

Lead a greener life, every day

Everybody is going green these days and it's easy to get overwhelmed – but it's also easy to begin making a positive impact in your life. Everything we do has an impact on the planet, so every single day the choices we make can have a global impact

We are all able to control most of our choices – how we live, shop and eat, where we take holidays, how we use our vote. Therefore, we can also control and limit our impact on the environment and have a global impact.

Here are five top tips to going green and making a difference:

1 TURN DOWN, SWITCH ON. Lowering your thermostat by one degree can save you €150 per year, and switching four regular bulbs for CFL's will save you up to €20 on your yearly electricity bill.

2 RECYCLING IS RIGHT. Recycling reduces the amount of waste that ends up in landfill, saves you money and lowers your carbon footprint.

3 GET AROUND. Do you need to use your car for every journey you make? Could you walk, cycle or use public transport instead? Leave the car at home one day a week and see how easy it is. Or what about working from home? Or carpooling? Think about fuel consumption when you're choosing your next vehicle; it will save you money.

4 SWITCH YOUR ELECTRICITY SUPPLIER. Eighty per cent of Airtricity's power comes from renewable sources, compared to 9% of ESB's.

5 VOTE GREEN!
The easiest change of all.

Need more information?

Contact your local Green Party representative:



Photos: flickr (Nam Nguyen / Paul Albertella / Moria / Heather Kennedy / Hugovk / Mike Rosales)

policies in action

January 2009

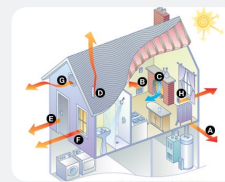
The Green Party is working in Government to make Ireland a better place for everybody.

Here are some of the things we have done in the last 18 months:

Helping people to save money by driving cleaner, greener cars



One of the Party's earliest achievements in government was to link motor taxes and vehicle registration tax to the level of greenhouse gas emissions produced by a car's engine. This long-held green policy has produced major changes in the type of cars that people drive. It is now much cheaper to buy and operate an environmentally friendly vehicle. Sales of gas-guzzlers have dived, while hundreds more green hybrid and electric vehicles appear on the roads every month.



Building warmer homes with lower energy bills

Developing the pioneering work of Green councillors in Fingal and Dun Laoghaire, the Government introduced rules for builders that would make new homes 40% more energy-efficient. Better design, construction and insulation standards, and a requirement to use a certain amount of energy from renewable sources, results in families in new homes paying energy bills that are, in many cases, half of those in older uninsulated houses. Homes built to the new standards have a much lower carbon footprint – and better resale value – thanks to these new regulations.

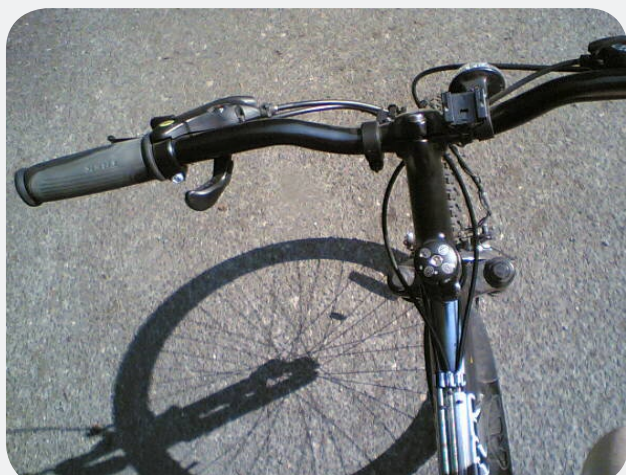
New money-saving, smart electricity meters will boost green power



In Italy in 2000, the state power company began installing a new type of meter that, on a regular basis, sent information about the amount of electricity being used in people's homes back to the grid. This €2bn project repaid investment costs within five years and eliminated thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, as a result of better management of the power supply. It also allowed hundreds more wind turbines and green energy plants to be connected to the grid. The ESB has begun to roll out these 'smart meters' across Ireland, helping customers to reduce their bills and allowing more renewable energy to be generated in Ireland. Special 'net meters' will also allow homes, businesses and farms that generate their own electricity to sell any surplus power back to the grid.

Halting bad planning, creating better communities

Bad planning decisions affect people's quality of life for generations. Ireland is littered with examples of huge housing estates built on the edges of villages without any consideration given to the schools, shops, transport options or sewage works that are vital to sustain a community. Greedy property owners, powerful developers and corrupt councillors have all played their part. Since becoming a minister, John Gormley has halted reckless planning decisions made by councillors in Monaghan, Mayo, and Waterford and changed the rules so that councillors will no longer be able to ignore either professional planning advice or national policy. He has also allocated at least €500m in 2008 to build better water and sewage treatment plants and correct the mistakes of the past. These measures will ensure that our drinking water is as safe as it can possibly be.



Cycle to work scheme

In January 2009 a new cycle to work scheme came into force. It covers bicycles and accessories up to a maximum cost of €1,000 and aims to promote cycling as a mean keeps of keeping fit, and as a fast, cheap environmentally friendly means of getting to work.

Extra money to heat and insulate low-income homes

Up to 60,000 households will benefit from €15m worth of structural work and increased fuel allowances to make warmer homes for those that need it most.



Removing tax breaks for high-earners

The 2009 Finance Bill eliminated a 'Cinderella clause' which allowed some of the country's richest people to avoid paying tax by leaving the country before midnight and not having that day counted as 'tax resident'.

Investing in jobs, protecting Ireland's future

Over €20m has been secured for green energy research in Irish colleges, which will create thousands of high quality Irish jobs and position Ireland as a leader in the rapidly developing 'green tech' area. Some €26m has been allocated for research into wave power



Battery recycling made simple

Batteries are an essential part of modern life and when they're dead it's tempting to put them in the bin along with other waste. But most batteries also contain dangerous poisons and toxins and can cause great environmental damage if they end up in landfill. Since September you can return used batteries to any shop that sells them. A safe and simple way to dispose of deadly waste!

Developing clean, renewable sources of energy



Extra financial supports and lighter legal requirements were extended to companies building renewable energy facilities and bio-energy plants. The supports to encourage offshore wind energy alone has almost trebled, while €2m has been made available to help farmers plant more bioenergy crops:

A ban on bed-sits: quality of rented accommodation improved

Bedsits will be phased out, heating and safety systems in flats improved, and gardens and shared areas better maintained under new laws to improve the quality of rental accommodation. Unscrupulous landlords failing to meet the new standards will be fined.