

Climate, Transport and Technology

Common sense environmental stewardship, solutions for a just transition



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We recognize the importance of stewardship of our natural environment but emphasize that we must do so in a responsible manner. Our small country of five million people cannot fix the world's problems, and we should resist the temptation to destroy our own economy to temporarily outshine other countries. Therefore, we propose to:

Key Policy Positions

- Ensure a responsible and **realistic energy mix** that embraces new technologies and harnesses Ireland's natural resources to allow a just and sustainable transition to new energy sources, while preserving existing ways of life;
- Invest in practical solutions, including **dredging rivers**, building proper **coastal defences**, and funding local councils to address neglected infrastructure. By taking proactive measures, we will protect communities from the adverse effects of climate change;
- Ensure all **climate policies reflect Irish realities** – we cannot import ineffective policies from abroad that do not benefit, and actually harm Ireland;
- **Rural-proof all public policy**, including climate policy;
- Ensure a **people-focused and -led approach** to environmental stewardship by listening to farmers, fishermen/fisherwomen, local communities, and businesses;

Ensuring a Just and Economically Viable Transition to Greener Technology

- **Freeze and review all fuel excise taxes;**
- Issue **VAT rebate on insulation** to encourage improving energy efficiency;
- Provide **grants for increasing the energy efficiency** of residences, businesses, farms, and community enterprises;
- **Expand use of floating gas terminals** to provide a clean, reliable energy source;
- **Reverse harmful policies** that put unfair constraints on farmers and fishermen/fisherwomen;
- **Abandon the unachievable and destructive “net-zero” agenda** and adopt a common-sense approach that protects our economy and environment together instead of sacrificing one for the other;
- **Support clean air** and water initiatives;
- **Reduce VAT on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO)** to help meet climate targets and ease people's transition to more environmentally friendly fuels;
- **Protect low- and middle-income earners** from bearing a disproportionate cost in the advancement of climate action plans and rural-proof all Government policies in this regard;

Transport

- Pursue a **road-widening campaign** nationwide to improve road safety; increase construction of passing bays on local and regional roads;
- **Improve bus services in rural areas** to reduce dependency on private automobiles;
- **Expand light rail services** to all 26 counties in rural and urban areas – we commit to completing the required feasibility study within the first two years in Government;
- **Conduct verge cutting year-round** by local authorities; all roads should have one metre road-edge and vertically to the full-height of the hedge.
 - This promotes hedges growing up and in, rather than down and out;
 - This will improve visibility and ensure safe roads;
 - It will also future-proof safety for motorists and pedestrians;
- Encourage airlines to expand operations at **Cork, Shannon, and Ireland West (Knock)** airports to alleviate pressure on Dublin and expand commercial opportunities country-wide;

Technology and Investing in the Future

- Make Ireland a global leader in **Green Tech**, no longer should we be followers of ineffective and often harmful policies that are not fit for purpose in Ireland;
- Create **“Green Technology and Innovation Tax-free Zones”** for entities who create high-end jobs in rural areas. This will ensure people developing new technologies understand rural ways of life, and benefit local economies;
- Create **self-sustaining “Data Centre Zones”** while preserving the aesthetic and domestic industries in rural Ireland, which are the existing backbones of local economies;
- Modernise and **reform planning process for wind farm development**, including a cost-benefit analysis of subsidies; harmonize regulations with other EU countries
- Encourage a **realistic transition to HVO** and Hydrogen based fuel systems;
- **Ensure climate action does not destroy Irish food independence.** Ireland cannot outsource its carbon footprint (and food production) to developing nations in the name of climate change; a whole-of-planet approach is needed;
- Expand investment into of **anaerobic digesters** and other means of reducing nitrates and methane emissions;
- Conduct a **full inventory of all existing carbon sequestration** to ensure public policy is properly informed so decisions are scientifically made. Currently, only cultivated woodlands are accounted for in our statistics, which ignores thousands of miles of hedgerows, wild woodlands, etc.
- Conduct a **full review of warmer homes scheme** criteria and delivery to accelerate the program and improve accessibility;
- Reform state aid rules for **community-owned renewables projects** and revise taxation, including VAT implications, for non-profit community groups;

Education

Investing in the future of our children



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Ireland's education system is largely responsible for the developed economy of today. In order to remain competitive, we must continually invest in all of our children's futures. Therefore, Independent Ireland proposes we:

Increasing Funding for Education

- Maintain **small class sizes** by hiring more teachers. This means increasing funding;
- **Reduce bureaucracy** coming from the Ministry of Education. Oversight is important, but if teachers are forced to spend hours each week reporting what they already taught, they spend less time planning on what to teach next;
- Increase funding for **Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)**;
- Increase **capitation grant** for all schools;
- Increase funding for **early childcare services**;
- Increase threshold **SUSI grants**;
- **Expand delivery of transportation services to primary and secondary school students** to improve safety and reduce emissions caused by private vehicles driven by parents unable to receive transportation services for their children;
- Redirect funding for **school meals and book rental** into the baseline funding of schools. This will enable schools to make strategic use of funding. Principals and teachers understand the needs of their pupils better than bureaucrats imposing a one-size-fits-all approach imposed by the Department of Education;
- Create and fund **greater links between Gardaí and local schools** to address early intervention and diversion away from youth crime and anti-social behaviour;

Ensuring an Education System That is Fit For Purpose

- **Oppose any politicisation of education;**
- Ensuring that **Irish culture**, tradition, and language remain cornerstones of our education system;
- Reform school transport and the "**close school**" rule, which deprives many children of access to transport and restricting their educational opportunities;
- **Amend means tests for educational grants** for third-level education to take pressure off the middle class, who are disproportionately burdened by education costs;
- Create a low-interest, **government-backed student loan** scheme available to all secondary school graduates;

Education

Ensuring an Education System That is Fit For Purpose

- Add **road safety** to secondary school curriculum;
- Deliver **Youth Workers** equitably throughout the country, to adequately serve all areas;
- Include **nutrition education** in school curriculum and increase physical education;
- Place a greater **emphasis on physical education** as a physical, mental, and emotional health measure. Ensuring the diverse needs of pupils are met in terms of physical education is vital to cultivating a healthy populace.
- Ensure all **sexual education is age-appropriate**;
- Promote education on **safe and responsible social media use**;
- Provide **emotional health education** to all pupils;

Provide increased vocational and apprenticeship opportunities

- Provide increased **vocational and apprenticeship** opportunities as alternatives to third-level education;
- Encourage young people, particularly **early school leavers**, to continue training that will better themselves and our economy at large;
- **End the stigma** associated with “not making it into third level,” which contributes to the shortage of skilled tradespeople in Ireland;
- **Increase funding for vocational and apprenticeship training.**



“We are committed to ensuring the next generation of Irish schoolchildren continue to receive the best education possible by funding more teachers, more educational programs and by rewarding the hard work of our second level students”

Health

Improving Healthcare Delivery, Supporting
Our Front Line Healthcare Workers



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Ireland's healthcare system is increasingly unable to meet demand and Irish citizens frequently wait months or years for necessary procedures. Hospital beds are chronically in short supply and primary care staff are overwhelmed by their workload. The bottom line is we need more doctors, nurses, and hospitals. This means we need more funding and competent management of the HSE to ensure that funding is well spent. We recognize the problem and propose we:

Fixing the Shortage of Healthcare Professionals

- **Increase salaries of primary care doctors and nurses** to ensure they remain in Ireland;
- **Provide forgivable, interest-free loans** for Irish students to study medicine with an attached agreement that they practice in Ireland for seven years after completing their education, otherwise the subsidies must be repaid;
- **Subsidise rental of state-owned accommodation for healthcare professionals** on low wages for a period of up to five years following entry to service;
- **Increase the number of medicines a pharmacist can prescribe** to reduce demand on doctors;

Addressing the Hospital Bed Shortage

- Introduce a new healthcare model to allow for **24/7 treatment** – we already know this is possible because private hospitals operate on this system;
- **Increase funding to smaller, regional hospitals** that can provide urgent and routine care to people who do not reside in large cities – that is 45% of the population;
 - This will also alleviate pressure large hospitals in urban centres;
- Establish public-private partnerships to help **shorten wait-times** for medical care;
- Introduce a **reimbursement scheme for Republic of Ireland private hospitals** and continue the Northern Ireland reimbursement program;
- Maintain and increase funding for **community hospitals**;
- **Expand use of elective surgery units** to prevent cancellations and backlog;

Supporting Young People and Carers

- **Abolish means testing for carers;**
- Include **nutrition education** in school curriculum to reduce preventable illnesses;
- Restore **funding for the school dentist** to prevent long-term dental problems;

Implementing Effective Oversight of the Healthcare System

- Create watchdog, independent of HSE, to ensure **accountability by HSE** and hospital management;
- Ensure **criminal prosecution for cover ups** by HSE and hospital personnel;
- Include **ethics component** to medical education;
- Strengthen **whistleblower protection** legislation;
- **Restore accountability** in the Ministry of Health. No longer should the minister be able hide behind the line that the HSE is an independent statutory body;"
- Make the **Minister for Health directly answerable** for delivery of services and ensuring transparent and effective healthcare for all;

Reforming Medical Card Issuance

- Automatically **issue medical cards to patients undergoing cancer treatment** for the duration of their treatment;
- **Curtail issue of medical cards to IPAS applicants;**

Modernising Mental Health and Eldercare Services

- Introduce **outpatient mental health respite facilities**, to address the gap between acute admission and community care;
- **Increase grants for nursing homes** to remain in compliance and prevent nursing home closures;
- Add **dementia units** to community hospitals.

Housing and Planning

Taking decisive action to address the housing crisis.



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Housing and Planning



There is a shortage of housing across Ireland and the few homes that are available remain unaffordable to most people. We all know this is a problem that the Government has failed to address. They often claim to be making headway on this issue, but the reality is that the situation continues to worsen. What we need is common-sense reform and Independent Ireland has a plan.

The only way to address the housing crisis is to adopt a comprehensive plan that increases housing supply, reduces costs, and improves access. To accomplish this, we must incentivise new construction and spur property development. The current Government has created an entire generation of people who will never achieve homeownership, unless we enact reforms now.

Key Policy Positions

- Declare a **housing emergency** to expeditiously implement solutions to the housing crisis;
- **Incentivise vacant property development:** Increase housing stock by introducing tax incentives for property owners to renovate and rent or sell vacant properties; and for those who change property usage to create accommodation;
- **Achieve affordable rents for tenants by making tax-free all rents lower than €1,000;**
 - Extend the Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP) to all landlords (not just those renting to Ukrainian refugees), and increase the allowable amount to €1,000 from €800;
 - This will reduce inflationary pressure, deflate rent prices, and reduce government expenditure in Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) and other schemes;
 - It will also be profitable for landlords, ensuring their participation; The Government would receive less in tax but spend less in HAP and other schemes;
 - Increase landlord participation in the revised ARP scheme by making it voluntary and permitting landlords to opt-out, should their tenants move out;
 - This would prevent landlords from being “locked-in” to Rent Pressure Zone (RPZ) rates; the fear of which would prevent their participation in a revised ARP scheme;

Housing and Planning



- **Reform mortgage lending to help people become homeowners:** Reform the banking sector and attract international competition to reduce mortgage costs; increase threshold to allow credit unions to issue mortgages;
- **Encourage Irish builders to return to Ireland from abroad** by providing tax relief for five years to returnees via the Special Assignee Relief Program (SARP);
- **Reduce VAT on building materials** to spur construction, increase supply of homes, and reduce costs;
- **Expand student housing construction** to ensure every student who needs one has a place to stay;
- **Increase infrastructure funding for community and social housing:** Allocate more funds to build and maintain sewage, water, and internet to allow construction of community and social housing throughout the country, which will provide affordable housing and reduce homelessness;
 - This will allow for dispersion of people to avoid impacting high density areas;
 - It will also allow people to downsize and remain in their community, freeing up housing space for the next generation;
- **Prioritise people with strong ties to the community** for social housing, which will benefit both the community and the beneficiary;
- **Promote modular, prefabricated, and log cabin housing:** Encourage the use of modular, prefabricated, and log cabin construction methods to reduce building time and costs, increasing the supply of affordable housing more quickly;
- **Allow downsizing senior citizens to remain near their families** and retain their independence by doubling the size of rear extensions (in areas with insufficient infrastructure and community housing);
- **Expand first-time buyer support:** Allow first-time buyers to reclaim VAT on home purchases;
- **Refurbish derelict state-owned properties and properties** under state stewardship to provide sustainable accommodation to homeless families and children in their local communities;
- **Overhaul public procurement policy** to ensure contractors with track records of building in the public and private sectors can tender for the construction of affordable and social housing;

Housing and Planning



Comprehensive Planning Reform

- **Obligate IPAS centres to follow the same planning regulations as every other entity in the country** and allow opponents to file objections with the planning office;
- **Streamline planning permissions:** Simplify and expedite the planning process for residential developments to reduce bureaucratic delays and encourage faster construction of new homes;
- **Simplify rural planning:** Reform planning guidelines to simplify permissions for one-off family homes in rural areas;
- **Require that all pre-planning be done in person:** Empower councils to allow families to build on land they own where they meet criteria for environment and safe access, including on to regional roads;
- **Reform planning framework** – the process should be bottom-up: Local development plan feeds into county development plan, and subsequently into the national planning framework, not the other way around;
- **Allow planning within cities to permit developers to build up** within reason, and with community buy-in.

An aerial photograph showing a large residential area with numerous houses, green lawns, and paved roads. In the background, there are more houses and fields under a cloudy sky.

These common-sense policy changes will alleviate many of the challenges currently faced by the Irish housing market and contribute to a more stable and affordable housing environment.

Immigration

Protecting our borders, enforcing our laws
and expediting the immigration system



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Immigration



Immigration is the most pressing issue facing Ireland in 2024. This includes legal immigration, which we support, because we recognise the important role immigrants play in our economy and our society. It also includes illegal immigration, which we strongly oppose. We have seen an enormous increase in applications for International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS), or refugee status, during the past two years (many of which are without merit). The Government has done nothing except force these people, many of whom are unskilled economic migrants, into communities that are not equipped to accommodate them.

Schools are overcrowded, doctor wait times continue to grow, and the school dentist is a distant memory. Illegal immigration has devastated the tourism industry, which has been one of our largest industries for the better half of a half century. Understandably, many Irish citizens oppose the creation of permanent migrant centres in their communities. However, IPAS centres are immune from planning regulations, which legally nullifies resident objections – this needs to change immediately. To address this crisis, Independent Ireland will:

Key Policy Positions

Improving Legal Immigration

- Impose **strict background checks** on all visa applicants;
- Streamline all **work visa applications** and expedite allowing legal immigrants to work;
- **Reduce bureaucratic hurdles** for small and medium enterprises hiring legal immigrants;
- **Allow legal immigrants with a tax number to work upon arrival** in order to meet the human resource requirements of the Irish economy;
- Ensure businesses demonstrate jobs cannot be filled by non-EEA workers and are sustainable, **strict consequences for employers who abuse the system**;

Opposing Illegal Immigration

- **Obligate IPAS centres to follow the same planning regulations** as every other entity in the country and allow individuals, communities, and businesses to file objections with the relevant planning authority;
- Require **airlines to provide scans of passports** presented pre-flight to identify people who destroy or lose their identity documents;
- Acquire the use of **secure airport detention facilities for undocumented arrivals** and people awaiting deportation;
- Support **immediate deportation of IPAS applicants convicted of violent or sexual offences**;
- Support automatic refusal of IPAS applicants who have **prior serious criminal convictions**;
- **Deport incarcerated foreign nationals** immediately after their prison sentence ends;

Immigration



Expediting IPAS Applications and Eliminating Wasteful Spending

- **Expedite IPAS applications** to be completed within a defined time frame. Hold Special court sittings to address and deal with these cases and hire 300 new case officers. We will pay these new salaries with money we save by not providing room and board to 30,000+ new arrivals each year;
- We must also expedite the appeal process and complete it within 30/60/180 calendar days:
 - **Safe Country** – 30 days after arrival;
 - **Unsafe Country** – 60 days after arrival;
 - **All Appeals exhausted** after 180 days after arrival;
- **Curtail automatic medical cards to IPAS applicants**, ensuring the same criteria is applied to IPAS applicants as is to existing residents;
- **Impose VAT to the contracts of hotels accommodating IPAS applicants** to stop incentivising damage to tourism;
- **End private accommodation reimbursement altogether for future arrivals** and eliminate the migrant housing industrial complex;
 - Communities that wish to accommodate IPAS centres should be empowered to do so on a not-for-profit basis and should be supported and funded by the state for the buying and doing up of unused properties;
 - This model would create greater community buy-in and the community would benefit from funds generated;
 - This will stop the overinflated state system;
- Implement a requirement that permanent residence permit applicants must take a six-month **course on Irish history and culture and pass an exam**, provided in English and Irish only;
- **Allow for revocation of naturalised citizenship** in cases where a naturalised citizen is convicted of serious violent or sexual crimes.

The Government's inaction on this issue demands a drastic correction, lest the situation deteriorate further. We must remove the incentives drawing economic migrants to Ireland; otherwise, they will keep coming and for every person we turn around, another will arrive. Ultimately, these are the steps we must take if we are to care for Irish people, legal immigrants, and genuine refugees already present in Ireland.

Agriculture & Fisheries

Protecting and supporting our indigenous industries



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Agriculture and Fisheries



Farming and fishing form the backbone of the rural economy, and Independent Ireland will fight to protect these industries. Our Government unjustly blames farmers for climate change and regularly changes priorities, making it impossible for farmers to plan strategically. Our policies are clear: we will advance policies that expand farming and fishing; and we will oppose any effort to restrict these industries.

Key Policy Positions

- **Oppose any mandatory cull** of the national herd;
- Oppose the Mercosur Trade deal;
- Introduce a specific **Minister for fisheries** responsible for maritime issues, and management of Ireland's territorial waters;
- Ensure **no farmer will be forced to re-wet their lands** or be affected by adjoining holdings undertaking re-wetting, under the Nature Restoration Laws;
- **Introduce yellow-card scheme for farm inspections** and implement 21-day notice before farm inspections (excluding animal welfare checks);
- **Remove carbon tax on marked gas oil** sold to the agricultural sector including agricultural contractors;
- Establish a **financial safety net** for farmers and fishermen or fisherwomen hit by unforeseeable challenges;
- Provide **funding for harbour development** to accommodate small and large fishing vessels, as well as tourism operators;
- Provide for a **farm retirement scheme** with a proposed budget of €300 million to facilitate the transfer of 20,000 to 30,000 farms to younger farmers;
- Create fund to help farmers and fishermen/fisherwomen **adopt technological advances** to improve efficiency;
- Create a **€200 million rainy fund** for all agricultural sectors to protect farmers in the case of serious adverse weather or emergencies affecting crops;
- Implement **taxation and zoning benefits** for areas that lose historically rural industries;

Industry Specific Policies

Fisheries

- Fight to increase the quota for Irish fishing vessels;
- Re-negotiate use of Irish territorial waters for Irish fishermen & fisherwomen;
- Create a specific responsible for maritime issues, and management of Ireland's territorial waters;
- Expand investment in deep-sea ports countrywide to reduce crowding in Dublin and limit environmental impact;
- Implement existing EU fuel rebates for fishermen/fisherwomen;

Dairy

- Oppose any reduction in derogation level and support farmers with water quality challenges;
- VAT reimbursement for dairy farmers on fixed milk tanks, calf feeders and mobile or fixed slurry cleaning equipment;

Beef & Suckler

- Introduce SCEP 2 – a simplified scheme to sustain suckler farming;
- When combined with the National Beef Welfare Scheme, each eligible cow and calf will be raised to €300. This scheme will assist 20,000 farmers;
- Farmers, including in SCEP 1, to experience raised subsidy on a pro-rata basis;
- Promote domestic consumption of Irish Beef;

Sheep

- Research and create viable wool markets;
- Increase funding for sheep improvement schemes;
- Implement a comprehensive dog control plan to protect livestock;

Equine

- Issue Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) grants to cover change of use;

Pigs & Poultry

- Invest in infrastructure and promote free-range practices;

"We must encourage and support the next generation of Irish Farmers, we produce some of the highest quality food in the world, that should be celebrated and promoted at every opportunity"



Exports, Tillage, TAMS, Environment



Exports

- Ensure continuation of live export markets and oppose EU policies that threaten them. Support live export of dairy calves and weanlings from all herds;

Tillage & Horticulture

- Implement €300 per hectare of a supplemental subsidy in addition to basic payments;
- Maintain funding for current schemes in the tillage sector;
- Explore the feasibility of resurrecting industries that have closed in recent decades; for example, sugar beet production and processing;
- Introduce urban allotment scheme;

Organic

- Reopen organic scheme for farmers who wish to engage in organic farming and eliminate the duplication of form-filling in the organic sector and schemes;

Environmental

- Introduce ACRES 3 open to 20,000 additional farmers who wish to participate;

TAMS

- Increase annual budget by €50 Million (new total will be €140 million);
- Increase grant to 70 percent maximum;
- Allow contractors to qualify for TAMS grants for all slurry equipment;
- Expand grants to deal with longer winters and increase slurry storage capacity;
- Expand list of qualifying equipment and infrastructure fundable under the scheme;

Education

Veterinary

- Targeted financial supports for young vets to join or set-up practices in areas where remoteness and scarcity of vets is posing a danger to animal welfare;
- Open two more veterinary schools, so students need not go abroad;
- Ensure anti-competitive practices are prohibited and legislate to prevent an oligopoly from developing in this sector;
- Provide financial support to agricultural college to prevent Irish students from having to travel abroad to pursue an education in agriculture;

Forestry

Forestry requires a full overhaul as Ireland has not and will not reach its targets.

- Full re-engagement with EU on regulations in forestry sector;
- Ensure balanced county percentage contributions;
- Improve compensatory scheme for ash dieback;
- Full review of carbon sequestration to include hedgerows and unmanaged forestry and deliver on the LiDER study which has been promised for many years;

Social & Regulatory Issues

EU Common Agricultural Plan (CAP)

- Engage with EU to ensure CAP budget is fit for purpose and addresses the issues for which it was originally designed;
- Ensure any future proposed environmental scheme is not taken out of CAP budget;
- Advocate for fair distribution of payments and maintain key income support schemes and increase budgets for critical schemes (e.g. ANC);

Young Farmer Supports

- We propose inflationary increases in young farmers' support, ensuring a vibrant future for the next generation of agricultural leaders;

Land Distribution

- Establish a Farmland Management Agency for fair land distribution;

Turf-cutting

- Protect the right of individuals to cut turf, in keeping with the heritage and traditions of rural regions;

TB

- Undertake an in-depth analysis of the TB situation in Ireland and work with UK researchers to learn from their experience to tackle the evolving threat TB poses to farmers and their herds;



Our farmers and fishermen are the guardians of our land and waters, and it's time we support them with common-sense solutions that secure the future of rural Ireland.

Broad Support For All Farmers: Today and in The Future

- **Young Farmers:** Support young farmers through innovative lease-to-buy schemes including strategic low-interest and longer-term loans are available to active farmers;
- An extension of the young farmer scheme and an alignment of the young farmer's scheme in relation to stamp duty and entitlements, as stamp duty is at age 35 and entitlements are 40. Both should be brought to age 40.
- **Women in Farming:** Introduce grants for women farmers and streamline applications;
- **Forgotten Farmers:** Rectify Government mistakes over the past 15 years by consistent funding and support and address the needs of "Forgotten Farmers" to ensure no farmer is left behind;
- **Research:** Increase support for precise scientific analysis of land and maximize potential for carbon credit trading;
- **Mart Infrastructure Scheme:** Make financial support of 75 percent available for safety measures and capital reinvestment projects;
- **Small-scale Agricultural Scheme:** Support, through our planning reforms, the ability of rural dwellers to participate in small scale agriculture related industries including sales, processing, manufacturing etc. This will also be supported with capital grants from DAFM and DET and local authorities;
- Support sustainable seaweed harvesting around the country to create aquaculture jobs;

Fisheries

- Fight to increase the quota for Irish fishing vessels;
- Re-negotiate use of Irish territorial waters for Irish fishermen & fisherwomen;
- Create a specific responsible for maritime issues, and management of Ireland's territorial waters;
- Expand investment in deep-sea ports countrywide to reduce crowding in Dublin and limit environmental impact;
- Implement existing EU fuel rebates for fishermen/fisherwomen;



"We fully support the farmers and fishermen of Ireland, we understand they are the backbone of rural communities and will work to deliver for these industries"

Cost Of Living

Supporting Families, Reforming Taxation
and Supporting Businesses



Cost of Living

Savings and Costs

Savings For You



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Cost of Living

The cost-of-living crisis is caused by two things: economic factors outside the Government's control, such as inflation; and factors within the Government's control, such as taxation. When pressed on how it will handle this crisis, the Government frequently points to things outside its control to absolve itself from responsibility.

The Government has ignored those factors within its control, because taking appropriate action can cause a short-term drop in popularity, even if it results in the country's long-term success. Independent Ireland is more interested in long-term success than popularity, and proposes we:

Reducing Taxes, Rewarding Hard Work, Cutting Energy Costs

- Abolish USC & PRSI contributions for pension-aged people who continue to work;
- Increase tax relief for those contributing to private pensions;
- Freeze all "green taxes" – review the effectiveness of the stated purpose and adjust accordingly. If they are not serving their stated purpose of reducing carbon impact, they are simply taxes, not green taxes;
- Reduce middle-class taxes by ensuring no one earning less than €50,000 per annum is affected by the highest marginal rate of taxation;
- Reduce VAT to nine percent for and tourism and hospitality, excluding accommodation;
- Equalise VAT at nine percent for restaurants and pubs to prevent two-tier taxation;
- Reform outdated VAT thresholds to promote and protect small business;
- Reduce taxation on overtime to fill staffing shortages and reward hard work;

Reducing Costs, Supporting Communities, and Controlling Government Spending

- Financially support community employment schemes (e.g. CSP, RSS, CE, TUS, HSC etc.);
- Expand prescription drug payment scheme;
- Expand public transport commuter scheme;
- Increase funding for early childcare to reduce childcare costs;
- Review and reform spending in NGO sector to reduce government waste; reward NGOs that provide valuable services and value for money and cut funding to those that do not;

Cost of Living

Improved Services and Support for Communities

- Enable An Post to deliver a full suite of banking services in rural Ireland by creating a new commercial bank in conjunction with credit unions;
- Restore employment opportunities and enhance investment in areas where jobs have been lost in Bord na Móna and ESB;
 - Create a new strategic investment zone for Just Transition Areas to accelerate planning and improve employment opportunities in those areas
- Introduce measures to facilitate community groups of standing with access to up-front funding;
 - The huge personal commitment of volunteers to community development programmes must be recognised. Matching funding and bridging funding are substantial barriers for voluntary groups who wish to draw down grant aid;

Helping Students and Young People

- Encourage skilled Irish workers to return to Ireland from abroad (builders, teachers, doctors, nurses, et al.) by providing tax relief for five years to returnees via the Special Assignee Relief Program (SARP);
- Reduce fees for repeat mandatory state requirements, such as driver theory tests, driving tests, and driving licenses;
- Amend means tests for educational grants for third-level education to take pressure off the middle class, who are disproportionately burdened by education costs;
- Create a low-interest, government-backed student loan scheme available to all secondary school graduates;

Supporting Front Line Workers

- Subsidise the rental of state-owned accommodation for front-line workers (nurses, junior doctors, teachers, gardaí, members of defence forces and fire brigade, etc.) on low wages for a period of up to five years following entry to service;
 - Extended to Gardaí who are relocated for up to 24 months following relocation;
- Introduce “locality pay” for civil and public servants, to attract skilled civil servants in higher-cost urban settings.

An Ghaeilge agus an Ghaeltacht

Ár gcultúr agus ár n-oidhreacht teanga a
chur chun cinn



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An Ghaeilge agus an Ghaeltacht



An Teanga

Is teanga bheo í an Ghaeilge. Tá iarracht as cuimse déanta le roinnt blianta anuas cur le líon na gcainteoirí Gaeilge. Mar sin féin, theip ar an rialtas infrastruchtúr cuí a chur i bhfeidhm le seirbhísí a chur ar fáil don phobal seo.

Tá maoiniú d'eagraíochtaí a chuireann an Ghaeilge chun cinn tar éis titim le blianta beaga anuas ach de réir tuairisce de chuid Chonradh na Gaeilge ar fhorbairt na teanga thar thréimhse cúig bliana (An Plean Fáis 2024-2029), tá beirt as gach triúr a ghlac páirt sa suirbhé den tuairim gur cheart go mbeadh tuilleadh maoinithe á chur ar fáil ag an rialtas leis an teanga a chur chun cinn.

Luadh sa tuairisc chéanna go bhfuil duine as beirt ag iarraidh níos mó deiseanna an Ghaeilge a labhairt níos minice. Tá an t-éileamh ann. Tá an riachtanas soiléir. Tá an Ghaeilge ar cheann de na haitheantóirí cultúir is tábhachtaí dá bhfuil againn mar shochaí. Seachadadh í ar aghaidh ó ghlúin go glúin agus tháinig sí slán ó na céadta bliain d'íarrachtaí í a chur faoi chos.

I sochaí ina bhfuil domhandú agus aonchineálacht chultúir forleathan, is í an teanga a nascann an duine leis an áit agus leis an bpobal, rud a theastaíonn uaidh chuile shochaí neamhspleách le bheith faoi bhláth.

Ar ndóigh, tá nasc láidir le fostáiocht sa nGaeilge le rath na Gaeltachta. Caithfidh an tÚdarás a chinntiú go bhfuil caomhnú agus cur chun cinn na Gaeilge ag croílár a chuid gníomhartha. Tá sé cheantar pleanála teanga is fiche ar an bhfód agus tá sé riachtanach an dóthain maoinithe a chur ar fáil dóibh le cinntiú go n-éiríonn lena gcuid iarrachtaí. Tá sé riachtanach chomh maith tuilleadh maoinithe a chur ar fáil don Údarás le cinntiú go mbeidh rochtain ar acmhainní cuí ag chuile cheantar pleanála teanga.

Níl cothrom na Féinne á fháil ag Údarás na Gaeltachta ó thaobh an mhaoinithe de. Tá athruithe i mbuiséad caipítíl na ngíomhaireachtaí rialtais i gceannas ar chruthú fostáiochta idir 2008 agus 2022 le feiceáil i nGraf ar leathanach 21. Is léir gur laghdaíodh tagtha ar buiséad Údarás na Gaeltachta in 2008 agus, fiú leis an €14.5 sa mbreis a fógraíodh in 2021, tá an tÚdarás ag titim chun deiridh le hais an dá ghrúpa eile.

Tá laghdú tagtha ar bhuiséad caipítíl Údarás na Gaeltachta, ó €25.5m in 2008 go €14.5m in 2021. Cé go raibh méadú beag bídeach i mbuiséad na bliana seo, ní raibh méadú tagtha ar an mbuiséad sin ó 2021, cé go bhfuil costais le tográí caipítíl a reáchtáil ag dul i méid de bharr an ardaithe ar ráta boilscithe ó shin. Is ionann seo agus laghdú buiséid 43%. Tá buiséad an GFT tar éis méadú 66% agus buiséad Fhiontraíocht Éireann tar éis méadú 30% sa tréimhse chéanna.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Caithfear tacú le nuálaíocht mar go gcothaíonn sí forbairt i gceantar. Caithfear infheistíocht eacnamaíochta a chur ar fáil i gceantair ina an daonra ag dul i laige. Caithfidh go mbeidh Údarás na Gaeltachta mar údarás neamhspleách ar fhorbairt sa nGaeltacht arís.

- Maoiniú caipitil a mhéadú d'Údarás na Gaeltachta le cur lena hacomhainn tacú le forbairt eacnamaíoch agus soláthar post i gceantair Ghaeltachta. Leis sin, ba cheart maoiniú ilbhliantúil a chur ar fáil le pleannan agus tograí straitéiseacha fadtéarmacha a chur i bhfeidhm. Ba cheart go dtiocfadh aon mhéadú orthu seo le méadú an dá ghníomhaireseachtaí forbartha eile tar éis 2008, an GFT (méadú 66%) agus Fiontraíocht Éireann (méadú 30%).
- Tuilleadh acmhainní le rochtain ar leathanbhandá ardluais agus moil dhigiteacha (gréasán gteic) a chur ar fáil sna ceantair Ghaeltachta. Bheadh Ciste Nascacht Dhigiteach na Gaeltachta le maoiniú €50m thar thréimhse cúig bliana luate leis mar pháirt de seo, le cothromáíocht na féinne le ceantair uirbeacha a chinntiú.
- Maoiniú agus solúbthacht a chur ar fáil d'Údarás na Gaeltachta talamh a cheannach agus a dhíol le dul i ngleic leis an mbeagán tithe inacmhainneatáarfáiligceantairlabharthaGhaeilge. Ba cheart go mbeadh an chumhacht ag Údarás talamh a cheannacht, scéimeanna tithíochta atá forbartha ag páirtithe straitéiseacha pobail a mhaoliniú agus coinníollacha Gaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm ar thithe nua.
- Ciste Nuálaíochta Gaeltachta a chruthú, faoi stiúir Údarás na Gaeltachta, le tacú le taighde agus forbairt agus borradh a chur faoi fhiontar Ghaeltachta. Ba cheart go gcuirfí €20m i leataobh don chiste seo in aghaidh na bliana agus tacaíocht mheantóireachta agus oilteachta a bheith san áireamh leis chomh maith le cúnamh airgeadais.
- Scéimeanna tacaíochta d'fhiontar shóisialta de chuid Údarás na Gaeltachta a neartú le tionsclaíochtaí forbartha inbhuanaithe a chothú atá treoraithe ag an bpobal. Ba cheart go mbeadh ardú 20% i maoiniú d'eagraíochtaí fhorbairt na tuaithe a bheith san áireamh leis seo, a chabhródh leo fiontar shóisialta a bhunú a rachaidh chun tairbhe na Gaeltachta ó thaobh seirbhísí, fostáiochta agus saoil de.

- Maoiniú de €760,000 sa mbreis in aghaidh na bliana ag Muintearas le cláir oideachais agus oiliúna do dhaoine óga a chur chun cinn sa nGaeltacht, chomh maith €550,000 sa mbreis in aghaidh na bliana d'Ealaín na Gaeltachta le tionsclaíochtaí ealaíon agus cultúir a fhorbairt sna ceantair Ghaeltachta.
- Gníomhaireacht um Fhuinneamh In-Athnuaithe na Gaeltachta a bhunú faoi stiúir Údarás na Gaeltachta le tograí ar leis an bpobal iad ag plé le fuinneamh in-athnuaithe a chur chun cinn. Bheadh sí mar aidhm na gníomhaireachta seo togra fuinneamh in-athnuaithe amháin, ar a laghad, agus a bheadh faoi stiúir an phobail féin, a bhunú i ngach ceantar Gaeltachta taobh istigh de chuíg bliana.
- Tuileadh maoinithe do thionsclaíochtaí pleanála an Údaráis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn mar theanga phobail. Dhéanfaí an buiséad reatha do phleanáil teanga a dhúbait agus chuirfí le líon na nOifigeach Pleanála Teanga don Ghaeilge, le béim ar mhól lárnach a chruthú i ngach ceantar Gaeltachta i gceann dá sráidbhailte/bailte.
- Gealltanás a thabhairt an Próiseas Pleanála Teanga a athnuachan do sheacht mbliana sa mbreis, mar go bhfuil dáta deiridh chuid de na pleananna in 2026.
- Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil (OFÁ) a bhunú le hÚdarás na Gaeltachta, le maoiniú agus cumhacht siúd san áireamh. Comhlíonann an tÚdarás feidhmeanna OFÁ taobh istigh den Ghaeltacht cheana féin ach ní chuirtear maoiniú ar fáil dó don dualgas seo, rud a fhágann ceantar Ghaeltachta faoi mhíbhuntáise le hais na gceantar taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht. D'éileodh sé seo €4.5m in aghaidh na bliana mar phointe tosaigh do thacaithe OFÁ.
- €7.5m in aghaidh na bliana a chur i leataobh thar thréimhse cúig bliana d'Údarás na Gaeltachta le hinfrastruchtúr do chaithimh aimsire amuigh faoin spéir a fhorbairt i gceantair Ghaeltachta, a chuirfidh le háiseanna an phobail chomh maith le féidearthachtaí turasóireachta. Thacódh an maoiniú seo le cruthú agus uasghrádú na gconairí siúil, rotharbhealaí, agus áiseanna snámha, agus chinnteodh sé comharthaíocht chuí agus ábhair léirmhínitheacha i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla. Ní hamháin go gcuirfeadh an infheistíocht seo le caighdeán maireachtála na gcónaitheoirí Gaeltachta, ach bheadh borradh faoi thurasóireacht inmharthana chomh maith, rud a chuirfeadh le deiseanna fostáiochta san earnáil do chaithimh aimsire amuigh faoin spéir agus san earnáil sláinte. D'oibreodh Údarás na Gaeltachta as lámh a chéile le hÚdaráis áitiúla, Fáilte Éireann, agus grúpaí pobail le cinntíú go dtagann na forbairtí seo uilig le straitéisí reatha níos leithne do thurasóireacht réigiúnach agus le tionsclaíochtaí a chuireann an Ghaeilge chun cinn.

Law and Order

Tough on crime, safer cities and rural communities.



INDEPENDENT
IRELAND

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Law and Order

All too often we hear of violent criminals and criminals guilty of sexual or violent offences receiving suspended sentences and walking free. These light sentences often precede the guilty party committing additional crimes, and causing tragedies that should have been avoidable. While it is easy to blame the judge involved, the fact is that Ireland has weak sentencing laws that must be reformed. Gardai are leaving the force in record numbers and we must address the retention crisis within An Garda Siochana, while also incentivising new recruitment. Therefore, Independent Ireland will:

Tough On Crime, Protect Free Speech

Opposing Hate Speech Laws and Reforming Sentencing

- Oppose any hate-speech legislation;
- Implement stricter sentencing guidelines for serious violent and sexual crimes, and introduction of legislation that prohibits suspended sentences for such crimes;
- Prohibit sex offenders from legally changing their name to avoid detection in the future;
- Review Sex Offender Registry to ensure it is fit for purpose;
- Obligate Gardai to notify children services and school administrators of registered child sex offenders in their area;
- Support immediate deportation of IPAS applicants who are convicted of violent or sexual offences;
- Support automatic refusal of applications for IPAS from applicants who have prior criminal convictions;

Increased Support for Gardai

Improve Garda retention and recruitment. Safer cities and rural communities.

- Increase funding for An Garda Siochana and a halt to Garda station closures;
- Introduce accommodation supports for Gardai stationed in rent pressure zones. Provide state accommodation for Gardai close to their stations to prevent Gardai having to travel long distances to work;
- Reintroduce community policing system and greater investment in early intervention and diversion programs;
- Implement measures to ensure responsibility for parents of minors convicted of antisocial behaviour;
- Invest in more community alerts, neighbourhood watch, and business alerts;
- Reintroduce text alert schemes;

Taking Innovative Steps to Improve Law and Order



- Ensure year-round access to criminal courts;
- Reform civil liability laws to ensure criminals cannot sue for injuries sustained during commission of a crime and victims are not financially liable for damages;
- Create a direct communication program with gang members, particularly young members. Offer support and social services, while clearly stating the consequences of continued violence;
- Introduce a programme employing "violence interrupters" to mediate conflicts and provide resources to address intergenerational and systemic criminal activity;
- Introduce a focus on rehabilitation for first-time offenders offering education, job training, and therapy, which research shows reduces recidivism.



"We fully support the brave men and women of An Garda Síochána. We must work to deliver the support needed to ensure we prevent our Gardai leaving the force and implement changes need to improve retention. We also aim to provide accommodation supports to stop the current practice of Gardai having to travel inordinate distances to work."

"It is our goal to introduce stricter sentencing guidelines for violent crimes, sexual crimes and crimes against children. Suspended sentences for those who commit these serious crimes must become a thing of the past. It is only by introducing deterrents by stricter sentencing that we can send a clear message to offenders in these categories"



Neutrality

Maintaining Ireland's role as a nation of peacekeepers.



**INDEPENDENT
IRELAND**

Neutrality



Any change to Ireland's long-standing neutrality must require a referendum. Our stance on this is firm.

Ireland's neutrality has served it well for more than 100 years and Independent Ireland is committed to maintaining Irish neutrality in the future. We oppose Ireland joining any military alliance and support upholding the existing triple-lock mechanism, which pertains to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions.

In order for Ireland to participate in UN peacekeeping missions, the following conditions must be met:

- A UN Security Council resolution or UN General Assembly resolution and;
 - A formal decision by the Irish Government and;
 - Approval by a resolution of Dáil Éireann.
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- We recognize that Ireland's long-standing tradition of neutrality leaves us in an excellent position to pursue peaceful resolution of foreign conflicts, albeit quietly. Our success in diplomacy depends on discreetly encouraging negotiations, not in grandstanding for television cameras and social media. Therefore, Independent Ireland supports maintaining the existing triple-lock mechanism.
 - We are supportive of Ireland's role within the European Union, but oppose joining a multinational EU Defence Force. Our small island nation can play a larger role in facilitating peaceful international relations by remaining a neutral mediator, and Ireland should remain committed to its historical neutrality.