

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;