

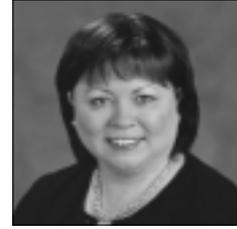


MANIFESTO 2002

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Introduction



Mary Harney TD

Dear Voter

People elect politicians to get things done.

What we do depends on the mandate we are given. We are now putting a comprehensive and innovative manifesto before the people.

Our policies will

- keep jobs coming and keep taxes low
- deliver real resources for public services
- transform transport
- end waiting lists and strengthen our health services
- support older people with secure pensions.

Each person's vote counts at this election. It will make the difference to our standard of living, our quality of life and the type of leadership the country needs.

This has been the most successful Government in the history of the State. The Progressive Democrats have shown that we can make coalition Government work.

We have transformed Ireland from mass unemployment to full employment, from emigration to opportunity at home, from negativity to enterprise and confidence.

We have shown just what we can achieve when we have confidence, fresh thinking and enterprise.

We must make sure to continue with high employment and low tax, and avoid policies that would send us backwards.

We must build on this foundation to deliver solutions for transport, education, strong regional development and technology.

We must support our communities and tackle crime with a fair balance between rights and responsibilities.

There are great challenges ahead to continue our progress.

Let's keep up the good work in Government.

I ask you to give your support to the Progressive Democrats.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Harney'.

Mary Harney, T.D.

Budgetary Policy: 2003-07

1 INTRODUCTION

The Progressive Democrats want to protect Ireland's prosperity.

The PD-inspired policies of the last five years have brought this country unprecedented success:

- there are almost 400,000 more people at work
- the rate of unemployment is down from 10% to 4%
- long-term unemployment is effectively eliminated
- emigration is ended.

And economic success has generated the resources to finance a massive increase in social spending - on health, education, pensions and child benefit, for example.

As a country we have achieved a huge amount and we can achieve a great deal more. We have now built a platform for progress, a basis for further major social and economic advancement over the next five years. But it is vital that we do not take risks with our economy: there is no room for complacency.

The Progressive Democrats in government will pursue a clear and coherent set of policies to protect our national prosperity and guarantee the future success of the Irish economy:

- (i) We will ensure prudent management of the public finances because sound fiscal policy is the essential base for sound economic policy.
- (ii) We will keep taxes low in order to keep employment high.
- (iii) We will promote competition wherever appropriate to enable the Irish economy and the Irish people to achieve their full potential.
- (iv) We will seek maximum value for public expenditure and ensure that resources are converted into results.

We approach the economic challenge of the next five years with both caution and confidence.

We are cautious because of the uncertain international climate. But we are confident because we believe in the energy and enthusiasm of the Irish people and their ability to achieve great things for this country and because our policies have been tried and tested and have been shown to work.

2. IRISH ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The Progressive Democrats believe that the Irish economy can grow at an average rate of 5% in real terms in the period 2003 to 2007, with inflation averaging 3% per year.

This assumes a broadly favourable international outlook over the lifetime of the next government. We expect interest rates to remain around their present levels. We believe that the economic recovery already under way in the US will be sustained and that recovery will get under way in Europe very soon. We envisage average growth rates of 3.5% in the US, 3% in the UK and 2.5% in Euroland over the next five years.

We see strong economic growth in Ireland over the next five years - though not at the exceptional pace of the last five. The Irish economy is now close to full employment and its capacity to expand is more limited. However, we believe that a more moderate growth rate of the order of 5% in GDP is both reasonable and sustainable in the Irish context. This would still represent a very strong performance by international standards

We will use some of the resources generated by this prosperity to implement further responsible reductions in taxation. Our priority, however, will be to invest in improving social services and increasing levels of social provision.

3. OVERALL BUDGETARY POLICY

A prudent approach to budgetary policy is essential for the long-term health of the Irish economy.

Poor management of the public finances cost this country dearly in the past and we paid a heavy price in terms of unemployment, emigration and poverty. It is important that the mistakes of the past are not repeated.

The Progressive Democrats are giving three clear guarantees on fiscal policy if returned to government after the forthcoming general election:

- One, we guarantee that there will be no borrowing to fund current spending.
- Two, we guarantee that there will be no increases in direct taxation.
- Three, we guarantee that there will be no raiding of the National Pension Reserve Fund to finance any government spending programmes.

The Progressive Democrats are absolutely committed to the fiscal independence of the Irish state. We believe that the best protection for that independence is to operate within the agreed European rules on budgetary policy and not to put our fiscal sovereignty at risk by breaching them.

4. CURRENT REVENUE AND CURRENT EXPENDITURE

Growth in current government expenditure must be kept in line with growth in current government revenue if we are to maintain prudent control of the public finances.

The Progressive Democrats are assuming an underlying, annual average rate of growth in taxation revenue of the order of 8% over the lifetime of the next government, in line with nominal growth in the Irish economy.

Tax revenues will be further boosted by the cash-flow gains to the Exchequer resulting from the changes to corporation tax announced in Budget 2002.

On the basis of these revenue projections we propose that gross voted current government expenditure grow at an average rate of around 8% per year over the lifetime of the next government.

This will mean that gross current spending will be some €14bn higher in 2007 than it is now.

Ireland is an expanding economy with an expanding population and a substantial increase in public expenditure is required to cope with that expansion over the next five years. Our priorities will be:

- to invest in the health service
- to support people with disabilities and those who care for them
- to provide better pensions and better care for older people
- to modernise and improve our education system, and
- to build a cohesive and inclusive society.

We recognise also that increases in expenditure have not always translated into improvements in services. Accordingly, we will strengthen and reform public sector management systems to ensure that we can convert existing and future resources into results more efficiently and more effectively.

The Progressive Democrats will not engage in auction politics. Buying the votes of every interest group is not consistent with the sound management of the public finances.

5. CAPITAL INVESTMENT

A huge programme of capital investment is needed to address Ireland's infrastructural deficit.

The Progressive Democrats in government will increase substantially the current levels of investment in our public infrastructure. Great progress has been made over the last five years; but the pace and scale of investment has to be increased if we are to provide this country with the kind of physical infrastructure appropriate to a modern and vibrant European economy.

We need to invest in roads, in railways, in housing, in our health and educational systems. We must redress our infrastructural deficit if we want this country to achieve its full potential in terms of economic growth and improved quality of life.

The challenge facing the new government is to redress that deficit without resorting to massive tax increases, without damaging the stability of the public finances, and without risking our long-term financial security by raiding the National Pension Reserve Fund.

The Progressive Democrats in government will put increased Exchequer resources into the public capital programme. We are prepared to borrow for capital purposes but we will ensure that such borrowing is kept to a minimum in order to keep Ireland well inside EU prudential limits on the general government balance. However, we do not believe that this money will be sufficient for the magnitude of the task involved.

Accordingly, we will pursue a threefold strategy to increase the pace and the scale of capital investment in public infrastructure:

- First, in competitive sectors we will shift the burden of investment from the public sector to the private sector.
- Second, we will give the private sector a greater role in the design, management and financing of public infrastructure projects.
- Third, we will use the sale of state assets to raise extra funds for public capital projects.

The overall impact of our strategy will be to make substantial extra funding available for infrastructural investment while maintaining the stability of the public finances.

6. NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION FUND

The Progressive Democrats will establish a National Transformation Fund (NTF) to help finance the most ambitious public capital investment programme in the history of the state.

The new fund will be administered on behalf of the government by the National Treasury Management Agency. It will derive revenue from:

- the sale of state assets where there is no longer a case for such assets remaining in public ownership
- windfall gains accruing to the Exchequer such as income from the sale of licenses and other once-off items.
- the excess foreign reserves of the Central Bank.

The Central Bank of Ireland holds foreign reserves which will become available to the European Central Bank (ECB) as reserves of the euro system. It is accepted that the total reserves held by national central banks are in excess of the reserve requirements of the ECB. Agreement on the apportionment of these reserves will be reached in the next few years.

We believe that the capacity is there to generate up to €6bn for the fund during the lifetime of the next government.

Money from the NTF will be used as extra finance for the public capital programme. It will be additional to the funding provided by the Exchequer under the existing public capital programme.

The NTF, combined with an increased Exchequer contribution, and private finance will enable us to invest up to €40bn in public capital projects over the next five years. This is the scale of investment required to transform our national infrastructure.

The creation of the NTF will allow for real long-term planning of the public capital programme. It will put an end to the current stop-go system whereby decisions to start major projects in any particular year depend on the state of the public finances in that particular year. This factor has been a huge constraint on the development of our national infrastructure over the last two decades.

The creation of the NTF will also allow for an expanded capital programme to be funded without recourse to increased taxation and will reduce the need to borrow for capital purposes.

7. NATIONAL PENSION RESERVE FUND

The National Pension Reserve Fund is a prudent investment in the future of our country.

This investment is required if we are to make prudent provision for future pension liabilities. The Pension Reserve Fund is there to ensure that the government will be able to afford to pay its employees their pensions in future years.

It is important that this issue is addressed now. Failure to provide for future liabilities could cause serious difficulties for this country down the line.

We reject as utterly irresponsible any attempt to raid the fund to finance public spending programmes. There can be no political interference in the management of the fund and all investment decisions made by trustees must be made independently and must be made in the interests of the fund's beneficiaries. Raiding the fund could even endanger public sector pensions in future years.

The Progressive Democrats in government were party to the establishment of the pension fund and we are strong supporters of the concept.

8. BUDGETARY SUMMARY

The Progressive Democrats will ensure a prudent approach to budgetary policy over the next five years.

We will deliver responsible reductions in taxation, as detailed below, through a series of modest tax packages. And we will deliver substantial improvements in public services through prudent increase in public expenditure.

Our proposals will ensure:

- i that we run a substantial current budget surplus in each of the next five years
- ii that we keep the general government balance (GGB) close to, or in surplus over the next five years, in accordance with our EMU obligations
- iii that the restructuring of the state's asset portfolio is used to reduce the need for Exchequer borrowing to finance infrastructural investment.

These are sound fiscal policies that will provide a sound basis for the continued growth of the Irish economy.

Rewarding Risk, Rewarding Work:

TAXATION STRATEGY 2003-07

1. INTRODUCTION

The Progressive Democrats are strong believers in the incentive power of low taxation.

Low rates of taxation have been central to the success of the Irish economy and the Progressive Democrats have played a key role in delivering those low rates. Our record in government since 1997 is there for all to see:

- the basic-rate income tax is down from 26% to 20%
- the higher rate of income tax is down from 48% to 42%
- the standard rates of both capital gains tax and corporation tax have been halved.

In addition we have pursued an ambitious tax-reform programme, successfully delivering on our manifesto commitment to introduce tax credits.

The net effect of these tax changes has been to achieve full employment in this country for the first time in our history and to generate the resources for a massive increase in social spending.

2. KEEPING TAXES LOW

The PD policy of low taxes and high incentives is working. We believe that a change of direction now would put Irish jobs in danger and it would put the future prospects of the Irish economy in danger.

The Progressive Democrats see no reason to change now the formula that has brought this country so much success in the past five years:

- we will not increase taxation on employment by raising PRSI
- we will not increase taxation on investment by raising capital gains tax
- we will not increase taxation on enterprise by raising corporation tax
- we will not increase taxation on inheritance by raising capital acquisitions tax.

And we will implement a programme of further responsible reductions in the burden of personal income tax over the lifetime of the next government.

The Progressive Democrats will vigorously defend Ireland's fiscal independence. It is our strongly held view that Ireland's tax policy should be determined by the Irish government.

3. INVESTMENT TAXATION

The reduction in capital gains tax (GGT) from 40% to 20% was a positive move for the Irish economy.

It has encouraged investment. It has rewarded risk-taking. It has stimulated new economic activity. And it has brought in massive additional resources for the Exchequer: the yield from CGT is now six times higher than it was before the rate was halved.

The Progressive Democrats in government will maintain the incentive to invest in the Irish economy by ensuring that the standard rate of CGT remains unchanged at 20%.

Many employees now own shares in the companies in which they work. We believe that this trend should be encouraged and rewarded by the tax system. At present the first €1,270 per annum in capital gains is exempt from CGT. We will raise this exemption limit to €10,000 over the next five years.

4. ENTERPRISE TAXATION

Low corporation tax has been a major contributor to the Irish economic success story.

Our attractive corporate tax regime has encouraged the development of indigenous enterprise. It has brought huge inflows of job-creating investment into this country. It has played an important role in the growth of our international services sector. And in terms of competitiveness it has helped to compensate for Ireland's peripheral location.

The Progressive Democrats in government will reduce the standard rate of corporation tax to 12.5% in the first budget of the next administration. And we will maintain it at that level as a permanent feature of our tax system.

We will introduce legislation to guarantee that the 12.5% rate will remain in force at least up until 2025. We believe this is essential to cater for the long-term planning horizons of major corporations contemplating large-scale investments in the Irish economy.

Legislation will help to secure the 12.5% rate in the event of a change of policy at EU level whereby decisions on tax harmonisation could be decided by qualified majority vote.

Tax competition is good for Ireland and good for Europe. The EU has no competence in determining what the standard rate of corporation tax in Ireland should be. And the Progressive Democrats will keep it that way.

We will defend Ireland's fiscal independence and resist tax harmonisation so that this country can continue to set its own tax rates.

5. EMPLOYMENT TAXATION

The Progressive Democrats recognise the need to keep taxes on employment as low as possible.

We want to see Ireland developing as a high-skill, high technology, high-income economy. We can only achieve that by maintaining an attractive regime in terms of labour costs. We will not achieve it by increasing the burden on employers and pricing ourselves out of the market for the mobile investment that generates high-income jobs.

We guarantee that there will be no increase in the level of employer PRSI during the lifetime of the next government.

We will keep the competitive position of Irish companies under regular review in the light of developments elsewhere. Should the level of employer PRSI be deemed a serious threat to employment in Ireland the Progressive Democrats will ensure that the appropriate measures are taken to reduce the burden on Irish business and to protect Irish jobs.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL TAXATION

The Progressive Democrats will use the taxation system where appropriate to achieve environmental improvement objectives.

Tax changes will be implemented in a number of areas to improve the quality of our environment:

- we will impose taxes where feasible on non-reusable packaging to encourage behavioural change and promote waste minimisation
- we will rebalance the Vehicle Registration Tax regime to favour vehicles with lower carbon dioxide emissions
- we will improve the tax incentives for investment in renewable energy in order to reduce our dependence on CO₂-emitting fossil fuels
- we will increase tobacco taxes in order to discourage smoking and promote healthier lifestyles.

The Progressive Democrats will ensure that Ireland meets its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. We will ensure that any initiatives in relation to carbon taxation are structured in such a way as not to damage Ireland's international competitiveness and not to put Irish jobs at risk.

7. INCOME TAXATION

The Progressive Democrats have been the driving force in delivering income tax reform over the last fifteen years.

Since 1990 the basic rate of income tax has been reduced by 12 percentage points; 11 of those came off while the Progressive Democrats were in government. Since 1990 the higher rate of income tax has been reduced by 14 percentage points; all 14 came off while the Progressive Democrats were in government.

Over the last five budgets we have driven not just tax reduction but tax reform. We delivered on our commitment to introduce tax credits - the single biggest reform in the Irish income-tax system in a generation. And we delivered record increases in bands and allowances which have dramatically reduced the tax burden for people on modest and middle incomes.

The Progressive Democrats in government will continue with a programme of responsible reductions in income tax. Over the next five years we will:

- take all those on the national minimum wage out of the income tax net completely
- index the value of tax credits and tax bands so that inflation is not used as a tax-raising mechanism
- ensure that no more than 20% of all earners pay tax at the higher rate
- deliver on our long term commitment by reducing the higher rate of income tax from 42% to 40%, the top rate in Britain and Northern Ireland since as far back as 1988.

We guarantee that there will be no tax amnesties while the Progressive Democrats are in government. We reject the gimmickry of special introductory rates and special intermediate rates of income tax. We have made great progress in simplifying our tax system over the last five budgets: special rates would reverse that progress and serve as a cover for those whose real agenda is to increase taxes by stealth.

We undertake also to maintain the ceiling on employee PRSI: abolition of the ceiling would increase the effective marginal rate of tax for hundreds of thousands of workers by 4%.

The Progressive Democrats have effectively achieved the tax-reduction targets which we set ourselves at the party's foundation. Should economic resources permit we will pursue further reductions in the rates of income-tax.

8. TAX TREATMENT OF SHARE OPTIONS

The Progressive Democrats will reform the tax treatment of share options.

We want to encourage people of ability and enterprise to work in high-technology industry here in Ireland. We want to help new businesses which are trying to get off the ground to attract and retain bright and committed people. And we want to promote the use of share options as a means of developing a skilled and committed workforce in all firms.

We recognise that people take considerable risks in working for emerging companies in the high-technology sector. They take risks by going to work for firms whose futures are uncertain; and they take risks by deferring a substantial part of their remuneration in the form of share options.

The Progressive Democrats believe that people who take risks should be rewarded. We will simplify the current system and ensure that, with appropriate safeguards, gains realised on share options are treated as capital gains and taxed at 20%. And we will ensure that this tax benefit is available to all the staff in any firm.

Building an Inclusive Society:

AN AGENDA FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Progressive Democrats believe in social justice.

We have worked hard in government to deliver social justice and the last five years have seen great advances in the level of social provision:

- record increases in the old-age pension
- record increases in child benefit
- record increases in resources for people with disabilities.

We have ambitious plans for further social progress over the next five years and we believe that those targets can be achieved.

2. ENTERPRISE ECONOMY

The Progressive Democrats are convinced that only an enterprise economy can generate the resources required to create a truly inclusive society.

We see no contradiction between enterprise and inclusion: in fact, we believe that they are two sides of the same coin. The Irish experience over the last five years has shown clearly that, properly managed, the Irish economy has the capacity to generate very significant resources to fund social inclusion.

Accordingly, we do not believe that raising taxes opens the road to social justice - quite the contrary in fact. Raising taxes would be totally counter-productive and would take us back to the doom and despair of the 1980s.

The Progressive Democrats will stay true to the policy formula that has brought such great economic and social progress to this country since 1997. We believe that economic growth is best achieved by keeping taxes low and incentives high, by rewarding work and encouraging effort. And we believe that it is only through economic growth that we can deliver a more just society with a higher standard of living and the chance of a better quality of life for all our people.

3. MAINTAINING FULL EMPLOYMENT

The Progressive Democrats believe that the best way to tackle poverty is to help people into jobs - real jobs.

That philosophy has been at the heart of our social and economic policy in government over the last five years. And that policy has been spectacularly successful by any standards:

- 400,000 extra jobs
- unemployment down from 10% to 4%, and
- long-term unemployment down from 90,000 people to 20,000.

Never before in the history of this state have so many Irish men and women been able to live and work in their own country. That is a social revolution and it is a revolution based firmly on the application of PD philosophies and the implementation of PD policies.

We are convinced that maintaining full employment is vital for the attainment of further social progress in this country.

Employment is in itself inclusive. It gives people the opportunity and the ability to participate, to play their full role in society, to share fully in the benefits of our new-found prosperity. And full employment releases resources in the welfare budget: unemployment compensation absorbed 22% of the budget in 1997 but only 10% last year. This structural change has facilitated substantial increases in welfare payments.

The challenge for the next five years is to maintain full employment in the Irish economy and to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to participate. We will achieve this by:

- (a) Intervention: Rolling out the Employment Action Plan (EAP) on a nationwide basis - the EAP has proved to be highly successful as an intervention aimed at helping people to move from welfare to work.
- (b) Training: Providing FÁS with the resources to satisfy the demands of a rapidly changing workplace and to equip people with special needs with the skills needed to avail of the employment opportunities on offer.
- (c) Taxation: Exempting the national minimum wage from income tax in order to ensure that it is always worthwhile for people to work.

The implementation of these policies will help to ensure that Ireland continues to enjoy one of the lowest rates of unemployment anywhere in the developed world.

4. PROGRESS AGAINST POVERTY

The Progressive Democrats will implement a comprehensive programme of anti-poverty measures during the term of office of the next government.

We will use the fruits of economic growth to enable everyone in Ireland to realise the benefits of full citizenship of this republic in terms of both income and opportunity:

- **Income:** We will set a target of €150 per week in 2002 terms for the lowest rate of social welfare payments, the figure to be adjusted upwards for inflation each year and the inflation-adjusted target rate reached by 2007.
- **Child Support:** We will increase child support so that for social welfare recipients the combined value of child benefit and child dependent allowances is equal to one third of the basic social welfare payment.
- **Literacy:** We will fund a major assault on illiteracy which is a huge barrier to opportunity and advancement for thousands of people, our target being the halving of the numbers of adults and children with literacy difficulties inside five years.
- **Community Action:** We will provide resources for a range of community initiatives so that voluntary effort can be harnessed at local level as part of the effort to combat poverty.

And we will develop the community employment programme within the framework of social partnership. We will mainstream activity as much as possible and we will develop new schemes under the social economy programme.

The Progressive Democrats believe that these measures, coupled with the maintenance of full employment in the Irish economy, will contribute significantly to the building of a more equitable and inclusive society in this country.

According to the most recent estimates from the Economic and Social Research Institute the number of people living in consistent poverty in Ireland had fallen to 6% by the year 2000, compared with 10% three years earlier.

We will reduce the number of people living in consistent poverty. We are confident that consistent poverty can be eliminated completely by the end of the decade.

5. CARING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The Progressive Democrats gave a commitment in 1997 to increase the value of the old-age pension to £100 per week.

We have been as good as our word. We have not just reached the target which we set ourselves but we have actually surpassed it, with the pension rising by almost 50% over the five budgets since we entered government.

Our goal now is to achieve the complete elimination of pensioner poverty in Irish society. We will build on the progress that has been made over the last five years and ensure that every pensioner has sufficient income to enjoy a reasonable standard of living in their retirement years.

We have ambitious objectives for the improvement of pensions:

- Pension Target: We will set a new target rate for the basic, contributory old-age pension of €200 per week and we will ensure that that target is reached by 2007.
- Individual Pensions: We will provide every old-age pensioner with a pension in his or her own right. This will be of particular benefit to older women who will no longer be regarded as dependents of their husbands but will have their own pension books.
- Pensioner Taxation: We will increase the income-tax exemption limits significantly in order to remove the vast majority of the over-65s from the tax net completely.

Public service pensioners have a range of concerns about their pension entitlements and related issues. We will provide a formal mechanism through the social partnership process for all of these issues to be addressed.

We recognise the need for improved provision in the area of short-term and long-term care for older people.

We will ensure the provision of increased capacity in both the public and private systems. And we will reform the state supports available to older people in need of care so that they receive greater assistance towards the cost of care in their own homes.

6. CARING FOR CARERS

The Progressive Democrats recognise the very important role played by carers in Irish society.

There are thousands of people in this country who devote a large part of their lives to caring for sick or elderly relatives, often in very difficult circumstances. They make huge personal sacrifices to provide an essential service which would otherwise require very substantial Exchequer funding. And many of them provide this service twenty-four a day, seven days a week.

More than a decade ago the Progressive Democrats were instrumental in securing the introduction of the carer's allowance. We are now committing ourselves to new measures to recognise and reward the role of the carer in Irish society:

- Carer's Allowance: As part of our anti-poverty strategy the value of the carer's allowance will be increased to €150 per week in current money terms by 2007.
- Means Test: We will abolish the means test for the carer's allowance and ensure that every carer is entitled to a full allowance in his or her own right.
- Respite: Respite is essential in enhancing quality of life for carers and cared. We will invest in the provision of improved respite facilities. And we will increase the value of the respite grant - introduced by this government to €1,000 per year.

- Workplace Supports: Recognising that up to one tenth of all those at work are engaged in some kind of caring duties as well we will work through the partnership process to develop a system of supports for carers in the workplace.
- Community Involvement: We will promote community involvement in the provision of care, including partnership arrangements with public-health nurses, and we will support voluntary initiatives at local level to improve the services available to both carers and cared.

For parents of children with disabilities the issue of care in the long term is a real concern. We will introduce tax incentives to enable parents to enter into long-term savings arrangements to provide for the future care needs of their children.

7. IMMIGRATION AND INCLUSION

Irish society is now more racially and culturally diverse than ever before.

We are attracting immigrants here to work and significant numbers of people are arriving here to seek political asylum. These social changes require careful policy adjustments if Ireland is to avoid the problems of marginalisation that have affected minority groups in other European countries.

The Reception and Integration Agency, which currently operates on an interim basis, provides for the welfare and integration needs of both asylum-seekers and those who have been granted refugee status. The Progressive Democrats will establish the agency on a statutory basis and give it the resources to fulfil its mandate more effectively.

The Progressive Democrats have played their part in government in putting in place a fair, efficient and compassionate process for dealing with applications for asylum. We recognise that delays in the system are still causing problems and we will work to expedite the determination process to reduce waiting times for applicants.

The Progressive Democrats are determined to prevent the rise of racism in this country. We will ensure that every resident of this country is fully protected by the law and that race will not become a source of social exclusion in Irish society. We will continue to implement anti-racism awareness programmes and will actively review legal and administrative provisions to ensure that racism is effectively tackled.

8. EXPANDING SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP

The Progressive Democrats will expand social partnership and admit representatives of pensioners and carers to formal participation in the process.

Both pensioners and carers are very important groups in Irish society. They have their own issues and their own concerns and it is important they have the opportunity of stating their case at the partnership forum where important social and economic agreements are concluded.

9. WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The Progressive Democrats believe that our democracy is unfinished while so few women are participating in political life and leadership.

The current Dáil has only 20 women out of 166 deputies, a percentage which has remained the same since 1992. We believe that political parties have a responsibility to facilitate and put forward women candidates.

As regards local elections, removing the dual mandate for Dáil and local authority would help provide opportunities for political advancement for women.

For our part, the Progressive Democrats have a good representation of women at all levels. One third of our candidates in this General Election are women. One half of our parliamentary party have been women in this Dáil, and we have the first woman leader of a political party and the first woman Tánaiste.

As a party in government we have appointed as many women as possible to State Boards. We believe that appointments to State Boards must be on the basis of equality between women and men and this principle must be more rigorously enforced.

We will ensure that the five year National Plan for Women is completed, published and implemented.

Restructuring the State's Asset Portfolio

1. INTRODUCTION

The Progressive Democrats will restructure the state's portfolio of commercial assets.

Our strategy has two key objectives:

- (i) to secure the future of the commercial state companies and of those who work in them, and
- (ii) to release funds from the state's existing portfolio of corporate and property assets to finance investment in a new set of assets in the area of social and economic infrastructure.

We recognise the pivotal role which the commercial state companies play in the Irish economy; our strategy will give them the strength to meet the challenge of change.

2. STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

The Progressive Democrats believe that a new strategy is required for state companies which operate in competitive markets or which are about to face competition because of market opening.

These companies will face major challenges in terms of competition and change. The whole thrust of policy at EU level is to de-regulate and open state commercial enterprises to full competition. EU rules limit the government's ability to invest in state-owned companies.

If Irish commercial state companies are to cope successfully with these challenges and develop sustainably they will need:

- complete independence from political control in their corporate decision-making
- full commercial freedom to compete vigorously in the marketplace
- the ability to pursue diversification and expansion opportunities on their own terms
- the capacity to offer share-ownership deals to their employees, and
- access to the capital markets to source the finance needed to fund their corporate development strategies.

It is clear, therefore, that the commercial state companies will not achieve their full potential in the long term if they remain in 100% state ownership. It is clear also that it is difficult if not impossible for the state to ensure fair competition in any market if it is effectively both regulator and dominant player in that market.

3. THE STATE PORTFOLIO

The Progressive Democrats will release companies from state control where that is in the best long-term interest of the taxpayer, the companies themselves and those who work in them.

During the term of the next government we will allow the following enterprises to achieve corporate independence and to secure their future development as private companies:

- ESB: The ESB, operating in a competitive generating market at home, will be looking abroad for expansion opportunities. Its investment requirements will be massive and it is imperative that it has the ability to raise new equity to finance that investment. The Progressive Democrats will retain the transmission business of the ESB, Eirgrid, in public ownership.
- Aer Lingus: Following recent restructuring the state airline has the potential to be a vibrant and independent international carrier provided it can source the equity capital it needs to finance its fleet expansion and fleet replacement plans.
- Bord Gáis: Full liberalisation of the Irish gas market will bring new firms into gas transmission in Ireland, creating competition for Bord Gáis. The company will need private capital if it wants to become a significant player in the pipeline business.
- Commercial Ports: Some of the larger commercial ports, such as Dublin, Cork and Waterford, are now major businesses. If they are to invest and to compete they will have to have access to private capital.

The Progressive Democrats believe that some sectors are effectively natural monopolies, particularly in a small country like Ireland. We do not believe that the interests of consumers are well served by converting public monopolies into private monopolies. And this view is borne out by experience in other countries.

We will, therefore, retain in public ownership sectors such as railways, water, sewerage services and electricity transmission as this policy best serves the strategic interests of the country.

4. ESOTs

The Progressive Democrats strongly support the concept of Employee Share Ownership Trusts (ESOTs) in commercial state companies.

We believe that ESOTs should be an essential part of the change-management process in all of the state companies. They give workers a real stake in the future of their firms and give them a vested interest in the commercial success of those firms.

We propose that ESOT arrangements apply in all cases where companies move in whole or part from public-sector ownership to private-sector ownership.

5. ASSET REGISTER

The Progressive Democrats will draw up a comprehensive register of all state property assets.

We will establish on a formal basis the full extent of the state's property portfolio, whether held by government departments or state agencies. We will identify which properties are surplus to operational requirements. Where there is no strategic case for continued state ownership such properties will be put up for sale and the proceeds channelled into the National Transformation Fund.

6. EXCHANGING ASSETS

Essentially, what the Progressive Democrats are proposing a massive programme of asset exchange on the part of the state.

The state no longer has any strategic reason to maintain ownership of companies operating in competitive markets in Ireland and abroad. We will transfer these companies to the private sector, realising a substantial windfall gain for the taxpayer in the process.

The proceeds accruing from the sale of state assets will be paid into the National Transformation Fund. Moneys from the fund will be used, in addition to Exchequer resources, to finance the construction of the new assets which this state urgently needs - roads, railways, hospitals and schools.

In essence, we are proposing is a restructuring of the state's asset portfolio to reflect the requirements of a dynamic and competitive modern economy.

Making Tracks:

TRANSFORMING PUBLIC TRANSPORT 2002-07

1. INTRODUCTION

The provision of a modern and reliable public transport system is absolutely critical to the future success of this country.

The Progressive Democrats will provide the investment needed to transform public transport in Ireland; but we believe that investment without reform will not deliver the required results.

Public transport policy must be set in the context of overall national transport policy. Accordingly, we are proposing an entirely new framework for the administration of transport in Ireland.

2. A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSPORT POLICY

Responsibility for transport at government level is currently spread across several different departments.

This results in a lack of coherence in transport planning and a lack of coordination in government initiatives and programmes in the transport area. At governmental level the Progressive Democrats will establish three new entities which will have an over-arching responsibility for all aspects of national transport:

- Department of Transport: A new Department of Transport will be responsible for strategic decision-making, the formulation of transport policy, the coordination of activity in the sector, and the allocation of public investment and public subsidy. Its remit will cover roads, ports, airports and public transport - including buses, trains and taxis.
- Transport Regulatory Commission: We will entrust responsibility for the regulation of all aspects of transport activity to a single regulatory commission
- Transport Safety Authority: A single authority will be set up which will have responsibility for safety across all the different transport modes.

We will introduce change also at the corporate level. We will restructure CIE as a number of entirely separate operating companies with clearly defined roles. We believe that this is essential if the companies are to achieve their full potential and operate as vibrant, competitive enterprises.

3. PUBLIC TRANSPORT: REDRESSING THE DEFICIT

In public transport terms Ireland lags a long way behind the rest of Europe.

Our system is deficient with regard to scale and scope and the quality of service it offers to the travelling public. We have a deficit and there are very cogent social and economic reasons why that deficit must be addressed. By transforming public transport we can:

- translate increased prosperity into improved quality of life by cutting congestion and reducing commuting times
- protect the environment and meet our Kyoto targets by shifting people from cars to more environmentally friendly modes of transport
- maintain Ireland's competitive position as an attractive location for industrial and commercial investment
- promote social equity by ensuring that mobility is not restricted to those who own cars.

The Progressive Democrats in government will continue to address the public transport deficit. And we will ensure that it is effectively eliminated by 2007.

We will use the new administrative arrangements to achieve progress on a number of fronts:

- Integration: The maximum degree of integration will be achieved between the different modes of transport and integrated ticketing will be introduced to enable passengers to make easy transfers.
- Coordination: Investment plans will be coordinated to that, for example, new rail developments provide park-and-ride and bus interchange facilities from day one.
- Cooperation: Cooperation will be promoted between different service providers in order to create for the first time in this country a unified public transport system.
- Competition: The new regulatory system will be used to facilitate the introduction of real competition in the public transport market.

And we will use a combination of Exchequer resources and the National Transformation Fund to finance the largest ever programme of capital investment in our public transport infrastructure.

4. REVITALISING THE RAILWAYS

The Progressive Democrats recognise that the railways have a major role to play in solving Ireland's transport problems.

This is especially true in the Greater Dublin region there will have to be a heavy reliance on rail-based solutions if progress is to be made on resolving the city's chronic traffic problems: no other mode offers the speed and the capacity required to move large volumes of people efficiently around a large conurbation.

The last five years has seen a massive programme of investment in our railway infrastructure. That has involved the renewal of track on much of the national network, the improvement of signalling and the modernisation of level crossings. This programme when completed in two years will have effectively secured the future of the national network for the next generation and prevented a large part of our rail system from falling into an unusable condition in the next few years.

The Progressive Democrats in government will build on the substantial progress that has been made and implement a range of new initiatives to revitalise the Irish rail system over the next five years. We will:

- establish Iarnród Éireann as an independent state company in its own right with full management autonomy
- give the company a clear mandate to run a fast, modern and reliable rail system capable of commanding the confidence of the travelling public
- set performance standards for the company with regard to punctuality, reliability and customer service
- provide the financial resources necessary to transform the Irish rail system, with a particular concentration on improvements that can be delivered within a 30-month timeframe

By making money available from the National Transformation Fund the Progressive Democrats will be able to finance a very extensive programme of investment in the railways over the lifetime of the next government.

Our objective will be to get more people onto Ireland's trains by offering them better standards of speed, service and reliability and to make rail commuting a viable option for a much larger section of the population.

5. NATIONAL NETWORK

The Progressive Democrats propose a major overhaul of the national rail network.

The train can provide a safe and reliable alternative to the car for inter-city journeys and is capable of increasing its share of overall traffic. We will transform the quality of the rail product by:

- ensuring that there is an adequate fleet of high-quality carriages available on every route to cope safely and comfortably with passenger demand
- offering improved frequencies and shorter journey times on all inter-city routes
- refurbishing and modernising stations on the network
- selectively reopening services on routes which were abandoned during the closure programme of the 1960s and 1970s.

Our objective is to develop a national inter-city service which is capable of commanding consumer confidence and which has the capacity to increase substantially passenger numbers.

REGIONAL LINES

We will re-introduce passenger rail services on the following lines:

- Limerick-Shannon-Ennis-Galway
- Galway-Claremorris-Sligo
- Limerick-Waterford

Only a skeleton service is provided on the Limerick-Waterford route at present. We will upgrade this and introduce a proper timetable of services on the line.

We will also upgrade and expand the local rail service in Cork and we will introduce commuter rail services in Limerick, Galway and Waterford.

The Progressive Democrats believe that the renewal of rail services has the capacity to open up a substantial amount of land for residential development, thereby making a very significant contribution to the increased supply of new housing.

These projects will have the potential to lead development, and not just to follow it. Set in the context of the national spatial strategy they can play a major role in achieving a balanced pattern of regional development around the country.

6. DUBLIN REGIONAL NETWORK

Dramatic improvements to the Dublin regional rail network are urgently required to combat congestion and provide commuters with a safe and reliable transport system.

The immediate priority for the Progressive Democrats will be to increase the carrying capacity of the DART and suburban rail network by 50% within thirty months. This will enable the system to carry more passengers in greater safety and comfort and will help to shift substantial numbers of commuters from car to train.

An accelerated programme of investment will deliver by the end of 2004:

- additional rolling stock to permit higher frequencies and longer trains
- platform lengthening to enable every station on the system to accommodate eight-car trains
- improved signalling and better trackwork to facilitate the elimination of bottlenecks at Heuston and Connolly
- fewer level crossings in order to reduce delays, increase speeds and improve operating efficiencies
- better late-night services as required to respond to passenger demand.

A continuing programme of investment will deliver further significant improvements in the Dublin region by 2007, with higher capacities and higher frequencies on all routes.

The Dublin travel-to-work area now extends in a fifty-mile arc out from the city. Long-distance car commuting means that more people are spending more time in their cars stuck in ever-longer traffic jams. Regional rail offers the only solution to this problem.

We will ensure fast and frequent commuter services on the following routes into Dublin:

- Dundalk-Drogheda-Connolly
- Arklow-Wicklow-Connolly
- Carlow-Kildare-Heuston
- Tullamore-Portlaoise-Kildare-Heuston
- Mullingar-Maynooth-Connolly
- Dublin-Dunboyne-Navan

Our aim - fast, reliable regional rail for the 1.7m people living within 50 miles of Dublin.

7. LUAS

The present government has provided the financial and political backing to keep the LUAS project on track over the last five years.

The two lines - from Tallaght to Connolly and from Sandyford to St Stephen's Green - are on schedule to open for service by the end of 2003. The Progressive Democrats will extend the network so that three additional sections are operational by 2006. Using public-private partnerships where appropriate we will extend:

- Line A from Red Cow to Citywest and Saggart
- Line A from Connolly to Docklands
- Line B from Sandyford to Cherrywood (compatible with conversion of Line B to metro status).

And we will provide high-speed bus links from LUAS at Heuston to the western suburbs and via the Phoenix Park to Blanchardstown and the north-western suburbs.

8. METRO

The Progressive Democrats believe that a citywide metro system is needed to provide Dublin with the high-quality public transport service that is the norm in other major European cities.

In the present government the party has worked to advance the concept of a public-private partnership for the Dublin metro. We believe a public-private approach is essential in order to transfer the huge financial cost involved from the state to the private sector.

On the basis of the progress that has been made to date on the planning of this project we are confident that the first phase of the metro can be delivered during the term of office of the next government, with extensions coming on stream quickly thereafter. Our timetable for opening is:

- Sandyford-City Centre-Dublin Airport 2007
- City Centre-Blanchardstown 2007
- Sandyford-Shanganagh extension 2008
- Dublin Airport-Swords extension 2008

We will commence planning work on the second phase of the system so that further lines can be brought into service before the end of the decade.

9. BUILDING A BETTER BUS SERVICE

The Progressive Democrats recognise that buses account for the bulk of passenger trips by public transport in Ireland and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Not all bus routes can be run on a commercially profitable basis. Public subvention is needed in many cases to secure the social and economic benefits associated with public transport provision - reduced congestion and better mobility for non car-owners. We will make increased resources available to support public transport and we will ensure that increased subvention translates into improved service for the consumer.

COMPETITION

The Progressive Democrats are convinced that competition is good for the consumer.

The benefits of competition are already apparent in many sectors which were previously state monopolies, such as telecom services and air travel. The benefits of competition have also been seen where the Irish bus market has been liberalised: there has been a huge increase in the range and number of services to Dublin Airport, for instance.

The Progressive Democrats will break down the barriers that prevent independent operators from offering bus services in Ireland so that passengers can benefit from the impact of competition. We will take immediate steps to create a competitive bus market:

- we will repeal and replace the outmoded legislation, dating from the 1930s, which still governs bus transport in Ireland

- we will set up a regulatory commission to operate as the single regulator for the liberalised market
- we will establish Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann as independent companies, separate from CIE, with full geographical freedom to compete against each other and against independent operators, and we will provide for substantial employee share ownership in both companies.

The regulatory commission will have responsibility for overall network design, the allocation of public subsidy, the setting of performance and safety standards and the issuing of licenses and franchises.

Our aim is to achieve 100% liberalisation in five years. We will ensure that bus-users enjoy the full benefits of competition with more companies providing more services on more routes. We want competition to deliver better frequencies, better reliability and better standards of service to the travelling public.

We will implement a twofold strategy - franchising for city and regional networks and full deregulation for long-distance services.

CITY AND REGIONAL NETWORKS

We do not believe that the free-for-all approach used in Britain (outside London) would serve Irish consumers well.

Instead we will introduce franchising for city and regional networks. This will involve competitive tendering for route networks for fixed-term contracts. Successful bidders will be required to meet standards of frequency, reliability and quality set by the regulator.

Network franchising will bring in new operators and new investment while preventing cherry-picking and the abandonment of non-profitable routes. The objective will be to achieve maximum value-for-money in return for state subsidy and an improved and expanded range of services for passengers. Employees of the state bus companies will be protected by EU legislation on the transfer of undertakings.

COMMUNITY BUSES

The Progressive Democrats will embark on a major initiative to develop community bus services.

There is considerable unmet demand for local minibus services designed to meet the specific needs of local communities, particularly in rural areas. Such services can play a valuable role in reducing rural isolation and in enhancing the mobility of older people.

The scale of operation for local minibus services will be too small to be of interest to major operators. We will channel funding to the regulatory body to finance community services on a nationwide basis. Priority will be given to community-based initiatives so as to encourage voluntary bodies to become directly involved in the running of services in their local areas.

LONG-DISTANCE SERVICES

There is a strong independent presence in the long-distance bus market in Ireland.

Independent operators have been operating at a major disadvantage, however. They have to cope with a restrictive licensing system and they do not enjoy the same privileges as the state companies in terms of vehicle taxation and fuel taxation.

The Progressive Democrats will effect the complete deregulation of entry to the long-distance bus market. We will make the necessary changes in taxation policy to ensure that all service providers, whether public or private, operate on a level playing field, with the same rights and obligations. And we will protect the public interest by ensuring that safe and reliable services are provided by all operators.

10. PLANNING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Good public transport must be an essential component of any major new residential development.

It is important that public transport provision is designed into developments from the outset. The Progressive Democrats will ensure that access to public transport is one of the criteria taken into consideration by the planning process. And we will encourage developers to enter into partnership arrangements and contribute to the cost of transport developments.

11. EQUALITY OF ACCESS

The Progressive Democrats are committed to equality of access to public transport for people with disabilities.

We will embark on a major programme of investment to ensure that all public transport facilities, including bus and train stations, are accessible to people with disabilities. And we will ensure that all new buses and trains added to the public transport fleet from now on can be accessed by people with disabilities.

12. BETTER ENFORCEMENT

Improved enforcement of the parking and traffic laws is essential if we are to make real progress in combating congestion.

Illegal parking is a serious impediment to traffic flow in the major towns and cities. It causes delay and disruption for motorists and it also prevents public transport from operating speedily and efficiently.

The Progressive Democrats will establish a new Traffic Police as a separate division within the Garda Síochána. This division will be a special, designated unit within the force with its own officers and its own budget. It will have specific responsibility for enforcing the traffic laws and for ensuring the free flow of traffic on a permanent basis in all major urban areas and on the main national routes.

We are confident that the public will give their support to tighter enforcement of the law provided they see results in terms of smoother traffic flow, better public transport and shorter journey times.

Pathways to Progress:

ROLLING OUT A NEW ROAD NETWORK FOR IRELAND

1. INTRODUCTION

The Progressive Democrats undertake to complete the biggest road-construction programme in the history of the state by 2007.

We recognise that roads are the dominant mode of internal transport in Ireland, accounting for almost 90% of freight traffic and over 95% of passenger traffic. We recognise too that despite recent improvements our road infrastructure is still poor by European standards and that it is totally inadequate for the present and future needs of a dynamic and competitive modern economy.

2. THE RATIONALE FOR BETTER ROADS

A major programme of road development is essential if this country is to achieve its full social and economic potential.

The arguments in favour of increased investment in our road network are compelling:

- **Developing the Regions:** Improved road links are essential if we want to achieve real regional development by channelling job-creating projects into the underdeveloped areas of the country.
- **Combatting Congestion:** Traffic congestion is costing Ireland dear in both human and economic terms. We must invest in a modern road system if we are to sustain the economic competitiveness which is key to our ability to generate employment and prosperity in this country.
- **Improving Quality of Life:** We must improve the nation's quality of life by taking large volumes of cars and trucks out of the streets of our cities, our towns and our villages. The key to achieving this is to develop new roads which will take as much traffic as possible away from urban areas altogether.
- **Promoting Road Safety:** Our existing road network cannot cope safely with present traffic volumes. Better roads are needed if we are to reduce Ireland's unacceptably high level of fatalities and injuries resulting from road-traffic accidents.

Enhanced public transport has a role to play. But it would be dishonest to suggest that the objectives outlined above can be achieved without a major road investment programme.

3. RESOURCING THE ROADS PROGRAMME

Decades of under-investment have left this country with a major infrastructural deficit in the roads area.

Now, the effects of rapid economic expansion mean that that deficit has to be tackled very quickly if the long-term growth potential of our economy is not to be threatened. Very large sums of money have to be provided in a very short space of time, posing a major challenge to the next Irish government.

The Progressive Democrats will meet that challenge. We are prepared to embrace innovative financing options to ensure that the work that needs to be done gets done.

We are now spending almost €1.5bn per year on our roads - national, regional and county. This is a massive sum of money and is a huge increase on the low level of investment that was undertaken under the previous administration. A further increase in resources is required, however, given the scale of what has to be achieved over the next five years.

The Progressive Democrats identify three major sources of finance for the roads programme:

- Exchequer Finance: We will make prudent increases in the level of Exchequer provision. Such increases will be consistent with the sound management of the public finances and with the need to keep well within the prudential limits set by the European Stability and Growth Pact.
- Private Finance: We will make maximum use of private finance initiatives to accelerate the delivery of the national roads programme, with particular reference to the motorway network and the major river crossings at Limerick and Waterford.
- National Transformation Fund: We will use the National Transformation Fund to make available substantial additional resources for the development of national infrastructure, including national road infrastructure.

The NTF will allow us to complete a very substantial and ambitious programme of road development between now and 2007 without recourse to excessive levels of Exchequer borrowing.

The Progressive Democrats will also give the private sector a greater role in the management of major road projects - by using design-and-build contracts for example - to ensure that projects are delivered on budget and on schedule.

4. THE NATIONAL MOTORWAY NETWORK

The Progressive Democrats are committed to the provision of a national motorway system.

This will involve the construction of new motorways and high-quality roads which will be financed by a combination of Exchequer money and the National Transformation Fund. We will ensure that the network is completed in full by 2007 by making maximum use of private-sector expertise and finance, by using large-scale contracts and by using the most cost-effective alignments.

The new network will connect Dublin with:

- Belfast
- Cork
- Galway
- Limerick
- Waterford.

Completion of this programme will represent the biggest transformation of the Irish transport system since the introduction of the railways in the middle of the nineteenth century.

DUBLIN REGION

The motorways around Dublin carry the heaviest volumes of traffic in the entire country.

The impact of congestion on these roads - particularly on the M-50 - is felt not just in Dublin but right around Ireland. Commercial and tourist traffic from all parts of the country to Dublin Airport, Dublin Port and Dun Laoghaire Ferryport have to pass through chokepoints on the network around Dublin, increasing costs for business nationally.

Serious bottlenecks in the Dublin area must be eliminated. Key priorities will be:

- (i) the re-engineering of key junctions on the M-50 to ensure the free flow of traffic on and off the motorway from the busiest national routes
- (ii) the completion of the Dublin Port Tunnel on schedule, and
- (iii) the full implementation of high-speed electronic tolling on the Westlink bridge

This will permit automatic deduction of tolls and will allow vehicles to pass through the toll-gates without having to stop. This initiative can make a huge contribution to the reduction of congestion on the M-50.

5. THE NATIONAL ROAD NETWORK

NATIONAL PRIMARY NETWORK

On routes not served by motorways the existing national primary road network will continue to carry very large volumes of traffic.

Much of the national primary network is still in need of upgrading in order to eliminate bottlenecks, reduce journey times and improve safety standards. The Progressive Democrats will ensure that the necessary upgrading is substantially completed by 2007.

Priority will be given to upgrading the deficient sections of the following routes which carry heavy volumes of passenger and commercial traffic and which are vital in terms of regional development:

- the non-motorway national routes connecting Dublin with the rest of the country
- the Donegal-Sligo-Galway-Limerick corridor (N-15/N-17/N-18) connecting the main population centres of the western seaboard
- the Limerick-Waterford route (N-24) linking the West and Mid-West with the main commercial ports of the South-East
- the Kerry-Cork-Rosslare route (N-22/N-25) linking the main tourist destinations in the South-West with Rosslare ferryport
- the new river crossings at Limerick (N-7) and Waterford (N-25)

These routes will be developed as high-quality two-lane roads with dual-carriageway provided where appropriate on the busiest sections. The aim is to achieve an average inter-urban speed of 80 kilometres per hour (50 mph) on the national primary network by 2007.

NATIONAL SECONDARY NETWORK

Major investment is required to improve the 2,700 km national secondary road network.

The Progressive Democrats will develop a comprehensive programme for the upgrading of the secondary system. This programme of work will form a central part of the next National Development Plan which is set to come into effect at the start of 2007. We will put the resources in place to enable the national secondary road network to be substantially transformed by the end of the present decade.

6. REGIONAL AND COUNTY ROADS

The extensive network of regional and county roads are an important part of our transport infrastructure.

They are crucial for the success of tourism and the development of rural enterprise; and they are vital for the competitiveness of Irish agriculture. Between central and local government almost €0.5bn per year is currently spent on regional and county roads.

Considerable improvements have been made in recent years but local roads in Ireland are still poor in standard compared with similar routes in rural Scotland or Wales, for example.

The Progressive Democrats will make additional capital resources available from the National Transformation Fund for regional and county roads. And we will give the new Department of Transport a central coordinating role in the implementation of a new improvement programme for these routes.

Specifically, we will:

- lay down new, uniform, national standards for local roads with regard to pavement quality, drainage, markings, signage and safety standards

- require each local authority to prepare and implement a coherent five-year plan for the upgrading and maintenance of the local roads in its area
- encourage local authorities to cooperate and pool resources as has happened successfully on the national roads programme
- increase the scale of activity so that larger-scale projects covering whole routes are undertaken as single contracts, and
- give private-sector contractors a greater role in construction and maintenance in order to ensure greater value for money.

Local roads are the basic transport infrastructure for local communities. We must ensure that these roads are maintained to a reasonable and acceptable standard if we want to promote community development and support rural life.

7. ROAD SAFETY

Considerable progress has been made over the last five years in improving road safety.

The number of people killed and injured in traffic accidents has declined since 1997 and this has happened despite a huge increase in the number of cars on the road. Our accident rate is still too high, however, and we must aim for a further significant reduction in fatalities and injuries.

The Progressive Democrats will implement a range of new policies to promote safe driving and reduce accident rates. We will take initiatives in the following areas:

- **Road Quality:** Our massive programme of road development and road improvement will enhance road safety. Better roads are safer roads, with better design, better surfaces and better markings. Accident rates on motorways, for example, are significantly lower than on roads without separation of opposing traffic.
- **Road Signage:** As an aid to safe driving we will install nationwide a clear, consistent and comprehensible system of road signage on all national primary, secondary and regional routes.
- **Penalty Points:** We will provide the resources for the systematic implementation of the penalty points system to discourage bad and dangerous driving practices.
- **Traffic Police:** The new Traffic Police will have specific responsibility for the enforcement of the road traffic laws and for free flow of traffic. They will have the extra resources needed to police our roads more effectively, particularly during the dangerous accident-prone hours around midnight.

We are convinced that this wide-ranging policy response will deliver significant dividends in terms of lives saved and accidents prevented.

8. SLOW MODES

It is important that road transport policy provides properly for the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

The Progressive Democrats will invest in expanding the national network of cycleways in order to encourage more people to cycle and to promote cycling as a safe and healthy mode of travel.

We will allocate a portion of the budget on road-improvement projects to the provision of new footpaths to allow pedestrians to walk in greater safety and comfort.

Access, Trade and Tourism:

COMPETITIVE ECONOMY, COMPETITIVE CONNECTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

Ireland is an island economy which trades with the world.

The continuing prosperity of this country depends to a very considerable degree on good international air and sea links. These links are vital for:

- Irish industry, which has to bring in raw materials and send out finished product without the aid of a land link to its main markets.
- Irish tourism, which is heavily dependent on overseas visitors.
- Irish consumers, who need competitive and cost-effective services for business and leisure travel out of Ireland.

Maintaining and enhancing these international transport links will be one of the main tasks of the new government.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

The Progressive Democrats in government will seek to achieve two key objectives in the area of international transport:

- (i) to develop new air services for both passengers and freight into and out of Ireland
- (ii) to develop new sea links for freight between Ireland and our major international markets

We will invest public money where this is deemed necessary and appropriate. However, we believe that these key objectives can best be achieved by liberalising markets and by enabling the private sector to take a bigger role in the financing and operation of access infrastructure.

Port and airport developments should be closely integrated with developments of the national road and rail network. The new, unified Department of Transport will have overall responsibility for air, sea, road and rail transport and for the formulation and implementation of coherent public policy in all of these areas.

3. AIRPORTS POLICY

Aer Rianta is the dominant player in the Irish airports sector.

The state company owns and operates the three major international airports - at Dublin, Cork and Shannon. And it is an effective monopoly as the smaller regional airports account for only a tiny share of national air traffic.

Three key issues will have to be addressed in the context of Irish airports policy during the lifetime of the next government:

- Regional Development: Does the current ownership and management structure allow Cork and Shannon to operate to their full potential as international airports ?
- Route Development: Are the current strategies being pursued by Aer Rianta enabling Ireland to exploit fully the opportunities to develop new routes, particularly in the low-cost carrier (LCC) segment of the market ?
- Future Investment: Should the taxpayer, through Aer Rianta, carry the cost of substantial investment in our international airports over the next few years or should that burden be shared with the private sector ?

We believe that a major change of direction is now required in Irish airports policy.

4. DUBLIN AIRPORT

The Progressive Democrats will facilitate the development of new, independent terminals at Dublin Airport which would be funded entirely by the private sector.

We believe that competition is the best form of regulation. The independent terminals will cater for the projected growth at Dublin over the next twenty years. They will offer choice to consumers and they will offer choice to airlines. And they will do so at zero cost to the taxpayer. New terminals can be expected to trigger a competitive response from Aer Rianta which will make that company more efficient and more successful.

Competition between terminals will enable Dublin to expand its route network very significantly. The airport will be better positioned to pursue route development opportunities. This should result in a huge expansion in services from Dublin to continental Europe by LCC operators, an increase in passenger numbers and an increase in the number of people employed at the airport.

As an interim measure we will press ahead with the immediate development of Pier D to facilitate the introduction of new services between Dublin and Europe.

5. CORK AND SHANNON

Dublin's strategic position and market strength mean that it will continue to be the most important Irish airport for many years to come.

The ability of Cork and Shannon to compete for traffic is hampered by the fact that they are in effect run by remote control from Aer Rianta's corporate headquarters at Dublin Airport. All management decisions made at Cork and Shannon are made with regard to their potential impact on Dublin. The net result is that neither Cork nor Shannon are achieving their full potential.

The Progressive Democrats believe that Cork and Shannon should be retained in public ownership but separated from Aer Rianta. Both airports would have:

- full management autonomy and independence
- a straightforward commercial mandate to increase traffic
- the freedom to set their own charges
- the ability to enter joint ventures with private-sector interests, for example, for the construction and development of new facilities.

We will guarantee that staff at both Cork and Shannon are not disadvantaged in any way by the restructuring: in fact they should benefit from the revitalisation of the two airports.

Clearly, Dublin's dominant position will pose competitive difficulties for Cork and Shannon. We will secure EU approval for direct Exchequer support for Cork and Shannon to enable them to play a dynamic role in regional development. And we will empower the transport regulatory commission to take regional considerations into account in arriving at its decisions on airport policy.

Aer Rianta would continue to own and operate the existing terminal at Dublin Airport. Its broad extensive portfolio of international aviation interests would give it the critical mass to prosper as an independent company.

6. REGIONAL AIRPORTS

The smaller regional airports have a significant role in local development in the seaboard counties from Donegal to Waterford.

The Progressive Democrats will continue to support the regional airports with marketing finance. We will maintain funding for regional links under the Essential Air Services programme and ensure connectivity for the regional airports with international services to and from Dublin Airport.

7. IRELAND: AN AIRFREIGHT HUB

The Progressive Democrats see Ireland's future as a high-skills, high-income economy.

If we are to achieve that this country will have to generate here, or attract in, companies in the emerging industries - information technology and biotechnology particularly. These industries typically produce goods with a high value-to-volume ratio which have to be moved quickly to worldwide markets.

For companies in these sectors high-grade international airfreight links are of critical importance, and Ireland's attraction as a location for high-technology industry will increasingly depend on our ability to provide such links.

The Progressive Democrats believe that this country can go further, however. We can make Ireland an international hub for the airfreighting of the high-value goods produced by the emerging industries. The changing nature of modern industry means that demand for airfreight services, particularly long-distance services, is set to grow significantly during the coming years.

Making Ireland an airfreight hub would require the development of a comprehensive network of international airfreight services out of Ireland, including intercontinental services to new destinations in Asia and North America.

This is a role for which our geographic location suits us. And the availability of underutilised airfield assets means that progress can be made without the need for massive new investment in physical infrastructure. We believe that Shannon Airport is ideally suited to fill this role and that it should be designated as Ireland's airfreight hub.

The Progressive Democrats will make this project a reality. We will address the key issues required to progress the project:

- legislative and regulatory changes
- taxation changes and tax-administration practices
- aviation policy development.

The benefits to Ireland could be significant in terms of high-quality employment opportunities, value added to our economy and additional revenue generated for the Exchequer. We have the capacity to repeat in this decade the success that we achieved in the 1990s with the International Financial Services Centre.

8. DEVELOPING AIR-PASSENGER SERVICES

The Progressive Democrats are confident that a liberal and competitive approach to national airports policy will deliver increased air passenger services to Ireland.

We recognise that competitive charges and fast turn-around facilities are important factors in attracting LCC operators into airports. We believe that our new approach to aviation policy, with competition for Dublin Airport and within Dublin Airport, will deliver a significant increase in scheduled air services to the three main international airports. It will be our objective also to attract into this country new LCCs which currently do not serve the Irish market.

The Progressive Democrats will secure the future of Aer Lingus as a viable and vibrant international airline.

Aer Lingus makes a very important contribution to the social and economic life of this country, providing us with international and intercontinental links which no other airline is likely to match. A strong Aer Lingus is essential for the success of our tourism industry and for the success of Ireland as a place in which to do business.

Within five years we are confident that we can develop:

- new routes from Ireland to North America
- new routes from Dublin to continental Europe
- new routes from both Cork and Shannon to Britain and continental Europe.

Our policy objective in civil aviation is clear. We want more planes on more routes carrying more passengers into all of Ireland's airports.

9. DEVELOPING TOURISM

The Irish tourism industry has four main requirements for success - product, people, access and supporting infrastructure.

The industry has made enormous progress in terms of product over the last ten years. Assisted by generous government incentives, the private sector has invested heavily in the provision of new accommodation and new facilities. The Progressive Democrats will maintain existing incentives to support further investment. But we believe the main challenge now is to bring in the extra tourists required to fill the accommodation that has been built and to remunerate the capital that has been invested.

We believe that that challenge will be best met by addressing the issues of people, access and supporting infrastructure, and then by marketing Irish tourism around the world in a professional and cost-effective way.

PEOPLE

People are the most important resource in the tourism business.

Visitors expect and demand high-quality service and high standards of customer care. The Irish tourism industry will not prosper unless it can supply those things. But maintaining the necessary standards can be difficult in a rapidly expanding industry operating in very tight labour market.

The Progressive Democrats will invest in people. We will resource the state training agency, CERT, to expand its efforts to professionalise the training function in Irish tourism so that all businesses operating in the hotel and hospitality sector have access to high-quality training for their staff. And we will ensure that everyone working in the tourism industry has ample opportunity for career development.

ACCESS

The liberalisation of the air-travel market between Britain and Ireland in the mid-1980s had a huge impact on Irish tourism, triggering a huge increase in the number of visitors coming here from the UK.

The Progressive Democrats are proposing further measures for the liberalisation of the aviation market. We are confident that these measures will result in a substantial increase in the number of flights between Ireland and continental Europe, enabling Irish tourism to increase substantially its market share in countries such as France, Germany and Italy.

SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

The Progressive Democrats are proposing a range of initiatives in the areas of transport policy and environmental policy.

These initiatives are put forward to improve the quality of life of Irish people and to make this country a better place in which to live. Some of these initiatives, however, will have important spin-off benefits for the tourism industry:

- Secondary Roads: Our major programme of investment in secondary and regional roads will improve access to the smaller tourism centres and allow the economic benefits of tourism to be spread more widely around the country.
- Road Signage: The poor quality of our road signage is a major source of frustration to visiting motorists and hampers the development of repeat business. Our plan for a clear and consistent system of signposting on all routes will address this issue.
- Litter: Our anti-litter strategy will clean up our cities, our towns and our countryside and remove one of the main negative factors which tarnishes the image of the Irish tourism product.
- Public Transport: Our ambitious plans to improve public transport will enable non-motoring tourists to get around the country much more easily, spreading the benefits of tourism well outside Dublin and the other major destinations.

MARKETING IRISH TOURISM

The last five years have seen an enormous increase in the level of state support for the marketing of Irish tourism.

The Progressive Democrats will continue to support the marketing effort. We will expand and enhance the degree of cross-border cooperation so that Ireland can be marketed as a single-island destination in our major tourism markets.

10. PORT ACCESS

As a trading nation Ireland is heavily dependent on competitive port and shipping services.

Considerable investment has gone into improving our facilities at our international ports in the last few years but further progress is required in order to meet the demands of an expanding economy.

The imminent privatisation of Belfast Port will increase the competitive challenge for all the other ports in the state and they must be equipped to respond to that challenge. The Progressive Democrats policy priorities will be:

- to ensure that our major commercial ports, all of which are in public ownership, have access to private capital to finance the modernisation and expansion of their facilities
- to promote competition among the ports for the benefit of port-users and for the benefit of the economy in general
- to integrate the development of port and rail facilities in order to facilitate a shift in commercial traffic from road to rail, and
- to facilitate balanced regional development by ensuring that all areas of the country have good transport links to the international ports.

We envisage an important role for the new Department of Transport in the coordination of government effort and investment so that we can develop an integrated approach to the management of freight transport.

A Pro-Enterprise and Pro-Consumer Society:

TACKLING INSURANCE COSTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Enterprise is at heart of a vibrant, developing society. An enterprising approach is about taking initiative to make change for the better happen. Enterprise creates wealth, delivers jobs and improves people's lives. Commercial enterprise is the engine of economic growth and delivers the tax revenues needed to build public services.

A caring society and an enterprise economy go hand in hand – no more so than at local, community level where initiative and enterprise bind strong communities together.

An enterprise economy means a diversity of enterprises, from large scale businesses delivering thousands of jobs, to micro-projects serving local communities. They all contribute to quality of life and our standards of living in Ireland.

The job of government is to clear the way for all forms of enterprise and initiative. This includes community and voluntary enterprise as well as business and individual enterprise.

2. CONSUMER INTEREST AND COMPLIANCE CULTURE

Enterprise must also be carried out in a compliance culture and in a way which is fair consumers as well as producers.

The Progressive Democrats in government have made great advances to ensure a fair business compliance culture. The Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement has been set up. A complete reform of the audit profession has been put in place. The Personal Injuries Assessment Board is being set up to keep the costs of legal claims down. In the consumers' interest and in the interest of all competitors in the market, the Competition Authority has been strengthened. A new, single financial regulator is being established with the consumer interest at the heart of its mandate.

3. TACKLING MOTOR INSURANCE COSTS

The regulation of the insurance industry will be part of the mandate of the new financial regulator, IFSRA (the Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority). It will both safeguard solvency and make sure that the consumer interest is protected. This is a new context in which the high cost of motor insurance, especially for young drivers, will be addressed.

The Progressive Democrats strongly support the wide-ranging recommendations of the Motor Insurance Advisory Board to address all aspects of motor insurance costs.

Actions will be pursued in relation to:

- accidents: road safety and driving behaviour;
- the cost of claims and court procedures; and
- the operation of the insurance market.

It will be for IFSRA to take many of the regulatory actions recommended. In Government, the Progressive Democrats will take actions under our Law Reform, Crime and Justice agenda to reduce the cost of claims and court procedures.

The cost of insurance is particularly acute for young drivers. We will take action to reduce that cost.

We will introduce road safety and safe driving training in the secondary school curriculum. We will seek partnership arrangements with the insurance industry to help implement new schemes. We will also introduce the means for insurers to recognise the driving record of responsible young drivers. Such actions may include optional annual testing to provide evidence of sustained driving standards.

We will encourage contractual arrangements for insurance companies to offer cheaper insurance to responsible young drivers, such as the posting of bonds or returnable deposits, and restricted hours coverage.

We will also ensure there is full transparency in pricing for insurance, with rates posted on the internet.

4. EMPLOYER INSURANCE COSTS

Employers are facing crippling increases in workplace insurance. It is undermining their businesses and job creation.

We will take actions to limit the cost of public liability insurance on businesses by

- establishing a set of guidelines on damages for particular injuries
- measures to reduce the cost of litigation (pre-trial mediation, serving of evidence by each party in advance of trial)
- introducing legal disincentives for unfounded claims
- urgent consultations on the issue of making employer liability insurance compulsory, in order to benefit from bonding / compensation arrangements
- a ban on no-foal no fee advertising by solicitors.

5. MEASURES TO SUPPORT ENTERPRISE

The Progressive Democrats' policies have provided an incentive for work, innovation and risk taking and underpinned the enormous success of the Enterprise Sector over the past decade. This success has virtually eliminated unemployment and underpinned an unprecedented increase in living standards.

The Progressive Democrats' top priority in government will be to keep Ireland working and ensure that the fruits of success are spread equitably across the country. This will require a continuing focus on competitiveness and a much greater focus on policies that promote Science, Technology and Innovation which will provide the foundation for more fulfilling and sustainable employment.

Over the next five years we will promote the competitiveness of the economy and of the business environment in all areas of Government policy, in partnership negotiations and in actions to de-regulate sectors of the economy and remove barriers to business. Above all we will ensure that there is no increase in taxes such as PRSI that represent a tax on employment.

We will produce an annual "Red Tape Assessment" to identify and produce proposals to eliminate the top five government regulations/procedures that inhibit the growth of the Small and Medium Sized enterprises.

We will ensure that state assistance to enterprise is focused on assisting innovative companies to create sustainable jobs with particular emphasis on encouraging balanced regional development. This will be re-enforced by Capital Gains Tax treatment of employee share options and additional incentives for companies to undertake incremental R&D.

We will improve the quality of science education in our schools and motivate more students to follow natural science courses at school and college by providing a greater incentive for science graduates to enter teaching, promoting more school/enterprise cooperation and introducing children to "science as fun" at an early age through the establishment of an interactive science museum.

We will maintain full employment through a flexible labour market and by providing additional support, through FÁS, for measures to help the long term unemployed, older workers and women returning to the paid employment to participate in a growing economy.

We will build on our initiatives to help people with disabilities into jobs by trebling the FAS budget for employment opportunities for people with disabilities, from €6 million currently to €18 million, and real increases in other relevant budgets, e.g. the social economy programme and supported employment.

We will promote a better understanding of entrepreneurship as the mainspring for business, community and social action by introducing practical experiences of it into the secondary education curriculum particularly in transition year.

6. INFORMATION SOCIETY INFRASTRUCTURE

The government also has a key role in arranging for the provision of infrastructure to facilitate enterprise. In addition to roads, rail, energy, airport and so on, the Government has a key role in ensuring that information technology infrastructure is developed across all regions of the country.

Information technology is at the heart of leading enterprise economies. How we provide information infrastructure, how we use technology and how we educate ourselves in information technology will determine whether we keep more and better jobs coming to Ireland.

We are an open, trading economy. Our prosperity depends on how we integrate with the global economy. We can develop key competitive advantages as an information society and in the provision of traded services by e-commerce.

The global trend for higher value-added jobs in information-based services and industry is a big opportunity for Ireland, since it does not rely on traditional heavy industry inputs or a central location.

Building an information society will enhance our quality of life, with better jobs, better services and better education. It will break down the barriers of distance between regions and help us achieve balanced regional development.

7. BUILDING AN INFORMATION SOCIETY

The National Development Plan which the present Government introduced in 1999 includes two main objectives for an information society:

- achievement of ranking of Ireland in the OECD's top 10 per cent of countries in communications across criteria like service range, quality, availability and price;
- putting in place a responsive and developmental regulatory framework for e-commerce and digital industries.

€200 million has already been provided in the NDP for advanced communications and e-commerce roll-out where the private sector is not responding. These remain central and correct objectives.

The challenge we will meet in government is to drive forward and accelerate the achievement of these objectives.

The key actions that we will take in government to build infrastructure will be:

- to ensure delivery of high-speed, low cost and high capacity internet connections by building broadband infrastructure across all regions of the country. The Government in March 2002 announced an investment programme to bring broadband to 123 towns in Ireland over the next five years. It is critical to implement this programme on time, and to be open to new technologies, e.g. wireless, for further roll-out.
- to create real competition for local phone services by ensuring the unbundling of the local loop. If the Office of the Director of Telecommunications Regulation requires further legislative backing to achieve this, we will provide it.
- to encourage the roll-out of new technologies such as 3-G phones. New technologies for mobile communications and 'm-commerce' must be encouraged, not tied up in red tape.

It is also a priority that the benefits of an information society are available across all regions and for all people. A key part of achieving this for Government action will be IT in education. We will also continue to support the community and voluntary initiatives to bring IT and multi-media skills and opportunities to people who might otherwise not be in a position to access them.

Modernising Waste Management

1. INTRODUCTION

The Progressive Democrats will revolutionise waste management in Ireland.

Right now this country is facing into a waste management crisis. Our failure to deal adequately with the waste problem threatens the quality of life of our citizens, the safety of our environment, the viability of our tourism industry and the growth potential of our economy.

Several factors are contributing to the emerging crisis:

- we produce up to 30% more domestic waste per head than continental European countries
- we lag well behind Europe in waste reduction and waste recycling
- we have not secured public support for a viable alternative to landfill.

Progress is urgently required on all these fronts if we are to solve our waste management problems.

2. THE PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS' APPROACH

The Progressive Democrats believe that, with resolute action, Ireland's waste management problems can be solved over the next five years.

We are putting forward sensible and practical solutions - solutions which have been tried and tested in other countries and which will be capable of commanding public support and public cooperation in Ireland. We believe that Ireland should learn from the experience of other European countries which have made great advances in waste management. And we should embrace the innovative new technologies which have helped to revolutionise waste management in Europe.

We reject the 'zero-waste' argument - the view that waste can simply be made to disappear completely. It can't. This view is put forward by those who lack the political courage to come up with real solutions to the real problems in waste management. It is a dishonest view and it does a disservice to the Irish people.

The Progressive Democrats recognise that major decisions have to be made in the waste area. We are prepared to face those decisions. We do not seek to evade the issues involved by hiding behind spurious zero-waste arguments.

3. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The Progressive Democrats are committed to the achievement of clear policy objectives if re-elected to government.

Under an integrated national waste management system we will:

- implement a national waste reduction and waste minimisation programme
- require all local authorities to meet definite recycling targets for municipal waste
- create stable long-term markets for the main recyclable products
- cut substantially the volume of biodegradable waste going to landfill by 2006 in line with the EU Landfill Directive.

We will give the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) overall responsibility for the implementation and enforcement of waste management policy at national level. This will avoid the need for the creation of a new layer of bureaucracy. And we will give the EPA the powers and the resources to police the waste industry in a professional way.

4. WASTE REDUCTION

A policy of reduction and minimisation has an important role to play in any waste management strategy.

The Progressive Democrats will use the taxation and charging system to encourage waste reduction in a number of areas. Specifically, we support:

- the landfill tax
- a tax on certain non-returnable packaging materials
- a pay-by-weight charging system for domestic refuse.

There is huge scope to reduce waste volumes by getting industry to cut the amount of packaging that it uses. It makes commercial sense for businesses to do this and to explore the possibilities and opportunities offered by eco-design to minimise the volume of waste generated. We will put in place a formal partnership arrangement between government and business to ensure that maximum progress can be achieved on an agreed basis without the need for new legislation or new regulations.

At present Irish waste volumes are growing in line with growth in the Irish economy. That situation is not sustainable in the long-term. We must decouple waste generation from economic expansion.

5. WASTE RECYCLING

The Progressive Democrats will close the recycling gap between Ireland and the countries of continental Europe.

We in Ireland currently recycle less than 10% of our municipal solid waste. For countries such as Denmark, Germany, Netherlands and Austria the equivalent figure ranges from 30% to 45%. We will bring Irish practice up to the best European standards by putting in place an entirely new system nationwide for the management of waste:

- Separation at Source: All household waste will be separated at source into its principal components. This is essential if any recycling strategy is to work successfully.
- Composting: Organic matter such as kitchen waste will be separated out and used for composting, either at household level or in specialist composting facilities.
- Segregated Collection: Segregated collection will operate for the main types of waste, including organic waste where that is required (e.g. apartment buildings).
- Bring Banks: We will double the number of 'bring banks' which receive bottles, cans and other recyclables from one per 3,000 people to one per 1,500 people within five years. And we will set standards to ensure that all bring banks are managed properly and operated cleanly.
- Community Initiatives: We will provide support for community initiatives to enable people to get involved in recycling schemes in their own neighbourhoods.
- Market Development: We will ensure that stable, long-term market outlets are available for the main recyclables and we will provide resources to support such markets where necessary.

The Progressive Democrats will promote innovative approaches to recycling. In the N-2 road scheme at Carrickmacross which opened in late 2001 some one million glass bottles were crushed and compounded and used as a substitute for stone in the road pavement. This is but one example of the way in which new uses can be found for recycled products.

6. TREATING MIXED WASTE

Our system envisages every household having one bin - the residual bin - for mixed waste which cannot be separated at source.

New technologies now exist which enable this waste to be further treated and further refined for recycling purposes. Experience in Europe shows that even where separation at source operates large quantities of recyclables still find their way into the residual bin.

We believe that the latest modern technology should be used to further treat mixed waste post-collection. The objective must be:

- to recover as much recyclable material, such as bottles and cans, as is feasible

- to recover all hazardous material, including batteries and metals
- to recover and purify toxic liquids.

The aim must be to create a dry, inert product which does not give rise to foul smells and which can be safely disposed of.

Such material is already being used to produce refuse-derived fuel (RDF) in continental Europe. The European experience shows that RDF can be used as a substitute for fossil fuels by industry and with new filtering systems can be burned safely in terms of emissions into the air.

7. REDUCING THE ROLE OF LANDFILL

The EU Landfill Directive requires Ireland to reduce significantly the amount of waste going to landfill.

Specifically, the Directive requires that we reduce the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill to 75% of the 1995 level by 2006. For most EU countries this is not an overly demanding target: reduction and recycling strategies are already there to help them meet it.

For Ireland the target is demanding. Waste volumes have expanded hugely since 1995. And we have made little progress on waste reduction and waste recycling.

Notwithstanding that the Progressive Democrats are confident that Ireland can comply with the EU Directive within the prescribed timescale. And we give a clear commitment that the target will be met by 2006. We are also confident that landfill can be eliminated as a disposal option for biodegradable waste by the end of the decade.

8. NO NEED FOR MASS-BURN INCINERATION

The Progressive Democrats are confident that Ireland's waste management problems can be solved without resort to mass-burn incineration.

Mass-burn incineration is essentially a twentieth-century technology, a generation of technology which we in Ireland have never embraced. Essentially, mass-burn involves the burning of untreated and unsorted waste.

This waste can contain a vast range of products - batteries, chemicals, metals, electrical goods - and burning it gives rise to serious problems:

- Conflict with Recycling: Local authorities have to enter long-term agreements to supply fixed quantities of waste to incinerator operators: otherwise they can face financial penalties. This is in direct conflict with any long-term strategy to cut waste volumes by recycling and reduction.
- Scale of Operation: Mass-burn incinerators need huge scale to operate efficiently. The facility planned for Ringsend in Dublin would handle 500,000 tonnes of rubbish per year. Such facilities do not fit easily into any urban or rural landscape.

- Traffic: Big incinerators generate big volumes of traffic. The Ringsend plant, for instance, would generate up to 50,000 truck movements per year.
- Air-Borne Emissions: The EU has set tight limits on toxic emissions into the air from incinerators but these are only effective with very tight enforcement. In 1999 and 2000 the eleven municipal incinerators in England and Wales breached their limits more than 500 times in total.
- Residual Ash: Unsorted household rubbish yields highly toxic product when burnt. Modern plants filter the gases but the toxins remain in the chimney ash. This is a toxic product and is difficult to dispose of safely.

For these reasons it is extremely difficult to persuade people to accept incinerators in their own areas. In the Ireland it may prove impossible to secure public acceptance of mass-burn, or else it may take so long to get projects through planning and legal challenges that we run out of landfill space in the meantime.

Innovation in the waste industry means that we in Ireland have the opportunity to solve our problems without using mass-burn incineration. We should take that opportunity.

9. COMMUNITY GAIN

Any waste management policy will involve the development of new infrastructure to handle waste.

The Progressive Democrats in government will ensure that new waste-management facilities are modest in scale, environmentally safe and run to the highest international standards. But we recognise that such facilities do impose some costs on the communities which host them and we believe that those costs have to be addressed as a matter of public policy.

The Progressive Democrats will promote the concept of community gain.

In hosting a waste-management facility a community incurs cost and inconvenience on behalf of the wider population. Community gain provides them with something in return for that cost and that inconvenience.

Community gain provides for formal agreements between affected communities and the developers of waste-management facilities, whether public or private. Such agreements allow the developer to offer benefits to the community. Experience internationally shows that such benefits can include:

- parks and open spaces
- community centres
- recreational facilities
- educational investments
- enhancement and improvement of local infrastructure.

The offering or conferring of such benefits does not in any way obviate the need for any facility to go through the full rigours of the planning process. However, experience in other countries shows that community gain acts as an incentive for people to accept facilities in their neighbourhoods and helps to avoid long delays at the planning stage.

Community gain can also be part of the planning process itself - planning gain. Communities can negotiate with developers of waste-management facilities at the planning stage. For example they could negotiate for the funding and installation of environmental monitoring equipment which would measure the precise impact of the facility on the neighbourhood.

10. HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ireland now has a sophisticated, high-technology industrial base which generates significant volumes of hazardous waste.

Hazardous waste materials occur also in many consumer products and in a range of household appliances.

We currently depend on other countries - especially Britain - to treat our hazardous waste. This is not a long-term option and we cannot rely on the British continuing to accept our hazardous waste into the future. In fact, European policy calls for national self-sufficiency in the management of hazardous waste.

We must develop strategies for dealing with hazardous waste if we are to sustain employment in our high-technology manufacturing sector. Failure to invest in the appropriate facilities would damage Ireland's future ability to attract high-technology industry and high-quality, high-income employment

The Progressive Democrats will implement a national strategy for dealing with unavoidable hazardous waste, supervised by the Environmental Protection Agency and operated to the highest international standards. This will involve:

- encouraging, with fiscal incentives where appropriate, reduction and minimisation measures to limit the amount of hazardous waste produced by industry
- promoting and incentivising the recovery and recycling of toxic materials from waste
- preventing the land-filling of toxic materials which have not been properly treated.

Recent instances of illegal dumping in Wicklow and Waterford show the need for proper environmental treatment for hazardous waste.

Where thermal treatment facilities for the processing and treatment of hazardous waste are required the Progressive Democrats will ensure that they are managed and operated to the highest safety standards laid down by the EU. Such facilities must only be used where it can be shown that all options for prevention, minimisation, re-use and recycling have been fully utilised.

11. LITTER

Managing litter is an essential part of managing waste.

The problem of litter has been a blight on our national landscape for too long. It damages our national image; it damages our environment; and it damages our quality of life. It also impacts on our economy by damaging our tourism industry and by damaging Ireland's attractiveness as a place to live and work in.

The Progressive Democrats propose a fourfold strategy to deal with the issue of litter:

- Education: We will promote anti-litter education in every school in the country and we will run a continuing public awareness campaign in the national media to persuade people not to litter.
- Enforcement: We will strengthen the existing enforcement measures and provide for higher fines for offenders.
- Community Action: We will involve local communities in the campaign against litter by giving them resources and responsibility for controlling litter in their neighbourhoods.
- Business Responsibility: We will bring business into the campaign by ensuring that the owners of shops and fast-food outlets take action to control the amount of litter around their premises.
- Council Responsibility: We will ensure that local councils play a much stronger role in the fight against litter - more litter bins, more frequent street-cleaning, more demanding standards for the management of the urban and rural environment.

Waste-reduction measures in the packaging area - the tax on plastic bags, a tax on non-reusable packaging - will also help to reduce the volume of litter on our streets.

12. CLOSURE OF SELLAFIELD

The PD will vigorously pursue every option at international level, whether legal, political or diplomatic, to bring about the closure of the Sellafield reprocessing facilities. This will be done at international legal tribunals, at EU level and by forming an alliance to this end with like-minded countries such as the Scandinavian states.

Regional Development, Rural Development and Agriculture: POLICY AGENDA 2002-07

1. INTRODUCTION

The last five years have been a period of tremendous economic growth in Ireland.

The country has benefited in terms of higher investment, higher employment and higher living standards. All parts of Ireland have gained from the rapid expansion of the economy but some have gained more than others and in some cases the disparities have been wide.

The pattern of growth has been uneven. Over-development in the major urban areas has generated a suburban sprawl which is impinging on quality of life in those areas. At the same time under-development is threatening the viability of communities in rural areas.

The Progressive Democrats in government will pursue a clear policy agenda over the next five years. Our policy objectives will be:

- (i) to ensure that all regions of Ireland are able to enjoy their fair share of our national prosperity
- (ii) to promote rural development and rural enterprise and to reverse the decline in population in rural areas
- (iii) to foster and encourage voluntary effort at community level
- (iv) to support farming families and to ensure the long-term viability of Irish agriculture
- (v) to promote sustainable agriculture and to safeguard and protect the rural environment
- (vi) to develop a food processing industry that is innovative, internationally competitive and capable of commanding consumer confidence at home and abroad.

We believe that a balanced approach to national development will enhance the quality of life for both rural dwellers and urban dwellers.

2. PROMOTING REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Progressive Democrats will make the promotion of regional development a political priority in the next government.

Employment and economic activity are generated by investment - foreign investment, investment by Irish companies and public investment by the government and its agencies. We want to see that investment spread as widely as possible around the country so that all regions are capable of achieving their full social and economic potential.

ROADS

We believe that infrastructure is the key to achieving real regional development and that road infrastructure is of critical importance. And the establishment of the National Transformation Fund, financed by the sale of state assets, will give us the resources to embark on an ambitious road-improvement programme.

Many areas are still hampered by poor road access to the major population centres and to the key international ports and airports. The Progressive Democrats in government will:

- roll out the national motorway network and ensure that it is completed within the lifetime of the next administration
- complete the upgrading of the rest of the national primary network to bring it up to international standards
- initiate an improvement programme for the much-neglected national secondary road network which is vital for regional transport, and
- provide resources to the local authorities for a comprehensive renewal of local and regional roads.

BROADBAND

Modern communications technology has a huge role to play in regional and rural development.

We will ensure that every community in Ireland has broadband connection. This will create a level playing field and give every location in Ireland the chance to compete for investment projects in the information-based industries.

It will also open up new opportunities for the electronic delivery of services to rural communities - in education, in medicine, in banking and in a wide range of other areas. Information technology has the potential to enhance significantly the quality of life for rural communities: that potential must be fully exploited.

3. DECENTRALISATION

The Progressive Democrats will implement a large-scale programme of public-service decentralisation.

Over the next five years we will offer some 10,000 public servants the opportunity to move out of Dublin and into provincial locations. There will be a full and formal process of consultation with staff unions on the implementation of this initiative.

This will be a comprehensive programme, involving the transfer of entire government departments and agencies. We reject the piecemeal approach of moving small numbers of public servants to favoured locations: this only leads to fragmentation and reduces support for decentralisation among both public servants and the general public.

Decentralisation can offer clear economic benefits to the country:

- It will give a major stimulus to regional economies, particularly the Border/Midlands/West region in particular.
- It can serve as lead by government to private sector organisations by highlighting the attractions of provincial towns as office locations.
- It will inject the energy and enthusiasm of new people into communities right across the country.

The decentralisation programme must be used to increase, not decrease, the efficiency of the public service. Individual public servants stand to gain from lower house prices and lower commuting times but the overall public service stands to gain also:

- accommodation costs in provincial towns will be substantially lower than in Dublin
- it will be easier to recruit and retain staff, and
- there will be greater opportunities for mobility within the public service for officers serving in locations outside Dublin.

Locations to host decentralised offices will be carefully chosen. The successful towns will have to show that they have the necessary social and physical infrastructure to host a major government office - housing, schools, transport. We will promote clustering to facilitate mobility and career development for those working in decentralised offices.

The development of the required office accommodation should be integrated with the urban regeneration plans of the local authorities. The objective must be to create new buildings of architectural merit in town-centre locations, not warehouse-type accommodation in out-of-town industrial estates.

4. SUPPORTING RURAL COMMUNITIES

Many rural areas have experienced a decline in population in spite of economic growth.

This is particularly true in counties in the Midlands and the West. The most recent census data shows that between 1991 and 1996 population fell

- in 51% of the rural districts in Laois
- in 54% of the rural districts in Offaly
- in 58% of the rural districts in Longford, and
- in 69% of the rural districts in Roscommon.

By rural districts are meant not just country areas but towns and villages with a population of less than 4,000. The rate of decline may have slowed since 1996 but it is clear that rural Ireland is very vulnerable and that it needs to be supported.

The Progressive Democrats will implement a range of policies to sustain rural life and ensure the viability of rural communities:

- **Rural Enterprise:** We will establish a Rural Enterprise Development Fund. The fund will provide finance to enable local communities to develop small-scale enterprise centres each capable of sustaining about 20 full-time jobs.
- **Rural Tourism:** We will create within the Department of Tourism a new unit with a specific remit to assist local communities in the development and promotion of rural tourism initiatives.
- **Urban Regeneration:** We will promote regeneration schemes in the smaller towns and villages in order to maintain the social and commercial viability of these centres.
- **Postal and Banking Services:** We will ensure that postal and banking services, using the most modern technology, are available to every rural community through the development of a new partnership between An Post and local retailers.

We will also put in place at national level comprehensive and coherent planning guidelines for rural housing so that there is a consistent system nationwide. We will create a sensible system which ensures sustainable development while taking account of the legitimate needs of local people and local communities.

5. PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST: SUSTAINING COMMUNITIES

The development of the potential of each and every citizen is the cornerstone of a liberal democracy.

People do not live in isolation but in communities. Increasingly, the pressures of modern living are placing strains on the sustainability of the whole concept of community. In particular the ethos of voluntary commitment which has been so important in Irish society is challenged in the modern and prosperous Ireland of the 21st century.

The Progressive Democrats are committed to building strong communities and we believe that strong communities have a vital role to play in the social and economic development of rural Ireland.

The Progressive Democrats in government will appoint a Minister of State with specific responsibility for supporting community initiatives around the country. The minister will have a coordinating role in rationalising and simplifying the system of state supports for community action.

In keeping with the principle of subsidiarity we will give local communities the opportunity to become involved in the provision of public services in their areas so that, where appropriate, voluntary effort can be harnessed successfully for the benefit of people.

We see scope for community involvement in a range of different activities:

- **Improving the Environment:** Communities will be encouraged to play a greater role in the development and management of recycling schemes, litter control campaigns and local heritage projects.

- Local Transport: As part of our plans for the liberalisation of the bus market we will make funds available to community groups to operate local minibuses to connect villages and rural areas with nearby towns.
- Community Enterprise: We will provide support for small-scale job-creating initiatives by community groups in industry, services and tourism.
- Social Economy: We will continue to roll out the social economy programme as a means of channelling aid to community and voluntary initiatives.

These proposals will help to revitalise voluntary effort in Ireland and ensure that it has an important part to play in sustaining rural communities.

6. AGRICULTURAL POLICY: INTERNATIONAL PRIORITIES

The regime under which Irish farmers operate is determined largely at international level.

This has been the case ever since Ireland came under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on accession to what is now the EU back in 1973. The intervening years have seen the further internationalisation of agricultural policy with successive World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements playing a major role in shaping the policies under which Irish farmers operate.

The Progressive Democrats recognise the need for continuing reform in the agricultural sector; but reform should not result in a reduction in living standards for Irish farmers.

EU ENLARGEMENT

We strongly support enlargement of the EU and we expect ten new member states to join the Union in 2004.

We believe it is vital that the CAP budget should be sufficient to fund the extension of farm supports to the new member states without reducing supports to farmers already within the EU. Otherwise, Irish farmers will be asked to bear the costs of enlargement.

WTO

We support the continuation of 'blue box' status for direct compensation payments so that they remain exempt from challenge by non-EU countries after 2003 as they are at present. This is essential to maintain Irish farm incomes.

Export refunds are essential to a country like Ireland which sells a substantial quantity of food products outside the EU; refunds must remain in place to ensure the stability of the Irish agricultural production and processing industries.

CAP

The next mid-term review of the CAP is due in 2005 and Ireland's case will have to be put strongly at that review:

- our national milk quota must be secured up until 2008 as already agreed at the Agenda 2000 review
- any cuts in beef production should be concentrated on intensive producers on the continent and not on the extensive grass-based producers who have suffered most as a result of the fall-off in consumer demand due to BSE.

Increased support for the sheep sector should be secured by modifying the calculation of stocking densities for extensification premium purposes.

7. AGRICULTURAL POLICY: DOMESTIC PRIORITIES

The Progressive Democrats will pursue policies at national level to sustain a strong and vibrant food production sector in Ireland.

Our priorities will be:

- (i) to ensure that all international markets are open to Irish exporters because of the critical importance of food exports to our economy
- (ii) to improve the management of the national milk quota to facilitate farmers wishing to enter the dairy industry or to increase their scale of operations
- (iii) to incentivise the leasing of land by people who wish to disengage from farming to enable enterprising commercial farmers to attain a more efficient scale
- (iv) to use electronic government and electronic tagging and recording to achieve less bureaucratic control systems in the industry, and to ensure that a simpler and more sensible penalties regime applies to farmers, and
- (v) to encourage more young people to become involved in farming by reforming the installation aid system and by exempting from stamp duty land transfers from parents to children.

In order to rationalise the incentives for balanced regional development we will ensure that all parts of the BMW region qualify for disadvantaged area status.

FARMING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Progressive Democrats are strongly committed to sustainable agriculture and environmentally friendly farming practices.

The Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) is a very important for the promotion of environmentally friendly farming. However, the numbers participating in REPS have fallen significantly in recent times and are now down to around 35,000. We will make resources available to enhance REPS with a view to doubling the numbers participating in the scheme within five years.

We will provide increased support for organic farming so that the organic sector can expand its share of national agricultural output.

Farm waste can pose a threat to the rural environment and to water quality. We will modify the incentives available under the Farm Waste Management Scheme to ensure that as many farmers as possible invest in improving their facilities.

8. FISHERIES AND SEAFOOD

The fisheries and seafood sector makes a major contribution to regional development.

It generates economic activity and supports employment in areas of the country that would find it hard to attract and sustain other industries. The Progressive Democrats will ensure that the fisheries and seafood sector continues to develop and that it receives the support and the resources needed to achieve its full potential.

OUR PRIORITIES OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WILL BE TO:

- provide assistance to enhance the safety, quality and competitiveness of the national fishing fleet, and particularly the modernisation of the whitefish fleet
- invest in improving the fishery port infrastructure and the facilities available for the handling and storage of fish
- support product innovation and marketing strategies for seafood products in order to increase value added in the sector.

Our programme of investment in secondary and regional roads will also boost the competitiveness of the Irish fisheries and seafood industry by enabling producers and processors to get their products to market more easily and more cost-effectively.

9. COMMANDING CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

The Progressive Democrats consider it essential that we command consumer confidence in Irish food produce if our agriculture sector is to prosper.

Recent years have seen a big move towards freer international trade in food products. But there is a natural tension between free trade and clean food. Huge improvements in food safety have been achieved in Europe but this has pushed up the cost of European produce vis-à-vis produce imported from countries such as Argentina.

Healthy animals produce safe food so on-farm food safety is important. Our present farm inspection regime is over-bureaucratic and a more streamlined and simplified system is required.

Our food inspection system is also cumbersome and complex with several different agencies operating under several different departments. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) has the over-arching role in food inspection. We will give the FSAI greater powers and greater resources to coordinate the activities of the various agencies and to make the whole system more efficient and more responsive to potential threats.

The foot-and-mouth crisis of 2001 showed that our control systems do work well when they are confronted with a major external threat. Our objective is to make sure that they can detect such threats early and react to them quickly.

The foot-and-mouth crisis also showed that free trade can quickly become zero trade when things go wrong. We believe that the best protection for our food industry is a single, all-island approach to animal health and we will work to achieve that in government.

GREEN LABEL

Irish consumers will have confidence in Irish food if they have confidence in the Irish food inspection system.

The problem is in defining Irish food. South American beef can be processed in an Irish plant and the resulting product can be classified as 'Irish'. Consumers have no way of knowing the origin of the raw material.

The Progressive Democrats will introduce a distinctive labelling system for Irish food - the Green Label. This will give consumers an assurance that a product is Irish all the way from farm to fork

The Green Label concept is permitted under EU regulations as long as the labelling does not mislead. Irish eggs are already labelled in this way and British beef has been labelled in this way.

An identifiable label would increase the distinctiveness and the attractiveness of Irish food products for Irish consumers. It could also be used to improve the marketability of Irish food in the British and European markets.

The Green Label would present a challenge and an opportunity to Irish food processors to come up with the innovative products and imaginative marketing required to make such a scheme succeed.

Our Health Services:

PUTTING PATIENTS FIRST

1. INTRODUCTION

Our policy objective in health is for patient-centred, quality services at all levels, including a 3-month treatment guarantee for hospital treatment.

The overall goal of health policy has to be measured in the health status of the population. Education and prevention measures, and primary health care outreach, are centrally important, alongside the delivery of health services through hospitals.

The resources generated by economic growth have been invested in health services and personnel. Healthcare spending has more than doubled in the last five years – from just over €3bn to €8bn. Ireland's per capita spending on health now exceeds the EU average.

We have dedicated medical, nursing and administrative staff – now over 90,000 in the health system.

These additional resources in finance and personnel have resulted in the delivery of more and better services. The number of medical procedures performed in Irish hospitals has virtually doubled, from 420,000 to 825,000, in the last five years.

But still, the system is not working as well as we want. A lot more services could be delivered closer to the community. There is over-reliance on hospital Accident and Emergency units, which are then over-burdened with cases. We could achieve greater value for money for the investment we are making. Our management structures are not yet organised to deliver the best results for patients. Incentives are not aligned with the results we want. Clinical and management decision-making are not sufficiently integrated. It is difficult to implement change.

Health policy is one of the most wide-ranging and complex areas of policy. However, we will not allow that complexity to deflect us from a series of progressive reforms, alongside significant new investment. Our approach as a party is to take steps to reform and improve the health services for patients that are measurable, achievable and sustainable.

Our complex health system cannot be changed overnight. The hoped-for benefits of attempting to do so are easily outweighed by the risks of confusion and disruption to the population, to patients and to health professionals.

2. HEALTH STRATEGY 2001

The Health Strategy 2001 - Quality and Fairness for All - is a 10 year view of how to progress investment with reform of our health services. It is aimed at delivering quality health care for all people, and eliminating inequalities in health by delivering results rather than by theory and rules. It entails the recruitment of hundreds more consultants, more doctors and nurses and investment in services closer to the community.

The consultative process of drawing up the Health Strategy was very valuable and showed that there are no easy or quick answers for delivering the quality services we want.

The Progressive Democrats in Government adopted the Health Strategy. In implementing it, we will place an emphasis on:

- ending waiting lists for hospital treatments, using the Treatment Purchase Fund
- expanding primary health care teams for more services in the community, for example, diagnostic tests and physiotherapy
- extending services for people with intellectual disabilities
- extending care for older people, including the expansion of 'step-down' facilities for after hospital care
- using the private sector to contract for public health services

The Health Strategy provides for an early and clear report on Health Agencies and Management structures. The Progressive Democrats will ensure that this is carried out, evaluated by Government and a report published, by the end of 2002. It is vital to all our people as well as all working in the Health Services to have health management structures that are tuned to delivering quality services and care for all.

We believe that, at a minimum, hospital management must be given more autonomy and there must be better integration at hospital level of clinical and management decision making.

We will take further steps to ensure value for money in the health services. The Progressive Democrats ensured that the first ever Value for Money audit of the health services was carried out in 2000. We will also put in place quarterly reports of health service activity and services by the Central Statistics Office.

Some of the immediate steps taken in the first year of the Health Strategy and funded in Budget 2002 are:

- New hospital beds – €40 million funding for 650 new beds
- Ending waiting lists - €30 million Treatment Purchase Fund and a dedicated National Treatment Purchase Team

€39 million for services for people with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism to help provide over 100 new residential places; 75 new respite places; 600 new day places; the continuation of the programme to transfer persons with an intellectual disability or autism from psychiatric hospitals and other inappropriate placements.

- €47m for services for people with Physical Disabilities, to provide home support services (including personal assistance); therapy services; up to 100 additional posts, 500 rehabilitative training places; and 15 guidance/assessment staff in the health boards in the area of rehabilitative training.
- €81m for services for Older People to provide for the enhancement of the Nursing Home Subvention Scheme; provision of additional Home Helps; improving community based services and services provided in community hospitals and day care centres; and additional respite care and support for carers.
- €19.6m for further support for GP Co-ops and the start of the Primary Care Model

Our continuing focus will be on results and service levels. This is how patients judge the health services. This is where unacceptable differences in treatment between public and private health matters. The solution is not to try to make one size fits all or to bring in a new PRSI tax under the guise of universal private health insurance.

3. FUNDING HEALTH SERVICES

There is no valid reason why service levels should be enormously different between publicly and privately funded health service providers. The reason so far is that with private insurance, the customer pays insurance and is given a contractual expectation of a certain level of service. The insurance company effectively acts as a buyer of health services on behalf of the customer.

We intend to move to the same approach as regards the publicly funded health services: the public sector will be more a buyer of services for its clients, the patients, than a buyer and provider of services. We have made a start by setting up the €30 million Treatment Purchase Fund to end hospital waiting lists. We will use at least €300 million in this way, approximately 4 per cent of the present Health budget.

Patients should be able to expect to have stated service levels delivered. The positive dynamic of incentives and competition must be brought to bear insofar as possible in the relationship between the public health buyer and the health service provider. This new model can be implemented in particular areas more easily than others, for example, in the purchase of certain standard operations in hospitals, for orthodontic services or the leasing of bed capacity. We are convinced that to try a 'big bang' approach to funding health service reform would most likely fail and end up in confusion for patients and health service staff alike.

We do not believe that starting now with a major change in the way health services are funded would achieve the results patients want. Moving to a universal health insurance system would be very complicated and would cause considerable upheaval. Conditions in the Irish market are not ready for this change; for example, for this system to work, there would need to be a multiplicity of competing insurers, not one dominant player in the market owned by the State.

Health services have to be paid for. The population of Ireland already spends more than the EU average per head on health. The health budget is a quarter of Exchequer spending each year. There is also a contribution to health spending from private health insurance and from non-insurance private payments, for example, for private GP services.

Our mixed funding of health services should not be tampered with.

Half the population now voluntarily pay for medical insurance. A mixed funding base - tax, insurance and direct payments - is appropriate. We will encourage more insurance provision in the country, not less. To do this, we must make the market more evenly balanced and more attractive to potential entrants.

3. END WAITING LISTS

Since 1997, hospital waiting lists have fallen from 32,200 to 26,000. There have been major declines in waiting lists for cardiac surgery (-55%), gynaecology (-46%), orthopaedics (-29%) and ophthalmology (-27%).

The challenge is to end waiting lists altogether.

The Progressive Democrats brought forward an initiative to government last autumn to end waiting lists for hospital treatments. The Treatment Purchase Fund has been set up to get treatments for waiting list patients in private hospitals in Ireland and abroad, if necessary. The emergence of health care on a European-wide basis is an encouraging development, which we must put to the advantage of Irish patients.

Once a person has waited three months from their outpatient appointment, treatment will be made available under the arrangements put in place by the National Treatment Purchase Team. This marks a radical difference from the previous situation, where a person was simply counted on a waiting list after three months from outpatients.

We are committed to using this way of purchasing treatments alongside investment in more public beds and new personnel to ensure that patients are actually treated within three months. We will make the necessary reforms to guarantee that patients will receive their hospital treatment within three months of their outpatient appointment. This is a commitment in the Health Strategy 2001, to be met by the end of 2004. In government, the Progressive Democrats will ensure that this commitment is met.

Treating patients within three months will end waiting lists, as we have known them. It will deliver real results and practical fairness in the health system.

4. PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Our primary health services - GP practices, public and private - are one of the best features of our health services. We must build on that solid base. We will actively promote more services at primary health care level. We see great value and improvements for people in their communities in the primary health care teams set out in the Health Strategy 2001. We will implement these new teams with determination, accelerating where possible the rollout across regions. We will ensure that the principles of patient choice and clinical independence are maintained in this new system.

As well as building new primary health care teams, we will support GP co-operatives, so that GPs can organise better cover for patients.

5. MEDICAL CARDS

The medical card or GMS scheme is a key part of social policy of the State. It is aimed at ensuring social inclusion. Our policy on medical card eligibility is based on medical need and income. We will ensure income eligibility criteria at least keep pace with movements in incomes.

We do not support a dilution of the social policy objective of the medical card scheme by giving the medical card to all, irrespective of need. It is not a priority for the Progressive Democrats to give free GP services to people who can afford to pay for them. Well-off people do not need free social services.

The Long Term Illness Scheme has not been extended since 1975. We will review medical card eligibility for people with long-term illnesses to assess whether the needs of all people with long term illnesses are being met through this scheme and other supports, consistent with the principle that social supports are based on need.

We will vigorously implement a renewed scheme for early childhood vaccinations. Our vaccination rate is far too low. This is symbolic of lack of integration and effective implementation in our health management structures. We cannot continue with the same ways of running the scheme with a 60 per cent vaccination rate.

6. CANCER CARE CENTRES FOR THE REGIONS

Cancer therapy is often prolonged and stressful. Nearly a third of the population will be affected by cancer in one form or another. The National Cancer Strategy is a number of years in place now. There is an urgent need now to implement centres of excellence for cancer care across the regions. The views of local populations must be taken into account in the siting of regional centres of excellence.

The Progressive Democrats will ensure that in the next government, regional cancer care centres are established so that patients do not have to travel 100 miles for on-going radiotherapy. This will be an immediate priority for us.

7. SPECIAL NEEDS

Specific sections of the population have special needs and require specific attention. The Health Strategy sets out how the health needs of older people, children, people with intellectual disabilities, for example, will receive focus in implementing change.

In Government, the Progressive Democrats will focus on the particular needs of older people, children and people with disabilities. Among the priorities we shall pursue will be a focus on step-down facilities for older people and supporting nursing care in the community, including a review of the nursing home subvention. We will ensure that our child vaccination rates are much higher than at present and that child support facilities and staffing are available for children at risk of homelessness and out-of-control children who have come before the courts. We will also continue to invest in services for people with disabilities and build and support more respite services for their carers.

We will not lose sight of the needs of smaller groups of people in setting policy for larger schemes. For example, we will seek the extension of recovery services for victims of brain injuries.

Education:

OPENING OPPORTUNITY AT ALL LEVELS

1. INTRODUCTION

Education opens opportunity. It is the key to work, to social inclusion and to a well-grounded, civilised society.

Ireland has attained a high standard of education. Our professional educators, a sound curriculum and significant investment in education have contributed to this outcome.

The total budget for education is now €4.8bn compared to €2.8bn in 1997 – up 71 per cent. This is 14 per cent of total current expenditure, coming only after social welfare and health in size.

The Progressive Democrats believe the challenges for the future are centred on:

- improving significantly the standard of school buildings particularly at primary level
- broadening education access to promote social inclusion
- improving the standard of education achievement at all levels, from primary to advanced research
- promoting further the teaching of science in schools.

The record of the Government in education is clear:

- 4,000 more teachers for September 2002 compared to 1997
- almost five fold increase in the budget for school building projects up from €74m in 1997 to €335m this year
- 200 large school building projects underway, compared to 22 in 1997
- second lowest class sizes in the history of Irish education
- 15,000 new third level places
- first-ever full adult literacy programme introduced, with funding up ten times from 1997
- Irish 15 year olds have the second highest literacy rate in the EU (OECD study)
- primary school special needs assistants – budget up to €50m this year from €3.5m in 1997.

2. SCHOOLS BUILDING PROGRAMME

At primary school level, the most urgent task is to bring all schools up to an acceptable building standard. The standard of a school building influences the entire teaching and learning environment.

National standards must be set out explicitly. They must be at least as good as Health Boards use for pre-school facilities, for example. We will establish an objective and open way to rank the schools where work is most urgently needed to give confidence to parents and teachers that decisions are made on transparent grounds.

We will ensure that every primary school in the country reaches and is maintained at an acceptable, explicit national standard within three years.

We will maximise the potential for private sector groups to contract with the State to design, build and maintain large groups of new school buildings.

The primary school building capital budget is €154m euro in 2002. We will increase this to over €200 million within three years.

The budget for second level school building is €184 million in 2002. We will increase this to over €250 million in the lifetime of the next government.

3. ACCESS, LITERACY AND ACHIEVEMENT

We believe that education is the key to opportunity and to jobs.

Broadening education access means continuing to focus on areas of greatest need with targeted initiatives. Good progress has been made by this Government under the RAPID programme and the use of FÁS training to ensure skill development for employment. Targeted action at Government levels means having specially low teacher pupil ratios and increasing the number of special needs assistants in schools that have to cope with particularly acute social problems.

We will give further support to targeted initiatives for social inclusion, including support for community and voluntary work in breakfast and homework clubs. The Early Start and Home School Liaison Programmes will receive continuing support. We will encourage more partnerships, support and mentoring programmes between businesses and schools, particularly in areas where we are especially targeting for social inclusion.

We support measures to make the criteria more transparent and clear for schools to participate in programmes like Early Start and Home School Liaison. We will also take steps to bring together on a multi-agency basis the supports available for socially-disadvantaged schools. We will also bring together in one budget the funding for educational disadvantage.

Literacy is critically important to enabling people to take up and keep jobs. We will continue to implement and enhance the National Adult Literacy Programme, with the goal of achieving full adult literacy across the country. Basic literacy at all levels is the most fundamental national education target and we are determined that it will be met.

The current budget allocation for Literacy and Community Education for adults is €25.7m, up 30 per cent on 2001. We will ensure continued, real increases in order to achieve the target of national adult literacy and to support community initiatives.

We will also implement constant monitoring of literacy attainment at all levels, so that the country does not slip backwards and interventions can be kept focused.

We will improve education services for people with disabilities with a Rights Commissioner or Ombudsman in a position to go to court to ensure provision of services.

We will also promote education opportunities for older people based on principle of lifelong learning. In particular, we will ensure that older people have the ability to access information technology to have full opportunity to participate in our growing information society.

4. TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

An increasingly important part of the physical infrastructure of schools as well as broadening education access will be technology.

We will ensure over the lifetime of the next Government that every school in Ireland has access to a broadband connection. This will mean that the use of computers and other technology in schools will become much more valuable as a teaching and research aid. We also recognise that the provision of computers alone is only one part of ensuring that we harness technology for education advantage. Integrating technology in schools will mean training and development programmes for teachers, and a coherent approach to how computers and other technology is used.

5. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Our national curriculum needs constant updating, to promote our culture as well as to train people for work. We believe that our education curriculum must prepare our children and young adults for the broad and interdependent world they will live in, not just Ireland, but Europe and beyond. Our future prosperity and well-being as a country will depend increasingly on our ability to work with and adapt to the wider world.

Our curriculum must be adaptable to these changing realities. We must hold to the highest standards of assessment internationally. We must ensure the right mix of subjects and make them attractive to students. Our educational attainment in science and technology must not lag international best practice, including at primary level.

For these reasons, the Progressive Democrats will ensure that the national curriculum design and assessment process is challenging and responsive to Ireland's needs in the wider world.

Tying in with our policy to build up our enterprise society, we will improve the quality of science education in our schools and motivate more students to follow natural science courses at school and college. We will provide a greater incentive for science graduates to enter teaching, promoting more school/enterprise cooperation and introducing children to 'science as fun' at an early age through the establishment of an interactive science museum.

We must also ensure that we promote our national heritage, culture and democratic values and citizenship in our curriculum. We will seek to enhance and mainstream Civic, Political and Social Education across the curriculum.

It will also be important to promote life skills that have application across all work areas, such as an outward, enterprising approach. Education has done much to build our success. We must make sure it continues to foster confidence, achievement and civilised values in the next generation.

We propose to have a more explicit place given to the promotion of Irish culture in a European context in the secondary school curriculum. We see any assessment of the Irish language in the curriculum as part of a broader need to promote a better understanding and valuing of our national heritage and culture in schools.

We will also seek to introduce modern European languages into the primary school curriculum.

As part of providing a rounded curriculum that meets the needs of all students, we will introduce Sport and Physical Education as a qualifying Leaving Certificate subject.

We will examine ideas like education for entrepreneurship in the secondary school curriculum, around fostering a spirit and understanding of commercial, social and voluntary enterprise.

5. POINTS SYSTEM

The points system has the advantage of being a universal and fair way of allocating places in third level courses. It has disadvantages also in becoming the sole basis of entry into all courses, even some where non-academic aptitude and disposition or other third level qualifications, can be important, for example, in medicine.

The Progressive Democrats recognise the need to evaluate how some of the disadvantages of the points system can be addressed without compromising its main advantage. We will initiate a review of the points system with a view to seeing how it can be improved for specific courses. We will also examine how the role of continuous assessment could be enhanced for exam purposes.

7. PROMOTING PARTICIPATION: O'MALLEY SCHOLARSHIPS

Significant steps have been taken by the Government and will be continued to promote more education opportunity for people who face disadvantage. The RAPID programme ('Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development') seeks to target the 25 urban centres with the greatest concentration of disadvantage for priority funding under the National Development Plan for social inclusion measures.

We recognise that there is frequently an economic barrier to education participation at higher levels. Many students in the RAPID areas cannot see how they could afford to go on to third level studies.

In addition to the programmes and strategies to address social exclusion in education, we will introduce as a special measure new, specially-funded O'Malley Scholarships for students in RAPID areas who have the ability and desire to pursue third level studies. These will be named after Donough O'Malley whose seminal decision to provide free secondary education opened opportunity for generations of Irish young people.

The O'Malley Scholarships will be aimed at providing an additional help for students and their families who have a special ability but not the economic means to pursue third level studies successfully.

7. STUDENT GRANTS REFORMS

The O'Malley scholarships will not be seen as a substitute for adequate third-level maintenance grants. We will ensure that these grants, and the means-test threshold for them, are increased in real terms and that they take account of real living costs of students. We will continue consultation with student representative bodies on how these costs are best calculated.

We will also introduce improvements in the means of payment of student grants. For example, we will seek to use special smartcards for student grants, to assist students in their budgeting over an academic year, as used in universities in the United States, for example. We will also keep the need for affordable student accommodation a priority in changes to the tax system as it affects landlords.

Childcare:

REAL OPTIONS FOR PARENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Access to childcare is a major concern of parents today in Ireland. The cost of childcare and the assurance that childcare is of the highest standard are key issues for all parents.

We believe that parents are in the best position to decide what are the best childcare arrangements for their families. Some choose to use crèches and day care centres, others make informal arrangements with friends and families; others employ part time or full time childminders in their homes.

The Progressive Democrats support parents in the variety of choices they make. We do not favour one form of childcare over another. The policies we will implement in government are aimed at supporting all parents.

2. PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR PARENTS – CHILD BENEFIT

Child Benefit is a fair and equal support for all parents. It is a direct payment that women, by and large, manage and budget for in their families. It is paid directly, rather than channelled through the tax system and salaries.

Over the last five years, the Government has increased monthly Child Benefit massively, from £30 to £92.60 (€117.63) for the first and second child.

A three-child family now receives €383 (£301) in Child Benefit each month, up from €126 (£99) in 1997.

In Government, the Progressive Democrats will continue to increase Child Benefit, completing the three year programme in the budget later this year to bring it to €150 per month (for the first and second child). After then we will continue to provide real increases in Child Benefit.

3. SUPPORTING CHILDCARE FACILITIES

Where parents decide to use childcare outside the family, the Progressive Democrats will take action to increase the supply of facilities and of childcare staff.

We will continue to address the shortage of childcare facilities, building on the progress made in recent years. There are barriers to the creation of new childcare places, for example, funding difficulties, staff shortages and planning problems. All of these can and will be addressed.

The Government has increased the budget to support childcare by 18 times since 1997. The total budget for childcare then was £2.6 million (€3.3million). In 2002, we are allocating €58.4 million, current and capital.

In the years 2000-2001 we supported 26,900 childcare places, including 12,200 new places, by approving over 889 applications for support.

The National Development Plan already provides for increases in childcare support to over €80 million each year after 2002. The total NDP allocation to childcare is €436 million.

4. ACTIONS TO SUPPORT CHILDCARE OPTIONS

Building on this start, in government, we will

- fund 40,000 new childcare places
- increase capital grants for community and private childcare facilities, raising the present capital budget from €20 million to €60 million annually.
- we will double the €50,000 limit on capital grants to private childcare facilities to €100,000, subject to overall compliance with EU State Aids rules. We will seek to make the application process for capital grants more streamlined.
- continue staffing grants to support community groups and not-for-profit organisations that provide childcare in disadvantaged areas.
- introduce a special 2- year working visa scheme for international child minders.
- carry out a review of regulations of crèches and childcare facilities to remove, where possible, barriers to setting up and expanding services, consistent with health and safety requirements.
- amend the Planning and Development Act to make it easier to obtain planning permission for childcare facilities and to overcome objections.
- seek practical ways for the State to help meet the insurance cost of school buildings which are used for after-school care. There is a need to make greater use of all types of suitable facilities in the community to facilitate after-school care, and the Government must play a role in overcoming barriers that exist to their use.

Quality childcare is a labour-intensive service. There is a need to increase the number of qualified childminders and childcare workers. In line with practice in other countries, we will introduce a 2-year working visa for childminders from non-European Economic Area countries who wish to learn English and provide child-minding at the same time. It is important that vetting procedures are operated by agencies who find international child minders for a fee. We aim to make it easier for parents and childcare centres who want to employ childminders.

Housing:

PRACTICAL POLICY TO MEET GROWING DEMAND

1. INTRODUCTION

The Progressive Democrats believe in practical solutions for the consumer and for social justice. Accordingly, we aim to provide good quality affordable housing through a comprehensive housing policy to meet the growing housing demands over the period 2002 –2007.

The overall priority of the Progressive Democrats in Government in the housing area since taking office has been to increase housing supply and to tackle house price inflation. Since 1997, we have built some 225,000 new houses and reduced house price inflation per annum from around 40% to 5-6% currently.

Housing is included in the National Development Plan for the first time because the Progressive Democrats are committed to ensuring that the housing needs of an expanding and changing population are met in a comprehensive fashion. The Plan provides the framework for an integrated investment strategy to facilitate the provision of over 500,000 houses required to meet demand over the next ten years.

For the Progressive Democrats in the next government every possible measure will be taken to increase the supply of housing going forward. Failure to address our housing needs effectively would impose significant costs and constraints upon Ireland's economic growth, competitiveness and social development.

2. POLICY ACTIONS

We will increase the record levels of housing output to meet the continuing strong demand for housing.

We will ensure that the overall social housing output for 2002–2007 will meet the needs of 100,000 households.

We will provide the necessary infrastructure investment to facilitate the level of housing output required to meet current and anticipated levels of demand.

We will increase resources for servicing residential land along with increased resources for public transport and roads combined with a framework to ensure that such investment is undertaken in a planned and coherent fashion.

We will extend the use of Strategic Development Zones (SDZs) for housing to provide certainty in regard to the timing and the amount of housing to be provided in these areas. The early development of these sites will also provide local communities with access to social and affordable housing.

We will extend the withering of planning applications from two to the normal five years and undertake an immediate review of the operation of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to ensure continuity of high levels of housing output nationally.

We will increase social housing output by increasing the local authority housing programme with funding for 40,000 starts, front loaded to meet existing demand more quickly.

We will expand voluntary housing activity with funding for 18,250 voluntary housing dwellings and provide funding for the provision by local authorities of 7,600 affordable houses and for 6,800 households to acquire homes under the shared ownership scheme.

We will continue the drive to improve the physical condition of our social housing stock and implement area based regeneration initiatives to restore the physical fabric of established areas and to support local communities, most notably the redevelopment of Ballymun and a number of local authority estates throughout the country.

We will provide more resources for the Remedial Works Scheme which targets the improvement and upgrading of low cost, pre-1960 dwellings and run down local authority housing estates.

We will ensure that all local authority dwellings have central heating.

We will increase the eligibility limits and the subsidy levels will be upgraded annually for the Shared Ownership, Affordable housing and Voluntary housing schemes.

The Progressive Democrats will implement legislation for security of tenure as recommended by the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector.

We will accelerate the implementation the Government's homeless strategy as well as the national strategy for the provision of Traveller accommodation under the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

3. HOUSING OUTPUT

The number of new homes built last year reached a new record level of 52,602, up 5.6% on the previous record achieved in 2000. This was the fifth consecutive year of record housing output under this Government. Total output for 1997 was 38,842.

Despite more difficult economic conditions last year, the housing sector still continued to perform well, boosted by Government support and particularly high levels of output under the local authority and voluntary housing programmes. We are building houses at a rate of over 13 per 1,000 population which is by far the highest rate of house building in Europe.

Output in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA - Dublin City and County, together with Counties Kildare, Meath and Wicklow) was also positive last year with output of 16,498 up 6% on 2000, and the highest level of output ever produced in the Greater Dublin Area.

Looking to future prospects for the housing sector, there are a large number of extant planning permissions for residential development. Provisional figures available to the Department of the Environment and Local Government show that in the period from the start of 2000 to the end of the 3rd Quarter 2001, a total of 150,000 residential units were granted permission nationally, including around 45,000 units in the GDA.

It is important that the momentum that has been achieved in the house building sector in the last few years is maintained and that builders press ahead with their programmes.

4. PRIVATE RENTED RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

A considerable boost had been given to the house building sector in Budget 2002, targeted specifically at increasing output in the private rented sector and thereby moderating rent increases. These measures:

- restore mortgage interest relief for investment in the private rented residential sector from the beginning of the year, for purchase, improvement or repair of rented residential properties.
- adjust the Stamp Duty system to increase the supply of rental accommodation, remove barriers to activity in the second hand market and simplify the system.
- amend to the "Section 50" Student Accommodation Scheme (introduced in the 1999 Finance Act) including the extension of the deadline for the scheme by 2½ years to 30 September 2005.
- amend the Town and Urban Renewal Scheme so that new build or refurbishment projects which have already been designated for the residential (owner-occupier) incentive will now qualify for the Section 23 residential investor relief.

These Budget interventions provide substantial opportunities to the house building sector to continue to deliver the levels of housing output required to meet demand. With the large stock of permissions for apartment development in particular, we believe we can rightfully expect an increased supply of good quality rental accommodation.

5. SOCIAL HOUSING

In terms of social housing over 5,000 local authority houses were completed or acquired last year, the highest level of output for over 15 years. Output under the voluntary housing programmes in 2001 was some 1,200 units, the highest level ever achieved by the sector.

It is anticipated that some 6,000 local authority housing units will be completed or acquired this year. The substantially increased resources provided this year for the full range of social housing programmes will contribute significantly to meeting the increased demand for social housing.

In order to meet social and affordable housing need, €9 billion is being provided for social and affordable housing in the NDP. This includes the increased funding of almost €1.3 billion provided in "Action on Housing" for social and affordable housing and infrastructural investment to facilitate housing. The original NDP investment plus this additional investment will now allow the social and affordable housing needs of almost 100,000 households to be met over the lifetime of the Plan.

6. FUNDING

This Government's record housing output would not of been possible if it were not for the record level of funding. In 2002 total housing funding provision is in excess of €1.7 billion.

The overall housing capital provision of €1.6 billion includes funding for Local Authority Housing Programme, Area Regeneration (including Ballymun Regeneration programme), Voluntary Housing schemes, Traveller accommodation, funding for the Task Force on Housing Aid for the Elderly and funding for the provision of affordable housing for sale to low income households.

Justice, Crime and Law Reform

1. INTRODUCTION

The Progressive Democrats hold to the basic values of a free, liberal democracy. We emphasise both rights and responsibilities, both personal liberties and social obligations. Our principles inform our actions, our policies and our priorities.

On this basis, the Progressive Democrats in government will implement an ambitious and attainable five year plan for major law reform. The aim of the programme will be to reform our laws and legal system to make it serve the needs of the 21st century rather than reflect the social thinking of the 19th century.

2. CRIMINAL LAW REFORM

A SINGLE CRIMES ACT

All substantive criminal law will be codified into a single Crimes Act, dealing with homicide, violence, property offences, dishonesty, corruption, public order, arrest, criminal procedure and court jurisdiction, uniform sentencing procedure and policies, defences such as insanity and incapacity. This criminal code will be published and kept up to date by means of the Statute Law Restatement legislation now before the Oireachtas.

SENTENCING LAW

Part of the major reform of criminal law will be legislation laying down uniform guidelines and principles in relation to the punishment of offenders. A new statutory basis will be provided for probation, parole and rehabilitation.

FINES AND COMPENSATION

Greater emphasis will be laid on the use of fines in all cases whether or not prison sentences, actual or suspended, are imposed. The law relating to fines will be radically overhauled. All offences will carry liability to standard categories of fine. Fines will be collected by an agency attached to the Court Service. New methods of recovery, including attachment of payments and earnings and assets, will be introduced.

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Fines will be payable into a central fund which will be administered through a statutory Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal to compensate crime victims for personal injuries and non insured loss. Offenders will also be made liable to pay compensation into this fund.

MODERN, DRUGS-FREE PRISONS

The programme of prison building and replacement will be maintained using private finance initiatives to ensure that Irish prisons are maintained to acceptable standards.

New prison rules will be implemented to ensure that prisoners can benefit from a drugs-free environment in prison.

We will extend the training, education and psychological services for the rehabilitation of prisoners.

SINGLE STATE COURT FOR INDICTABLE OFFENCES

As part of a general reform of the courts system, the existing criminal jurisdiction of the Circuit Criminal Court and the Central Criminal Court will be merged in one nation-wide indictable crimes court of which all Circuit Court judges and High Court judges will be members. This will reduce the delay between charging and trial.

PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES AND BYE-LAWS

Further measures will be introduced to suppress violent street crime, including closure of premises that are the focus or source of violent behaviour. Local Authorities will be empowered to make bye-laws with the consent of the Gardai and the Minister to control behaviour in particular trouble-spots.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Our criminal law system and our prison and rehabilitation system are not yet adequately addressing the many problems related to crimes committed by juveniles. The criminal law, the prison and rehabilitation services and social inclusion measures all need to be effective if we are to reduce juvenile crime. We will introduce new legislative provisions to deal adequately with crimes committed by juveniles, including provisions to update sentencing, rehabilitation and training.

We will provide the residential facilities and the support services required to deal with young offenders.

3. CIVIL LAW REFORM

EMPLOYER LIABILITY AND ROAD TRAFFIC CLAIMS

Many claims for employer liability and road traffic injuries are brought in the courts where liability is not seriously in issue. The Progressive Democrats believe that mandatory mediation of such claims should be a condition precedent to the trial of such claims in court. A mediation service will be provided to accomplish early and inexpensive settlement of such claims.

FRAUDULENT CLAIMS

All personal injury claims will have to be based on sworn affidavit evidence to be exchanged before trial. False and fraudulent claims on liability or quantum will be punishable as perjury and will be dismissed as a matter of law.

LIBEL LAW

In conjunction with a statutory Press Council to protect citizens from abuse of media power, a new Defamation Act will reform the law of libel to bring Irish law into line with other states in allowing a defence of privilege for the expression of views and the investigation of matters of public and political importance. The Act will also reform the law relating to lodgments, apologies, and the duty of judges to advise juries on the issue of damages, in line with the European Convention on Human Rights.

CIVIL LAW PROCEDURE

New laws will be introduced to speed up civil litigation. Written briefs including sworn depositions will be exchanged pre-trial. Case management, including case conferences to isolate issues and agree facts, will become the norm. Lengthy opening of cases and lengthy testimony will be avoided. Courts will operate on the basis of electronic case data files.

We will also introduce reforms to enable the use of evidence from one court proceeding in another.

FAMILY LAW

Family law cases will continue to be held in private but their conduct will be subject to monitoring and scrutiny to encourage consistency and fairness.

We will seek to introduce the concept of community property into family law in order to avoid some of the fears of loss of property held before a marriage was entered into in the event of marriage breakdown or divorce.

COURT ORGANISATION

The Progressive Democrats will implement proposals to re-organise the High Court into specialist divisions – such as commercial, planning law, administrative law - and will ensure that there are sufficient courts, judges and staff to guarantee speedy trial in all cases.

PROPERTY AND WILLS

We will introduce provisions to require the registration of wills. To make property transactions more transparent and efficient, we will create a register of grantees of property, alongside the register of grantors.

JUDICIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Progressive Democrats will legislate to provide effective remedies for complaints about judicial misbehaviour, including lay participation in the investigation of complaints.

CHARITY LAW REFORM

A comprehensive reform of the law relating to charities will be enacted to ensure accountability and to protect against abuse of charitable status and fraud and waste.

EQUALITY RIGHTS

New laws will be enacted to allow co-habitants the right to confer rights in relation to property, succession and financial support on each other.

Equality rights will be enforceable at law by means of a public enforcement agency.

LEGAL OMBUDSMAN

A statutory ombudsman will be established to protect the interests of clients of the legal profession.

4. PROGRESS ON POLICING

TRAFFIC POLICE

The Progressive Democrats will develop a specialised Traffic Police within the Gardai which will use the new penalty points system to ensure compliance with the law. By this means, the same degree of compliance will be achieved as resulted from clamping in relation to parking offences. If people know that the law is being rigorously enforced, they tend to obey it. This will save life and limb, and very significant costs to the State's annual health budget.

GARDA NUMBERS

An increased Garda presence on the street and in communities is required to meet the policing challenges posed by our expanding population and by social changes.

We will increase the strength of the Garda Síochána by 2,000 members.

RESERVE POLICE FORCE

We will introduce a reserve police force for effective community policing, helping the Gardai to maintain public order and combat street crime. We will also extend CCTV to urban crime blackspots.

POLICE OMBUDSMAN

We believe it is important that full public confidence is maintained in the Garda Síochána and full support is given to their work. We will support and implement actions to this end. Accordingly, we will establish a police ombudsman so that any complaints against Gardai can be dealt with speedily, professionally and fairly.

Europe:

PROMOTING JOBS, PROSPERITY AND DEMOCRACY

1. INTRODUCTION

Ireland's interests are to take a full, constructive role in the European Union. This has been our historic orientation since we joined the European Economic Community. We are a small country, but we cannot have any influence in shaping the future of Europe, its policies and its structures, if we are not playing our part fully in EU affairs.

Jobs depend on our full engagement in the EU. Foreign investment in Ireland and our trade would not be as great if we did not take a full role in Europe. Our influence in the world and on our external environment is enhanced by participation in the Union. Without full and active participation, we would have virtually no influence on the world in which we live, trade and work. Our influence on how the international community works in an interdependent world is greatly helped, not hindered, by our participation in the Union.

We will work to ensure Ireland is an active and enthusiastic contributor to the development of EU policies and democratic structures. We will continue to press for jobs-friendly policies at the EU level, and to avoid excessive regulation.

2. THE EURO AND NATIONAL ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT

The euro has been a great benefit to Ireland. It is now our currency as much as any other country's. We must ensure that it remains an effective currency for us and for all Europe. That means we must manage our finances in a way which does not undermine the euro. We must make absolutely sure not to break or threaten our commitments under the Stability and Growth Pact. This is a fair bargain for keeping personal and corporation tax policy at national level, which we are totally committed to.

In government, we will make sure to keep policy on personal and corporation tax at national level and will oppose harmonisation of direct taxes across the EU. We will do this in the context that we cannot, and will not, endanger the euro, or the setting of tax policy nationally, by excessive spending and borrowing in our national budget.

3. ENLARGEMENT AND THE NICE TREATY

The European Union has played a fundamental, strategic and historic role in ensuring that Europe is a continent of democracy, prosperity and human rights. To extend these benefits to many ten or more European countries would be an enormous achievement for all. Though there are many adjustments to make by existing Member States and by new applicant countries, all that work is fundamentally worthwhile. It must proceed in an orderly way, particularly in relation to agricultural policy. Enlargement of the European Union will be good for Europe and good for Ireland.

This is why the Progressive Democrats are committed to ratification of the Nice Treaty. The debate in Europe is moving on. Most countries have already ratified the Nice Treaty. We accept fully that there is no legal obligation on Ireland to ratify the Treaty. We can choose not to do so, if we wish. But the Progressive Democrats believe that the best course of action for Ireland is to ratify the Nice Treaty.

As a party, we will work to explain the Treaty and re-assure the people who voted No to the Nice Treaty in June last year about the issues that concern them. We support Ireland seeking a Declaration at EU level noting Ireland's non-participation in military alliances and our traditional policy of military neutrality.

We will also bring forward a referendum before the end of 2002 to enable the people to ratify the Nice Treaty if they choose. The issue is so important that we, as a people, should allow ourselves the opportunity to think again about the Nice Treaty, particularly since the turnout in the last referendum was unusually low.

4. FUTURE OF EUROPE DEBATE

The European Union is now engaged in a long and detailed debate about the Future of Europe. This is taking place in advance of a planned Intergovernmental Conference on Europe in 2004. All issues are on the table. Ireland must play its part in this debate and in the major conference in 2004 to set the future course and structure of the Union.

The Union will be getting larger. The internal challenges will be to ensure a democratic Union, a Union with the correct policies for prosperity, and a Union that functions effectively. We wish to see the democratic deficit addressed, for example, in relation to the institutional balances between the European Commission and the European Parliament.

The external challenges will be to manage trade and international relations in the context of globalisation and of rapidly changing economic and political circumstances.

These are big issues and Ireland must be in a position to take a view and make a meaningful contribution across all areas.

That is why we are prioritising as our policy actions the clarification of democratic mandates within the Union, the choices of EU level policies to promote jobs growth, and the effective working of EU institutions respecting the position of smaller countries.

In the design of the future of Europe, we will

- ensure that smaller Member States continue to have a fair representation
- make clear the matters that will be decided at national level and those at EU level, giving practical meaning to the principle of subsidiarity
- work to make EU decision-making more efficient and more transparent to citizens.

We must make our commitment to human rights and peace work within the political realities of international affairs. That is why we are willing to commit ourselves to membership of the Rapid Reaction Force as part of defence policy. Our commitment as a country to the peaceful resolution of international disputes does not make us neutral or pacifists in the face of actual or imminent human rights abuses.

5. SCRUTINY OF EU BUSINESS

To help make EU business more relevant to the Irish people and to integrate it with our domestic political debate, we will significantly enhance the scrutiny of EU business by the Oireachtas and its Committees.

We favour a strengthened role for Oireachtas committees in questioning Ministers on their handling of EU business on Ireland's behalf.

We will also take actions to enhance public information about Oireachtas scrutiny of EU business and the public's understanding EU issues under debate.

We favour the creation of a dedicated EU unit to service the Oireachtas and its members in relation to draft Directives and developments in the EU institutions which will eventually fall to be considered by the Oireachtas. It will be an early warning and information provider for members of the Oireachtas to help them monitor and scrutinise EU legislative developments.

We recognise that if the Oireachtas is adequately to scrutinise EU business and the handling of that business by the Government and Ministers it will need the resources to do so. We are committed to providing adequate resources for this task.

International affairs:

NORTHERN IRELAND AND DEFENCE POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Ireland has a vibrant and distinct foreign policy tradition. Our historical experience and our role in the EU and in the global economy mean that foreign policy issues will continue to be central to our interests and concerns as a people.

The Progressive Democrats believe in a foreign policy which reflects Ireland's strategic interests, our people's values of democracy and human rights.

The Irish people wish Ireland to have a distinct voice in the world and to take a position of leadership in areas like human rights, development aid, conflict resolution and peace-keeping.

To have an influential voice in the world, our approach must be reasoned and realistic. The world is becoming increasingly globalised, politically as much as economically. It will be important for Ireland to continue to play a strong role in international institutions that are established to promote a just, peaceful and progressive world order.

We set out below our key priorities for Irish foreign policy for the next five years. We have set out policy on the European Union issues in a separate manifesto paper.

2. PRIORITIES FOR IRISH FOREIGN POLICY

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Continue to develop our bilateral relations more deeply with our fellow Member States of the European Union and accession countries, with the United States and with countries with whom we already have diplomatic relations on a resident basis.

Pursue our strategic political and economic interests and contribute to other nations by developing our new diplomatic relations in Asia and Latin America.

Extend our consular network in co-operation with EU partners.

MULTILATERAL RELATIONS

Work through the United Nations to focus its work effectively, particularly in areas like human rights, conflict resolution, peace-keeping and development.

Support UN measures to counter the real threat of terrorism. Our membership of the UN Security Council has allowed us to highlight the humanitarian imperatives in the context of the international coalition against terrorism.

Participate actively in world trade negotiations at the World Trade Organisation, to extend fair and free trade, in Ireland's interests and to the benefit of developing countries

Work to build an institutional and policy framework that promotes human rights and economic opportunity in globalisation.

We believe Ireland should be an early, distinct and courageous advocate for effective measures to counter abuses of human rights, bilaterally and in international fora.

OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA)

Ireland's new prosperity brings additional obligations to the poorest peoples of the world. We will develop and implement a World Class Aid programme, as outlined in the recent review of Ireland's Aid Programme brought forward by the Progressive Democrats.

This review sets out a blueprint for the strategic direction of the expanding aid programme.

The Progressive Democrats in Government secured a historic decision to reach the UN target for ODA of 0.7 per cent of GNP by 2007. In today's terms, this would amount to approximately €700 million. An interim target of 0.45 per cent of GNP has now been achieved. This is the highest level of ODA allocated by any Irish Government since the aid programme was started in the mid-1970s.

Given the projected increase in taxpayers' money in ODA, we will ensure an effective and accountable aid programme. The focus will be on reducing poverty and promoting economic development in the poorest countries of the world and which promote human rights, democracy and good governance.

Our aid programme is a measure of our civilised values as a nation. It is also a vital investment of our foreign policy.

3. NORTHERN IRELAND

We will build on and vindicate the historic decision of the Irish people, North and South, to approve the Good Friday Agreement in May 1998. This is the definitive statement for the time being of the will of the Irish people on the question of sovereignty and relationships on the island of Ireland.

Our task in government will be to build on the successful agreement of a comprehensive political settlement as represented in the Good Friday Agreement. We will continue to implement the Agreement in all its aspects.

It is particularly important that policing in Northern Ireland is effective and has wide, cross-community support. We urge those who have not yet given their support for policing in Northern Ireland to commit to the new policing arrangements. We strongly support the continued development of co-operation between the police forces north and south in order to secure peace and security for all communities on the island of Ireland and to combat terrorism effectively.

The Good Friday Agreement provides the basis for a lasting and sustainable peace and for the generation of economic prosperity for the whole island. It also provides the context of strengthening the ties between Britain and Ireland, and, in particular, between public representatives in the regional and national assemblies and parliaments on our islands.

4. DEFENCE AND PEACEKEEPING

The Progressive Democrats support the development of the capabilities of Ireland's Permanent Defence Forces in order to maintain national security and contribute to the maintenance of international law, and international peace and security.

We are unshakeably committed to vindicating the sole legitimacy of the Permanent Defence Forces under the control of the Oireachtas, as provided for in our Constitution. This applies similarly to the Garda Síochána as our sole legitimate police force.

We will challenge and resist any dilution of this legitimacy in public debate and political discourse. We will highlight the failings of any others to lend total, unequivocal and exclusive support to our Defence Forces and Garda Síochána as the rightful forces of law and order.

Ireland's defence forces are playing an increasing role in contributing to international peace and security. A clearly defined mission is required for all effective military operations, and a clearly understood policy is an essential framework for any operations.

We reject the easy rhetoric of neutralism and pacifism. The 1990s were a decade which showed that European governments cannot stand by while neighbouring European peoples have their human rights grossly abused. Although not part of any military alliance, we are not neutral in the face of genocide and such gross abuses of human rights as witnessed in the Balkan conflicts.

The Irish people are proud of the peacekeeping and humanitarian tradition of our defence forces. In government, we will act consistent with that support from the Irish people and further develop the capabilities of our defence forces.

We believe that only if we develop the Permanent Defence Forces with appropriate staff development, materiel and equipment will the Dáil be in a position to mandate their participation in international peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. This includes being in a position to take part in the EU Rapid Reaction Force where the Dáil has mandated a specific action.

We recognise the contribution made in earlier years by members of the Defence Forces who have since retired. Accordingly, we will ensure that the military service allowance is payable to pensioners, and their widows, who retired before August 1st, 1990.

We favour participation by Ireland on a case-by-case basis in peacekeeping, humanitarian and peace-enforcement missions of the EU Rapid Reaction Force.

Our participation in defence operations with the EU Rapid Reaction Force is already subject to approval by the Dáil on a case by case basis. We will keep to that level of case by case scrutiny and commitment.

It is essential that any missions that Ireland participates in have international legitimacy. This is provided fundamentally through the UN. We will continue to act consistent with this principle and consistent with the sovereign right of Dáil Éireann to deploy the sole legitimate defence forces of the State. We believe that Ireland does not need to enter any military defence alliance in order to make a worthwhile contribution to international security and the defence of human rights. We will not enter into a common European defence pact or any other military alliance.

Sport and Culture

1. SPORT

Participation in sport is central for the health and well-being of the nation. Sport is part also of our unique cultural heritage. The Government has built up a massive increase in financial support for sport and sporting infrastructure throughout the country and across all sports.

Total support for sports is now €120m, up from €33 million budgeted by the last Government for 1998. This massive increase in funding shows a real political commitment to the development of sport in Ireland.

The Progressive Democrats do not support the proposed Campus Stadium Ireland development at Abbotstown in Dublin.

The project is too costly. We believe that with a price-tag of almost €1bn the Abbotstown project is not affordable for a country of this size. Nor would it be right to concentrate so much of our national sporting investment in a single location in the capital city.

We recognise the clear need for modern international-standard stadium facilities for the three major sporting bodies. We believe that the needs of the major sporting bodies can be adequately met by helping the development of the two existing stadia in Dublin. In Government we have already supported significant funding to help the GAA develop Croke Park.

The Progressive Democrats favour a ground-up approach to sporting development. Our priority will be to support sport at local level and to bring our basic facilities up to an acceptable standard. We will promote community involvement and we will support community initiatives for the development of sports facilities.

We will put in place a coherent five year plan to support sport and the sporting bodies to address their funding requirements and their development plans.

2. THE IRISH LANGUAGE

The Progressive Democrats believe that our cultural heritage is protected and deepened by continuing to support our understanding, use and development of the Irish language in as many media as possible.

In Government we have supported the introduction of Bille na Gaeilge and will implement it in the next Dáil. It is one of the most important developments for the Irish language in a long time.

We will also continue to provide strong support for Irish language broadcasting and for publications in Irish.

3. BROADCASTING

We support media diversity in an environment where public service broadcasting is valued and supported.

We strongly support the work of the Forum on Broadcasting. We seek a clear definition of public service broadcasting so that RTÉ and others can be supported in delivering quality public service broadcasting.

We will support a license fee review within three months of taking office, in the context of the implementation of a major structural re-organisation of RTE and costs savings in its operations being pursued under its strategic review.

We will ensure free to air broadcasting for national sporting fixtures.

4. ARTS

We will continue to fund the Arts Council and support its strategic approach as a development agency in its most recent Arts Plan.

We will encourage all efforts to increase participation in the Arts in schools and in communities.

Our priorities in government over the next five years will be:

- to provide additional resources to the Arts Council to enable it to expand its range of activities to support the arts
- to encourage the arts at community level
- to promote participation in the arts in schools by enhancing the cultural and artistic role in the school curriculum
- to stimulate further the development of artistic endeavour in the crafts sector
- to support national arts venues and facilities.

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