

Others promise
WE DELIVER



Saoirse - Ceart - Síocháin

Sinn Féin General Election Manifesto 2007
Forógra **Shinn Féin** do Thoghchán

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A Message from **Gerry Adams**

Ireland has changed greatly over the past decade. The Peace Process driven by Sinn Féin has delivered changes many never thought possible. In this State, the hard work of all our people has reversed economic decline, reduced unemployment dramatically, ended emigration and encouraged immigration. As a consequence, Ireland is now more peaceful and economically prosperous than ever before.

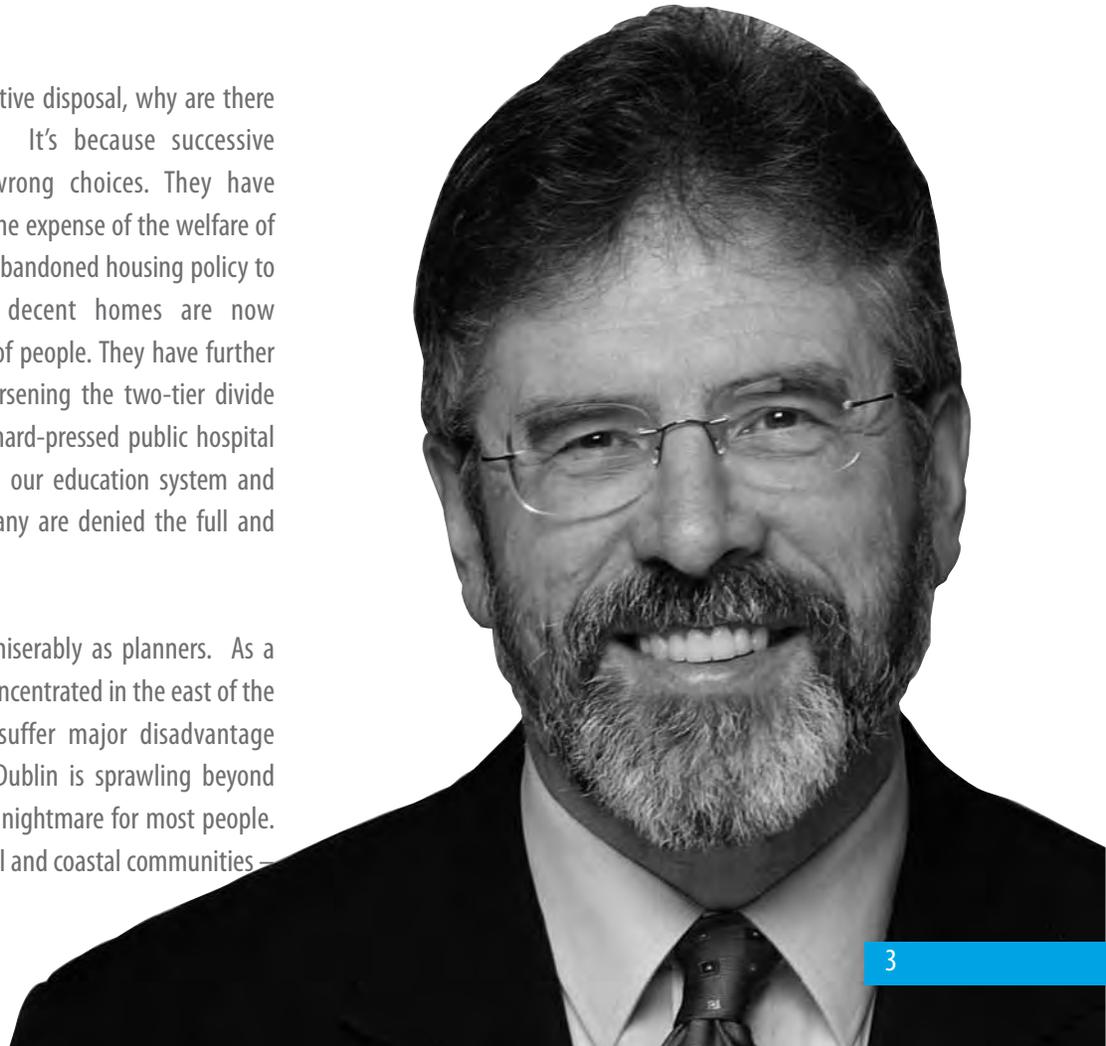
But we still live in a divided Ireland. The gap has widened between those with massive wealth and those who must work long hours to house, clothe and feed themselves and their families. People in poverty and on the margins of society don't share in the new prosperity. Minorities suffer discrimination. And our country is still partitioned.

With so much wealth at our collective disposal, why are there still so many social problems? It's because successive Governments have made the wrong choices. They have rewarded the greed of the few at the expense of the welfare of the people as a whole. They have abandoned housing policy to speculators and profiteers, so decent homes are now unaffordable for many thousands of people. They have further privatised our health services, worsening the two-tier divide and aggravating the crisis in our hard-pressed public hospital system. They refused to invest in our education system and make it more inclusive so that many are denied the full and equal access that is their right.

This government has also failed miserably as planners. As a result, economic development is concentrated in the east of the country and some regions still suffer major disadvantage despite the booming economy. Dublin is sprawling beyond control. Commuting has become a nightmare for most people. Agriculture and fisheries – and rural and coastal communities –

are in accelerated decline. Our natural resources have been sold to the lowest bidder and our environment is under pressure as never before. Irish economic competitiveness is not secure; it is decreasing.

But it is not true that anything would be better than the current Government. It is not enough to say that this coalition has been in office for a decade and we need a change of personnel, because democracy is not just about parties taking turns. Far more is needed – a new vision, different policies and a genuine determination to build a secure future and a better quality of life for all, based on equality.



There is only one real alternative in this general election: Sinn Féin.

We are ready for Government, north and south. We have a vision and a plan for a prosperous country in which wealth is shared and where the promise of equal rights and equal opportunities is fulfilled for each and every person who lives on our island.

We are the only party with a genuine commitment and a strategy to achieve a new republic that honours the vision of the 1916 Proclamation by pursuing 'the prosperity of the whole nation and all of its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally'. What does this mean in 2007? It means:

- A United Ireland where all the people of our island look forward to a shared and peaceful future.
- An Ireland of Equals where everyone's rights are guaranteed, free of the divisions caused by partition, sectarianism, racism and other forms of discrimination, and free from poverty and economic inequality.
- A healthcare service providing equal access for everyone based on need alone.
- Housing as a right for all.
- An education system that allows Ireland to reach its full potential – that ensures every child full access to learning at all levels and ensures literacy and life-long learning for everyone.
- Childcare for all who need it, to help raise family incomes, promote women's right to equal pay, and enhance early childhood development.
- A properly planned Ireland with improved quality of life for

individuals, families and communities through efficient transport and other vital infrastructure, leisure facilities and working conditions that allow people to contribute time to their family, friends and neighbours.

- A new commitment to protect the land, the waters, the air and the whole environment of Ireland, to ensure sustainable agriculture and fisheries, to reclaim our natural resources and to develop renewable energy to guarantee a future for our children.
- An Ireland that opposes war and global exploitation and through a policy of positive neutrality, works for international peace and justice.
- A strong economy that serves and protects our society – that offers more prosperity and more equality.

This is the type of Ireland we are committed to build. To achieve these positive changes we will work as hard as we always have throughout the Peace Process, in our communities, in councils across the country, in the Assembly and in the Dáil. For the past five years our five Sinn Féin TDs have provided leadership beyond their numbers. They have promoted the republican vision and worked with people throughout Ireland to create a new type of politics. Ireland needs more Sinn Féin TDs in the Dáil to champion real change and to provide the most effective representation for our communities.

This is your Ireland. It is your future. Only you can shape it for the better. Join us in that task by voting Sinn Féin.

Gerry Adams MP MLA

Teachtaireacht ó Gearóid Mac Ádhaimh

D'athraigh Éire cuid mhór le deich mbliana anuas. Sholáthair an Próiseas Síochána, a thiomáin Sinn Féin, athruithe nár shíl mórán daoine a bhí indéanta. Sa stát seo, chúlaigh obair chrua ár ndaoine an meath geilleagrach, laghdaigh sí difhostaíocht go suntasach, chuir sí deireadh le heisimirce agus spreag sí inimirce. Mar thoradh air seo, is tír níos síochánta agus níos rathúla go heacnamaíoch í Éire.

Ach táimid beo go fóill in Éirinn scoilte. Méadaíodh an bhearna eatarthu siúd a bhfuil saibhreas ollmhór acu agus iad siúd ar gá leo uaireanta oibre fada a obair chun teach a bheith acu, éadaí a cheannach agus iad féin a dteaghlach a chothú. Níl sciar den rathúnas nua ag daoine i mbochtaineacht agus iad ar imeall na sochaí. Fulaingíonn mionlaigh ag leithcheal. Agus tá ár dtír deighilte go fóill.

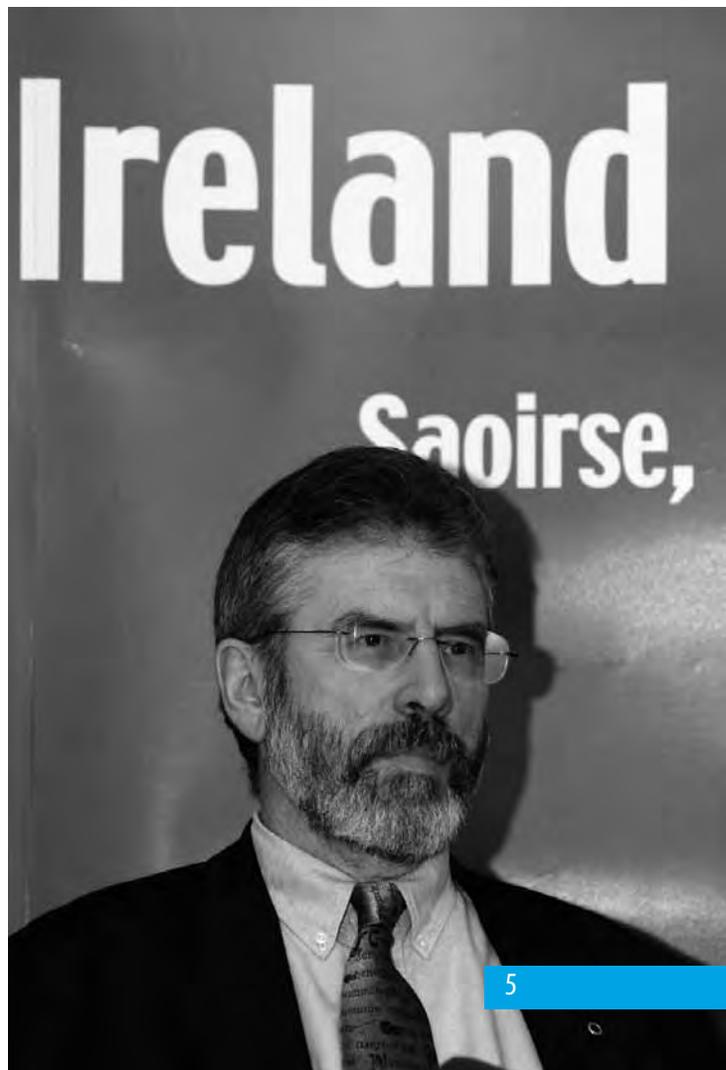
Leis an oiread sin saibhris againn, cad chuige a bhfuil an oiread sin fadhbanna sóisialta ann go fóill? Is ann dóibh toisc go ndearna Rialtais leantacha na roghanna míchearta. Chúitigh siad saint an bheagáin agus bhí leas na ndaoine ina n-iomláine thíos leis. Thréig siad polasaí tithíochta d'amhantraithe agus brabachóirí, mar sin de níl tithe réasúnta inacmhainneach do na mílte duine. Chuir siad le príobháidiú ár seirbhísí sláinte, rinne siad an scoilt dhá shraith níos measa agus chuir siad leis an ghéarchéim ar ár gcóras ospidéal poiblí. Rinne siad neamhiontas den ghá chun infheistíocht a dhéanamh inár gcóras oideachais agus é a dhéanamh níos cuimsithí, ar son tosaíochtaí eile, is iomaí duine ar diúltaíodh rochtain iomlán cothrom dóibh mar atá atá tuillte acu.

Tá sin ann fosta toisc gur theip orthu go hiomlán mar phleanálaithe. Mar thoradh air seo, tá forbairt gheilleagrach lonnaithe ar an taobh thiar den tír agus fulaingíonn cuid de na réigiúin faoi mhíbhuntáiste in ainneoin an gheilleagair shlántiúil. Tá Baile Átha Cliath ag méadú leis gan smacht. Déirigh iompar ina thromluí do chuid mhór daoine. Tá talmhaíocht agus iascaireacht – pobail tuaithe agus cósta – faoi mheath atá ag méadú. Tá ár n-

acmhainní nádúrtha díolta don tairgtheoir is lú tairscint agus tá ár gcomhshaol faoi níos mó brú anois ná mar a bhí riamh. Níl iomaíochas eacnamaíoch Éireannach slán, tá sé ag meath.

Ach níl sé fíor gur fearr rud ar bith in áit an Rialtais atá faoi láthair. Ní leor é le rá go bhfuil an comhrialtas seo in oifig le deich mbliana anuas agus go bhfuil athrú pearsanra de dhíth orainn, ní faoi pháirtithe ag glacadh sealanna atá daonlathas. Tá i bhfad níos mó de dhíth – fis nua, polasaithe difriúla agus fíordhiongbháilteacht chun saol slán agus cáilíocht fheabhsaithe saoil a thógáil do chách bunaithe ar chomhionannas.

Níl ann ach aon rogha eile ann san olltoghchán seo: Sinn Féin.



Táimid réidh don Rialtas, sa Tuaisceart agus sa Deisceart. Tá fíis agus pleain againn do thír rathúil ina roinntear saibreas agus ina gcomhlíontar an gealltanas ar chearta comhionanna agus ar chomhdheiseanna do gach duine a chónaíonn ar ár n-oileán.

Is sinne an t-aon pháirtí amháin le fíorghéalltanas agus straitéis chun poblacht nua a chur i gcrích a thugann úrraim don fhís ar Fhorógra 1916 atá ar lorg 'rathúnas don náisiún iomlán agus dá pháirteanna uile, a chaomhaíonn páistí uile an náisiúin mar a gcéanna'. Cad é a chiallaíonn sé seo i 2007? Ciallaíonn sé:

- Éire Aontaithe ina mbíonn muintir ár n-oileáin uile ag siúl le todhchaí síochána agus roinnte.
- Éire Chomhionann ina mbíonn cearta gach duine ráthaithe, saor ó dheighiltí de dheasca críochdheighiltí, seicteachais, ciníochais agus cineálacha eile leithcheala, agus saor ón bhochtaineacht agus neamhionannas eacnamaíoch.
- Seirbhís chúram sláinte a sholáthraíonn rochtain chothrom do gach duine bunaithe ar riachtanais amháin.
- Is ceart é tithíocht do chách, le straitéis náisiúnta a ghlacann na heochracha tithíochas réasúnta ar ais ó amhantraithe agus brabachóirí.
- Córas oideachais a ligeann d'Éirinn a lánacmhainneacht a bhaint amach – a chinntíonn go mbíonn rochtain ag gach páiste ar fhoghlaim ar gach leibhéal, agus a chinntíonn litearthacht agus foghlaim ar feadh an tsaoil do chách.
- Cúram páiste do duine gach a bhfuil gá acu leis, le cuidiú leo ioncam an teaghlaigh a ardú, tacú lena mban ceart chun pá cothrom bheith acu, agus forbairt luath-óige a fheabhsú.

- Éire phleanáilte mar is ceart le cáilíocht fheabhsaithe saoil do dhaoine aonaracha, do teaghlaigh agus do phobail trí iompar éifeachtach agus bonneagar ríthábhachtach eile, áiseanna fóillíochta agus coinníollacha oibre a thugann seans do dhaoine am a thabhairt dá dteaghlaigh, gcairde agus dá gcomharsana.
- Gealltanas nua chun talamh, na huisc, an t-aer agus comhshaol iomlán na hÉireann a chosaint, chun talmhaíocht agus iascaireacht inbhuanaithe a chinntiú, chun ár n-acmhainní nádúrtha a fháil ar ais, agus chun fuinneamh in-athnuaite a fhorbairt chun todhchaí dár bpáistí a chinntiú.
- Éire a chuireann in aghaidh cogaidh agus dúshaothrú domhanda agus, trí bheartas neodracha dearfaí, a oibríonn ar mhaithe le síocháin agus ceartas idirnáisiúnta.
- Geilleagar a riarann ar, agus a chosnaíonn, ár sochaí – a thairgeann níos mó rathúnais, agus níos mó comhionannais.

Seo an cineál Éireann a bhfuilimid geallta di. Chun na hathruithe siúd a chur i gcrích oibreoidh muid chomh crua agus a d'oibrigh muid le linn an Phróisis Síochána, inár bpobail, i gcomhairlí fud fad na tíre agus sa Dáil. Le cúig bliana anuas sholáthair ár gcúigear TD i Sinn Féin ceannaireacht ar láidre í ná a líon. Chuir siad fíis phoblachtach chun cinn agus d'oibrigh siad le daoine fud fad na hÉireann chun cineál polaitíochta nua a chruthú. Tá níos mó TDanna Shinn Féin de dhíth ag Éirinn sa Dáil chun fíorathrú a thabhairt i gcrann agus chun an ionadaíocht is fearr dár bpobail a sholáthar.

Is é seo d'Éirinn féin. Is é seo do thodhchaí. Ní thig ach leat féin é a dhéanamh níos fearr. Bí linn sa tasc sin trí vótáil a dhéanamh ar son Shinn Féin

Gearóid Mac Adaim FP CT

Executive Summary

Lasting Peace and Irish Unity

- Complete a Green Paper on Irish Unity within one year, identifying steps and measures to promote and assist a successful transition to a United Ireland.
- Appoint a Minister of State to co-ordinate the Government's all-Ireland policies across Departments.
- Introduce 6 County elected representation in the Houses of the Oireachtas.
- Begin the process of co-ordinating economic development, service provision and planning on an all-Ireland basis.
- Commence a specific process of outreach to the unionist community to involve them in this planning as equal partners.
- Secure a referendum on Irish Unity to be held simultaneously, north and south.

Equal Access to World Class Public Services

Healthcare is a Right

- Begin the transition to a new universal public health system for Ireland that provides care to all free at the point of delivery, on the basis of need alone, and funded from general, fair and progressive taxation.
- Invest all health funding in the public system.
- Immediately end tax breaks for private hospitals and the land gift allocation scheme.
- Provide full medical cards for all under the poverty line and all under-18s
- Make all new hospital consultant posts public-only.
- Develop a network of modern and accessible Primary Care Treatment Centres.
- Make advanced screening services available locally, promptly and widely.
- Deliver into the public hospital system the additional 3,000 hospital beds required.
- Reverse cutbacks in services at local hospitals and configure all hospitals to ensure that emergency services are available as locally as possible.

- Ring-fence at least 12% of the health budget for mental health services.
- Produce a fully resourced, comprehensive All-Ireland Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Housing is a Right

- Establish a Department of Housing with a full Minister.
- Construct 70,000 new units by 2012 to accommodate social housing need.
- Amend the Planning and Development Act (2002) to require that all new developments must allocate 30% to social and affordable housing, with at least 10% social and at least 10% affordable housing.
- Eliminate street homelessness by the year 2010.
- Increase mortgage interest relief for first time mortgage-holders and principle home owners who earn up to the average industrial wage.
- Introduce a tenants' rights charter.
- Require all new social housing to be fitted with energy-efficient alternative energy sources.
- Reform the planning laws to support the right of rural dwellers to build on their own land or to purchase and build locally.
- Legislate to ensure services such as public transportation, healthcare centres, childcare centres and schools are incorporated into all housing schemes.

Education and Childcare

- Introduce a universal pre-school session of 3.5 hours per day, five days a week for all children aged 3-5 years.
- Centralise childcare provision under a single Department.
- Immediately reduce all class sizes for children under 9 to a maximum of 20 pupils.
- End the use of prefab buildings within the lifetime of the next Dáil.
- Increase funding per pupil at pre-school and primary level so that expenditure will be more equal to that at third level, ensuring that schools in areas of high disadvantage receive proportionately more funding and resources.
- Prioritise action on autism to ensure the earliest intervention for all who need it.
- Keep the Irish language as a core subject at post-primary level.

- Teach a second subject through Irish at primary school level eg PE or drama.
- Launch a vigorous all-Ireland adult literacy campaign.
- Assist schools and teachers to promote discipline in schools and ensure a positive learning environment.

A Strong and Sustainable economy

Strengthening the All-Ireland Economy

- Adopt and implement an all-Ireland Economic Development Plan.
- Ensure maximum all-Ireland co-ordination in the use of EU funds.
- Begin an open debate on the benefits of one currency for the whole island.
- Establish a public investment programme to ensure that Government departments and agencies proactively invest in historically neglected and underdeveloped areas to reverse the current imbalance.

Infrastructure

- An extensive expansion of an all-Ireland rail network on an accelerated basis.
- Increase funding and provision of buses in rural areas. Provide 500 extra buses for Bus Átha Cliath.
- Legislate and budget to ensure that all public transport is accessible to people with disabilities.
- Build a North West Motorway/high speed dual carriageway serving the route from Dublin to Donegal/Derry.
- Abolish road tolls.
- Provide universal access to broadband on an all-Ireland basis.
- Establish an all-Ireland mobile phone network, with reasonable all-Ireland tariffs.
- Put an end to the artificial inflation of ESB prices.
- Invest in the accelerated development of wind and wave energy production.

Supporting Enterprise and Job Creation

- Support the development of indigenous micro and small and medium enterprises (SME) and social economy enterprises.
- Improve support for start-up businesses including provision of

increased business advice, guidance and training plus dedicated management development.

- Adopt an All-Ireland R&D Strategy including extra assistance to SMEs and new businesses to develop business plans for R&D.
- Provide specific recycling depots for small business to enable them to reduce their waste management costs.
- Initiate a specific Redundancy to Entrepreneurship scheme
- Explore and pursue possibilities for establishing new profitable companies in public ownership, particularly in strategic sectors.

Promoting Workers' Rights

- Establish a Department of Labour with a full Minister.
- Introduce a penalty points system against rogue employers who consistently violate labour law, with a range of penalties including a bar from eligibility for public contracts to removal from the companies register.
- Increase regulation of the apprenticeship system and extend minimum wage legislation to cover apprentices.
- Legislate to establish rights and entitlements for migrant workers equivalent to those of host society workers.
- Immediately enact corporate manslaughter legislation.

An Equal Economy, Where Wealth is Shared

Raising Household Incomes

- Double the Living Alone Allowance.
- Increase the Family Income Supplement by €68 per week and make it an automatic payment
- Extend eligibility for the Back to Work Allowance to include those who are unemployed for more than 12 months.
- Extend the new Early Childcare Supplement to include children aged 6 to 12.
- Ensure lone parents can keep their rent supplement for at least 3 years of full-time work and continually if they are in part-time employment.
- Abolish the means test for carers and substantially increase the Carer's Allowance.
- Introduce a Cost of Disability Payment.

Taxation Justice

- Keep those on or below the minimum wage out of the tax net, and set the minimum wage at, at least of 60% of average industrial earnings.
- Keep those on or below the average industrial earnings within the standard rate tax band.
- Aggressively pursue tax evasion and invest adequate resources for tax collection and enforcement.
- Close all remaining legal loopholes that have allowed millionaires to pay no tax whatsoever.
- Introduce legislation to end tax exile status
- Remove tax exemptions except where the economic and social value outweighs the cost eg R&D.
- Negotiate for tax harmonisation across the island.

A New Emphasis on Non-Tax Revenue

- Reform the current exploration licensing and taxation regime and renegotiate oil and gas contracts.
- Establish a State oil, gas and mineral exploration company which would actively participate and invest in exploration.
- Set a target for becoming a net exporter of electricity from renewable sources.
- Keep the ESB and all other public companies in public ownership.
- Negotiate at EU level for an exception to the EU State Aid Rules similar to that conceded to Germany, to assist post-partition reconstruction for reunification.

Responsible Spending of Public Wealth in the Public Interest

- Subject public spending not just to 'value for money' efficiency audits but also to regular effectiveness audits against social and economic goals.
- Empower the Comptroller and Auditor General to examine all existing PPP projects for cost overruns, revenue foregone and wastage against long-term cost and profit projections.
- Establish an All-Ireland Procurement and Purchasing Agency accountable to the Dáil, Assembly and All-Ireland Ministerial Council to introduce greater efficiencies.

Equality for Rural Communities

- Make rural regeneration and balanced regional development a priority.
- Immediately commission an All-Ireland Rural White Paper.
- Actively promote and support entrepreneurship within rural communities, especially co-operative and other 'social economy' ventures.
- Provide greater access to start-up incentives for rural businesses.
- Reform the planning laws to support the right of rural dwellers to build on their own land or to purchase and build locally.
- Enhance investment in rural public transport, and ensure planned delivery of an all-Ireland road and rail network, with a focus on accelerated development in the western and border regions.

Revitalising Irish Agriculture

- Ensure that the maximum number of people continue farming, while stemming the shift towards large scale factory style farming.
- Oppose importation of cheap meat that fails to meet the strict food safety regulations imposed here.
- Work to amend the Single Farm Payment regulations to raise the lower income limit and impose a higher income limit, in order to redirect EU funds and ensure a decent livelihood for smaller farmers.
- Assist farm diversification into new areas eg organic farming and renewable energy.
- Keep Ireland as a whole GM crop-free
- Facilitate the conversion of the Carlow and Mallow sugar plants to biofuel production.
- Give farmers adequate notice prior to farm inspections.

A Sustainable Future for the Irish Fisheries

- Establish a separate Ministry for the Marine and Natural Resources with a full Minister.
- Negotiate radical reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, with the aim of returning the greater part of management of Irish fisheries back into Irish hands.
- Introduce a transparent system of issuing of licences, quota and tonnage.
- Conserve Irish fish stocks by reducing the quota available to foreign fleets and introduce proper independent scientific monitoring of stocks.
- Ensure adequate compensation for Driftnet Salmon Fishermen.

Community Safety

- Establish a fully independent Garda Ombudsman, a Garda Board for civilian management oversight and Community Policing Partnerships.
- Civilianise appropriate tasks to allow the redeployment of all fully trained Gardaí to fight crime and serve their communities.
- Establish a system of consistent victim liaison to ensure that victims, especially of violent crimes, are kept fully informed throughout the investigation and prosecution process.
- Ensure more consistent prosecution of sexual assault, rape and domestic violence.
- Adopt a comprehensive strategy to effectively combat anti-social behaviour including social investment in marginalised areas, early intervention for those at risk of offending, community policing and effective rehabilitation.
- Introduce community restorative justice alternatives for most non-violent offenders.
- Ensure robust enforcement of the law and prosecution of offenders involved in criminal behaviour.
- Repeal the Offences Against the State Acts and dissolve the Special Criminal Court
- Continue to negotiate the establishment of an effective all-Ireland sex offenders registry.

Strengthening Human Rights Protections

- Introduce the All-Ireland Charter of Rights provided for under the Good Friday Agreement.
- Adequately fund the Equality Authority and Equality Tribunal.
- Adopt binding gender targets of at least 40% for each gender on the boards of all state and semi-state bodies, the judiciary, and the Cabinet.
- Amend the 1937 Constitution to expressly recognise children's rights.
- Establish an Ombudsman for Older People.
- Establish a Disability Strategy Implementation and Monitoring Unit within the Department of the Taoiseach, to set annual targets towards full delivery by 2016.
- Reinstate previous funding levels for anti-racism initiatives and provide annual increases as necessary.
- Repeal the sections of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 that criminalise the Traveller way of life.
- End the policy of dispersal and the Direct Provision System and extend the right to work and pay taxes to all asylum seekers while their

applications are being processed.

- Introduce legislation to permit and recognise same-sex marriage, to provide full and equal recognition of all civil partnerships in law and recognise the right of same-sex couples to adopt children in the same manner as heterosexual couples.

A Better Quality of Life

A Clean Environment is a Right

- Campaign to secure the complete closure of Sellafield.
- Ban the development of municipal incinerators in Ireland and set progressive time-framed targets to minimise waste going to landfill.
- Introduce legislation to compel industrial and commercial producers of waste to reduce waste production in a planned, targeted and accountable manner.
- Mandate and support all councils to produce waste reduction strategies including a minimum target of 50% recycling and introduce a total ban on disposal of compostable waste in landfills by 2010.
- Support the introduction of 100% capital and maintenance grants for civic recycling initiatives.
- Legislate to regulate for best practice environmental standards for all new buildings, and work towards the target of zero carbon homes by 2015.
- Bring all water supplies up to the highest EU standard.

A Serious Approach to the Drugs Crisis

- Make adequate resources to Local Drugs Task Forces and Rural Drugs Task Forces.
- Combat cocaine use and roll out cocaine treatment projects.
- Introduce widespread and well-resourced drugs education programmes and awareness campaigns for children and parents.
- Continue to work directly with families and communities worst-affected by drug and alcohol use and by the illegal drugs trade.
- Commit adequate funding to significantly expand the availability of drug treatment and to eliminate waiting lists for treatment.
- Provide additional supports for the families of drug users, such as grandparents caring for grandchildren.
- Continue to pursue major drug traffickers and allocate funds seized from them for community development.
- Increase the resources available to An Garda Síochána drugs units.

Ag Cur an Ghaeilge ar ais i mBéal an Phobail

- Implement the Official Languages Act 2003 in full.
- Agree a 10 year All-Ireland Irish Language Development Plan focusing on the preservation and advancement of the language.
- Enhance Irish medium education and Irish language learning.
- Ensure that every member of the 'New Irish' community has the opportunity to learn Irish.
- Allocate more funding to Foras na Gaeilge.
- Increase funding for TG4 in keeping with its position as the primary Irish language broadcaster.
- Put in place a 10 year monitoring programme for the Gaeltacht and a mechanism to officially recognise 'Breac-Ghaeltachtaí' throughout the island.

Supporting Arts and Culture

- Restore funding to the levels recommended by the Arts Plan, reach a minimum investment target of 1% total budgetary spend
- Increase support to community festivals.
- Make arts and culture a new area of formal all-Ireland co-operation under the Good Friday Agreement, and actively promote the State as a cultural visitor destination within an all-Ireland framework.

Demilitarisation and Solidarity for a Better World

- Enshrine neutrality in the Constitution.
- Ensure Irish troops train and serve abroad only under the auspices and leadership of the United Nations, and only with prior Dáil approval.
- Prohibit use of Irish airports, airspace, seaports, or territorial waters for preparation for war or other armed conflict by foreign powers or to facilitate any aspect of illegal acts such as the US Government's programme of 'extraordinary rendition'.
- Withdraw from the EU Rapid Reaction Force, Battle Groups and NATO's Partnership for Peace.
- Incrementally increase Overseas Development Assistance to 1% of GNP by 2010, ring-fence the ODA budget and keep all such aid un-tied.





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 *Sinn Féin*

Achoimre Feidhmiúcháin

Síocháin bhuan agus Aontacht na hÉireann

- Páipéar Uaine ar Aontacht na hÉireann a chríochnú taobh istigh de bhliain amháin, a aimsíonn na céimeanna agus na himeachtaí chun chuidiú le trasdul rathúil chuig Éire Aontaithe agus leis seo a chur chun cinn.
- Aire Stáit a cheapadh chun polasaithe uile-Éireannacha an Rialtais a chomhordú trasna na Rann.
- Ionadaíocht tofa ó na 6 Contae a thabhairt isteach chuig Tithe an Oireachtais.
- Tús a chur le próiseas chomhordú forbartha geilleagraí, soláthar seirbhíse agus pleanáil ar bhonn uile-Éireannach.
- Tús a chur le sainphróiseas de thionscadal for-rochtana don phobal aontachtach chun a rannpháirteachas a dhéanamh sa phleanáil seo mar chomhpháirtithe cothroma.
- Reifreann ar Aontacht na hÉireann a chinntiú a dhéanfar go comhuaineach, sa Tuaisceart agus sa Deisceart.

Rochtain Chothrom ar Sheirbhísí Poiblí ar Chaighdeán Domhanda

- Deireadh láithreach a chur le faoiseamh cánach d'otharlanna príobháideacha agus le scéim bronntanas talaimh agus cistiú sláinte uile a infheistiú sa chóras poiblí.
- Cártaí iomláine leighis a sholáthar do chách faoin líne bhochtaineachta agus do gach duine faoi ocht mbliana déag d'aois.
- Poist lia chomhairligh otharlann nua a dhéanamh poiblí amháin.
- Líonra Ionaid Chóireála Phríomhchúraim nua-aimseartha agus inrochtana a fhorbairt.
- Seirbhísí scagtha forbartha a chur ar fáil go háitiúil, láithreach agus leathan.
- Na 3,000 leaba breise riachtanacha otharlann a sholáthar isteach sa chóras otharlann poiblí.

- Ciorraithe i seirbhísí ag otharlanna áitiúla a chúlú agus cumraíocht a dhéanamh ar gach otharlann chun cinntiú go mbíonn seirbhísí éigeandála ar fáil chomh háitiúil agus is féidir.
- 12% den bhuiséad sláinte do sheirbhísí sláinte meabhrach a aonrú.
- Straitéis ar Chosc Féinmharaithe Uile-Éireannach, chuimsitheach, maoinithe go hiomlán a chruthú.

Is ceart í Tithíocht

- Roinn Tithíochta le hAire iomlán a bhunú.
- 70,000 aonad nua a thógáil faoi 2012 chun freastal ar riachtanas tithíochta sóisialta.
- An tAcht Pleanála agus Forbairt (2002) a leasú - beidh ar gach forbairt 30% a chur ar fáil do thithíocht shóisialta agus ar phraghas réasúnta, le 10% do thithíocht shóisialta agus 10% do thithíocht ar phraghas réasúnta.
- Easpa dídine sráide a dhíothú faoin bhliain 2010.
- Faoiseamh úis ar mhorgáiste a mhéadú do chéadcheannaitheoirí agus príomh-úinéirí baile a shaothraíonn suas go dtí an meántuarastal tionsclaíoch.
- Cairt chearta tionónta a thabhairt isteach.
- Cinntigh go gcuirtear foinsí fuinnimh comhroghnacha atá tíosach ar fhuinneamh isteach i ngach tithíocht shóisialta nua.
- Dílthe pleanála a leasú chun tacaíocht a thabhairt do cheart chónairí tuaithe tógáil ar a dtalamh féin nó ceannach agus tógáil go háitiúil.
- Cuir i bhfeidhm reachtaíocht chun cinntiú go gcuirtear seirbhísí poiblí, ionaid chúram sláinte, ionaid chúram leanaí agus scoileanna isteach sna scéimeanna tithíochta uile.

Oideachas agus Cúram Leanaí

- Seisiún réamhscoile uilíche 3.5 uair sa lá, cúig lá sa tseachtain a thabhairt isteach ar son gach páiste idir 3-5 bliain d'aois.
- Foráil chúram leanaí a lárú faoi aon Roinn amháin.
- Laghdú láithreach a dhéanamh ar méid gach rang do leanaí faoi 9 mbliana d'aois go 20 dalta.
- Deireadh a chur le húsáid ranganna réamhdhéanta taobh istigh d'fhadtréimhse na chéad Dála eile.

- Cistiú an dalta ar leibhéal réamhscoile agus bunscoile a mhéadú sa dóigh go mbeidh caiteachas níos cothroime leo ar an tríú leibhéal, ag cinntiú go bhfaighidh scoileanna i gceantair faoi mhíbhuntáiste níos mó cistithe agus acmhainní go comhréireach.
- Tosaíocht a dhéanamh de ghníomh ar uathachas chun an idirghabháil is luaithe do chách a bhfuil an riachtanas orthu a chinntiú.
- An Ghaeilge a choinneáil ina croí-ábhar ag leibhéal iarbhunscoile.
- Dara hábhar scoile a theagasc trí Ghaeilge ag bunleibhéal msh. CO nó dráma.
- Feachtas litearthachta bríomhar uile-Éireannach d'aoisigh a sheoladh.
- Cúidiú le scoileanna agus múinteoirí chun smacht i scoileanna a chur chun cinn agus comhshaol léinn dhearfaigh a chinntiú.

Geilleagar láidir agus inbhuanaithe

Geilleagar uile-Éireannach a Dhaingniú

- Glacadh le Plean Geilleagrach uile-Éireannach agus é a chur i bhfeidhm.
- Uaschomhordú Uile-Éireannach úsáid cistí an AE a chinntiú.
- Díospóireacht oscailte a thosú ar na sochair le hairgeadra amháin don oileán iomlán.
- Clár infheistíochta poiblí a bhunú chun cinntiú go ndéanann ranna agus gníomhaireachtaí an Rialtais infheistiú gníomhach i gceantair tearcforbartha ar a ndearnadh neamart go stairiúil orthu chun an mhíchothromaíocht láithreach a chúlú.

Bonneagar

- Cuid mhór de na línte iarnóid a druideadh i lár nó ag deireadh an 20ú aois a oscailt arís, agus pleanáil a dhéanamh do mhéadú suntasach líonra iarnóid uile-Éireannaigh ar bhonn luathaithe.
- Cistiú agus foráil níos mó busanna i gceantair thuaithe a mhéadú agus 500 bus eile a chur ar fáil do Bhus Átha Cliath.
- Reachtaíocht a chur i bhfeidhm agus buiséadú le cinntiú go mbíonn gach iompar poiblí inrochtana do dhaoine le míchumas.
- Mótarbhealach Thuaidh Thiar/débhéalach ardluas ag freastal ar an bhealach ó Bhaile Átha Cliath go Dún na nGall/Doire a thógáil.
- Doláí Bóithre a chealú.
- Rochtain uilíoch ar leathanbhanda a sholáthar ar bhonn uile-Éireannach.
- Líonra teileafóin mhóibíligh uile-Éireannach a bhunú, le taraif uile-

Éireannacha réasúnta.

- Deireadh a chur le praghasanna boilscithe shaorga ESB.

Ag Tacú le Fiontraíocht agus Cruthú Post

- Tacaigh le forbairt mhionfiontar agus fiontar beag agus meánmhéide (FBM) dúchasach agus fiontar geilleagair shóisialta.
- Tacaíocht do thosú gnó, méadú comhairle gnó, treorú agus traenáil ina theannta le forbairt bainistíochta aonfheidhme san áireamh a fheabhsú.
- Glacadh le straitéis T&F uile-Éireannach cuidiú bhreise do FBM agus gnóthaí nua san áireamh chun pleananna gnó do T&F a fhorbairt.
- Sainshuímh athchúrsála a sholáthar do ghnóthaí beaga le cur ar a gcumas a gcostais bhainistíochta dramhaíola a laghdú.
- Sainscéim 'Iomarcacht go Fiontraíocht' a thionscnamh
- Féidearthachtaí a fhiosrú agus a lorg do chomhlachtaí nua tairbheacha in úinéireacht phoiblí, go háirithe in earnálacha ar leith.

Cearta Oibrithe a Chur Chun Cinn

- Roinn Fostaíochta le hAire iomlán a bhunú.
- Córas pointí pionóis a thabhairt isteach in aghaidh fostóirí rógaireachta a thagann salach ar dhlí fostaíochta go seasta, le réimse pionós ina mbeidh scor ó chlár comhlachtaí go dtí cosc ó incháilitheacht conarthaí poiblí san áireamh.
- Rialú an chórais phrintíseachta a mhéadú agus reachtaíocht phá fosta chun printíseachta a chúlú a shíniú.
- Reachtaíocht a chur i bhfeidhm chun cearta agus teidlíochtaí d'oibrithe imirceacha atá coibhéiseach le hoibrithe sa tír seo a bhunú.
- Reachtaíocht dúnbhásaithe chorparáidigh a chur i bhfeidhm láithreach chun freastal ar dhliteanas coirpeach.

Geilleagar Cothrom, ina roinntear saibhreas

Ioncaim Teaghlaigh a Ardú

- Liúntas Cónaí Aonarach a Dhúblú.
- Fordheontas Ioncaim Teaghlaigh a mhéadú le €68 an tseachtain agus íocaíocht uathoibhríoch a dhéanamh sa.
- Síniú incháilitheacht do Liúntas Ar Ais ar Obair chun iad siúd atá difhostaithe le níos mó ná 12 mí a chur san áireamh.

- Síningh Liúntas LuathChúram Leanáí chun leanáí idir 6 agus 12 bliain d'aois a chur san áireamh.
- Cinntigh gur féidir le tuismitheoirí aonarach a bhfordheontas cíosa a choinneáil agus iad i bhfostaíocht lánaimseartha ar feadh trí bliana ar a laghad, nó go deo má bhíonn siad i bhfostaíocht go páirtaimseartha.
- Cealaigh an tástáil acmhainne do chúramóirí, méadaigh Liúntas Cúramóirí go suntasach.
- Tabhair isteach Íocaíocht Costais Mhíchumais.

Ceartas Cánachais

- Coinnigh iad siúd atá ar nó faoi phá íosta amach as an eangach cánach, agus leag síos pá íosta ar 60% den mheántuilleamh tionsclaíoch ar a laghad.
- Coinnigh iad siúd atá ar nó faoi íocaíocht mheántuillimh tionsclaíoch taobh istigh den bhanda cánach gnáthráta.
- Lean go hionsaitheach imghabháil cánach agus infheistigh acmhainní oiriúnacha do bhailiúcháin cánach agus curi bhfeidhm cánach.
- Dún gach bealach éalaithe dlíthiúil a lig do mhilliúnaithe gan cáin ar bith a íoc.
- Tabhair isteach reachtaíocht chun deireadh a chur le stádas deoraí cánach.
- Bain ar shiúl saoirseachtaí ach nuair is mó an luach eacnamaíoch agus sóisialta ná an costas msh: T&F.
- Déan socrú faoi chomhchuíbhíú cánach fud fad na tíre.

Béim Nua ar Fháltas gan Cháin

- Leasaigh ceadúnú taiscéalaíoch agus an riailréim cánachais reatha agus déan na conarthaí ola agus gáis a athidirbheartú.
- Bunaigh comhlacht ola, gáis agus mianra taiscéalaíoch Stáit a ghlacfadh páirt ar bhonn gníomhach agus a dhéanfadh infheistíocht i dtaiscéaladh.
- Cuir síos sprioc le bheith ina ghlan-onnmhaireoir leictreachais ó fhoinsí inathnuaite.
- Coinnigh an ESB agus gach comhlacht poiblí sochrach eile atá in úinéireacht phoiblí.
- Déan socrú ar leibhéal AE d'eisceacht Rialacha Cúnamh Stáit AE cosúil leis sin a geilleadh don Ghearmáin, chun cuidiú le hatógáil iardheighilte d'athaontú.

Caiteachas Freagrach de Rachmas Poiblí ar mhaithe le Leas an Phobail

- Cuir caiteachas poiblí faoi smacht, ní amháin maidir le hiniúchtaí éifeachtachta 'luach ar airgead' ach déan iniúchtaí éifeachtúlachta rialta orthu in aghaidh spriocanna sóisialta agus eacnamaíocha.
- Tabhair an chumhacht don Ard-Reachtair agus don Ard-Iniúcháir chun gach togra PPP a fhiosrú maidir le barraíocht caiteachais, ioncam dosheachanta agus deachmaíocht in aghaidh costais agus brabús réamh-mheastachán.
- Bunaigh Gníomhaireacht Soláthair agus Ceannaigh Uile-Éireannach atá freagrach don Dáil, don Tionól agus don Chomhairle Aireachta Uile-Éireannach chun éifeachtachtaí níos fearr a thabhairt isteach.

Comhionannas do Phobail Tuaithe

- Déan tosaíocht d'athghiniúint tuaithe agus d'fhorbairt chothrom réigiúnach.
- Coimisiúnaigh láithreach Páipéar Bán Tuaithe Uile-Éireann.
- Cuir chun cinn go gníomhach agus tacaigh le fiontraíocht laistigh de phobail tuaithe, frontair comharchumainn agus 'geilleagair shóisialta' eile go háirithe.
- Soláthair níos mó rochtana ar dhreasachtaí nuathionscanta le haghaidh gnóthaí tuaithe.
- Athchóirigh na dlíthe pleanála le tacú le ceart na gcónaitheoirí tuaithe tógáil ar a dtalamh féin nó talamh a cheannach agus tógáil go háitiúil.
- Feabhsaigh infheistíocht in iompar tuaithe poiblí, agus cinntigh soláthar pleanáilte gréasán uile-Éireann bóithre agus iarnród, a dhíríonn isteach ar fhorbairt níos luathaithe i réigiúin an iarthair agus na teorann.

Talmhaíocht Éireannach a Athbheochan

- Cinntigh go leanann an méid is mó daoine orthu ag feirmeoireacht, agus san am céanna cuir cosc ar an aistriú chuig feirmeoireacht mhórsála monarchan.
- Cuir in aghaidh feoil shaor a thabhairt isteach nach gcomhlíonann rialúcháin dhaingne sábháilteacht bia atá curtha i bhfeidhm anseo.
- Oibrigh chun rialúcháin Íocaíocht Feirme Shingil a athrú leis an ioncam is ísle a ardú agus teorainn níos airde ioncaim a fhorchur, le go n-atreorófar cistí AE agus go gcinnteofar slí bheatha mhaith d'fheirmeoirí níos lú.

- Cabhraidh le héagsúlú feirme i réimsí nua m. sh. feirmeoireacht orgánach agus fuinneamh athnuaite.
- Coinnigh Éire ina hiomlán saor ó bharráí géinathraithe.
- Éascaigh athrú monarchana siúcra i gCeatharlach agus i Mala chun táirgeadh bithbhreosla.
- Tabhair go leor fógra d'fheirmeoirí roimh chigreachtaí feirme.

Todhchaí Inbhuanaithe d'Iascach Éireannach

- Bunaigh Aireacht ar leith ann um Acmhainní Mara agus Nádúrtha le hAire iomlán.
- Idirbheartaigh athchóiriú radacach ar Chomhbheartas lascaigh, ar aidhm dó an chuid is mó de bhainistíocht lascaigh Éireannaigh a chur i lámha Éireannacha arís.
- Tabhair isteach córas trédhearcach chun ceadúnais, cuóta agus tonnáiste a eisiúint.
- Caomnaigh stoic éisc tríd an chuóta a laghdú atá ar fáil do chabhlaigh eachtrannacha agus tabhair isteach ceartmhnatóireacht eolaíoch ar stoic.
- Infheistigh i bhforbairt luathaithe táirgeadh fuinneamh gaoithe agus tonnta.
- Cinntigh go leor cúitimh d'lascairí Bradáin Sruthlonta.

Sábháilteacht Pobail

- Bunaigh Ombudsman iomlán neamhspleách, Bord Garda le haghaidh maoirseoireacht bainisteoireachta sibhialta agus Páirtíochtaí Póilíneachta Pobail.
- Tabhair tascanna iomchuí d'oibríthe nach gardaí iad a thabharfadh faill do gach garda atá oile go hiomlán troid in éadan na cora agus freastal ar a bpobail.
- Bunaigh córas idirghabháil leanúnach íospartaigh lena chinntiú go bhfuil íospartaigh, iad siúd a d'fhulaing cora foréigneacha go háirithe, curtha go hiomlán ar an eolas le linn an imscrúdaithe agus próiseas ionchúisimh.
- Cinntigh ionchúiseamh níos leanúnaí ar ionsaí gnéis, banéigean agus foréigean baile,
- Tabhair isteach straitéis chuimsitheach le dul i ngleic ar bhealach éifeachtach le hiompraíocht fhrithshóisialta agus lena n-áirítear infheistíocht shóisialta i gceantair imeallaithe, idirghabháil luath dóibh siúd atá i mbaol éagóir a dhéanamh, póilíneacht pobail agus athshlánú éifeachtach.

- Malairtí ceartas aisíroch pobail don chuid is mó chiontóirí neamhfhoreigneacha.
- Cinntigh forfheidhmiúchán dlí daingean agus ionchúiseamh ciontóirí a bhfuil baint acu le hiompraíocht choiriúil.
- Aisghairm Achtanna um Chiontaí in Aghaidh an Stáit agus lánscoir an Chúirt Choiriúil Speisialta
- Lean leis an idirbheartaíocht chun clár uile-Éireann éifeachtach ciontóirí gnéis a bhunú.

Cosaintí Chearta an Duine a Dhaingniú

- Tabhair isteach Cairt Uile-Éireann Ceart a ndéantar forálacha dó faoi Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta.
- Cistigh mar is cuí an tÚdarás Comhionannais agus an Binse Comhionannais.
- Tabhair isteach spriocanna inscne ceangailteacha de 40% ar a laghad de cheachtar den dá inscne ar bhoid comhlachtaí stáit agus leathstáit, na breithiúna agus an Chomh-aireacht.
- Leasaigh Bunreacht 1937 chun cearta leanaí a aithint go soiléir
- Bunaigh Ombudsman le haghaidh Daoine Scothaosta.
- Bunaigh Aonad Feidhmiúcháin agus Monatóireachta ar Stráitéis Míchumais laistigh de Roinn an Taoisigh, chun spriocanna bliantúla a leagan i dtreo soláthair iomláin faoi 2016.
- Tabhair isteach arís leibhéil chistithe do thionscnaimh fhrithchíochais, agus méaduithe bliantúla mar is cuí a sholáthar.
- Aisghairm míreanna an Acht Tithíochta (Forálacha Ilchineálacha) 2002 a dhéanann coir de shaol an Taistealaí.
- Cuir deireadh leis an bheartas scaipthe agus an Córas Soláthair Dhíreach, agus tabhair an ceart chun oibre agus cánacha a íoc do gach iarrthóir tearmainn le linn dóibh a n-iarratas a phróiseáil.
- Tabhair isteach reachtaíocht a cheadaíonn agus a aithníonn pósadh idir an gnéas céanna, chun aitheantas iomlán agus cothrom a thabhairt do gach páirtíocht shibhialta agus an ceart ag lánúna den ghnéas céanna leanaí a uchtú ar an dóigh chéanna agus a dhéanann lánúna heitrighnéasacha.

Cáilíocht Níos Fearr Saoil

Is ceart é Comhshaoil Glan

- Gabh i mbun feachtais chun druidim iomlán Sellafield a thabhairt i gcrann.
- Cuir cosc ar fhorbairt loisceoirí bardasacha in Éirinn agus leag spriocanna forásacha de réir ama amach leis an dramhaíl a théann chuig líonadh talún a laghdú.
- Tabhair reactaíocht isteach a thabharfaidh ar tháirgeoirí dramhaíola tráchtála táirgeadh dramhaíola a laghdú ar chaoi phleanáilte, aimsithe agus fhreagrach.
- Cuir ar chumas, agus tacaigh le, gach comhairle straitéisí laghdaithe dramhaíola a tháirgeadh agus íos-spríoc de 50% a leagan d'athchúrsáil agus cosc iomlán ar dramhaíl indiúscartha a dhéanfar muirín de i líonta talún faoi 2010.
- Tacaigh le tabhairt isteach deontais 100% caipítíl agus cothabhála le haghaidh tionscnaimh shaoránacha athchúrsála.
- Déan reactaíocht le rialúchán le haghaidh cleachtas is fearr caighdeán chomhshaoil a dhéanamh do gach foirgneamh nua, agus obair i dtreo tithe gan charbóin faoi 2015.
- Feabhsaigh gach soláthar uisce go dtí an caighdeán is airde AE.

Cur Chuige Tromchúiseach maidir leis an Ghearchéim Drugaí

- Cuir ar fáil go leor acmhainní do Thascfhorsaí Áitiúla Drugaí agus Thascfhorsaí Tuaithe Drugaí.
- Gabh i ngleic le húsáid cóicín agus roll amach tograí cóireála cóicín.
- Cláir oideachas drugaí fhorleathana agus le hacmhainní maithe agus feachtais feasachta le haghaidh leanaí agus tuismitheoirí.
- Coinnigh ag dul le hobair dhíreach le fadhbhuascailt a dhéanamh le teaghlaigh agus le pobail atá thíos mar gheall ar úsáid drugaí agus alcóil agus ar an trádáil drugaí neamhdhlíthiúla.
- Tionnaigh go leor cistithe chun infhaighteacht cóireáil drugaí a leathnú go suntasach agus liostaí feithimh le haghaidh cóireála a chealú.
- Tabhair tacaíocht bhreise do theaghlaigh úsáideoirí drugaí, amhail seantuismitheoirí ag tabhairt aire do gharleanaí.
- Lean ar aghaidh sa tóir ar ghéinneálaithe móra drugaí agus airgead a gabhadh uathu a úsáid le haghaidh forbairt pobail.
- Méadaigh acmhainní ar fáil d'aonaid drugaí An Gharda Síochána.

An Ghaeilge a chur ar ais i mbéal an phobail

- An tAcht Teangacha Oifigiúla 2003 a chur i bhfeidhm go hiomlán
- Comhaontaigh ar Phlean Forbartha Gaeilge Uile-Éireann 10 mbliana ag díriú ar chaomhnú agus ar chur chun cinn na teanga.
- Feabhsaigh Gaeloideachas agus foghlaim na Gaeilge.
- Cinntigh go bhfuil deis ag gach ball de phobal na 'nGael Nua' chun an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim.
- Leithdháil níos mó cistithe ar Fhoras na Gaeilge.
- Méadaigh cistiú le haghaidh TG4 ag cloí lena sheasamh mar phríomhchraoltóir Gaeilge.
- Cuir i bhfeidhm clár monatóireachta 10 mbliana don Ghaeltacht agus meicníocht chun 'Breac-Ghaeltachtaí' a aithint go hoifigiúil ar fud na tíre.

Ag Tacú le hEalaín agus le Cultúr

- Tabhair ar ais an cistiú go leibhéil a mhol an Plean Ealaíon, bain amach íos-spríoc infheistíochta 1% den chaiteachas iomlán buiséid.
- Méadaigh tacaíocht d'fhéilte pobail.
- Déan réimse úr d'ealaíona agus cultúr maidir le comhoibriú uile-Éireann faoi Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, agus cuir chun cinn go gníomhach an stát mar ceann scríbe cuairteora chultúrtha laistigh de chreat uile-Éireann.

Dímhíleatú agus Dlúthpháirtíocht le haghaidh Domhan Níos Fearr

- Cumhdaigh neodracht sa Bhunrecht
- Cinntigh nach dtraenáilann agus nach bhfreastalaíonn saighdiúirí Éireannacha ach faoi choimirce agus faoi cheannaireacht na Náisiún Aontaithe, agus sin amháin le réamhcheadú na Dála.
- Cuir cosc ar aerfoirt, aerspás, poirt farraige nó uiscí tíriúla na hÉireann a úsáid le hullmhú le haghaidh cogaidh nó coinbhleacht armtha eile ag cumhachtaí eachtracha nó chun gné ar bith de ghníomhartha neamhdhlíthiúla amhail clár rialtas na SA maidir le 'seachadadh urghnách'
- Tarraing siar ó Fhórsa Frithghnímh Mhear AE, Grúpaí Catha agus Páirtíocht Síochána ECAT (NATO).
- Méadaigh de réir a cheile Cúnamh Forbartha Thar Lear go dtí 1% de GNP faoi 2010, cuir ar leataobh an buiséad ODA agus coinneigh gach cabhair den chineál gan cheangal.

Lasting Peace and Irish Unity

The Peace Process the Sinn Féin leadership initiated well over a decade ago has positively transformed the Irish political landscape. Problems that only ten years ago seemed intractable are now being addressed one by one. In the post-Good Friday Agreement period, increased all-Ireland co-operation is creating huge opportunities for everyone. Sinn Féin has driven the peace process. As the only all-Ireland party, we continue to drive the agenda for positive change.

Since we last went before the people of the 26 Counties to seek a mandate in 2004, the IRA has taken a historic unilateral initiative that has opened unprecedented democratic opportunities. Subsequently, Sinn Féin negotiators secured additional progress on the delivery of the Good Friday Agreement.

We began 2007 by taking our own historic unilateral initiative on policing.

More recently Sinn Féin made an agreement with the DUP and the historic first public meeting between Sinn Féin and the DUP took place in Stormont. Since then Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley have been working together to prepare for the return of the power-sharing institutions.

Sinn Féin is the largest nationalist party in the northern Assembly and the Executive with a Deputy First Minister and Junior Minister, a Minister for Education, a Minister for Agriculture and a Minister for Regional Development. We have commenced the process of jointly governing the 6 Counties and the all-Ireland political institutions and we are committed to do our part to ensure this succeeds. Our negotiators also continue to work tirelessly to bring about further progress in ongoing talks with the Irish and British Governments and with unionists.

Over the past decade, republicans have proven our ability to negotiate successfully. We have shown leadership by taking major and sometimes difficult decisions in the national interest. Sinn Féin has brought a new energy and a new dynamic to Irish politics and there is a lot more we want to deliver.

One of the best ways for Irish citizens to assist further progress in the process towards a lasting peace, reconciliation and unity is a strong vote for Sinn Féin in this general election. A persuasive Sinn Féin mandate in the 26 Counties will further strengthen the hand of our negotiators, weaken partition and build greater all-Ireland links, leading us closer than ever before to the reintegration of our nation.

All political parties claim to support peace and unity – Sinn Féin delivers. We will continue to lead in the Peace Process and to act as Irish unity's champion in the new Dáil.

The Sinn Féin Platform on Irish Unity

Sinn Féin has delivered on our promise to provide a peaceful strategy to achieve our central objective of Irish unity and independence. It is essential that we build on the achievements to date by taking the next steps. The vast majority of people on the island now recognise that partition is restricting political, economic and social potential. There is growing support for all-Ireland planning in both the public and private sectors and in civic society. As a result we now see significant practical initiatives with the capacity to improve everyday life for all, such as the introduction of an all-Ireland energy market. Clearly, support for reunification is growing and it is time to start the real work to prepare the transition to unity.

We believe there is a political onus and national responsibility on the Irish Government to formulate and implement a specific strategy to promote and achieve the democratic objectives of national self-determination, Irish territorial reunification, political independence, sovereignty, and national reconciliation.

We propose that the incoming Irish Government begin the practical planning now by producing a Green Paper on Irish Unity. This should commence with a process of comprehensive consultation, engagement, persuasion and negotiation with a view to securing active and widespread support for a future United Ireland. By definition such a process must involve all the people of this island, including all of the social partners that constitute civil society.

It must involve a process of dialogue with unionists on the basis of mutual respect. It must by necessity involve a negotiation with the British Government and a meaningful and substantial Peace Dividend from both Governments. It also needs to have an international dimension seeking specific forms of support from popular and political opinion in Britain, the Irish diaspora and the international community.

In addition to the proposed Green Paper process, we would immediately extend representation and the franchise to the 6 Counties electorate, engage in all-Ireland economic planning and pursue a focused programme of direct positive engagement with unionists.

The Sinn Féin Record in Leinster House:

- Our Dáil team consistently urged the Taoiseach and Government Ministers to pursue the Peace Process and the All-Ireland Agenda ever more vigorously, especially in their dealings with the British Government.
- We urged full inquiries into the policy of collusion by which British forces and their agents carried out hundreds of killings, including many in the 26 Counties between 1972 and 1994.
- We backed the demands of Justice for the Forgotten and the family of Cllr. Eddie Fullerton, among others, for the truth about British collusion in murders in this State.
- We published proposals for a Green Paper on Irish Unity, tabled a Dáil motion to this effect and sponsored a full-scale Dáil debate on this motion – the first such debate in decades.

Sinn Féin Priorities in Government:

A Green Paper on Irish Unity

- Complete a Green Paper on Irish Unity within one year, identifying steps and measures to promote and assist a successful transition to a United Ireland.
- Give all stakeholders in society on the island an opportunity to take ownership of the debate on the Green Paper and to participate in the process this initiates.
- Appoint a Minister of State with the dedicated and specific responsibility of driving forward and developing policy options and strategies to advance the outcomes of the Green Paper and to direct and co-ordinate the Government's all-Ireland policies across Departments.
- Refer the Green Paper to a dedicated Joint Committee of the Oireachtas on Irish Unity to monitor, assess and report progress on implementation.

Extension of Representation and Franchise to the 6 Counties

- Introduce 6 County elected representation in the Houses of the Oireachtas.
- Legislate to extend to the 6 County electorate the right to vote in Presidential elections.

Delivering Justice for Victims of Collusion

- Continue to demand full independent and public inquiries into British state collusion and demand British Government co-operation with such inquiries.
- Seek proper support for the families of those killed as a result of collusion.

All-Ireland Economic Planning and Unionist Engagement

- Begin the process of co-ordinating economic development, service provision and planning on an all-Ireland basis.
- Produce a genuine National Development Plan.
- Include the business and agricultural sectors, the trade unions, and the community and NGO sectors in this all-Ireland planning process.
- Commence a specific process of outreach to the unionist community to involve them in this planning as equal partners, in keeping with the principles outlined in Sinn Féin's new Charter for Unionist Engagement.

Without question, Sinn Féin is the party with the greatest commitment to strengthening the All-Ireland political institutions. To advance this priority Sinn Féin in government will work to:

- Expand the areas of all-Ireland co-operation and increase the number of all-Ireland Implementation Bodies.
- Establish the All-Ireland Inter-Parliamentary Forum.
- Establish a Six County Civic Forum and the All-Ireland Consultative Civic Forum.
- Ensure maximum co-ordination and co-operation between the human rights and equality bodies north and south and real progress towards the All-Ireland Charter of Rights.
- Pursue a comprehensive programme to maximise all-Ireland economic and social planning across a range of areas outlined in the following sections of this manifesto.
- Secure a referendum on Irish Unity to be held simultaneously, north and south.

Equal Access to **World Class Public Services**

When people elect a Government to act on their behalf and pay taxes to fund Government initiatives and programmes, they rightly expect and deserve provision of public services in return. That is what the Social Contract is all about. In Celtic Tiger Ireland, however, essential services are not made available equally to all. Rather, the quality of services available to you depends increasingly on your ability to pay over and above your taxes. Despite ample wealth in the State, public provision is shrinking and double taxation for services in the form of service charges and user fees is on the rise. The net result is unequal two-tier healthcare, housing, education and childcare.

Sinn Féin believes that one of the most fundamental roles of Government is to make world class public services – including and especially the basics: healthcare, housing, education and childcare – equally available to all as of right. This is what we are committed to deliver for the people of Ireland.

Healthcare is a Right

Sinn Féin believes that healthcare is a fundamental human right. We now have the resources in this State to realise this right for everyone: not only to ensure that all people have equal access to world class health services, but also to effectively tackle the factors leading to poor health for many – social and economic inequality.

While health spending has increased under the current Government, they have stubbornly maintained the unequal two-tier public-private system, thus wasting public money in a system that is not only inequitable but inefficient. The symptoms of consequent crisis in our health services are well known – manifested in the scandalous situation in A&E units, long waiting lists and the shortage of beds and staff.

In an era of unprecedented wealth and spending on healthcare the continued inequalities in health and in access to health services are inexcusable. They are an indictment of successive Governments run by all the establishment parties.

Many parties now make claims about opposing the two-tier health system.

But only Sinn Féin has a credible plan to establish healthcare on the basis of full equality.

The Sinn Féin Healthcare Reform Package¹

Sinn Féin proposes a new universal public health system for Ireland that provides care to all free at the point of delivery, on the basis of need alone, and funded from general fair and progressive taxation.

We are also proposing fundamental re-orientation of the health system to adopt a central focus on prevention, health promotion and primary care (including mental healthcare and full spectrum addiction treatment services), and on ultimately eliminating the underlying social and structural causes of ill-health and premature death, such as poverty and inequality.

We plan to restructure the health service to reconfigure delivery on an all-Ireland basis to make it more efficient and locally accessible, by introducing a single All-Ireland Strategic Health Executive to oversee all services. And we plan to make delivery more responsive to the communities served by establishing locally accountable Community Health Partnerships bringing together public representatives, service users, advocates, health professionals and systems experts to collectively manage delivery of all local health services on the basis of need.

We plan to enshrine the right to healthcare in the 1937 Constitution, in a future All-Ireland Charter of Rights and in legislation, making this a fully enforceable right in Irish courts. We also plan to establish a Health Ombudsman to provide an administrative remedy short of the courts, in the interests of speedier and less expensive resolution of disputes and redress regarding violations of the right to healthcare.

Furthermore, we will introduce equality-proofing and human rights-proofing to all health policy, law and practice, and public health-proofing of other areas of law and policy. Of course, pursuing the other aspects of our economic and social programme will increase social and economic equality and therefore have a positive impact on health outcomes for all our people.



35 HOUR WEEK
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THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team stood firm in support of the public system and public patients and led the fight against privatisation, including the allocation of land at public hospital sites to developers of private hospitals – a scheme that has no mandate and is being fast-tracked in the run-up to the general election.
- We fully supported people campaigning across the State for services to be retained in their local hospitals
- We initiated a Dáil debate on the failures of the current healthcare system and used the opportunity to set out our positive proposals for a universal health system based on equal access for all.
- With our party, we launched a campaign for Healthcare as a Right, meeting healthcare workers, local groups and the general public throughout Ireland.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

A Phased Introduction of Universal Healthcare as a Right

- Begin to reverse privatisation of healthcare by immediately ending tax breaks for private hospitals and the land gift scheme and investing all health funding in the public system.
- Provide full medical cards for all under the poverty line and all under-18s (as a transitional measure towards a fully universal public access service) in the first Sinn Féin Budget.
- Make all new hospital consultant posts public-only.
- Ensure working conditions, promotion prospects and remuneration sufficient to maintain trained staff in the public service, halting the exodus from the public system and from the country.
- Immediately establish a Healthcare Funding Commission to report within a reasonable time-frame on the projected costs of the transition to an all-Ireland system of universal healthcare provision (taking into account all spending on health services under the current systems, including state funding and spending on private insurance), and to make recommendations on how the State can best harness our resources in the interests of more equitable and efficient delivery.
- Hold a referendum to amend the current 1937 Irish Constitution to include the right to healthcare.

A New Emphasis on Primary Care and Prevention

- Develop a network of modern and accessible Primary Care Treatment Centres run by properly-resourced multi-disciplinary and multi-agency Primary Care Teams. Start this process by completing the rollout of the Primary Care Centres promised throughout the State on an accelerated timetable.
- Appoint salaried GPs to work in the Primary Care Teams and negotiate to phase in salaried contracts for all other GPs.
- Make advanced screening services (ie national breast and cervical cancer screening) available locally, promptly and widely – based on risk criteria rather than age alone – to ensure early detection of cancers and other illnesses.

Equality in Hospital Care

- Introduce a timetabled and fully resourced strategy to deliver into the public hospital system the additional 3,000 hospital beds required.
- Plan for enhanced provision of essential public nursing home beds, community care facilities and home care, to take pressure off A&Es and ensure care delivery in the most appropriate setting.
- Halt the over-centralisation of hospital facilities, reverse cutbacks in services at local hospitals, and institute a national plan for the provision and resourcing of hospital care, including clear access targets within an equality framework.
- Configure all hospitals to ensure that emergency services are available as locally as possible. For the vast majority of the population, these services should be located less than 45 minutes travel time away. No one should be more than one hour's travel time from an A&E unit when the three critical access factors are taken into account: hospital location, road conditions and ambulance provision.
- Invest significantly in the ambulance service, including upgrading of the existing fleet, and introduce an air ambulance fleet.

A New Emphasis on Mental Healthcare

- Fully implement the Mental Health Act 2001 and the recommendations of the Government's Mental Health Expert Group as set out in their report A Vision for Change (2006).
- Introduce a spending programme to counteract decades of underfunding, followed by ring-fencing at least 12% of the health budget for mental health services, as recommended by the UN World Health Organisation.

- Reconfigure primary, secondary and children’s/adolescent mental healthcare services to manage a shift away from secondary services over the next 5-10 years, so that the vast majority of mental healthcare is provided by Primary Mental Healthcare Teams (providing a 24 hour service).
- Establish a network of step-down services and other comprehensive community supports for transition out of secondary care facilities.
- Establish an All-Ireland Mental Health Commission to promote and implement the best standards of care within the mental health services and to fund research on an all-Ireland basis.

Suicide Prevention

- Invest in further clinical and community-based research on suicide prevention and produce a fully resourced, comprehensive All-Ireland Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Full-Spectrum Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services

- Expand the spectrum of drug and alcohol treatment services available and dedicate adequate funding to eliminate treatment waiting lists.

Rights-Based Hospice and Palliative Care

- Establish a timetable for implementation of the 2001 Report of the National Advisory Committee on Palliative Care.
- Ensure regional equity in the delivery of hospice and other palliative services.
- Introduce a state-funded scheme for Compassionate Care Leave.
- Provide funding for the development of paediatric palliative care.

Justice for Victims of Healthcare-Related Scandals

- Establish a statutory inquiry into the scandal of organ retention in the Irish health system.
- Carry out an investigation into the barbaric practice of symphysiotomy.

New National Children’s Hospital

- Proceed with the new National Children’s Hospital at the Mater Hospital site as a centre for provision of tertiary paediatric services. This new hospital should provide services on an all-Ireland basis and should include services that are not currently provided on the island of Ireland and for which children have to travel abroad.
- Retain the maximum possible number of paediatric services and in-

patient beds at Tallaght Hospital. Prevent the closure of the current Children’s Hospital there.

- Retain Crumlin Children’s Hospital as a child-focussed healthcare facility, including primary, secondary and tertiary care for children.
- Increase the overall hospital bed capacity for children.
- Put in place a coherent structure to co-ordinate acute hospital services in the Dublin region, maximising the resources in all the hospitals in the capital to ensure their most effective use.
- Provide appropriate paediatric hospital services in the regions.

Housing is a Right

Sinn Féin believes that housing, like healthcare, is a basic inalienable human right. We now have the resources to realise this right for everyone: to ensure that all people have access to adequate and appropriate, secure accommodation, and also to end exploitation by unscrupulous landlords, mortgage lenders, estate agents and management companies. Most importantly, we have the means to end homelessness in Ireland for good.

Current Government policy favours wealthy developers, speculators and landowners over first-time and principal home buyers and particularly over individuals and families on lower incomes who are priced out of the housing market. Thus they find themselves on social housing waiting lists or locked into highly risky 100% mortgages they cannot afford, or renting substandard properties at high rents from unscrupulous and largely unregulated landlords, or at worst on the street. This policy has created a crisis in housing with over 43,000 households on local authority waiting lists – some for up to seven years – and thousands of homeless people. Meanwhile one in seven houses in the State lies vacant.

Only Sinn Féin has a credible plan to make housing available to all on the basis of full equality.

The Sinn Féin Housing Reform Package²

Sinn Féin proposes fundamental reform to ensure that everyone has equal access to adequate, appropriate and affordable accommodation as of right.

We will bring social housing to the centre of provision, with an ambitious five year social housing new build programme. We propose radical complementary measures to intervene in the housing market to prevent the anti-social private housing speculation that fuels house price inflation to ensure that more affordable housing is available and is actually affordable. We are also proposing the introduction of a more robust and comprehensive system of tenant rights including rent control.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team called on the Government to adopt and implement the National Economic and Social Council (NESCC) recommendations on the provision of social housing.
- We proposed a legislative amendment to section 5 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2004, proposing a requirement to price housing units designated as 'affordable' at cost-price, meaning a price equal to the cost of construction.
- We published and debated legislation to remove the 'get-out clauses' for developers under the Planning and Development Acts that allow them to pay off local authorities rather than provide social and affordable housing units (the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2006).
- We published and debated legislation to introduce a constitutional right to housing (the Twenty-Seventh Amendment of the Constitution (No. 2) Bill 2003, which sought to amend Article 40 of the 1937 Constitution).

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

The Right to Housing

- Hold a referendum to add the right to adequate and appropriate housing in the 1937 Constitution.
- Establish a Housing Ombudsman to provide an administrative remedy short of the courts.
- Establish a National Housing Strategy and a National Housing Agency to plan and regulate all aspects of housing provision on an all-Ireland basis.
- Establish a Department of Housing with a full Minister.

Increase Supply of Social and Affordable Homes

- Construct 70,000 new units by 2012 to accommodate social housing need (a new build rate of approximately 14,000 per annum).
- Amend the Planning and Development Act (2002) to remove the 'get-out clauses' for developers in Part V, and stipulate that all new

developments must allocate 30% to social and affordable housing, with at least 10% social and at least 10% affordable housing.

- Oppose any sale of public land to private developers by local authorities in the absence of adequate social housing provision, and reject any local authority housing plan that does not contain social and/or affordable housing or does not promote social inclusion.
- Plan to end local authority waiting lists, with a target to supply suitable accommodation to 70% within two years.
- Legislate to require that any social housing stock sold is replaced on a unit-for-unit basis, with the profits received by local government ring-fenced and matched by central government to replenish social housing stock.
- Use Compulsory Purchase Orders to acquire land, derelict properties and properties vacant for 12 months or more for social housing, allowing a fair and transparent appeals procedure.

Ending Homelessness

- Develop an All-Ireland Strategy on Homelessness, with meaningful targets and adequate resources to progressively reduce and eliminate homelessness (beginning with elimination of street homelessness by the year 2010).
- Put the existing homelessness strategies and Local Homelessness Action Plans on a statutory footing.
- Honour the commitment made in Towards 2016 that by 2010 nobody will be living in emergency accommodation for longer than an actual emergency.

Making Principal Home Ownership more Accessible

- Legislate to ensure that housing units designated as 'affordable' are priced at cost-price.
- Increase mortgage interest relief for first time mortgage-holders and principle home owners who earn up to the average industrial wage.
- Take strong action against speculative practices that inflate housing prices, such as abolishing tax incentives that effectively encourage unfair competition between investors and first-time or principal home buyers, introducing a tax on windfall gains from planning decisions in recognition and compensation for betterment by the State, and imposing a statutory ceiling on the price of land zoned for housing.
- Support and promote co-operative housing ownership.
- Establish Universal Design and Lifetime Adaptability Guidelines and incorporate them as legal a requirement for all new build houses, with a national monitoring system for implementation.



Protect the rights of Principal Home Owners

- Create a Housing Agency to establish legally enforceable codes of practice for developers, house builders and vendors, mortgage brokers, estate agents, auctioneers and solicitors.
- Establish a Housing Ombudsperson with a remit to monitor and enforce the relevant codes of conduct, provide an effective remedy short of the courts, monitor the implementation of housing and planning legislation, monitor changes in house prices, mortgage interest rates and professional fees, support enforcement of snag lists and ensure an end to gazumping.
- Strengthen regulation of property management companies and legislate to ensure all public areas are managed by the local authority and not outsourced to private management.
- Legislate to improve the standard of housing and apartments including increasing the minimum size of one bed and two bed apartments, increasing the ceiling height, ensuring that balconies are recessed into apartment space and ensuring that social and affordable housing is built to the same standard as private housing in the same development.

A Tenants' Rights Charter

- Introduce a system of comprehensive legal protection for tenants, including: a system to regulate, monitor and enforce security of tenure standards (regarding length of leases, deposits and evictions), accommodation standards (including a right to maintenance and repairs) and a system of rent control for fair rent.
- Legislate for the power to bar unscrupulous landlords from letting property.

Sustainable Warm Homes

- Fully enforce environmental sustainability regulations on new build and review these to ensure they are sufficiently robust. Ensure all new social housing is fitted with energy-efficient alternative energy sources.
- Introduce Low Income Full Cost Residential Renewable Energy Grants for Fuel Allowance recipients, increase the Greener Homes Scheme grants to cover a greater percentage of approved cost, and extend the Warmer Homes Scheme to meet the needs of an additional 10,000 homes a year.

Promoting Housing for Sustainable Rural Communities

- Reform the planning laws to support the right of rural dwellers to build on their own land or to purchase and build locally.
- Create a grant scheme to encourage first-time house buyers in rural areas to renovate derelict houses.
- Expand of the Rural Cottage Scheme.

Sustainable, Safe Communities

- Provide for direct community participation in housing planning by establishing statutory Local Community Planning Fora.
- Legislate to ensure that a community's social needs (including local access to employment, to services such as public transportation, healthcare centres, childcare centres and schools and to amenities such as public play and recreation areas, and shopping and social centres) are incorporated into all housing schemes from the earliest stage.
- Support high-density housing developments only where they are designed to support family living, located in mixed tenure areas, have good transport links, shops, schools, essential services and sufficient open public spaces.
- Introduce a positive area-based 'Good Community Agreements' scheme involving both public and private tenants and property owners, to enhance community input, participation and ownership of local strategies to prevent and tackle criminal and anti-social behaviour.
- Ensure consistent criminal sanction against criminal behaviour and that eviction is not used in place of prosecution.

Education – Reaching Our Full Potential

Sinn Féin believes that education is a basic and fundamental human right. Education should be free universally available as of right and assist everyone without exception to develop her or his full potential. Instead of guaranteeing everyone equal access to the highest standard of education, current Government policy has entrenched educational inequalities and a two-tier system. Educational expenditure is one of the lowest as a percentage of income.

More than one in four primary school pupils are being taught in overcrowded classrooms and many are taught in run-down facilities. Too many children still go to school hungry. Almost one quarter of children of working-class parents do not sit the Leaving Certificate. The numbers leaving school without qualifications have remained unchanged since the 1990s, and an estimated 1,000 students per year cannot even make the transition from primary to secondary education. Approximately one quarter of the adult population have literacy and numeracy problems. Meanwhile taxpayers pay €80 million per annum to subsidise the private education system, even though the children of the majority will never have a chance to attend these exclusive fee-paying schools.

Sinn Féin has a credible plan and the political will to make education available to all as of right, on the basis of full equality.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team introduced a motion regarding the provision of education for children with special needs, pressed the Minister for Education and Science to increase resources for the National Educational Psychological Services and to reduce waiting times for children to be assessed, demanded more speech and language therapists and for their placement under the remit of the Department of Education and Science, and urged the Minister to protect the rights and entitlements of children with autism and special needs and to open the Middletown Centre of Excellence for Autism.
- We supported the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) campaign to reduce class sizes, and pressed for more funding for modernising and constructing school buildings and other educational facilities.
- We called for an increase in the maintenance grant for third level students to reflect the true cost of living.
- We urged the Minister to increase resources for adult literacy, proposed a progressive national strategy on lifelong and work-based learning focused at those most in need of training, re-training and upskilling, pushed for the abolition of part-time fees and advocated the introduction of paid educational leave.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Increased Public Investment in Education

- Spend at least 6% of GDP on education, in keeping with best international practice.
- Increase funding per pupil at pre-school and primary level so that expenditure will be more equal to that at third level, ensuring that schools in areas of high disadvantage receive proportionately more funding and resources.
- Review the current system of ownership and management of schools with a view to ensuring equitable education for all, sufficient school places for all pupils wherever they live and the best management of schools.
- Set a target to eliminate the need for subsidy of educational provision by charitable organisations (in the form of schoolbooks and school breakfasts and lunches) within the lifetime of the next Dáil.
- Place a new emphasis in the school curriculum at primary and secondary on civic education, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and encouragement of voluntary activity across society. Education needs to prepare children for life and encourage creativity and human thought and not just be about providing the next generation of workers.

Increased Investment in Early Years Education

- Immediately extend the Early Start pre-school project to all schools with pupils from disadvantaged areas, with a maximum child to adult ratio of 12:1.
- Introduce a universal pre-school session of 3.5 hours per day, five days a week for all children aged 3-5 years (see also next section on childcare).

Increased Investment in Primary Level and Reduced Class Sizes

- Invest towards implementation of a pupil-teacher ratio of 15:1 in all primary schools. As a first step, immediately reduce all class sizes for children under 9 years of age to a maximum of 20 pupils.
- Legislate, plan and budget for immediate upgrading of substandard schools and building of premises where required. Ensure that the practice of educating children in prefab buildings can be eliminated within the lifetime of the next Dáil.
- Introduce a standard statewide school breakfast and lunch programme to supply nutritious food free of charge to schoolchildren.
- Provide adequate funding for the National Education Welfare Board to increase the number of Educational Welfare Officers to combat school absenteeism and low attendance.
- Provide greater support for children with additional needs.

Increased Investment and Reform in Post-Primary Education

- Immediately establish a primary school database to track the transition of students from primary to secondary school and increase funding for schools with low Leaving Certificate completion rates.
- Invest to progressively reduce class sizes at post-primary level.
- Increase internet use for educational purposes and reduce the computer/student ratio to 1:5 by substantially increasing investment in ICT provision for schools to €130 per pupil.
- End the Junior and Leaving Certificate examination and points system in favour of more continual assessment.
- End the practice of School League Tables.

Guaranteed Right to Free Education

- Extend the school book rental scheme nationwide.
- Introduce a new Back to School Allowance that absorbs the current Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance and introduces an additional payment for books and other expenses to more accurately reflect the true costs of sending a child to school. Extend eligibility for this scheme to all families in receipt of Family Income Supplement in addition to those in receipt of social welfare.
- Keep funding for schools fully public and under democratic control instead of relying on the private sector to protect schoolchildren from manipulative advertising and corporate agendas.

Support for Multi-Denominational Schools and Facilitation of Cross-Border Access

- Allocate adequate funding for the Educate Together schools.
- Facilitate cross-border access to the school that is geographically closer.
- Eliminate cross-border fees affecting third level students from the 26 Counties who choose to study in the 6 Counties and vice versa.

Support for Special Needs Education.

- Allocate more resources for the National Educational Psychological Service to reduce waiting time for assessment and subsequent early detection of special educational needs.
- Fund appropriate supports within mainstream classrooms for children with special needs. This should include adequate provision of special needs assistants where required.
- Adopt an all-Ireland approach to securing rights and entitlements for those with autism through a rights-based legislative framework.

Prioritise action on autism to ensure the earliest intervention for all who need it, access to Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) and enhanced funding for people with autism, their carers and support organisations.

- Deliver the All-Ireland Centre of Excellence for Autism at Middletown, Co. Armagh, which was initiated by Martin McGuinness when he was Education Minister.

Educational Equality for Traveller Children

- Fully implement the Traveller Education Strategy and develop supplementary national education strategies for the inclusion of Traveller, Roma and other ethnic groups as necessary to systematically address segregation and combat discrimination, prejudice and racism in the educational setting.

Positive Educational Integration of International Newcomer Children

- Incorporate teaching of different cultures, beliefs and languages into the mainstream curriculum to foster interculturalism.
- Improve training for ESL teachers and remove caps on the number of language support resource hours.
- Facilitate and assist children from immigrant backgrounds to learn and/or retain their native languages.

Promotion of Irish Language Learning and Irish Medium Education

- Improve provision of náiscoilleana and Gaelscoilleana.
- Keep the Irish language as a core subject at post-primary level with increased emphasis on oral and aural Irish.
- Provide facilities in every third-level institution for students to pursue their studies through the medium of Irish.
- Establish an Irish language university.
- Increase Government support for accessible and affordable Irish language learning for adults.
- Provide adequate training and support for all teachers to have a basic qualification in Irish, reform an Scrúdú le hAghaidh Cáilíocht sa Ghaeilge, and introduce certification and mobility measures to ensure that teachers of Irish from the 6 Counties can work in the 26 Counties and vice versa.
- Facilitate schoolchildren, particularly those from disadvantaged areas, to attend the Gaeltacht for immersion learning.
- Teach a second subject through Irish at primary school level such as PE, music or drama.

Increased Accessibility of Level/Further and Higher Education

- Set targets to increase the number of students in further and higher education, especially part-time and adult students and other groups (including people with disabilities and Travellers).
- Provide third level access programmes for schools with a low take-up of places.
- Provide adequate financial assistance and support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to complete their courses.
- Double the third level grant to reflect the true cost of living.
- Implement the McIver Report recommendations to ensure that Post Leaving Cert Colleges (PLCs) receive adequate resources and other supports necessary for optimal functioning.
- Establish a high-quality child care infrastructure to support adult education.

Illiteracy Eradication, Support for Adult Education and Workplace Learning

- Launch a vigorous all-Ireland adult literacy campaign with a substantially increased budget and a separate budget for the provision of ESL (English as a second language) to newcomer international adults.
- Provide adult education free to all up to third level qualifications, abolish part-time fees and grant part-time students eligibility for maintenance grants.
- Produce a coherent National Strategy on Workplace Learning.
- Introduce paid learning leave for workers with Junior Cert qualifications or less.

Supporting Our Teachers

- Support appropriate improvement in pay, terms and conditions.
- Cover costs for trainee teachers during their sixteen-week training placement for which they receive no pay.
- Provide increased funding for continuous professional development opportunities.
- Provide laptop computers to all teachers to facilitate greater effectiveness in lesson preparation and administration activities.
- Support teacher exchange schemes between the two jurisdictions on this island and work for the harmonisation of curricula.
- Recognise the seriousness of school indiscipline including bullying, and allocate the necessary supports to assist schools and teachers to promote discipline in schools and ensure a positive learning environment.

Childcare is a Right

Sinn Féin believes that childcare is a right and policy must be geared to the needs of children and families rather than solely to the needs of the labour market. This State still has one of the lowest rates of childcare provision in the EU. Childcare costs almost one third of the average disposable income of a double-income family. It has become the 'second mortgage'. Many families on lower incomes either cannot get childcare at all, or else must pay a disproportionate amount of their income on massive weekly childcare bills. The lack of quality, affordable childcare prevents many women who wish to do so from working outside the home.

There is an urgent need to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for childcare provision. While some progress has been made since Sinn Féin first raised this demand in 2004 the Government has been far too slow to act and progress has come very late in its term of office.

The Sinn Féin Childcare Reform Package

We are proposing State-led provision of regulated comprehensive childcare, to be made available to all equally as of right, and funded by general direct and progressive taxation. This will include universal early childhood education and care, universal pre-school for 3 to 5s, and an afterschool childcare system.

In addition, there needs to be a greater recognition of the economic and social value of parents providing full-time care directly. All parents who wish to spend the first year caring for their child full-time should have the right to be enabled to do so, and employers should provide more flexibility for working parents to provide childcare directly when necessary, without penalty. We also propose that full-time family caring work should be recognised by the pension system through gender neutral Carers' Credits.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team sponsored a motion calling for the development of a comprehensive and accessible childcare infrastructure and a wide range of measures to assist parents, whether caring for children full-time in the home or working outside the home and using childcare services.

- We organized a conference on Best Practice in Childcare in Europe, hosted by our MEP MaryLou McDonald under the auspices of Sinn Féin's EU Parliamentary Group GUE/NGL.
- We consulted widely with the childcare sector before publishing our 2005 and 2006 pre-Budget priorities documents Putting Children First and distributed tens of thousands of newsletters throughout the country outlining our proposals and challenging the Government on its failure to deliver.
- Commission a study, including widespread public consultation, to determine the best way to support those parents whose work is in the home caring for their children.
- Introduce gender neutral Carers' Credits into the pension system.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

A Phased Introduction of Universal Childcare as a Right

- Immediately provide for a universal pre-school session of 3.5 hours a day, five days a week for all children aged 3-5 years.
- Expand the National Childcare Investment Programme to increase capital, staffing and operational funding.
- Review the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities and investigate the introduction of legislation in line with Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to require developers to construct childcare facilities in housing developments and to transfer these to the ownership of the local authority upon completion.
- Establish a single accrediting body to inspect, evaluate and register all early childhood care and education providers.
- Establish national pay scale for early childhood care and education workers.
- Introduce universal training and accreditation for childcare workers.
- Centralise childcare provision under a single Department.
- Immediately establish a Childcare Funding Commission to report within a reasonable time-frame on the projected costs of the transition to a comprehensive all-Ireland system of universal childcare provision and to make recommendations on how the State can best harness our resources in the interests of more equitable and efficient delivery.

Expanded Support for Parents Providing Full-Time Care

- Set a time-frame for the introduction of one year at 100% of pay and introduce two weeks paid paternity leave entitlements (as an interim step towards four weeks leave) to harmonise these rights on an all-Ireland basis.



A Strong Economy, Sustainable Into the Future

Sinn Féin wants a strong economy that is sustainable into the future. We are committed to building and maintaining an economic environment that enhances enterprise and job creation and that provides favourable conditions for business to operate in and for people to live and work in. We believe in economic reintegration and sovereignty. We believe in regional equality and balanced regional development. We know that achieving all these things will require government intervention and planning and public investment.

Current Government policy has failed to address rising inflation, an over-reliance on foreign direct investment and an over-dependence on the construction sector. The government has failed to promote balanced regional development and infrastructure and service provision is still not good enough in many parts of the State. The levels of research and development (R&D) remain too low. There is no coherent plan for developing indigenous business or for training and upskilling the workforce. There is a worrying and unacceptable move by some employers to sustain competitiveness on the back of low-paid and exploited migrant workers, and the Government has not prevented this. Furthermore, the active dismantling of the public enterprise sector has impeded the economy overall: for example the privatisation of Eircom significantly slowed broadband rollout.

The Government has also failed to proactively plan to meet future challenges to the economy, including specifically planning for workers employed in vulnerable sectors. According to the National Competitiveness Council, in the five years to March 2006 manufacturing industries lost over 32,000 jobs. Many of the jobs lost in rural areas are not being replaced - with devastating local effects. Many of the new jobs cited by the Government as replacing those lost are only part-time. That's not good enough.

Sinn Féin is the party most committed to developing a regionally balanced, single economy. We are the only party who understands the urgency of diversifying our competitive base to safeguard our economic health. We are the party most committed to the development of the indigenous business

sector and to protecting jobs and workers. Only Sinn Féin has a credible and comprehensive plan to grow and spread prosperity.

The Sinn Féin Platform for a Strong Economy

Sinn Féin's plan for a strong and sustainable economy involves five main priorities:³

- building the all-Ireland economy including all-Ireland economic planning and balanced regional development;
- providing world class infrastructure and public services to enhance Irish competitiveness;
- supporting enterprise and job creation;
- ensuring that workers' rights are fully protected in this process;
- supporting agriculture which provides 20% of all jobs outside the public sector.

We plan to diversify the basis of Irish competitiveness by investing in infrastructure, public services, R&D and a highly educated workforce, and by intervening to bring down business costs in key areas such as energy and insurance.

We propose to assist indigenous business development by supporting small and medium enterprises, social economy (non-profit community or co-operatively-owned) enterprises, and strategic sectors identified for growth.

We plan to invest in research and development, entrepreneurship and innovation, enterprise clusters and networks, and education and training. We would focus on provision of infrastructure and investment on an all-Ireland basis. We also propose a single currency, a single labour market and a harmonised tax regime for the island.

Building the All-Ireland Economy

Economic reunification and sovereignty is at the core of Sinn Féin economic policy. Partition is wasteful and inefficient for the Irish economy as a whole. It involves duplication of government and public service structures. It imposes an unnecessary administrative burden on those wishing to do business in both jurisdictions. It means we are competing with ourselves for economic investment, as well as with the rest of the world.

It is now widely recognised that our economic future depends on moving towards all-Ireland economic integration. Despite the recent lipservice given to all-Ireland development by the Government parties in particular, Sinn Féin is unquestionably the party most committed to deliver this.

We also need to invest and plan for balanced regional development so that no part of the country is excluded from the benefits of economic growth. The State must make robust interventions to reverse the legacy of underinvestment and neglect and bring economic equality to the regions including and especially the Border, Midlands and West of the Shannon and the Bann. Sinn Féin's decision to choose the Ministry for Regional Development over other important portfolios signals the degree of priority we would accord this in Government.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Economic Reintegration and Regional Equality

Sinn Féin proposes to accelerate all-Ireland economic reintegration pending reunification.

We will take all necessary measures to end economic discrimination and regional inequality by proactively planning and investing to rebalance regional development.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team consistently made the case for the development of the all-Ireland economy across the public and private sectors, and for the integration of services, so that we maximise the resources of our island in all areas from the health services to the mobile phone network.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Strengthening the All-Ireland Economy

- Adopt and implement pro-active all-Ireland economic development strategies, including an all-Ireland Economic Development Plan.
- Amalgamate inward investment agencies such as IDA Ireland and Invest NI into a single All-Ireland Investment Agency with a remit to assist indigenous industry. In the short term, ensure that they work together in a regionally-balanced manner, rather than competing with each other.
- Ensure maximum all-Ireland co-ordination in the use of EU funds.
- Harmonise the fiscal and legislative business environments.
- Begin an open debate on the benefits of one currency for the whole island.
- Remove obstacles to island-wide labour mobility.

Achieving Balanced Regional Development

- Adopt an all-Ireland Balanced Regional Development Strategy, based on objective need criteria, to end the imbalance in financial support for economic development and underinvestment in infrastructure along the border and in the west.
- Establish a public investment programme to ensure that Government departments and agencies not only deliver investment to the regions on an equal basis but proactively invest in historically neglected and underdeveloped areas to reverse the current imbalance.
- Create new incentives for private investment in areas of high unemployment or social deprivation.

Providing World Class Infrastructure

Infrastructure is one of the most important pillars of competitiveness in the global economy. The Government has failed to give this sufficient priority despite having the resources available. The state of infrastructure continues to be an impediment to further, more regionally-balanced growth.

Business and workers urgently need improved public transport provision, including an enhanced railway network. Our transport system has never fully recovered from the closure of rail lines in the 1950s and 60s. Public transport

continues to be severely under-funded, traffic gridlock is a chronic problem, many areas lack railway provision and there is a virtual absence of a rural community-based transport system. Business and workers also need efficient and safe road networks, and road networks in turn need planned development and proper maintenance. Vast sums have been spent on construction and upgrading of national primary routes in recent years, but much of this development has been uneven and significant gaps remain. Enhanced air and sea port provision are also important to economic development, and they deserve greater attention and State-led development on an all-Ireland basis.

Business needs communications infrastructure for sustainable economic growth and competitiveness. We lag behind other states in broadband provision. As a result of the decision to privatise Eircom, we went from Europe's second highest telecommunications technological availability to 23rd in less than a decade. In addition, the imposition of cross-border mobile roaming charges is not reasonable and needs to end. An Post provides a valuable and effective service that reaches everyone throughout the State and deserves safeguarding and diversification, not closures.

Business also needs affordable and reliable energy sources. The Government has failed to develop domestic energy production and all-Ireland networks, and has allowed Ireland to remain overdependent on foreign and non-renewable energy supplies and thus captive to oil price rises. The domestic renewable energy sector is underdeveloped despite huge potential. Some areas of the country still do not have natural gas connectivity. In addition, rather than keeping electricity prices as low as possible in the public interest, the Government has presided over unreasonable ESB increases as part of a cynical exercise in fattening the company for private sale.

Sinn Féin is strongly committed to deliver world class infrastructure. We believe that infrastructure provision is one of the core responsibilities of Government.

The Sinn Féin Platform on Infrastructure Provision

Sinn Féin proposes to plan, configure and fund all infrastructure – transport, communications and energy – on an all-Ireland basis.

Development of these strategic sectors which are so essential to continued economic growth cannot be left to chance and to the market. They can be efficiently and cost-effectively run by the public sector and should not be

privatised. We therefore propose that infrastructure development should be publicly funded and State-led.

We would prioritise environmentally sustainable public transport. In energy provision, we would support accelerated development of affordable renewable energy as a priority as this is the way of the future, and will also enhance increased Irish energy independence and we would bring Ireland onto the right side of the 'digital divide'.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team rejected the privatisation of our public transport system and called for an increase in the subvention to Bus Átha Cliath and Bus Éireann in order to acquire more much-needed buses.
- We sponsored a motion and Dáil debate opposing the privatisation of our national airline and raised the concerns of Aer Lingus workers.
- We called for increased rail usage to distribute freight and take trucks off our already congested roads, and called for the speedy completion of the Western Rail Corridor.
- We expressed our opposition to motorway and road tolls.
- We opposed the privatisation of Eircom and criticised the Government's abysmal telecommunications record on broadband uptake and under-provision in rural areas.
- We urged Minister to end the rip-off of mobile phone customers and abolish roaming charges, a major problem in border areas.
- We put pressure on the Minister for Communications to intervene to stop the closure of post offices, especially in rural areas.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

- Increased Investment in an All-Ireland Public Transport Network
- Increase investment in public transport, reject privatisation, make service more frequent and keep fares affordable.
- Reverse the policy of phasing out rail freight and institute a full review and restoration of this energy-efficient form of transport.
- Reopen many of the rail lines closed in the mid to late twentieth century, and plan for an extensive expansion of an all-Ireland rail network on an accelerated basis, including an extended Western Rail Corridor serving Donegal and Derry, the Derry-Dublin rail link, and the West Cork railway network.
- Prioritise rapid construction of rail/metro links to Dublin Airport and development of the Heuston-Connolly rail link.
- Develop a rail link to Shannon Airport, a Dublin-Navan rail link and upgrade the Derry-Belfast rail link.



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- Increase funding and provision of buses in rural areas and provide 500 extra buses for Bus Átha Cliath.
- Legislate for mandatory public transport provision, including park-and-ride facilities, to be factored into all major housing developments at the earliest planning stages.
- Legislate and budget to ensure that all public transport is accessible to people with disabilities.

Building an All-Ireland Road Network

- Build a North-West Motorway/high speed dual carriageway serving the route from Dublin to Donegal/Derry.
- Complete the M3 to serve the hard-pressed commuters of Meath and re-route it away from Tara, one of the nation's most important historical sites.
- Repeal the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006, which undemocratically restricts the ability of citizens to challenge planning decisions and forces major projects through the planning process.
- Oppose the use of Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs) to finance road construction.
- Abolish road tolls.
- Increase public funding for road upgrading and maintenance.
- Concentrate expenditure on increasing cycle lanes provision.
- Adopt a biofuel policy including tax incentives for the production of ethanol and provide incentives for car buyers to choose more environmentally friendly and efficient cars such as hybrid cars.

Improving Air Networks and Sea Ports on an All-Ireland Basis

- Initiate an all-Ireland strategic review of the air industry, including carriers and airports.
- Initiate an all-Ireland strategic review of the sea ports.
- Use Public Service Obligations to ensure the delivery of air services in the west and north-west and on an all-Ireland basis.
- Reverse the break-up of Aer Rianta, and return Air Lingus and Irish Ferries to public ownership or establish new companies in public ownership.

Universal Broadband and an All-Ireland Phone Network

- Invest to bring the Irish broadband network up to a satisfactory level and bridge the existing gap.
- Bring Eircom back into public ownership or establish a new company in public ownership.
- Set a target by which all telephone lines must be ADSL-enabled.
- Introduce all-Ireland co-operation to integrate telecommunications systems on the island, thereby improving the service and reduce costs particularly for those in the border region.
- Provide universal access to broadband on an all-Ireland basis.
- Establish an all-Ireland mobile phone network, with reasonable all-Ireland tariffs.

Saving, Developing and Diversifying An Post

- End the closure of Post Offices throughout the country.
- Reject privatisation of An Post and ensure it remains as a state asset under public control.
- Support the further diversification of the rural post office network into other areas of service provision.

Enhancing All-Ireland Energy Networks, Controlling Prices, Developing Renewables

- Develop an All-Ireland Energy Strategy to expand all-Ireland networks, accelerate development of the renewable energy sector with progressive targets towards energy independence, and bring domestic energy prices down.
- Ensure that an all-Ireland energy market benefits all through the provision of affordable sustainable energy and security of supply.
- Put an end to the artificial inflation of ESB prices, which results from the energy regulator's liberalisation remit and puts an undue burden on small businesses in particular.

Supporting Enterprise and Job Creation

Sinn Féin believes that indigenous business development is crucial for a sustainable economy. Under current Government policy the enterprise environment has actually deteriorated. Businesses large and small are now feeling the pinch from the combined impact of poor infrastructure and gridlock and spiralling energy, insurance, water and waste management prices. Smaller businesses get second class treatment. Only now, in the run-up to the General Election, is the Government finally beginning to take measures to promote R&D.

Sinn Féin is committed to supporting enterprise and job creation and to balanced regional development.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Irish Entrepreneurship

Sinn Féin proposes a package of measures aimed specifically at supporting and developing indigenous enterprise. We would continue to encourage more Foreign Direct Investment but give the same type of supports to small and medium businesses. We would also support agriculture which provides 20% of all jobs outside of the public sector.

We also believe that publicly-owned companies make an important contribution to the Irish economy and business environment – particularly where these are established in strategic sectors – and moreover that these can be run both efficiently and profitably. We do not propose to continue the downsizing of the public sector in the 26 Counties, but rather to retain profitable and especially strategic sector companies in public ownership and to develop new companies where there is scope for this.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team consistently opposed the privatisation of essential public utilities that are vital to a healthy business environment.
- We consistently pressed for an increased focus on supporting indigenous industry and promoting R&D amongst Irish companies.
- We pushed for meaningful intervention where jobs were lost as multinational companies moved their operations to lower cost

economies. We demanded improved redundancy protections for workers and that the Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment carry out an assessment of the relevance of training courses provided by FÁS in meeting the needs of business and those seeking employment.

- We called attention to Government failures to focus business development supports on areas such as County Donegal that have experienced significant job losses and have above average levels of unemployment.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Support for Private Enterprise

- Support the development of indigenous micro and small and medium enterprises (SME) and social economy enterprises.
- Establish an All-Ireland Small Business Task Force to develop an island-wide strategy for the indigenous SME sector.
- Improve support for start-up businesses including provision of increased business advice, guidance and training plus dedicated management development.
- Adopt an All-Ireland R&D Strategy co-ordinated through the enterprise development agencies, central and local government, business, trade unions and educational institutions – including a programme of extra assistance to SMEs and new businesses to develop business plans for R&D.
- Adopt an All-Ireland Clustering Strategy that both targets the new emerging technologies and strengthens the potential in existing economic sectors such as financial services, agriculture and food processing. Make extra funding and supports available to develop clusters in the more underdeveloped and disadvantaged areas such as the Border Midlands West region.
- Initiate a targeted and funded strategy to pre-emptively up-skill workers vulnerable to future jobs-losses following an assessment of sectors and geographic regions likely to experience job losses in the next five years.
- Provide specific recycling depots for small business to enable them to reduce their waste management costs.
- Initiate a specific Redundancy to Entrepreneurship scheme to assist workers who have become redundant to establish their own businesses.

Support for Public Enterprise

- Establish a State oil, gas and mineral exploration company.
- Establish a publicly-owned company to develop Irish renewable energy resources for the benefit of the nation.
- Actively pursue the return of Eircom, Aer Lingus and Irish Ferries to public ownership or establish new State companies in these sectors.
- Oppose the privatisation of the ESB and other public sector companies.
- Explore and pursue possibilities for establishing new profitable companies in public ownership, particularly in strategic sectors.

Developing Social Economy and Cooperative Enterprise

- Adopt a co-ordinated and comprehensive Social Economy Strategy on an all-Ireland and cross-departmental basis.
- Establish an appropriately-funded, all-Ireland Social Economy Development Agency (including a dedicated Co-operative Development Unit) to develop the sector strategically.
- Ensure increased investment in community-owned enterprise units and infrastructure by the enterprise development agencies.
- Provide specific government support for social economy community-run projects in the renewable energy, housing and agricultural sectors.

Promoting Workers' Rights

Sinn Féin believes that workers' rights are basic requirements of a healthy economy and a just society. We aim to end exploitation and unsafe working conditions and to ensure that everyone can have rewarding employment, a fair income and a good quality family life.

Government policy has steadily eroded workers' rights over the last decade. Employers displace well-paid workers for lower-paid labour because they can do so in the absence of strict regulation and stringent enforcement. Evidence of exploitation involving abuse of migrant workers is mounting across the State.

Yet weak regulation and poor enforcement have resulted in low rates of inspection and prosecution for violations. The rate of working households in

poverty has doubled over the last decade as a result of low-paid employment. Non-enforcement, insufficient penalties and deficiencies in law all contribute to high-levels of work-related illness, injuries and fatalities. In 2005, 73 people lost their lives in work-related accidents.

Sinn Féin has established a new Trade Union Department and published a detailed plan to bring workers' rights back to the centre of economic and social policy.

The Sinn Féin Workers' Rights Platform⁴

Sinn Féin's priority is to better the lot of all workers in Ireland. We advocate employment based on equality with fair conditions and a secure living wage, in a work environment that is safe, healthy and free from harassment and discrimination. Rogue employers who operate dangerous workplaces or unsafe work practices or who exploit workers and violate labour law in Ireland must be made subject to stringent penalties. Employers must be made to recognise trade unions and trade unions' right to organise recognised in law.

Sinn Féin recognises that Irish workers and trade unions have legitimate concerns regarding 'displacement' by lower-paid workers, including migrant workers. 'Displacement' is not so much the exchange of Irish workers for non-Irish workers but the exchange of organised workers with good pay, conditions and benefits for unorganised workers who are ripe for exploitation. The solution to displacement therefore lies in regulating employment standards (including pay and working conditions) for all workers, and their effective enforcement to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable workers for profit.

Sinn Féin also proposes enactment of a new generation of employment equality legislation. Particularly as we move towards an all-Ireland labour market, we propose an upward-harmonisation of employment equality law – as well as all other workers' rights – on an all-Ireland basis. We plan to enshrine workers' rights in the 1937 Constitution in a future All-Ireland Charter of Rights and in a United Irish Constitution. These will include the right of workers to organise, to join trade unions, to negotiate contracts of employment, and to strike. Sinn Féin would establish a Department and Minister of Labour.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team published the Corporate Manslaughter Bill 2007 to make employers accountable for the death of an employee in the workplace as a result of negligence.
- We regularly called attention to cases of migrant worker exploitation, and proposed amendments to the Employment Permits Bill to enshrine equal rights for migrant workers, to change the law so that all employment permits would be issued directly to the worker and to extend family reunification and employment rights.
- We used the Private Members Time in the Dáil to initiate a debate calling for the establishment of a stand alone Department of Labour Affairs.
- In the Dáil Sinn Féin has consistently demanded government action on workplace fatalities, injuries and illnesses.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

- Promoting Trade Union Rights and Establishing a Department of Labour.
- Hold a referendum to enshrine in the 1937 Constitution the right of workers to form, join and be represented by trade unions, to negotiate contracts of employment, and to engage in industrial action and trade union activities. This will have the effect of making trade union recognition mandatory.
- Harmonise labour law upwards on an all-Ireland basis.
- Establish a Department of Labour with a full Minister and a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Labour Affairs.

Ending Exploitation

- Establish a toll-free 24 hour Workers' Rights Helpline.
- Determine the optimum number of labour inspectors, as well as the legal and other professional supports required and immediately implement any necessary increase.
- Introduce a penalty points system against rogue employers who consistently violate labour law, with a range of penalties including a bar from eligibility for public contracts and removal from the companies register.
- Review, strengthen and introduce where necessary new Employment Regulation Orders covering service sector employment.

- Increase regulation of the apprenticeship system and extend minimum wage legislation to cover apprentices.
- Increase regulation and introduce licensing of employment agencies.
- Increase regulation of contractors and subcontractors to end exploitation through coerced bogus self-employment.
- Adopt public purchasing and investment policies to bar companies engaged in exploitation of workers or anti-trade union activities from receiving Government contracts.
- Introduce public disclosure ('whistleblowers') protection legislation.

Combating Displacement by Promoting Equal Rights for Migrant Workers

- Legislate to establish rights and entitlements for migrant workers equivalent to those of host society workers.
- Amend the law to provide that in all cases employment permits are issued directly to migrant workers and not their employers, and to extend migrant workers' rights to family reunification and employment.

Combating Low Pay

- Immediately increase the minimum wage to 60% of the average industrial wage and abolish age and experience differentials.
- Provide for stringent enforcement of minimum wage legislation and increase penalties for non-compliance.
- Establish a Low Pay Commission responsible for developing a time-framed National Strategy for the Reduction of Wage Differentials between low paid and high-paid workers.
- Initiate a review of workers' pay and conditions with a remit to recommend remedies for deficiencies identified.

Sick Pay, Overtime Pay and Better Protection from Redundancy

- Introduce a Statutory Sick Pay Scheme.
- Introduce a statutory entitlement to overtime pay.
- Legislate to introduce redundancy protection from the first day of employment with no minimum qualifying hours per week, and increase redundancy payments to a minimum of four weeks of pay per year of service.

Pension Justice

- Investigate the introduction of a basic non-means tested pension supplementing second tier (PRSI/Carers' Credit-related) pensions.

Enforcing and Improving Workplace Health and Safety

- Immediately introduce a package of robust prevention and enforcement initiatives to tackle work-related illness, injuries and fatalities including increased prosecutions and penalties for violations of health and safety law and standards.
- Introduce a package of programmes to tackle other work-related hazards such as toxic stress and bullying as well as truly effective workplace drug and alcohol policies.
- Increase the number of health and safety inspectors to a level that enables the Health and Safety Authority to effectively fulfil all its responsibilities under existing worker health and safety legislation.
- Introduce a penalty point system to deal with companies and employers that consistently transgress health and safety law, with a range of penalties including removal from the companies register and a bar from eligibility for public contracts.
- Immediately enact corporate manslaughter legislation.
- Develop a ten-year All-Ireland Health and Safety at Work Strategy.

Promoting Work-Life Balance

- Introduce a statutory right to request flexible working arrangements that requires all employers to 'seriously consider' this and only permits refusal where there is a compelling business case.

Promoting Employment Equality

- Amend employment equality legislation to prohibit discrimination on all the following grounds: race, ethnic origin (including membership of the Travelling community), nationality, colour, gender (including gender identity), sexual orientation, disability, age, social or economic status, marital or family status, residence, language, religious belief, criminal conviction (save where the offence would be objectively incompatible with job responsibilities), political or other opinion or membership of a trade union.
- Introduce legal sanctions on those who promote or incite discrimination or who directly participate in sectarian, racist, homophobic, or sexual

- harassment or other victimisation on any of the prohibited grounds.
- Legislate to prohibit employment discrimination against former political prisoners.
- Develop a specific state-wide strategy to tackle high rates of unemployment among disabled workers with effective supports for the public and private sector to recruit people with disabilities.
- Introduce subsidy and tax relief measures on the cost of workplace adaptations to accommodate workers with disabilities.



An Equal Economy, Where Wealth is Shared

Sinn Féin believes that we need an economy that is not only strong but also equal. The world's most equal economies are also among the most stable and prosperous. That is what we want for our country.

The 26 Counties may have become one of the world's richest state but it is also one of the most unequal. The policies of successive Irish Governments have created an economy in which the wealthiest 20% now earns more than ten times the income of the poorest 20%.

Inequality is not good for the economy – it is wasteful and costly. It is not equality but poverty that drains public resources. It is far better for all of us when everybody can make their full contribution to our economy and society. When everyone is working and earning a decent income, they are also spending, supporting businesses and paying their fair share of tax to ensure that the Government can provide all the services, social supports and other infrastructure needed to grow and spread prosperity.

All parties claim to oppose poverty and support equality. Only Sinn Féin has brought the Equality Agenda to the centre of all our economic and social policy.

The Sinn Féin Platform for an Equal Economy

Equality is at the heart of Sinn Féin's agenda for government. We believe in the right to universal access to excellent healthcare, education and childcare. We believe in the constitutional right to a home. We believe in building the economy and using the wealth created for the public good. We believe that people should pay according to their ability to pay and that everyone should have equal access to the highest quality public services, infrastructure and social protections.

For ten years there has been unprecedented revenue available to the Irish Government. They have had the ability and the resources to deal effectively

with poverty and inequality. They have had the resources to deliver an end to the crisis in the health service, to build social and affordable housing, to provide a decent education system and to introduce comprehensive childcare. They have chosen not to. Sinn Féin would make different choices.

Sinn Féin believes that public finances should be used to share the wealth by ensuring the highest possible quality of infrastructure and public services are available equally to all as of right. We undertake to guarantee that everyone's basic needs and rights to food and warmth, housing, health, education and childcare are met and that all have the benefit of a comprehensive regime of social protections. We are committed to eliminate poverty through the progressive achievement of the equitable distribution of the wealth of Ireland amongst the people of Ireland.

These objectives require taxation justice, a new emphasis on the generation of significant non-tax revenue, and public spending policies that are sustainable, transparent and accountable and that eliminate waste. They will also require the removal of many of the current constraints on our economic sovereignty imposed by the EU.

Eliminating Poverty

Sinn Féin believes that poverty must be eradicated. Our society is now in a better position than ever before to achieve this.

Yet the current Irish Government has failed to use our economic success to benefit everyone. It has failed to share the abundant wealth with those most vulnerable such as the unemployed, large families, lone parent families, those in low-income jobs, older people, and people with disabilities. As a consequence of bad policy choices and wrong priorities, nearly one in five people are still at risk of poverty and struggle to make ends meet. Almost 275,000 people are still poor enough that they lack some of the necessities of life including adequate food, shelter, warmth and clothing. We have one of

the highest rates of child poverty in the EU and OECD. Over 60,000 people cannot afford to adequately heat their homes.

All parties pay lip service to eliminating poverty. Only Sinn Féin brings this commitment into the heart of our economic policy and elevates it as our principal economic objective. Elimination of poverty is a national aspiration shared by virtually every Irish person and we are committed to do what is necessary to achieve this goal.

The Sinn Féin Anti-Poverty Platform⁵

We believe there is a positive obligation on government to eliminate poverty by providing a comprehensive system of social supports to ensure that everyone has a decent quality of life, does not lack for essentials, and can access appropriate education and employment. Social welfare reforms should not be used to force people into low paid employment, creating a larger substratum of 'working poor'.

We propose to take all necessary steps to genuinely ease the transition from welfare to work through education and employment measures, accessible and affordable childcare, and appropriate and adequate income supports. We propose a package of measures to raise household incomes, enhance specific supports for low-income families, eradicate food and fuel poverty, bring early school leavers back into education, increase support for unpaid care work and tackle disability-related poverty.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team was to the fore in highlighting the fact that poverty has left a significant proportion of the population marginalised and excluded. We called the Government to account for its inaction on the National Anti-Poverty Strategy commitments and on child poverty.
- We repeatedly raised with the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the fact that social welfare payments and pensions are not adequate to keep people out of poverty.
- We opposed cuts in Community Employment (CE) and J1 schemes.
- Every year at Budget time we pressed for additional assistance for lone parents who experience disproportionate levels of poverty.
- We were foremost in pressing for an increase in Child Dependent Allowance when the government maintained a freeze on it.

- We continuously raised the issue of fuel poverty, including specifically pushing for additional measures to address the impact of fuel price increases.
- Since 2004 our Pre-Budget Submissions Putting Children First and Putting Low Income Families First included proposals aimed at ending poverty for those in employment and increasing social protections of those out of work or working in the home. We also put forward specific proposals for helping the less well off cope with rising costs.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Raising Household Incomes

- Increase the minimum wage to 60% of average industrial earnings, index-linked to inflation. Eliminate the discriminatory lower rate of pay for young people.
- Set a new longer term benchmark against which the evolution of social welfare rates can be measured. Sinn Féin is proposing that a new short term target of 35% of gross average industrial earnings be set.
- Double the Living Alone Allowance.
- Increase the Family Income Supplement by €68 per week and make it an automatic payment. Ensure all those eligible take it up, reduce the qualifying working hours and make it more flexible to recognise seasonal work.
- Extend eligibility for the Back to Work Allowance to include those who are unemployed for more than 12 months.
- Extend the new Early Childcare Supplement to include children aged 6 to 12.

Enhancing Specific Supports for Lone Parents

- Ensure lone parents can keep their rent supplement for at least 3 years of full-time work and continually if they are in part-time employment.
- Introduce adequate supports to ensure that lone parents in work can access well-paid and meaningful employment, including a comprehensive revamp of schemes for bringing lone parents back into the formal education system as a crucial element of incentives to return to work.
- Ensure that proposed reforms replacing the One Parent Family Payment with a Parental Allowance are accompanied by adequate education/training and childcare supports
- Remove the cut-off point for the new Parental Allowance (proposed when children reach the age of 7).

Eradicating Food and Fuel Poverty

- Increase the weekly fuel allowance payment to €25, or the equivalent in an allowance for units of electricity and heating fuel, for those on social welfare payments and families eligible for FIS, and extend the fuel allowance from the beginning of September to the end of April – for 34 weeks instead of the current 29 weeks.

Bringing Early School Leavers Back Into Education

- Make the Back to Education Allowance available to all those on low incomes after six months unemployment.

Increasing Support for Unpaid Care Work

- Abolish the means test for carers, substantially increase the Carer's Allowance, respite care and support services and provide for needs assessment and training of carers.
- Increase the Orphan Guardian Payment to the level of the Foster Care Allowance. Change the criteria to ensure that grandparents or other family members do not have to agree that the child in question was 'abandoned' in order to receive payments to help look after the children of their drug-addicted sons and daughters and bring supports into line with provision for foster parents.

Tackling Disability-Related Poverty

- Introduce a Cost of Disability Payment on a phased basis, to offset extra costs related to disability and in recognition of disproportionate rates of poverty and unemployment among people with disabilities.

Sharing the Wealth by Financing Better Services, Infrastructure and Social Protections

The most important reason for a Government to raise revenue is for the purpose of financing world class public services and infrastructure and social protections from which all benefit or potentially benefit. Sinn Féin believes that this revenue should be raised fairly: those who have more should pay more, and those who have less should pay less. No tax should be unfair or onerous. No one should have to pay twice as a consequence of service charges and user fees for what should be public services already paid for

through taxation. The Government should also seek to raise revenue through methods other than taxation or selling off public assets in order to reduce the burden on taxpayers to the greatest possible extent.

The current system for raising public finance is unjust and needs to change. Successive Government policy has created a situation whereby some of the wealthiest people on this island pay no income tax at all – while people on middle incomes are not only paying tax at a rate of 41%, they also pay disproportionately more of their income on tax through consumption tax (VAT) as well as on the indirect or double taxes of service charges and user fees. Almost one third of the overall tax take is raised through consumption tax. When taken together with excise duties, it amounts to nearly half of all tax receipts.

The coalition government redistributed wealth in favour of the already-wealthy. They have allowed the super-rich to skim off the rest of us. They have also sold off public assets and profitable public companies and contracted public services out privately. This policy has not only deprived the State of important sources of non-tax revenue, it has also subjected people to double taxation.

All parties claim to be in favour of fair taxation but none has made it happen. Only Sinn Féin has the will to tackle the super rich – the exploiters who make super profits by the clever use of tax loopholes – and to maximise public ownership of profitable companies. Sinn Féin is committed to public finance reform and taxation justice, to enhancing non-tax sources of public revenue, and to spending the public wealth responsibly – on the delivery of services, infrastructure and social protections for the benefit of all.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Taxation Justice

Our basic principle is that people should pay according to their ability to pay. We believe that tax policy should be about reducing the burden on low and middle-income people as much as possible. It should be about encouraging local small businesses and the social economy. It should be about ensuring there is sufficient revenue to deliver strong public services, infrastructure and social protections. That is what we would work to see delivered in government.



It is not fair that the lower-paid should subsidise the wealthy, as is currently the case. Everybody should pay their fair share – and no more than that.

The tax system needs to be overhauled to bring about a fair and equal system where everybody pays their fair share. Our first order of business for tax policy will be eliminating and closing all the loopholes and reducing the burden on the lowest-paid. We are also committed to reclaim and protect Irish sovereignty over taxation from encroachment by the EU and to harmonise the tax system on an all-Ireland basis.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team was to the fore in highlighting the injustices at the heart of the present tax regime. Each year we made a Pre-Budget Submission to the Minister for Finance setting out what we believe should be Government priorities.
- We demanded the lowering of the burden on low and middle income earners by reducing and removing regressive features that penalise them, including ending indirect taxes such as refuse charges that constitute double taxation.
- We were foremost in demanding the abolition of damaging, costly and unjust tax giveaways to speculators and developers.
- We strongly opposed Government use of tax breaks to promote the private healthcare business.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Reducing the Tax Burden on the Lowest Paid

- Keep those on or below the minimum wage out of the tax net, and set the minimum wage at a minimum of 60% of average industrial earnings.
- Keep those on or below the average industrial earnings within the standard rate tax band.
- Oppose the introduction of user fees and service charges for essential public services and review the existing charges that apply to public services to plan for their reduction and removal.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the VAT system in order to identify the best ways to reduce the consumption tax burden on the lowest paid within present EU constraints,. Campaign at EU level for repeal of the EU VAT Directive to restore Member State sovereignty on VAT, and determine the most appropriate way to achieve VAT harmonisation on an all-Ireland basis.

Ensuring the Wealthiest Pay their Fair Share

- Aggressively pursue tax evasion and invest adequate resources for tax collection and enforcement.
- Close all remaining legal loopholes that have allowed millionaires to pay no tax whatsoever.
- Introduce legislation to end tax exile status – the ability of high income individuals to declare themselves ‘non-resident for tax purposes’.
- Review all current tax exemptions and retain only those where the economic and social value clearly outweighs the cost of the exemption to the Exchequer (for example in the case of R&D).
- Increase restrictions on the use of specified tax reliefs by high-income individuals, for example by introducing a ceiling on exempt income.

Fundamental Tax Reform

- Conduct an early, comprehensive review of the tax system to be completed within one year, in order to ensure a just and equitable system where everyone pays their fair share of tax but no more than that.
- Work for the restoration of economic sovereignty and for EU Member States to retain complete control over taxation policy and strategy, and in particular work for the restoration of Member State competence in relation to VAT through repeal of the EU VAT Directive.
- Negotiate for tax harmonisation across the island.

A New Emphasis on Non-Tax Revenue

We aim to keep public service provision high and taxes as low as possible. This means that finding other non-tax sources of public revenue must become a priority. Sinn Féin would therefore put a unique new policy emphasis on maximising non-tax sources of revenue.

Current Government policy is not concerned with this. In 2005 only approximately 1.5% of overall Government revenue came from non-tax sources. There is ample but as yet underdeveloped potential to realise significant revenue from profitable public companies, particularly in strategic sectors such as transport, communications and energy. For example, in 2005 the Exchequer received in excess of €5 million in royalties from Marathon Petroleum, in excess of €10 million from Bord Gáis Éireann, approximately €73.5 million in dividends from the ESB and it is estimated that the Corrib field may contain reserves valued at up to €21 billion.

The experience of Norway where the mineral exploration sector has become one of the engines of economic growth proves the benefits of state involvement in the natural resources sector in particular. Earnings from oil and gas contribute almost one third of state revenue in Norway. In contrast, the Irish Government has actually surrendered our entire stake in any finds, reduced tax levels, abolished royalties and granted long-term frontier licences. All this has been done at a great financial loss to the people of Ireland and the Exchequer.

The Sinn Féin Platform to Enhance Non-Tax Revenue

We would reverse the irresponsible policies of natural resource giveaway and official neglect of opportunities to raise non-tax revenue by investing in profitable public companies.

Moreover, we would invest strategically in the accelerated development of the renewable energy sector, as this is the way of the future: moving us towards environmental sustainability, energy independence and enhanced non-tax sources of public revenue.

We recognise that current EU rules impose some constraints on our objectives. We would therefore work with allies in Europe for the necessary reforms at EU level to remove these impediments, and we would also pursue specific exemptions similar to those achieved by Germany to allow Ireland to use State aid to finance reunification.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team published a motion advocating the creation of a public company to oversee mineral explorations and the imposition of proper tax and royalties. We raised these demands with the Minister for the Marine and Natural Resources on numerous occasions.
- We made a comprehensive submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport opposing the proposed privatisation of Aer Lingus, wrote to the EU Commissioner urging an investigation of the attempted takeover of Aer Lingus by Ryanair, repeatedly raised the airline privatisation issue with the Minister for Transport, and moved a Dáil motion opposing the proposed sale of Aer Lingus, prompting a debate in the House. Throughout this campaign we were in regular contact with SIPTU union leaders and raised airline employee concerns regularly in the Dáil.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Reclaiming our National Resources

- Reform the current exploration licensing and taxation regime and renegotiate oil and gas contracts.
- Establish a State oil, gas and mineral exploration company that would actively participate and invest in exploration which, alongside a proper revenue and royalties structure, would ensure that such finds benefit the Irish people by providing additional revenue for the Exchequer.

Realising the Potential Revenue from Renewable Energy

- Plan for strategic public investment in developing the renewable energy sector including the establishment of a profitable company or companies in public ownership.
- Set a target for becoming a net exporter of electricity from renewable sources.

Maintaining Profitable Companies in Public Ownership

- Keep the ESB and all other profitable public companies in public ownership.
- Actively pursue returning Eircom and Aer Lingus to public ownership.
- Explore and pursue the possibilities for the establishment of new public sector companies.
- Negotiate at EU level for an exception to the EU State Aid Rules similar to that conceded to Germany, to assist post-partition reconstruction for reunification.

Responsible Spending of Public Wealth in the Public Interest

The big question for many people is whether the vast amount of revenues, generated from both the EU and taxation, are being put to the most efficient use. The answer to that question is No. Official incompetence and corruption have resulted in waste of public resources and failure to meet budget and completion targets. We all know about the faulty electronic voting machines, the PPARS health computer system which does not work, the overruns in the

Port Tunnel and other major road and infrastructure projects. There has been some improvement in relation to spending on major road projects in recent months but the overall problem remains. The era of government squandering public finances has to end.

All parties claim a monopoly on fiscal responsibility, but what we need are credible proposals to deal with the problem. Sinn Féin is determined to change the bad planning and procurement policies, the poor decision making and established practices – and to challenge the vested interests, privatisation and lack of public accountability – that have resulted in cost overruns and wastage. We are equally determined to introduce new policies and practices that ensure responsible spending of the public wealth in the public interest.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Responsible Spending

Sinn Féin believes that publicly-funded projects must deliver on budget and on time, and we would take the necessary steps to guarantee value for public money. We propose to introduce efficiency and effectiveness audits to ensure that public spending is meeting economic and social goals. We propose to end the wasting of public funds on Public-Private-Partnerships which are inefficient and ineffective. We propose to introduce significant efficiencies in investment and spending through all-Ireland procurement. And we propose to introduce more direct accountability for public spending and participation in public spending decisions through mechanisms including the establishment of an All-Ireland Consultative Civic Forum.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team consistently drew attention to the extent to which public money is wasted through PPPs.
- We used our annual Pre-Budget Submissions to call for equality-proofing and poverty-proofing of the Budget.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Introducing Efficiency and Effectiveness Audits

- Subject public spending not just to 'value for money' efficiency audits but also to regular effectiveness audits against social and economic goals.

Ending PPP-Related Waste

- Empower the Comptroller and Auditor General to examine all existing PPP projects for cost overruns, revenue foregone and wastage against long-term cost and profit projections.

- End the use of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and reassess existing PPP contracts with a view to returning them to the public sector.

Introducing All-Ireland Efficiencies in Spending

- Immediately implement public investment as a new area of all-Ireland co-operation, operating as a formal partnership between the Strategic Investment Board in the 6 Counties and the National Development Finance Agency in the 26 Counties, with a remit to include co-ordination of State and local procurement strategies as well as public and social investment.
- Establish an All-Ireland Procurement and Purchasing Agency accountable to the Dáil, Assembly and All-Ireland Ministerial Council to introduce greater efficiencies.

Increasing Transparency and Accountability in Public Spending

- Establish a mechanism for participatory budgeting through the All-Ireland Consultative Civic Forum to increase accountability and to allow taxpayers and other voters to have direct input into budgetary priorities.
- Practice multi-annual budgeting and ring-fence a meaningful proportion for programmes aimed at reversing economic inequality and eliminating poverty.
- Establish an All-Ireland Comptroller and Auditor General's Office accountable to the Dáil, Assembly and All-Ireland Ministerial Council sited in the AIMC Directorate.



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Equality for Rural Communities

Sinn Féin wants to see a new deal for rural Ireland. We want to ensure that people can continue to live and work and count on a decent quality of life in rural communities. We want to see agriculture and fisheries remain an important part of our rural and coastal economies. We want to see the development of new and potentially dynamic sectors of the rural and coastal economies such as renewable energy production.

Successive Governments, led by all the establishment parties have presided over the economic and demographic decline of rural Ireland. This decline is neither inevitable nor accidental but the result of decades of neglect and wrong policy – the failure to act as a strong advocate for Irish farming, Irish fishing and rural communities as a whole. It is also the result of a discriminatory approach to investment in off-farm employment, infrastructure and service provision.

We strongly believe that with equal treatment, planning, innovation, investment and other support, rural and coastal economies, industries, businesses and communities can have a sustainable future. Moreover, we are convinced that future viability – particularly of Irish farming, fishing and new rural industries – rests on their development within an all-Ireland context. Sinn Féin is the only party fully committed to this.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Rural Regeneration⁶

Sinn Féin wants to empower rural communities to reach their maximum potential. We want to create strong and sustainable rural communities supported by sustainable rural economies, adequate infrastructure, and equal access to housing and public services. We believe that the means to achieving rural regeneration is through all-Ireland investment and planning underpinned by a commitment to Rural Equality.

Rural Equality requires in the first instance real decentralisation for balanced regional development.⁷ This means more than the decentralisation of

government departments: it means decentralisation of investment and the incentives that create employment opportunities. Sinn Féin will guarantee an equal level of provision of essential public services for all. We will redress the current infrastructural deficits by extending rural transport and broadband networks. We will ensure the safety of people living in rural communities by providing adequate levels of policing. We will address the planning permission problem that is creating a crisis in rural housing and reducing the overall viability of rural communities. Sinn Féin proposes a strategic programme for affirmative action in all these areas to redress the unequal treatment of rural communities to date.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team regularly raised the effects of overall Government policies on the quality of life in rural communities. We argued for equality for rural hospitals and schools, transport and communications. We argued against closures of rural post offices, cutbacks in rural policing, and the planning restrictions that impede local people from accessing housing.
- We published a Private Members motion on rural regeneration which triggered the most wide-ranging debate on the issue in the lifetime of the current Dáil.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

A Strategic and All-Ireland Approach to Rural Regeneration

- Immediately commission an All-Ireland Rural White Paper that will take into account the needs of all those living and working in rural areas.
- Agree a comprehensive, fully integrated, properly resourced All-Ireland Rural Regeneration Strategy – in consultation with farmers and fishermen, rural businesses, rural communities and their representative organisations.

- Introduce a package of incentives to create rural economic hubs.
- Pursue rural policies that will sustain the long-term needs of the people without damaging our natural environment.
- Introduce structures, mechanisms and practices that respect rural people's right to participate more directly in decisions affecting their own community.

Increased Investment in Off-Farm Employment

- Use an All-Ireland Balanced Regional Development Strategy to end the underinvestment and imbalance in financial support for the development of rural and coastal economies, particularly in the north western and border areas.⁸
- Support public and private sector decentralisation from the east coast by building the necessary infrastructure for balanced regional development.⁹
- Create new incentives for investment and implement a public investment programme in the rural areas of highest unemployment.
- Actively promote and support entrepreneurship within rural communities, especially co-operative and other 'social economy' ventures.
- Provide greater access to start-up incentives for rural businesses.

The Right to Rural Housing and Responsible Rural Planning

- Reform the planning laws to support the right of rural dwellers to build on their own land or to purchase and build locally.
- Create a grant scheme to encourage first-time house buyers in rural areas to renovate derelict houses.
- Expand the Rural Cottage Scheme.

Increased Investment in Rural Infrastructure and Services

- Ensure equal access to essential infrastructure and public service provision including healthcare, education, childcare, transport, communications, policing, recreation and other essential services.
- Establish a Rural Health Taskforce. Remove the barrier to GP access in border areas, maintain and develop the rural hospital network, and invest in an all-Ireland air ambulance fleet.
- Upgrade all substandard rural schools.
- Enhance investment in rural public transport and ensure planned

delivery of an all-Ireland road and rail network, with a focus on accelerated development in the western and border regions.

- Save the network of rural post offices and support their further diversification.
- Provide universal access to broadband services on an all-Ireland basis.
- Ensure PEACE III funding specifically targets social need in the border corridor.

A Sustainable Future for Irish Agriculture

Agriculture remains an important part of rural life and a key economic factor even for those not directly employed on farms. Sinn Féin is committed to ensure that family farming is protected from further erosion. Moreover, we are committed to achieve the revitalisation of Irish agriculture into the future.

An ever-increasing share of the price charged to consumers now goes to processors and retail conglomerates. This is making it difficult for farmers to remain economically viable: indeed, little more than half of dairy and tillage farmers and only 15% of beef farmers can achieve this. Sinn Féin supported the introduction of the Single Farm Payment as part of the reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), as it provides a potential means to allow family farms to increase their income and viability. The Government failed to capitalise on this. It has also failed to frame a strategy that would boost agricultural incomes through a focus on development of new sectors and food processing for higher value production.

The Government has accepted diktats from the EU even where these have proved disastrous for Irish farmers. A prime example of this was its refusal to defend the Irish sugar industry, which was sacrificed in an EU deal with the WTO and then asset-stripped by Greencore shareholders. It also did not oppose EU moves towards the introduction of genetically modified (GM) crops, which would be disastrous for the Irish tillage sector. Nor did it defend the Irish beef sector from the threat posed by meat imports from third countries.

Sinn Féin will act as strong advocates for Irish farmers and proactively plan to ensure a viable and sustainable future for Irish agriculture. We have demonstrated the depth of our commitment by selecting the Agriculture Ministry in the northern Assembly over other competing priorities.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Revitalising Agriculture

Sinn Féin believes the reformed CAP will only benefit farmers if the Irish Government forms its own strategy to support the future of farming. Such a strategy must be all-Ireland in scope. It must focus on new areas of production including renewable energy crops and organic farming, as well as higher value processing of Irish food products in Ireland. It must also ensure the protection of food produce from the threats posed by cheap imports, further EU and World Trade Organisation (WTO) restrictions and the possible introduction of GM crops.

Sinn Féin proposes to market Irish produce as 'safe food'. We will therefore introduce the stringent labelling of all food products on an all-Ireland basis, to support the buying of Irish food produce both for economic and health and safety reasons. This is in the interests of producers as well as consumers. We will support the extension of organic farming, which currently constitutes a very small part of overall production despite the clear demand for such produce and higher-than-average incomes earned by organic farmers catering for either the domestic or export market.

We also propose a series of measures to secure fair payment for farmers including support for the formation of farmers' co-operatives for domestic production, processing and retailing, and the extension of farmers markets to circumvent the grip of the large processors and retailers that squeeze producers' incomes.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team consistently defended the interests of the family farm in contributions to debates on legislation and in hundreds of questions to the Minister for Agriculture. We argued for a fairer price for farmers and promoted the advantages of reviving genuine farmers co-operatives to challenge the power of agri-business.
- We stood up for the rights of farmers on the Early Retirement Scheme (ERS), championed the rights of those farmers who lost out with the introduction of the Single Farm Payment, argued for fairer treatment for those who entered into the ERS in good faith, and challenged the claim that their fate was out of the Government's hands due to EU directives.

- We continually questioned this Government's support for GM at EU level and its implications for Irish agriculture.
- We strongly argued against closure of the Irish sugar industry, condemning the massive compensation awarded to Greencore in contrast to the fund available to the 3,600 growers and the paltry redundancy settlement for former sugar factory employees. We put the case for the growing of energy crops as a profitable alternative production system, and published detailed proposals on the use of sugar beet as an input into the production of bio-ethanol.
- We argued for the promotion of energy crops as a source of increased farm incomes and future jobs in the agricultural processing sector.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

An All-Ireland Approach to Supporting and Revitalising Irish Agriculture

- Ensure that the maximum number of people continue farming, while stemming the shift towards large-scale factory-style farming.
- Fully implement the Charter for Farmers on an all-Ireland basis.
- Integrate agri-food and agricultural services on an all-Ireland basis, including an All-Ireland Food Promotion Agency.
- Ring-fence the milk quota within the island of Ireland to ensure that quota from the Six Counties is not sold into the British quota. We also support regional ring fencing.
- Develop an island-wide animal health strategy.
- Oppose importation of cheap meat that fails to meet the strict food safety regulations imposed here.
- Establish an all-Ireland CAP Reform Review Group to conduct bi-annual reviews for anomalies and unfair outcomes.
- Work towards single representation of Ireland in trade talks to allow stronger future negotiations at EU and WTO level.

Initiatives to Raise Farm Incomes

- Work to amend the Single Farm Payment regulations to raise the lower income limit and impose a higher income limit, in order to redirect EU funds and ensure a decent livelihood for smaller farmers.
- Actively promote domestic co-operative processing and the development of local markets.
- Assist farm diversification into new areas such as organic farming and renewable energy.

Promoting Ireland as a Producer of Safe Foods

- Ensure the stringent labelling of all food products on an all-Ireland basis.
- Keep Ireland as a whole GM crop-free to safeguard our environment and best promote the high quality of Irish food internationally.
- Extend support for farm diversification into organic farming.

Supporting Sustainable and Renewable Energy Crop Production

- Invest in renewable energy
- Encourage co-op-led processing.
- Facilitate the conversion of the Carlow and Mallow sugar plants to biofuel production.

A Sustainable Future for the Irish Fisheries

Sinn Féin is committed to doing all that we can to secure a viable future for coastal communities and economies.

Ireland's fisheries have been scandalously sacrificed since EU accession in 1973. The deal made under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) handed over control of the national fisheries to EU bureaucrats and squandered a potentially massively valuable resource in exchange for what was believed to be a good deal for farming within the Common Agricultural Policy. Ironically, the value of fish taken from Irish waters by foreign fleets since 1973 – over €40 billion in current values – has actually exceeded the total sum of CAP monies received. The division of quotas has also led to a situation where this country has fishing waters that account for around 12% of the EU fishery, but Irish fishermen are currently allowed only around 4% of the EU quota.

Not only have successive Governments led by all the establishment parties acquiesced in this, they have also failed to encourage the development of indigenous processing to its full potential. Thus the greater part of fish caught in Irish waters even by Irish fishermen is exported raw, and much of that value is lost to the domestic processing sector and to struggling coastal communities. The current Government has continued to neglect the fishing industry and has at times adopted a confrontational attitude towards fishermen. They attempted to force through the Sea Fisheries and Maritime

Jurisdiction Bill, which would introduce draconian measures to penalise Irish fishermen at a time when the sector is struggling to survive.

The future of the Irish fisheries is nowhere on the establishment parties' political agenda. Sinn Féin proposes to end the neglect of this economy and the communities it supports.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Revitalising the Irish Fisheries

Sinn Féin believes that strong Government action is needed to empower coastal communities and secure a sustainable future for the Irish fisheries. We propose to establish a dedicated Ministry for this purpose, to lobby and negotiate within the EU for radical reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, to establish all-Ireland management and to adopt an all-Ireland strategic plan. We propose to involve fishing organisations directly in the conservation and management of the Irish fisheries. We will establish a hardship fund to fairly compensate those forced out of the fishing industry, and we will invest in and otherwise encourage development of the domestic seafood processing and renewable energy sectors to create new coastal employment.

To commence the coastal revitalisation process, Sinn Féin would use the EU Green Paper on the Future of the Common Fisheries Policy as the basis for a wide-ranging debate in the country regarding the future of the fishing sector, ensuring the fullest involvement of all fishing organisations and coastal community organisations and elected representatives from those communities.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team opposed the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Bill, tabling numerous amendments in close consultation with the main fishing organisations. We were instrumental in forcing a debate that prompted a major reversal on the part of the Irish Government, if not to the full satisfaction of the demands of fishermen.
- We successfully lobbied the Department to meet with fishing representatives and provide for closer consultation with the fishing organisations in the regulation of the sector.
- We supported the joint efforts of fishing organisations operating in the Irish Sea in relation to the management of that fishery.

- We raised a number of issues with the Minister including the unfavourable treatment of Irish fishermen in regard to quotas, irregularities relating to the issuing of quotas, and failure to confront illegal fishing by foreign crews, in contrast to the heavy-handed treatment of Irish boats.
- We argued with the Minister that the Common Fisheries Policy has been a disaster for Irish fishing and needs to be completely overhauled.
- We participated in a delegation of Sinn Féin representatives that brought these and other concerns directly to officials of the EU Fisheries Directorate.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

A Dedicated Ministry

- Establish a separate Ministry for the Marine and Natural Resources with a full Minister.

Reform at EU Level

- Negotiate radical reform of the Common Fisheries Policy with the aim of returning the greater part of management of Irish fisheries back into Irish hands.
- Propose the establishment of a Coastal Communities Regeneration Fund under the CFP similar to that under CAP.

All-Ireland Management of the Fisheries

- Establish fisheries as a new area of all-Ireland co-operation under the Good Friday Agreement and develop an All-Ireland Strategy to Safeguard the Future of the Irish Fisheries.
- Directly involve the fishing organisations in the management of Irish fisheries.
- Introduce a transparent system of issuing of licences, quota and tonnage. Conduct a thorough investigation of past decisions in this regard by the Department of the Marine.
- Conserve Irish fish stocks by reducing the quota available to foreign fleets and introduce proper independent scientific monitoring of stocks in direct consultation with fishermen.
- End all illegal fishing conducted in Irish waters under the guise of EU research.

Support for Development of Domestic Seafood Processing and Renewable Energy from Coastal Sources

- Enhance the potential of the Irish marine sector by supporting the further development of a domestic seafood processing industry, and by adopting an all-Ireland marketing strategy for Irish seafood.
- Invest in the accelerated development of wind and wave energy production.

A Hardship Fund

- Ensure adequate compensation for Driftnet Salmon Fishermen.



Justice and Community Safety

Sinn Féin believes that every person has the equal right to safety at home and in our communities. Everyone also has the right to a fully accountable policing service, imbued with a human rights ethos, and to a justice system in which they can have confidence. Yet the working class communities hit hardest by certain kinds of crime lack the levels and modes of policing and other services that would deter crime and other anti-social behaviour. Many have lost faith in the policing and justice system.

The current coalition's record on justice and community safety has been woeful. They introduced gimmicky Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and the Garda Reserve to cover their refusal to concentrate policing resources where they are needed most.

The Justice Minister is more interested in getting private developers to build an unnecessary super-prison than in ensuring that the Probation Service has adequate resources. He has ignored the recommendation of the Comptroller and Auditor General which concluded that community service orders have a more positive impact on rates of re-offending than prison and cost about one-third of custodial sentence. Domestic violence and sexual abuse are pervasive crimes they have never strategically or comprehensively addressed in crime policy. Instead they starved frontline victims' services of funding. The system is failing these people: the number of these cases coming before the courts in this State is the lowest among 20 European countries, and we have a conviction rate of just 5%.

The current Government refuses to acknowledge the true extent of Garda corruption and the culture of cover-up that prevails in the force. They failed to act in a meaningful way on the findings and recommendations of the five Morris Tribunal reports.

Successive Irish Governments presided over by all the establishment parties have failed to make communities safe or produce a coherent and robust approach to prevent crime before it happens.

All parties claim to be tough on crime. Sinn Féin has the only credible plan for crime prevention, community safety and fully accountable policing.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Community Safety

Sinn Féin believes that the most effective crime policies focus on prevention. This means intensive and systematic social investment in marginalised areas. It means providing intervention and support services for individuals and families at risk. It means accountable community policing. It means effective rehabilitation programmes for prisoners and other offenders, and comprehensive post-release community supervision. We are committed to deliver these as a matter of priority.

We believe that for most non-violent offences, community restorative justice alternatives can be more effective than custody, for both victim and offender. Sinn Féin justice policy will be more effective socially, and it also makes better economic sense – reducing both the incidence of crime and the high cost of incarceration.

We want real justice for victims, stronger action on domestic and sexual violence, an effective approach to anti-social behaviour and effective sentencing reform. We will also regulate the legal profession and increase access to legal representation.

We are working towards the establishment of an all-Ireland policing service. In the interim, we are proposing fundamental Garda reform consistent with the Patten model in the 6 Counties to end corruption and misconduct, establish genuine accountability, and imbed a human rights and public service ethos. While recently introduced Government reforms including the Joint Policing Committees fall short of our proposals, Sinn Féin will work with them – to tackle in particular anti-social behaviour, illegal drug empires and unequal access to policing. We will repeal draconian legislation such as the Offences Against the State Acts.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team sought major changes to the Garda Síochána Bill, tabling nearly 150 amendments, and secured mandatory introduction of a Garda Code of Ethics. We proposed the introduction of Community Policing Partnerships at the district level. We secured the support of TDs from all opposition parties for our amendment calling for the establishment of a single Garda Ombudsman.
- We demanded the ring-fencing of confiscated CAB monies for community development.
- We proposed major changes to the Criminal Justice Bill 2004, tabling more than 175 amendments. We opposed unaccountable Garda powers, the introduction of ASBOs and the rollback on child protections commitments contained in the Children's Act 2001.
- We opposed the introduction of the Criminal Justice Bill 2007. We tabled 90 amendments proposing more effective ways of tackling serious crime.
- We successfully amended the Criminal Justice Bill 2004 to ensure that the Criminal Law Codification Advisory Committee includes human rights expertise.
- We were the only party to call annually on the Government to schedule a Dáil debate on the need to confront crimes of domestic and sexual violence against women. We tabled the motion that prompted the only domestic violence debate to take place in the Dáil during the whole term of this Government.
- We published the Offences Against the State Acts Repeal Bill to strike down repressive emergency legislation, as recommended by the UN Human Rights Committee.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Crime Prevention

- Develop and fund a comprehensive Crime Prevention Strategy.
- Increase and accelerate social investment in marginalised areas.
- Ring-fence CAB-confiscated monies for a Community Development Fund additional to any Government funding commitments.

Garda Reform for Fully Accountable Policing

- Reverse the culture of misconduct and cover-up through genuine and extensive Garda reform consistent with the Patten model, including:¹⁰
 - accountability mechanisms
 - a fully independent Garda Ombudsman to investigate Garda misconduct

- a Garda Board for civilian management oversight and
- Community Policing Partnerships at District level for policing fully accountable to the local communities served.
- Comprehensively review Garda deployment and redeploy Garda Special Branch detectives into serious crime units.
- Civilianise appropriate tasks including many administrative duties and the traffic corps, to allow the redeployment of all fully trained Gardaí to fight crime and serve their communities.
- Keep the Garda service routinely unarmed. Review and improve the inadequate training delivered to Gardaí bearing weapons.

Sentencing Reform

- Introduce increased transparency in sentencing and sentencing guidelines to ensure consistency, supported by a training programme for the judiciary.

Real Justice for Victims and the Community

- Establish Community Restorative Justice and Community Mediation programmes in every county and major urban centre. Ring-fence fines collected from offenders to part-finance these programmes.
- Legislate to encourage direct victim restitution where appropriate.
- Establish a system of consistent victim liaison to ensure that victims, especially of violent crimes, are kept fully informed throughout the investigation and prosecution process.
- Legally recognise the right to access justice and the right to legal representation, and expand the fund for Civil Legal Aid accordingly. Introduce Legal Aid reforms in keeping with recommendations by the Free Legal Advice Centres, to enable more people to challenge violations of their economic and social rights.

Stronger Action against Domestic and Sexual Violence

- Ensure more consistent prosecution of sexual assault, rape and domestic violence, coupled with priority access to free legal advice for victims and training for judges to ensure more appropriate sentencing outcomes.
- Introduce a support system to encourage victims to report crimes.
- Offer victims adequate opportunities for support in recovering from these devastating crimes.

An Effective Approach to Anti-Social Behaviour

- Adopt a sensible comprehensive strategy to effectively combat anti-social behaviour, including:
 - intensive and systematic social investment in marginalised areas
 - early intervention and support services for those at risk of offending
 - accountable community policing
 - effective rehabilitation programmes and post-release supervision and
 - community restorative justice alternatives for most non-violent offenders.
- Ensure robust enforcement of the law and prosecution of offenders involved in criminal behaviour.
- Fully implement the Children's Act 2001.

Enhancing Rehabilitative Supports and Prison Reform

- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture allowing for independent inspection of places of custody and produce a timetabled plan to implement all recommendations of the European Committee Against Torture regarding conditions in places of custody.
- Fully resource the statutory Prison Inspector, introduce an Ombudsman for Prisoners and extend the Children's Ombudsman's remit to include children in detention.
- Increase funding to Probation Service and to prevention and rehabilitation.
- Establish an adequate number of mental health centres with appropriate levels of security to ensure an end to the practice of people with mental illness and disabilities in prisons where appropriate services are not available.
- Stop the construction of super-prisons.
- End the practice of immigration-related detention.

Regulating the Legal Profession

- Introduce an independent body to monitor and hold the legal profession to account.

Repealing Repressive Legislation and Dissolving the Special Criminal Court

- Repeal the Offences Against the State Acts and dissolve the Special Criminal Court as recommended by the UN Human Rights Commission.
- Re-introduce the right to silence.

Establishing an All-Ireland System of Policing and Justice

- Work towards the establishment of an all-Ireland policing service.
- Continue to negotiate the establishment of an effective all-Ireland sex offenders registry.
- Establish an all-Ireland missing persons helpline which will be adequately resourced, properly run and widely advertised.
- Work constructively with 6 Counties counterpart in the All-Ireland Ministerial Council following the repatriation of policing and justice powers.
- Establish a new Implementation Body on Justice and Policing under the Good Friday Agreement.

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An Ireland of Equals, with Rights for All

Equality and human rights laws and new institutions provided for under the Good Friday Agreement are important advances but social inequality and discrimination still remain a fact of life in Ireland. Hate crime is on the rise, targeting people on the basis of religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability. Children are still vulnerable to abuse. Older people are still vulnerable to neglect. Domestic and sexual violence against women is still prevalent, and women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making. People with disabilities are routinely excluded from buildings and services and from economic and social life. Same-sex couples experience discrimination. Successive Governments led by all the establishment parties have failed to effectively address these issues.

The Irish Government is no friend to equality and indeed has gone on the offensive against it. This coalition criminalised the Travellers' way of life. They actively scapegoated immigrants and refugees for Government failures in service delivery. They stripped away the equal right of all Irish children to citizenship. They refused to guarantee the rights of people with disabilities in law. They starved organisations helping victims of violence against women of the funding they need to function. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Minister responsible was reappointed despite his stated view that inequality is good for society.

Under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement the Irish Government is obliged to introduce equality and human rights protections at least equivalent to those pertaining to the 6 Counties. Yet they have failed to meet the equivalence test on anti-discrimination and equality protections in a number of areas including disability rights, the rights of gay, lesbian and transgender people, political opinion, rights enforcement and remedies for discrimination and other violations.

Promoting equality and human rights is at the very core of republicanism and of Sinn Féin's agenda for change. Unique among the parties on this island, we are not rhetorical on this issue – we bring equality and human rights considerations into every area of our policy. Our negotiators fought hard for the equality and human rights protections introduced as a consequence of

the Good Friday Agreement, and Sinn Féin will continue to press for the fulfilment of the principle of equivalence in human rights and equality protections between the 6 and 26 Counties.

The Sinn Féin Platform for an Ireland of Equals with Rights for All¹¹

Equality is good for the economy and society. We believe that all human rights – including economic and social rights – can and must be enforceable. We strongly believe that human rights begin at home. All violations past and present must be acknowledged stopped, and robust mechanisms put into place so they can never be repeated.

We are committed to a range of proposals to strengthen equality and human rights protections, and to move us closer towards full equality for women, children, older people, people with disabilities, people of all ethnicities, and lesbian/gay/bisexual and transgender people.

We are committed to legislative and constitutional change to ensure that the people of Ireland have the very best equality and human rights protections. We will campaign for the introduction of an enforceable All-Ireland Charter of Rights as promised under the Good Friday Agreement. We will campaign in the interim for a range of changes to the 1937 Constitution, and to incorporate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights into domestic law, so that these rights can be upheld directly through the Irish courts.

Our plan for full rights enforceability involves administrative tribunal structures as well as courts. This means that people should not have to go all the way to court to vindicate their rights. Administrative Tribunals and Ombudsman structures make it faster and cheaper to get rights enforced and aim for negotiated settlements. Court challenges then become a true measure of last resort. In addition, real political will to deliver equality and human rights will also ultimately reduce the number of people needing to sue for their rights.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team vigorously challenged each and every attack on equality and human rights by the Minister for Justice, by working together with campaigning groups and by proposing legislative amendments to protect and extend equality and human rights protections.
- We proposed the introduction of binding human rights-proofing, requiring the Human Rights Commission to certify all legislative proposals as compliant with international human rights standards.
- We proposed to expand the grounds on which discrimination is prohibited under the Equal Status Act and Employment Equality Act to include socio-economic status, political opinion or membership in a trade union and status as a former prisoner.
- We proposed the introduction of equality-proofing of all law and policy and a legal duty to promote equality, equivalent to that in the 6 Counties.
- We proposed the introduction of a gender quota ensuring a minimum of 40% representation of women on the boards of all newly-created State or semi-State bodies.
- We proposed a range of child protection proposals on foot of the Ferns Report, and urged the introduction of constitutional protections for children based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- We backed the campaign for a rights-based Disability Bill, tabling nearly 40 substantive amendments.
- We fought to maintain the republican principle of the equal right to citizenship on the basis of birth in the 1937 Constitution.
- We tabled an amendment to delete a section of the Civil Registration Bill 2003 that prohibited same-sex marriage; we made a submission to the Working Group on Domestic Partnership urging constitutional change and supporting the rights of all to cohabit, to found a family (including by adoption) and to enter into marriage or civil partnership regardless of gender or sexual orientation, and we voted in favour of the Civil Union Bill 2006.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Strengthening Human Rights Protections

- Increase funding to the Human Rights Commission to at least equivalence with its counterpart in the 6 Counties.
- Increase the powers of the Human Rights Commission to equivalence

with its counterpart in the 6 Counties (ie to hear cases as an administrative tribunal like the Equality Tribunal and to regularly engage in advocacy supporting claimants in other court challenges).

- Introduce binding human rights-proofing on all legislation.
- Review the European Convention on Human Rights Act, with a public component, to strengthen this law.
- Conduct an audit to identify gaps in legislation and in the 1937 Constitution in regard to Irish obligations under international human rights treaties and develop a legislative programme that will provide full protection of all such rights in domestic law.
- Introduce the All-Ireland Charter of Rights provided for under the Good Friday Agreement.

Strengthening Equality Protections

- Introduce prohibition of discrimination on the basis of socio-economic status, political opinion, membership of a trade union and status as a former prisoner.
- Introduce a statutory duty to equality-proof all law and policy and to promote equality, at least equivalent to that pertaining in the 6 Counties.
- Adequately fund the Equality Authority and Equality Tribunal.

Equality for Women¹²

- Develop a robust All-Ireland Strategy for Women's Equality, including a timetabled plan to implement all recommendations of the UN Committee to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women.
- Adopt binding gender targets of at least 40% for either gender on the boards of all state and semi-state bodies, the judiciary, and the Cabinet. Consider extending such targets to those private sector bodies in receipt of government funding, within a given time-frame.

Equality for Children and Young People¹³

- Amend the Equal Status Acts to prohibit unjust discrimination against young people in the provision of services.
- Amend the 1937 Constitution to expressly recognise children's rights and to provide that the State must guarantee that in all actions concerning children undertaken by or on behalf of the State the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration - thus bringing it into line with the standard established by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Equality for Older People¹⁴

- Develop an All-Ireland Strategy for Older People, following consultation and direct involvement of older people themselves.
- Establish an Ombudsman for Older People.

Equality for People with Disabilities¹⁵

- Review the operation of the current Disability Act with a view to the introduction of a new rights-based Disability Act.
- Introduce robust mechanisms to ensure that existing and future provisions are enforced, including a Disability Ombudsman.
- Establish a National Disability Strategy Implementation and Monitoring Unit within the Department of the Taoiseach, to set annual targets towards full delivery by 2016.
- Conduct a review of funding for people with disabilities' organisations and services, and increase funding to the disability sector – particularly those organisations led by people with disabilities themselves.

Equality for People of All Ethnicities¹⁶

- Introduce stronger hate crime legislation.
- Reinstate previous funding levels for anti-racism initiatives, and provide annual increases as necessary.
- Fully implement and resource the National Action Plan Against Racism, and adopt a timetable for implementation of the recommendations of the UN Committee Against Racism.
- Officially recognise Travelling people as an ethnic minority deserving of protection under the UN Convention Against All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
- Repeal the sections of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 that criminalise the Traveller way of life.
- Establish a statutory Traveller Agency, including representatives of Traveller organisations to monitor, coordinate and enforce Government policy relating to Travellers (including the Traveller Health Strategy and Traveller Accommodation Plans).
- End the policy of dispersal and the Direct Provision System, and extend the right to work and pay taxes to all asylum seekers while their applications are being processed.¹⁷

Equality for the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Community

- Introduce legislation to permit and recognise same-sex marriage, to provide full and equal recognition of all civil partnerships in law and recognise the right of same-sex couples to adopt children in the same manner as heterosexual couples.

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A Better Quality of Life

Growing and spreading prosperity, providing world class public services and infrastructure, providing security, promoting equality and protecting human rights – these are all crucial roles for Government. But they are also not enough. There is little point in generating wealth if other factors prevent enjoyment of a good quality of life. Sinn Féin would focus on the core Government duties and getting these right, but we would not neglect those other responsibilities that can make a positive difference for people: protecting the environment reducing the harm from drugs, promoting the Irish language and supporting arts and culture. All these things also need care, attention and a strategic approach.

We are committed to helping create a better quality of life for everyone on the island without exception.

A Clean Environment is a Right

Everyone in Ireland has the right to a clean and safe environment. Sinn Féin is committed to sustainable development and robust environmental protection. This necessarily involves the use of legislation that challenges the attitudes and practices of businesses and consumers alike and promotes behavioural change. We fully recognise that global warming is one of the most serious challenges facing us all, demanding urgent action. We know there is much that can and must be done at local, regional and national level to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The current Government has an appalling record on the environment – from policies that promote incineration and effectively encourage illegal dumping, to refusal to invest in renewable energy, to failure to meet the Kyoto targets or to implement EU environmental directives. Now we learn that they have also failed to act to protect the people of Clare and Galway from drinking water contamination.

Sinn Féin has green credentials that rival any party on the island. We firmly oppose nuclear energy and have long campaigned against Sellafield. We are committed to the promotion of a zero waste strategy that rejects incineration, keeps landfill to an absolute minimum and supports waste reduction, reuse and recycling. We are committed to vigorously promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy. We will continue with this constructive approach in creating an environmentally sound, sustainable future for Ireland.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Environmental Rights¹⁸

Sinn Féin supports strong environmental regulation at all-Ireland, EU and global levels as the only way to protect the right to a clean environment.

We commit ourselves to the principle of sustainable development. We will legislate and regulate to proactively safeguard our air, rivers, lakes, wetlands, boglands, remaining forests, coastal zones and oceans. We will support the sustainable use of renewable natural resources and the conservation of non-renewable natural resources through efficient use and careful planning. We will introduce legislation to minimise the production of waste and work towards a zero waste society through a policy centred on reduction, reuse and recycling. We will continue to oppose incineration. We support the polluter pays principle and we will apply it in a manner that does not disproportionately penalise small businesses and those on lower incomes. We will abolish refuse charges as they are an unfair and unjust double tax.

We believe that carbon reduction and not emissions trading should be the basis of government policy on climate change. We will introduce a Comprehensive Carbon Reduction Strategy that includes an emphasis on renewable energy production, improved energy efficiency and conservation, improved public transport and investment in research and development. We will continue to oppose nuclear energy as it is not a safe carbon-free source.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team participated in the campaign to close Sellafeld.
- We published the Waste Management (Amendment) Bill 2003 to amend the laws in relation to imposition of charges for waste services, and to return power over waste management planning to elected representatives.
- We called for an island-wide ban on incineration.
- We opposed the Carbon Fund Bill 2006 which allows the Irish Government to buy its way out of its obligations under the Kyoto Protocol.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Opposing Nuclear Energy and Closing Sellafeld

- Engage in a campaign of public, political, legal and diplomatic pressure to secure the complete closure of Sellafeld.

All-Ireland Environmental Protection and Management

- Establish an All-Ireland Environmental Protection Agency to drive forward a strong programme of enforcement.
- Develop an All-Ireland Zero Waste Strategy that prioritises reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and mechanical-biological treatment (where metal/plastic and glass is sorted and biologically treated) as an alternative to incineration and landfill.

Towards Zero Waste

- Ban the development of municipal incinerators in Ireland and set progressive time-framed targets to minimise the waste going to landfill.
- Introduce legislation to compel industrial and commercial producers to reduce waste production in a planned, targeted and accountable manner.
- Agree a comprehensive strategy for agricultural waste concentrating on biological treatment in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner.
- Promote recycling centres on a community and commercial basis that will provide employment and efficient waste management.

- Repeal the Waste Management Act and return control of waste management and recycling to local councils and not unelected city and county managers.
- Abolish the double taxation of refuse charges that hit lower-income families the hardest and reverse the privatisation of local authority refuse services.
- Mandate and support all councils to produce waste reduction strategies including a minimum target of 50% recycling and introduce a total ban on disposal of compostable waste in landfills by 2010.
- Support the introduction of 100% capital and maintenance grants for civic recycling initiatives.

Towards Sustainable Renewable Energy and Playing our Part in the Fight against Global Warming¹⁹

- Adopt a Comprehensive Carbon Reduction Strategy.
- Establish an All-Ireland Renewable Energy Commission with a specific brief of aggressively accelerating the development of the Irish biofuel, wind, wave and solar sectors and centrally involving the social economy in energy production.
- Set clear and achievable targets by which all vehicles owned by local authorities, central government and public bodies will use bio-fuel.
- Legislate to regulate for best practice environmental standards for all new buildings, and work towards the target of zero carbon homes by 2015.

Ending the Water Contamination Crisis

- Resolve the current water contamination crises on an urgent basis.
- Formulate and adequately fund an All-Ireland Safe Water Strategy that will bring all water supplies up to the highest EU standard following a comprehensive review of the existing regime.

Reducing Harm from Drugs

Sinn Féin believes that everyone should have the right to be protected from the harmful effects of legal and illegal drugs and associated crime. Everyone should be able to grow up in communities free from poverty, social exclusion and inequality, which are significant factors influencing drug misuse.

Alcohol overuse ravages our society. Rates of addiction to prescription drugs, and solvent usage by young people have never been higher. The unprecedented availability and usage of illegal drugs including heroin, cocaine and now crack cocaine continues to wreck individual lives, families and communities. Drug dealers have been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of men, women and children throughout the towns and cities of Ireland, and their trade has ravaged entire working-class communities. More recently, gangland shootings have significantly increased due to turf wars for control of this highly lucrative industry.

While many drug users seek treatment, they must either wait months or travel long distances. Often, the treatment they need is not available to them at all. While there are an estimated 13,000 heroin users in Dublin alone, there are only an estimated 22 detoxification beds in the State. Currently there are no methadone clinics in Cork or Limerick which means opiate users there must travel to Dublin for this treatment. Many women who need drug treatment services still do not access them for fear of their children being taken from them by the authorities or because the existing services are not family-friendly.

Sinn Féin has an unrivalled track record of standing and working with communities, particularly against the illegal drugs trade. We are committed to expand on this work in Government by mounting an effective nation-wide campaign to reduce the harm done to our nation by legal and illegal drugs and to dry up business for the illegal drugs trade.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Confronting the Drugs Crisis

Sinn Féin proposes to take a more serious approach to the drugs crisis than any previous Irish Government. We will dedicate a Minister of State with sole responsibility for pursuing the objectives of the National Drugs Strategy, for fully funding the necessary prevention, education and treatment

programmes, and for co-ordinating enforcement action against the illegal drugs trade on an all-Ireland basis.

We propose social investment in vulnerable communities as a preventative measure. We will significantly expand the availability of full-spectrum drug treatment services including effective harm-reduction measures and eliminate treatment waiting lists, so that all drug users can get the services and supports they need.

We will introduce structures to enhance community co-operation with the Gardaí in enforcement against drugs traffickers and barons, and to hold the Gardaí accountable for their action or inaction in this area.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team sponsored the only debate on the drugs crisis during the last Dáil, which amongst other things called for increased resources to implement the National Drugs Strategy, eliminate treatment waiting lists, address alarming rates of illegal drug dealing, tackle poverty and educational issues and support communities in their fight against cocaine and heroin.
- We successfully pressured the Irish Government to release funding for cocaine treatment projects.
- We urged the Minister responsible for the National Drugs Strategy to rollout the successful non-Garda Dial to Stop Drug Dealing Campaign piloted in Blanchardstown throughout the State.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

A Serious Approach to the Drugs Crisis

- Appoint a Minister of State with sole responsibility for drugs issues.
- Make adequate budgets available for both Local Drugs Task Forces and Rural Drugs Task Forces.
- Use an all-Ireland approach to ensure the application of the strategic objectives of the National Drugs Strategy to the island as a whole.
- Immediately formulate, resource and implement an All-Ireland Action Plan to Combat Cocaine Use and roll out cocaine treatment projects.
- Establish widespread and well-resourced drugs education programmes and awareness campaigns for children and parents, based on international best practice models proven effective, in schools and in the community.



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1 Cuir deireadh leis an corás dhá shraith
Aon airgead poiblí le caitheamh ce...

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- Target the causes of problematic drug use and the rise of the illegal drugs trade by working for the elimination of poverty and inequality in this State, including educational disadvantage. Immediately expand the Early Start programme to cover all RAPID and CLÁR areas.
- Provide substantial funding to set up alcohol and drug-free social environments, such as late opening cafés, aimed at teenagers.
- Fully resource provision of local sports facilities and amenities that are both accessible and affordable to everyone in a local community.
- Continue to work directly to problem-solve with families and communities worst-affected by drug and alcohol use and by the illegal drugs trade.

Significant Expansion of Full-Spectrum Treatment²⁰

- Commit adequate funding to significantly expand the availability of drug treatment and to eliminate waiting lists for treatment.
- Expand the spectrum of services available so that all drug users who want to avail of treatment and other services can do so.
- Make additional funds available for the development of local full-spectrum drug services.
- Ensure that all prisoners who need drug treatment can avail of it while serving sentences, and increase diversion of offenders into drug treatment programmes where appropriate in order to reduce drug-related repeat offending.
- Fund sufficient residential drug treatment places for women (alone, or with children).
- Provide additional supports for the families of drug users, such as grandparents caring for grandchildren.

Effective Harm Reduction Measures

- Expand needle exchange programmes to reduce the risk of HIV and hepatitis C infection, including in Irish prisons.
- Ensure methadone treatment to reduce injection behaviour and offending behaviour and to stabilise people in education or employment, is equally available no matter where the user lives.

More Effective Enforcement against Drug Traffickers and Barons

- Continue to pursue major drug traffickers and allocate funds seized from them by the Criminal Assets Bureau for community development in those neighbourhoods worst affected by the illegal drugs trade.

- Increase the resources available to An Garda Síochána Drugs Units and introduce local Garda accountability structures at District level such as Community Policing Partnerships.²¹
- Divert resources from the Special Branch to allow An Garda Síochána to target drug dealers instead of harassing community activists attempting to protect their children and their areas from the illegal drugs trade.

Ag Cur an Ghaeilge ar ais i mBéal an Phobail

Irish is the first official language of this State and the original language of the Irish people. According to the 2006 Census more than four in ten residents of the 26 Counties speak Irish – a total exceeding 1.6 million people, and a 7% rise on the 2002 Census. In the Gaeltacht more than one quarter of all people use the Irish language on a daily basis, and more than half of all Gaeltacht children aged 3-4 use Irish daily. Sinn Féin recognises that language rights are fundamental human rights, and we are committed to ensure that the rights of Irish speakers are respected fully by the Irish Government and all its agencies.

Promoting the Irish language is a basic duty of the Irish Government. In our view, however, none of the establishment parties has ever taken this responsibility seriously. More than any other party on the island, Sinn Féin has championed the Irish language. Whereas other parties in this State have either neglected the language or proposed to eradicate Irish from our school curriculum, Sinn Féin has kept language rights high on our agenda. We have acted as a catalyst for Irish language campaigns in both parts of the island and featured the issue of language rights prominently in all our negotiations with the Irish and British Governments. We were instrumental in the establishment of the cross-border language body Foras na Gaeilge. Working with the STÁDÁS campaign we helped achieve legal recognition for the Irish language in the EU. Déanann Sinn Féin an gnó.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Promoting the Irish Language

Sinn Féin believes that Irish language revival is essential to achieving an Ireland of Equals. We believe that everyone on the island of Ireland has a right to learn Irish and have their children educated through Irish medium

education. We are also committed to implement all the specific provisions and protections for Irish speakers demanded by international human rights standards.

Sinn Féin is working for the development of the Gaeltacht. Sinn Féin cumainn are active in every Gaeltacht area and the party now has representation in Údarás na Gaeltachta. Sinn Féin in Government will take strategic initiatives to strengthen the Gaeltachtaí and recognise other areas where 10-30% of the population speak Irish on a daily basis as Breac-Ghaeltachtaí.

Sinn Féin welcomes whole-heartedly the emergence of new communities from a variety of ethnic backgrounds in Ireland. In Government, it is our aim to create a multicultural and multilingual society at every level. We believe that all the people in this island, north and south, including the New Irish also, should have access to and take ownership of the Irish language.

We will focus our Irish language promotion initiatives on ensuring full implementation of existing Irish language rights in law, adopting a strategic planned all-Ireland approach to advancing the language through education programmes and the media, and to growing the Gaeltacht.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team supported the enactment of the Official Languages Act 2003. and is pressing for its implementation in full.
- We were active supporters of the EU Stádás campaign.
- We helped secure a yearly debate in the Dáil around the Irish language.
- We actively campaigned for the safeguarding of Irish in the school curriculum.
- We defended the protected position of Irish in UCG within the University College Bill 2006.
- We secured recognition of the Irish language arts in the Arts Act 2003.
- Our Spokesperson on Cultúr, Gaeilge agus Gaeltacht was a leading advocate of language rights and has used Irish more than any other member in the Dáil.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Full Protection for Irish Language Rights in Law

- Implement the Official Languages Act 2003 in full.
- Ensure there is an Irish Language Act in the 6 Counties without delay.

A Strategic Approach to the Promotion of Irish

- Agree a 10 year All-Ireland Irish Language Development Plan focusing on the preservation and advancement of the language.
- Implement our package of proposals to enhance Irish medium education and Irish language learning.²²
- Ensure that every member of the 'New Irish' community has the opportunity to learn Irish.
- Allocate more funding to Foras na Gaeilge.
- Increase funding for TG4 in keeping with its position as the primary Irish language broadcaster.

Growing the Gaeltacht

- Put in place a 10 year monitoring programme for the Gaeltacht and a mechanism to officially recognise 'Breac-Ghaeltachtaí' throughout the island.
- Provide a financial package to allow for Local Authority Irish Language Development Officers in areas where there is already a need, and to help foster demand for Irish language services in other areas.

Supporting Arts and Culture

Arts and culture generally enhance our quality of life. Community arts in particular promote development and social inclusion and foster local identity. They also have the capacity to significantly enhance our economy, driving local economic regeneration and the tourism sector in particular. Sinn Féin believes that arts investment must reflect its true social and economic value. There is an urgent need to end the funding deficit and restructure the arts budget. Sinn Féin is committed to this.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Supporting the Arts

Sinn Féin believes that arts and culture are essential, not an optional extra.

State support for the cultural industrial sector can act as an important investment in both cultural and economic development, particularly in economically peripheral regions. We specifically recognise that there is significant and growing employment potential in the Irish film industry, which deserves greater support.

Sinn Féin will stop the cuts to the arts budget and will restore arts funding to the levels recommended by the Arts Plan. Restoration and a compensatory increase of monies to non-profit and community-based arts groups and projects would be our priority. As with other areas of the budget, we believe that the only responsible way to prevent further destabilisation of the arts sector is through multi-annual funding and we would commit to this.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team achieved enhanced support for the Irish film industry through securing the renewal of Section 481.
- We advocated a greater role for local authorities in promoting and funding community arts during debate on the Arts Act 2003.
- We campaigned in the Dáil for greater protection of national monuments and heritage including the Hill of Tara.
- We supported the rights of cultural workers, including the right to form and join trade unions. During debate on the Film Board Bill 2006 Sinn Féin called on the Irish Government to ensure that the rights of all workers in the industry are fully protected and called for the Labour Inspector to review the conditions of all those working, and particularly younger workers, in the area of media production.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

End the Arts Funding Crisis

- Restore funding to the levels recommended by the Arts Plan, reach a minimum investment target of 1% total budgetary spend.

Support Community Arts and Diversity in Arts

- Devote significant support to co-operatively-run and community arts projects including community festivals, and particularly those that actively promote social inclusion and oppose racism and other forms of discrimination.
- Ensure that funding allocation is not discriminatory but fully inclusive, actively and equally promoting not only Irish culture including Irish language arts, but also participation by new communities and a comprehensive disability arts programme.

All-Ireland Cooperation and Promotion

- Make arts and culture a new area of formal all-Ireland co-operation under the Good Friday Agreement, and actively promote the State as a cultural visitor destination within an all-Ireland framework.

NO WAR ON IRAQ

- 50% of all war casualties are children
- 90% of all war casualties are civilians

Sinn Féin



Demilitarisation and Solidarity for a Better World

Demilitarisation and solidarity are the means by which we will achieve a better world. Sinn Féin strongly supports these objectives – shared by the vast majority of Irish people – but they have been steadily undermined by the actions and inactions of successive Irish Governments.

Irish military neutrality is under increasing pressure. An EU Army is steadily evolving with the establishment of EU Battle Groups and ever greater EU military research and development budgets. The current coalition have accelerated this process by consistently violating or otherwise undermining their own stated policy of neutrality. First they joined NATO's so-called Partnership for Peace without consulting the people, despite an earlier commitment to a referendum. Then they allowed Shannon Airport to be used to facilitate the illegal invasion of Iraq and the illegal programme of secret abduction and torture of prisoners (so-called 'extraordinary rendition'). Then they failed to negotiate recognition for Irish neutrality during talks on the draft EU Constitution. Finally, they rushed through the Defence (Amendment) Bill 2006 eliminating the triple-lock safeguard on Irish military deployments and enabling the integration of Irish Defence Forces into EU Battle Groups. The cumulative effect of these decisions has been to heighten Irish complicity in human rights violations and compromise neutrality to an unprecedented extent.

Despite the genuine commitment of the Irish people to help Make Poverty History, the UN Millennium Development Goals on global poverty reduction by 2015 have not been a central objective of the current Irish Government. Instead, they reneged on promises to allocate 0.7% GNP in Overseas Development Assistance by 2007. This is the third wealthiest state in the world - their decision to reduce our commitment to just 0.5% by 2007 is unjustifiable, and constitutes a betrayal of the world's poorest.

All the political parties claim to support Irish neutrality and the UN and to oppose global poverty and injustice. However only Sinn Féin makes these core guiding principles of our international relations policy.

The Sinn Féin Platform for Positive Neutrality in Action²³

Sinn Féin believes that true international security is universal and based on social justice, fully meeting human needs, and respecting human rights and human equality.

We propose an independent and progressive Irish international relations policy that opposes military alliances and works for international co-operation and conflict negotiation leading to democratic social change and respect for human rights, universal demilitarisation and nuclear disarmament.

We support full foreign policy independence, underpinned by support for UN primacy and complemented by a policy of Positive Neutrality in Action. Positive Neutrality in Action is not about sitting on the fence. It is about making politics work to redress legitimate grievances and achieve needed social changes – at both state and international levels.

We propose to enshrine neutrality in the Constitution. We recognise the urgent need to reform the UN to build its capacity, and to transform the Security Council by eliminating the system of permanent members with vetoes. It is not acceptable for this State, acting through the EU, to continue imposing a free trade agenda that hurts the developing world. Instead the Irish Government should focus on ensuring that we do not contribute directly or indirectly to human rights violations in other parts of the world and should use whatever leverage we have to ensure human rights compliance. To work towards global social justice we would push for reform of the international financial system to strengthen representation of developing countries in international economic decision making. We would campaign for fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, and increase Irish Official Development Aid accordingly.

THE SINN FÉIN RECORD IN LEINSTER HOUSE:

- Our Dáil Team strongly supported the anti-war movement and the Shannon Peace Camp. We were the first party to table a Dáil motion to get US troops out of Shannon.
- We proposed a Constitutional Amendment Bill to protect neutrality.
- We consistently challenged the acceleration of militarisation of the EU and its emergence as an economic and military superpower.
- We opposed the Defence (Amendment) Bill 2006, tabling almost 20 amendments in an effort to save the triple-lock mechanism and neutrality.
- We submitted a Book of Evidence on Extraordinary Renditions to Garda Headquarters, demanding an investigation into the CIA's use of Shannon Airport.
- We sought guarantees from the Irish Government that arms in transit to belligerent regimes not be permitted through Irish airports or airspace, and that it would cease delivering military training to soldiers from countries engaging in human rights abuses and breaches of international law.
- We consistently raised and supported the causes of peoples currently denied the right to self-determination. For example, we put two motions to the Oireachtas EU Affairs Committee calling for the suspension of preferential trade with Israel on foot of that regime's illegal occupation of Palestine and grave human rights abuses against the Palestinian and Lebanese people.
- We campaigned for incremental increases in Official Development Aid to 0.7% by 2007, and proposed a legislative amendment to ring-fence such aid.
- We pushed for and secured Oireachtas EU Affairs Committee hearings on the social dimension of the EU's Lisbon Agenda concerning workers' rights and anti-poverty issues.

SINN FÉIN'S PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT:

Positive Neutrality in Action

- Enshrine neutrality in the Constitution and codify it in legislation.
- Ensure Irish troops train and serve abroad only under the auspices and leadership of the United Nations, and only with prior Dáil approval.
- Prohibit use of Irish airports, airspace, seaports, or territorial waters for preparation for war or other armed conflict by foreign powers or to

facilitate any aspect of illegal acts such as the US Government's programme of 'extraordinary rendition'.

- End Irish involvement in the arms trade and profit from war, including the use of Irish airports to transport arms to belligerent regimes.
- Withdraw from the EU Rapid Reaction Force, Battle Groups and NATO's Partnership for Peace.
- End Irish complicity in violations of international law and human rights abuses through mainstreamed human rights-proofing of all policy making and decision making at every level.
- Work for a binding Protocol excluding Ireland from the processes of EU militarisation.
- Actively promote demilitarisation of the EU, including nuclear disarmament.
- Form alliances with other progressive, neutral states to promote a Human Security approach to international relations.
- Actively promote UN primacy, as well as badly-needed UN reform and capacity-building to create a revitalised UN capable of fulfilling the promise of the Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of upholding international law.

Supporting Global Social Justice

- Work for the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals and continue to support the global campaign to Make Poverty History.
- Incrementally increase Overseas Development Assistance to 1% of GNP by 2010, ring-fence the ODA budget and keep all such aid un-tied.
- Make poverty reduction and the reduction of inequality in all its forms key goals of Irish development policy. Ensure policy transparency at all stages and work in partnership with actors in developing countries.

Another Europe is Possible

- Continue our policy of critical but positive engagement in the EU.
- Take a firm stance at EU level that the proposed EU Constitution and its neo-liberal substance have been expressly rejected and must not be reintroduced by stealth or otherwise.
- Propose suspension of all Association Trade Agreements between the EU and countries engaged in serious human rights violations including Israel and Turkey.

Endnotes

1 For more details see Sinn Féin's Healthcare in an Ireland of Equals (2006), the most comprehensive health policy published by any political party in Ireland.

2 For more details see Sinn Féin's Housing is a Right (2007), the most comprehensive housing policy published by any political party in Ireland.

3 For more details of Sinn Féin plans to support enterprise and job creation, equalise regional economic development and build an all-Ireland economy see A Strong Economy for an Ireland of Equals (2006), the first module of the Sinn Féin economic policy.

4 For more details, see Workers Rights in an Ireland of Equals (2007), the most comprehensive policy on workers' rights published by any political party in Ireland in the 21st century.

5 For more details on the Sinn Féin anti-poverty platform see Eliminating Poverty: A 21st Century Goal (2004).

6 For more details on the Sinn Féin proposals on rural regeneration, agriculture and fisheries, see our more detailed platform document Equality for Rural Communities (2007).

7 See also the Sinn Féin Platform for Economic Reintegration and Regional Equality.

8 For more details see the Sinn Féin Platform for Economic Reintegration and Regional Equality.

9 For more details see section on Investing in World Class Infrastructure.

10 For more detail on the Sinn Féin Garda reform proposals see Policing for the People (2004).

11 For more details of our rights-based approach and the protections we propose for adoption into a future All-Ireland Charter of Rights, see our discussion document Rights For All (2004).

12 For more details of our programme for women's equality, see the Childcare is a Right section, the proposals on Stronger Action Against Domestic and Sexual Violence in the Justice and Community Safety section, and the Sinn Féin Women's Manifesto 2007.

13 For other proposals relevant to children and young people see the proposals on A Phased Introduction of Healthcare as a Right and A New Emphasis on Mental Healthcare in the section Healthcare is a Right, proposals in the sections Education: Reaching Our Full Potential and Childcare is a Right, the proposals on Ending Exploitation and Combating Low Pay in the section Promoting Workers' Rights, the proposals on Raising Household Incomes in the section Eliminating Poverty, and the proposals on An Effective Approach to 'Anti-Social Behaviour' and Enhancing Rehabilitative Reports and Prison Reform in the section Justice and Community Safety.

14 For other proposals relevant to older people, see the proposals in the section Healthcare is a Right, the proposals on Sustainable Warm Homes in the section Housing is a Right, the proposals on Pension Justice in the section Promoting Workers' Rights, and the Sinn Féin Charter for Senior Citizens (2004).

15 For other proposals relevant to people with disabilities, see the proposals on Support for Special Needs Education in the section Education: Reaching Our Full Potential, the proposals on Increased Investment in an All-Ireland Transport Network in the section Providing World Class Infrastructure, the proposals under Promoting Employment Equality in the section Promoting Workers' Rights, and the proposals on Tackling Disability-Related Poverty in the section on Eliminating Poverty.

16 For more details of our anti-racism programme, relevant to the rights of both new communities and Travellers, see proposals on Educational Equality for Traveller Children and Positive Educational Integration for International Newcomer Children in the section on Education: Reaching Our Full Potential, and Cherishing All the Children of the Nation Equally – Towards an Anti-Racist Ireland (2001).

17 For proposals relevant to rights and equality for migrant workers specifically, see the section Promoting Workers' Rights. For the proposal to end immigration-related detention, see section on Justice and Community Safety.

18 For more details of the Sinn Féin environment platform see Towards Zero Waste (2004).

19 See also the proposals on Sustainable Warm Homes in the section Housing is a Right, the proposals on Increased Investment in an All-Ireland Public Transport Network and on Enhancing All-Ireland Energy Networks, Controlling Prices, Developing Renewables in the section Investing in World Class Infrastructure, the proposals on Supporting Public Enterprise in the section on Supporting Enterprise and Job Creation, the proposals on Realising the Potential Revenue from Renewable Energy in the section on A New Emphasis on Non-Tax Revenue, and the proposals on Initiatives to Raise Farm Incomes and on Supporting Sustainable and Renewable Energy Crop Production in the section on A Sustainable Future for Irish Agriculture.

20 See specific proposals under the section on Eliminating Poverty.

21 See specific proposals on Community Policing Partnerships under the section on Community Safety.

22 See proposals in Education section.

23 For more details see Positive Neutrality in Action



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