rural areas.
- We propose to extend the LEAP card provisions beyond its current regional boundaries to develop a truly integrated national travel service that would offer regular commuters significant savings on travel.
- We will provide additional express buses for long-distance commutes from Drogheda, Dundalk, Mullingar, Tullamore, Portlaoise, Carlow, Arklow and Gorey.
- We will prioritise funding for the Kildare Route Project Phase 2, the Navan Railway Line and the Interconnector (DART Underground) between Spencer Dock and Inchicore. We will promote a number of key rail routes to improve access for commuters including lines in Limerick, Waterford, Sligo, and Derry.
- We will undertake an in-depth public review of a Light Rail system for the city of Galway to service its residents needs and drastically reduce Galway's chronic traffic problems.
- We will increase bike space on our trains, with flexible space for bikes (eg fold-down seating), and put in place more car hire, bike hire and vehicle sharing schemes, at main stations.
- We will promote teleworking by allowing more local and semi-state workers to work remotely one day a week or more.

RURAL LIFE

- We propose a proactive approach to licensing local bus services by the licensing authority and the direct support of existing routes, to include school schemes and to provide capacity based on demand.
- We call for the expansion of the Rural Transport Programme and supplement it with more scheduled bus services at lower fare rates.
- We propose to place the farming community at the centre of decision making in the future development of greenway routes across the island of Ireland and will require a consultation process with local representatives, landowners and interested bodies as minimal requirement for applications.
- We will require the inclusion of cycle and walking lanes in all road planning assessments across Ireland, where appropriate, and in keeping with local concerns.
- We will promote greater integration of small scale, bio diverse, forestry into farming systems.
- We will promote co-ops and market gardening; artisan food, including cheese; small-scale poultry, farm-gate enterprises and farmer markets.
- We will promote small industry, craft making by making support available through local authority advice outlets, including on starting up, premises and marketing, and through grant aid.
- We will develop more attractive living options in town centres, including above shops.
- We will facilitate the retention of post offices, Garda stations and banks, they are a vital social and infrastructural resource within communities.
- We propose to increase funding specifically to mental health/rural isolation issues, which become more significant as our population ages.
- The Green Party supports an increase in organic output from tillage and other non-animal based products to 20% of total output by 2025.
- We advocate a 5% increase in subsidies to existing and new participants on the Organic Farming Scheme for produce in cereals, fruits, vegetables, legumes and other non-live stock based outputs.
- We support the launch of a major marketing initiative to encourage consumers to buy locally-grown, pesticide free produce with a particular focus on crops and horticultural produce

- We will promote strong subsidies to local regions to support High Nature Value farming, supporting farmer incomes and increasing the intrinsic, recreational and tourism value of a better rural natural environment.
- In line with our Food Policy and our Agriculture Policy we propose to move towards more regional markets of food production and trade that would deliver greater food security for the nation.

OUR PLEDGE TO NATURE

Nature is the most valuable resource we have in the fight against climate change, and halting the collapse of biodiversity is one of our most urgent tasks. That's why we're making a Pledge to Nature – to protect it, to value it, and to help it flourish. We need to halt the extinction crisis, returning threatened species to healthy numbers, restoring our damaged ecosystems, and letting nature thrive.

- We believe it is the right of every citizen to have reasonable recreational access to accessible green space. We propose that every local authority should meet the European average on the provision of green spaces per capita, including parks and woodlands, roof gardens, community gardens, school allotments, forests.
- We want every local authority to recognise role of nature in our national strategy on climate action make natural solutions and native habitats one of our primary means of sequestering carbon. Ireland has less than 14% forestry cover, well below the European average of 40%. We propose to plant 1 million, native trees as part of a national biodiversity plan that would work towards 20% cover by 2022.
- We want every local authority to commit to restoring native habitats, native forests, bogs and wetlands and to designate areas for rewilding.
- We call for an immediate end to the significant spate of tree felling in urban, suburban and rural areas around the country, and for local councils to protect nature we have with responsible and sustainable tree management in towns and cities and the effective management of hedgerows and Natura 2000 sites.
- We want local authorities to take the lead in the retention and conservation of hedge rows with appropriate species and sustainable management, and to reverse threatened and diminished biodiversity by revising section 40 of the 1996 Wildlife Act (as amended) to continue the closed period on annual hedge-cutting from 1 March to 31 August inclusive.

HOUSING PROVISION

We propose to provide a dedicated fund to each Local Authority nationwide based on relative housing needs to begin a comprehensive program of building delivering 36,000 homes per annum (30,000 net of obsolescence per annum) with a minimum requirement of 35% social housing, 35% affordable housing stock and with 12 % of the total designed to Universal Design building standards.

- Increase in funding to local authorities to acquire encumbered buy-to-let properties for social housing, through purchase or lease.
- We propose to allow Local Authorities to borrow 10% of their annual budget for building housing.
- An end to evictions for refurbishment that result in homelessness for a fixed period and the implementation of long term and 'forever' lease agreements to allow renters security of tenure.
- A clear definition of over-crowding in law that is meaningful and enforceable.
- We propose that all local authorities reformulate and strengthen their Housing Department so that they include both long term planning, the implementation of construction and the long term management of their housing sector without division across the authority.
- We propose to allow Credit Unions to invest in housing where their surplus funds are currently invested in overseas financing.
- We propose that local authorities would make available a percentage of land available for self build cooperative housing projects.
- We advocate a review and update to the guidance given to contracting authorities in setting appropriate criteria for tender packages.
- Allow a provision for the division of tenders where geographical location or specialism would benefit from such an action and allow for some specialist works sub contracts to be tendered for directly.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Landlords (rather than tenants) of rateable properties should be charged local business rates, whether the properties are in use or not. We believe this will discourage brownfield premises suitable for housing being left derelict by speculating owners.
- We propose that, where relevant structures exist and in particular in the case of housing, the retrofit of buildings is the standard base proposal for review before redevelopment is considered.
- We propose reform of the amended Planning and Development Act 2000; increase penalties on public representatives who subvert the planning process for personal gain; the reintroduction of planning reviews at council level; a review of the Part 8 planning clause; the provision of the average industrial wage for all local city and county councillors in return for increases in role responsibilities..
- We propose a three year time cap on developer maintained shared areas in new housing estates where planned handover has not taken place to the local authority. Where developers have not completed works agreed in granted planning permission they will be liable for a cumulative levy to enable residents and local authorities to negotiate completion and recoup costs or decouple completed sections from continuing construction areas.
- We propose that the state identify key communities at risk of gentrification to ensure that direct supports and available safeguards are fully in operation in those areas. We propose that in those communities in danger of becoming unaffordable for local populations the social housing requirement is increased to 35% for all new housing developments.
- The Green Party supports the development of a compulsory public register of all publically and privately-owned land and all options on land.
- The Green Party recognises that conserving the visual fabric of a community is more complex than maintaining any buildings featuring on the national list of protected structures. Social significance, historic resonance, folklore, community usage and even plot size are all currently undervalued and under reported in current planning decisions. We propose that this aspect of planning is given increased significance in the new local authority housing and planning departments we seek to create.

POLICING IN OUR COMMUNITIES

- The Green Party recommends the rapid rollout of Community Policing Teams across the country.
- The Green Party recommends that Community Policing Officers should only be withdrawn from their roles in particularly urgent situations. Policing of large sporting or musical events should not warrant their withdrawal.

The Green Party believes that Joint Policing Committees and local authorities can make an important contribution to creating greater local accountability of An Garda Síochána regarding both monitoring its effectiveness and guiding the establishment of policing priorities within local authority areas.

In order to achieve this, the Green Party recommends a number of changes to the operation of JPCs:

- Oversight of local policing activity should be clearly listed as a reserved function of local authorities.
- Operations of JPCs should be standardised across all local authorities. Meetings should be treated on par with meetings of the county council: broadcast live online, full minutes of meetings should be accessible to the public online within a reasonable time period and the public should be entitled to attend. There should be at least six meetings per year.
- Statistical data needs to be provided to members of a JPC independently of the local Garda stations.
- Where a JPC identifies issues, there should be a clear mechanism whereby the Gardai at local level set out their response and what way they plan to address the issue. If the issue cannot be addressed at local level, there needs to be a clear method of escalating the concern to higher levels within Garda Síochána, and there should be obligations to provide responses to these escalations.