

# Green Party /Comhaontas Glas Constitution 2022

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## **1. NAME**

The name shall be the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas hereinafter referred to as the Party.

## **2. PRINCIPLES**

In these principles we assert the interdependence of all life, and the role of the Green movement in establishing appropriate relationships in this web of interdependence. While respecting the human person, we recognise and celebrate our interdependence with other species. We oppose the destructive processes which are destroying our planet. We favour a balanced and sustainable system of production and utilisation of resources, keeping account of real costs. The task before us is to transform the vision of continued viable life on Earth into reality.

### **2.1 Basic Philosophy**

2.1.1 The impact of society on the environment should not be ecologically disruptive.

2.1.2 Conservation of resources is vital to a sustainable society.

2.1.3 We have the responsibility to pass the Earth on to our successors in a fit and healthy state.

### **2.2 Socio-economic Principles**

2.2.1 Unrestricted economic growth must be replaced by an ecologically and socially regulated economy.

2.2.2 The poverty of two thirds of the world's family demands a fair re-distribution of the world's resources.

2.2.3 Everyone must be enabled to take an equal and full share in all the responsibilities of life.

### **2.3 Political Principles**

2.3.1 All political, social and economic decisions should be taken at the lowest effective level.

2.3.2 Decisions should as far as possible be on the basis of consensus and respect for the rights of minorities.

2.3. Society should be guided by self-reliance and co-operation at all levels.

2.3.4 The need for world peace and justice overrides national and commercial interests.

2.3.5 There is no place for violence or threat of violence in the democratic political process.

### **3. OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the Party shall be to promote the Principles listed in Article 2, by means which shall include:

- (a) active participation in the political process, and
- (b) informing, educating and involving the public.

### **4. MEMBERSHIP**

The Party aims to enable the maximum number of persons possible, wishing to promote a sustainable society, to participate in the political process through its membership.

4.1 Membership of the Party is open to all persons over the age of sixteen years who:

- (a) accept the Principles and Objectives of the Party as stated in this Constitution;
- (b) are registered both nationally and with an appropriate Constituency Group of the Party, where this exists;
- (c) are not members of any political party outside Ireland other than one which is acceptable to the Party, and are not members of any other political party in Ireland.

4.2 Rules regulating categories of membership and subscription rates shall be made by Policy Council.

4.3 The membership records maintained by the national Party will be regarded as the definitive list. The officials of Regional Groups and Constituency Groups will be entitled to full access to the national records of their members. The Party's elected representatives and nominees for selection as Party candidates will be entitled to full access to the records of the members in their constituency. Rights of access for other members of the Party will be covered by guidelines agreed by the Executive Committee.

4.4.1 Members shall normally be subject to a six month period of probation before being granted full membership and the right to vote. The membership application may be rejected by the EC at any time during the probationary period, or by the Executive Committee of the Green Party in Northern Ireland ("GPNI") where the membership application is made to the GPNI. Where the person is a member of a Constituency Group, the General Secretary, or a person designated by them, or in the case of the GPNI a person designated by the Executive Committee of the GPNI, shall in accordance with Rules and Procedures notify the appropriate Constituency Group in advance of the six-month period ending, and in the

absence of a reply that the Constituency Group does not wish the person to proceed to full membership, the member shall automatically full membership and the right to vote.

4.4.2 A person who wishes to be a full member of the Party does not have to serve a six month probationary period if the Executive Committee agrees to their immediate [full] membership. Application for waiver of this probationary period shall be made in writing to the Executive Committee by the DCG Secretary, or Regional Group Co-Ordinator, where no DCG exists, having been mandated to do so by the membership of that DCG or Regional Group which the person wishes to join.

4.5 The Executive Committee may expel, suspend for a specified period, deprive of office within the Party or issue an official warning to any ordinary member or officer of the Party who, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, has behaved or is behaving in a manner which has caused, or is likely to cause, harm to the Party.

4.5.1 Such disciplinary measures shall be by means of a Motion passed by the Executive Committee in accordance with rules of natural justice and with Rules and Procedures.

4.5.2 Every person expelled from the Party, suspended from membership or office in the Party, deprived of office or issued with an official warning shall have a right of appeal to the Appeals Committee in accordance with rules of natural justice, and with Rules and Procedures.

4.6 The Executive Committee may expel, suspend for a specified period or issue an official warning to a Constituency or Local Group which, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, has behaved or is behaving in a manner which has caused, or is likely to cause, harm to the Party.

4.6.1 Such disciplinary measures shall be by means of a Motion passed by the Executive Committee in accordance with rules of natural justice and with Rules and Procedures.

4.6.2 The Constituency or Local Group so expelled, suspended or warned, or any individual member thereof, shall have a right to appeal to the Appeals Committee in accordance with rules of natural justice and with Rules and Procedures.

4.7 Rules of natural justice shall be understood to imply:

(a) the right to be furnished with details of allegations made against a member or group within a reasonable time before a decision is taken;

(b) the right of a member or group to be heard in their own defence;

(c) the right to have the complaint and the defence heard by a sub-committee, appointed by the Executive Committee, from which parties to the complaint are excluded;

(d) the right to be furnished with any documentation which may be proffered in evidence against the member or group at a hearing;

(e) the right to appeal the decision to an appeals body.

**4.7.1** The Executive Committee of the GPNI will, instead of the EC, be entitled to exercise all powers set out in this Constitution in relation to disciplinary matters involving or concerning GPNI members, officers and groups, including but not limited to the powers set out in rules 4.5 and 4.6.

#### **4.8 Young Greens / Óige Ghlas**

The Young Greens / Óige Ghlas shall be the youth section of the Party including all student and youth groups that are affiliated to the Party in accordance with Section 4.9.

#### **4.9 Group Affiliation**

Groups may become affiliated to the Green Party at the discretion of the Executive Committee. Each affiliated group must have a Party contact person, treasurer and chairperson. Affiliated groups should have at least 4 meetings per year and consist of not less than 4 members.

The affiliated group must hold an Annual General Meeting during which two people are appointed representatives from the group. These two 'representatives' must be over 16 years of age and must fill in forms declaring that they are not members of any other political party.

A minimum annual fee to be set by the Executive Committee will be required from each group seeking affiliation status. The two 'representatives' from each group will be eligible to vote at National Conventions and Conferences. One representative from each group will be entitled to vote at Policy Council.

There will be no minimum age for affiliated group members.

**4.10 Mná Glasa.** This group is to support women into elected office and leadership roles. All Green Party members are eligible to become members of Mná Glasa by opting into the group. The group is fronted by women but supported by all. It will operate, subject to its Rules and Procedures and officer board being recognised by the Executive Committee. It shall have the right to propose motions to Policy Council and Conventions on the same basis as constituency groups.

**4.11.1** The most up to date version of this Constitution will be available on the Party website and from the Party office within one month of the Annual Convention.

**4.11.2** Up to date Rules and Procedures documents and Standing Orders documents shall be available to all members. The manner in which these documents shall be available shall be outlined in a Rules and Procedures document.

4.11.3 The contact details of Party officers, elected representatives, spokespersons and policy groups shall be available to Party members, in a manner compatible with data protection legislation. The availability of these details will be outlined in a Rules and Procedures document.

## **5. ORGANISATION**

5.01 The Party shall consist of Individual Members, who shall where appropriate be organised into Constituency Groups, subdivided where appropriate into Local Groups.

The Executive Committee may organise Constituency Groups into Regional Groups to enhance the organisation and development of the Party in their region. The primary unit of organisation is the Constituency Group which shall correspond in area to one or more constituencies of Dáil Éireann or the UK Parliament.

5.02 The rules governing the relationships between the Party and Constituency Groups and associated Local Groups, Regional Groups and Specialist Groups shall be as laid down in this Constitution, supplemented by such rules as may be passed by National Convention or Policy Council.

5.03 The Party shall aim to achieve gender balance in all committees of the Party and in the selection of candidates for public office. Gender balance is understood to mean that not less than 40% and no more than 60% of committee members or candidates shall be of one gender.

5.04 The Executive Committee shall monitor gender balance. It shall submit to Convention or Policy Council proposals for Rules and Procedures which will achieve gender balance, and before elections to committees and selection conventions it shall suggest the nomination of candidates of a particular gender if appropriate. The Executive Committee shall be the final judge of whether adequate gender balance is being achieved, and of its own activities on gender balance, subject only to the amendment of its proposals by Convention or Policy Council.

5.05 All provisions limiting the length of time members may hold Party positions will be suspended. This suspension should be reviewed at each Annual Convention.

5.06 All bodies established under this Constitution may hold meetings partly or wholly by telephone or online communication. Failure to establish such communication, or breakdown after establishment, shall not invalidate the decisions of such meeting as long as a quorum remains.

### **5.1 Constituency Groups**

5.1.1 A Constituency Group must be recognised by the Executive Committee according to Rules and Procedures and in consultation with the relevant Regional Group where one

exists. The minimum membership must be 5 paid-up members. A Constituency Group may amalgamate with one or more Constituency Groups in adjacent constituencies. The Executive Committee may amalgamate Constituency Groups for adjacent constituencies if it considers that this will lead to increased activity.

5.1.2 Members of the Party resident in a Constituency belong to the Constituency Group for that Constituency. Rules and Procedures shall provide for changes of address, redrawing of Constituency boundaries and exceptional cases. Where there is no Constituency Group, the member may choose to belong to an appropriate neighbouring Constituency Group or an appropriate Regional Group.

5.1.3 Where a Constituency Group already exists, Local Groups may be formed on a geographical basis subject to the approval of the Constituency Group. Where a Regional Group exists, and there are insufficient members in an area to form a Constituency Group, the Regional Group may authorise the creation of a Local Group. Such Local Groups shall consist of 5 or more members. Where there are Local Groups, the Constituency Group may be set up on a delegate basis, in accordance with Rules and Procedures.

5.1.4 The Executive Committee has the right to convene a meeting of any Constituency Group by notifying all members on the records maintained by the national Party. The Executive Committee of the GPNI will exercise such powers in connection with Constituency Groups forming part of GPNI.

## **5.2 Regional Groups**

5.2.1 Regional Groups may be formed where there is a perceived regional focus for co-ordinated activity, either by unanimous agreement of the Constituency Groups in a region or by decision of the Executive Committee.

5.2.2 The decision-making structure of a Regional Group shall be decided by a General Meeting of members in the region who have voting rights according to Section 4.4. It shall be subject to approval by the Policy Council except in the case of an organisation outside the Republic of Ireland recognised by the Executive Committee as having Regional Group status in the Party.

5.2.3 Each Regional Group shall have a Co-Ordinator for the purpose of communications.

## **5.3 Policy Council**

5.3 There shall exist a Policy Council which shall meet at intervals between National Conventions. Policy Council shall consist of:

- (a) The Party Leader;
- (b) Two delegates from the Executive Committee;
- (c) Not more than two delegates representing the Oireachtas Group;
- (d) Not more than two delegates representing the Northern Ireland Assembly and Westminster Parliamentary Group;
- (e) Not more than two delegates representing the European Parliament Group;

- (f) Two delegates representing the Local Government Group;
- (g) One delegate per Constituency Group;
- (h) One delegate per Regional Group.

Each member of the Policy Council shall have one vote. The Policy Council shall elect its own Chair, Deputy Chair and Secretary, who each shall have no vote except if elected as delegates.

5.3.1 There shall be at least 3 Policy Council meetings between Annual Conventions, and the interval between them shall not exceed 3 months. The Executive Committee shall call the meetings of Policy Council, and may call an emergency meeting of the Policy Council on its own initiative or at the request of a minimum of three Constituency Groups.

5.3.2 The Secretary of Policy Council shall prepare the agenda of Policy Council meetings. The agenda shall include topics submitted in good time by Constituency Groups and other Party bodies, in accordance with Rules and Procedures. The Secretary shall have the power to negotiate the compounding of resolutions, in consultation with their proposers, and subject to the guidance of the Management Committee and the Rules and Procedures Sub-Committee.

5.3.3 The primary task of Policy Council shall be the development of policy, including policy content for manifestos, within general guidelines indicated by National Convention. Where there is conflict between policy as developed by Policy Council and policy contained within Convention guidelines, Policy Council policy shall prevail.

5.3.4 Constituency Group Delegates shall serve for not less than one year and not more than four years in any six-year period. One or more observers, without voting rights, may be selected by each Constituency Group or by each Regional Group prior to Policy Council meetings, taking into account the Policy Council agenda and the possible need for specialist knowledge.

5.3.5 Elections for the Delegates and Substitute Delegates to Policy Council and to Regional Group shall take place annually. Election of Delegates shall be in accordance with Rules and Procedures.

5.3.6 There shall be a Policy Steering Committee, comprised of the Chair, Deputy Chair and Secretary of Policy Council, the Party Leader, the Party Chairperson, and four members elected by Policy Council. The Local Government Group shall also be entitled to send an ex officio representative to these meetings. The quorum for a meeting of the policy steering committee shall be five. The role of the Policy Steering Committee shall be to co-ordinate and implement the work of Policy Council in between meetings and liaise with Policy Groups and Spokespersons to ensure that the policy production process is progressing.

5.3.7 In urgent situations falling between Policy Council meetings or National Convention, the Policy Steering Committee can take a decision on policy matters, where no current Party policy exists or Party policy is ambiguous. Such a decision will stand unless it is revoked by the subsequent Policy Council meeting or National Convention.

5.3.8 The GPNI will be entitled to convene its own Policy Council, governed under the provisions of the GPNI Rules and Procedures.

#### **5.4 Standing Committees**

Standing Committees shall consist of two types: Policy Groups and Policy Implementation Committees.

5.4.1 Policy Groups may be set up on the initiative of the Policy Council or the Policy Steering Committee. The terms of reference and method of appointing a Convenor of a Policy Group shall be determined by the body which has established it. Policy Groups shall report to the Policy Council and the Policy Steering Committee, either as a routine or by special request. The procedures of Policy Groups shall be as defined from time to time by Rules and Procedures.

5.4.2 Policy Groups shall work with Elected Public Representatives and/or Spokespersons to devise policy in the appropriate areas. They shall act in support of Elected Public Representatives and/or Spokespersons when requested on appropriate occasions.

5.4.3 Elected Public Representatives at local, regional, national and European levels shall be the primary means of Policy Implementation. If there are more than one elected representatives at a specific level, that is, Local Government, Oireachtas or European Parliament, they shall constitute themselves as a Standing Committee.

5.4.4 Policy Implementation Committees may be set up from time to time, on the initiative of and subject to recognition by, the Executive Committee. Such Policy Implementation Committees shall report to the Executive Committee by sending a delegate who shall not have voting rights.

#### **5.5 Executive Committee Tasks**

There shall exist an Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for ensuring the medium and long-term development and expansion of the Party. The tasks of the Executive Committee shall include the following:

(a) To employ staff, who may include a General Secretary. The General Secretary shall supervise the other staff employed by the Executive Committee, shall be the chief executive of the Party, and shall report to the Executive Committee and Management Committee.

(b) To obtain information about the performance of functions or tasks entrusted by the Party to Party Standing Committees or to individual members, who shall attend by arrangement when relevant issues are on the agenda. The Executive Committee may provide guidelines to Party Standing Committees or individual members for the execution of these functions and tasks.

(c) To formulate proposals for Policy Council to consider.

(d) The meetings of the Executive Committee shall be minuted and the minutes shall normally be accessible on demand to Regional Groups and to Constituency Groups. The Executive Committee may however decide that certain matters are confidential and refuse access to minutes. Any member aggrieved by such a decision may refer the matter to the Appeals Committee.

(e) The Executive Committee shall provide quarterly updates to Constituency Secretaries about its decisions and operations.

(f) To prepare an Annual Budget before the start of each year for consideration and approval. To present independently audited annual accounts to the Annual Convention. This annual budgetary process must be set within the development context of section 5.5(a) above.

(g) To organise election campaigns.

(h) There shall be a Management Committee comprising of the Party Leader, Deputy Party Leader, Co-Ordinator, Cathaoirleach and Chair of Policy Council. This Committee will include at least two elected representatives, one Dáil and one local. The quorum of any meeting of the Management Committee shall be three.

The Management Committee shall be accountable to the Executive Committee and shall act for the Executive Committee between EC meetings. The Management Committee shall meet weekly.

The Party Treasurer shall attend such meetings or provide advice if requested to do so by the Party Leader. Special Management Committee meetings can be called at any time by the Party Leader to discuss matters which require urgent attention.

(i) The Executive Committee shall appoint:

- a Rules and Procedures Sub-Committee
- a Convention Oversight Sub-Committee
- other sub-committees as it sees fit

and shall delegate such powers to sub-committees as it sees fit.

Sub-committees shall continue to carry out their functions until abolished or reconstituted by the Executive Committee.

(j) The Executive Committee shall ensure that a Registry of its composition is maintained and made available to all members of the Green Party on the Green Party website. As a minimum, the Registry will contain the name of each member of the Executive Committee, the start and end dates of their term, the total years they have served on Executive Committee, the method by which they were appointed to Executive Committee, their current role on the Executive Committee, and any notes or minutes relevant to their appointment. Any changes in the composition of the EC will be updated on the Registry within 30 days.

## 5.6 Executive Committee Composition

The Executive Committee shall comprise:

- (a) the Party Leader;
- (b) the Deputy Leader;
- (c) the Cathaoirleach;
- (d) a representative selected in advance of each Annual Convention by the Young Greens / Óige Ghlas;
- (e) a Treasurer, elected individually by Modified Borda Count at each Annual Convention;
- (f) 5 other members elected by Modified Borda Count to serve for two-year long terms at each Annual Convention so that:
  - (i) there are 15 members;
  - (ii) of the 15 members there will be at least one member of the Parliamentary Party and not more than three;
  - (iii) of the 15 members there will be at least one local government representative;
  - (iv) The Returning Officer shall ensure that the counting of ballots for the election to the Executive committee takes place so that it is possible for any full member of the Party to observe the count in person or online;
  - (v) The Returning Officer shall ensure that candidates or their appointed agent be afforded an opportunity to scrutinise potentially spoilt or unclear ballots;
  - (vi) The Returning Officer is the final arbiter of all matters contained in this section 5.6 (f: (iii) and (iv)), but shall consider the rules for Dáil elections;
  - (vii) of the 10 members who have been elected at an Annual Convention there will be at least one member resident in each of the following areas:
    - Dublin (City or County);
    - the rest of Leinster;
    - Munster;
    - Connacht, Cavan, Donegal, Monaghan;
    - Northern Ireland.

If the above conditions and gender balance cannot both be satisfied by the candidates available, additional members will be selected to achieve gender balance. In this event the next highest ranking candidates of another gender in the Modified Borda Count will be elected. Failing this the Executive Committee will co-opt members to achieve gender balance.

Meetings shall be attended in a non-voting capacity by the Chair (or in their absence the Deputy Chair) of Policy Council.

5.6.1 No person may serve on the Executive Committee for a period of more than four years in any six year period. A person elected to the Executive Committee shall serve a two-year term, unless obliged to resign due to compelling personal reasons. In the event of such resignation, they shall be replaced in accordance with Rules and Procedures.

5.6.2 The Executive Committee shall elect, from among its own members, in accordance with Rules and Procedures, a Co-Ordinator and Deputy, who shall act as the link between the Executive Committee and Party staff and shall summon meetings of the Executive Committee.

## **5.7 Party Leader**

5.7.1 The Party Leader shall be elected by Modified Borda Count through a national ballot of members except where two candidates are nominated, in which case a simple majority vote will apply. The nomination and election procedure for Party Leader candidates shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

5.7.2. The Party Leader must be a member of the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas.

5.7.3 The duties and responsibilities of the Party Leader will be:

- (a) To act as chief spokesperson of the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas
- (b) To appoint and regulate a negotiation team, with the approval of the Executive Committee, in the event of discussions on possible political arrangements with other parties.
- (c) To act as a focal point of inspiration and encouragement for Party members and supporters.
- (d) To direct the functions of the Party staff in consultation with the Executive Committee or, where circumstances require, with the Co-Ordinator.

5.7.4 The term of office of the Party Leader shall normally be five years, with a recurring option for further five year terms. However, should a general election be called in the Republic of Ireland, a leadership election shall be called by the Executive Committee after polling day and no later than six months after the subsequent election of a Taoiseach. In the case of the Party Leader resigning without completing a term, an election shall be called by the Executive Committee and the result be announced when the ballot is completed; the term thus started shall last until after the next general election in the Republic of Ireland,

when a leadership election must again take place after polling day and no later than six months after the subsequent election of a Taoiseach.

5.7.5 A Motion of Confidence or a Motion of No Confidence in the Party Leader can be proposed in a pre-submitted motion to the EC. Such a motion must be co-signed by the secretaries of at least 12 local constituency groups, or, separately a motion must be co-signed by at least half of the combined Green Party Oireachtas and local authority membership in the 32 counties. Passage of a motion of no-confidence or failure to win a motion of confidence will require the immediate resignation of the Party Leader.

5.7.6 A Deputy Leader shall be elected by National Convention after the election of the Party Leader is announced. The role of the Deputy Party Leader shall be to assist and deputise for the Party Leader.

## **5.8 The Parliamentary Party**

5.8.1 The Parliamentary Party shall normally comprise all Green Party / Comhaontas Glas members of the Oireachtas, the Northern Ireland Assembly, the UK Parliament and the European Parliament.

5.8.2 The Parliamentary Party may expel or suspend any of its members in accordance with Rules and Procedures and subject to the Party's appeals procedures.

5.8.3 Green Party members of each House of each parliament or assembly shall form their own Party Group. Where there are Green Party members of both houses of a parliament they shall also form a parliamentary Group. Each Group may adopt its own Rules and Procedures.

5.8.4. Following a General Election, the Party Group in the relevant House shall have the power to negotiate with other parties and to decide on all possible political arrangements with other parties, subject to ratification by a Special National Convention of any decision to participate in a government.

5.8.5. If the Party Leader is a member the Parliamentary Party, they shall be leader of the Parliamentary Party and the Party Group in the relevant House. All other positions in the Houses shall be decided by the relevant Party Group with the approval of the Executive Committee.

5.8.6. The Co-Ordinator and Deputy Co-Ordinator of the EC will have the right to attend meetings of the Parliamentary Party in a non-voting capacity.

## **5.9 Appeals Committee**

There shall exist an Appeals Committee.

5.9.1 The Appeals Committee shall consist of a panel of ten members who have been members for more than five years. To hear an appeal three members of the Appeals

Committee shall be drawn by lot to form an Appeals Tribunal. The members of an Appeals Tribunal shall have no direct organisational involvement in the decision appealed against, nor any other conflict of interest.

5.9.2 Appeals must be commenced within 4 months of the decision which is being appealed against.

5.9.3 An Appeals Tribunal may nominate one of their members to act as mediator, to explore the possibility of resolving the dispute without resort to the Appeals procedure.

5.9.4 When considering appeals, an Appeals Tribunal shall hear all relevant evidence and shall have power to lift or confirm the suspension or expulsion of a group or suspension or expulsion of a member, or deprivation of office of an officer. Its decisions shall be announced within seven days of being reached and shall be final.

5.9.5 An Appeals Tribunal shall hear cases relating to other issues as provided for in this Constitution.

## **5.10 Party Cathaoirleach**

The Party Cathaoirleach shall be elected for a term of two years by Modified Borda Count through a national ballot of members, except where two candidates are nominated, in which case a simple majority will apply. The nomination and election procedure for Party Cathaoirleach candidates shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

The Party Cathaoirleach must be a member of the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas and may not be a serving Minister or Minister for State. In the event that an incumbent Cathaoirleach becomes a Minister or Minister of State, the EC will initiate the election of a new Cathaoirleach at its next meeting and the incumbent Cathaoirleach will remain in office only until the new Cathaoirleach is elected.

The duties and responsibilities of the Cathaoirleach shall be:

- (a) to chair meetings of the national convention;
- (b) to chair the meetings of the management committee;
- (c) to chair meetings relating to electoral and Party strategy.

## **5.11 The Local Government Group**

5.11.1 The Local Government Group shall normally comprise all Green Party / Comhaontas Glas Elected Members of the Local Authorities in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

5.11.2 The Local Government Group shall act as a Standing Committee in accordance with section 5.4.3 of the Constitution.

5.11.3 Green Party members of each local authority shall form their own Party Group. Each Group may adopt its own Rules and Procedures.

5.11.4 Following a Local Election, the Party Group in the relevant Local Authority has the power to negotiate with other parties and to decide on all possible political arrangements with other parties.

## **6. DECISION MAKING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

6.1 Decisions, whether at meetings or conventions, shall where possible be made by consensus.

6.1.1 In circumstances where, in the view of the chairperson, all reasonable efforts to achieve consensus have failed and the time available for debate is exhausted, the chairperson may put the matter to a vote. Upon the chairperson announcing a decision to do so, any member entitled to vote at the meeting may request that a procedural vote be taken to overturn the chairperson's decision; in which case the procedural vote will be held immediately without discussion.

6.1.2 Except where otherwise specified in this Constitution, where the choice to be made is a decision between two options, a vote shall require a two-thirds majority of those present and entitled to vote excluding abstentions.

6.1.3 If a vote is taken on a proposed amendment to a motion, the decision to accept or reject the amendment will require only a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote excluding abstentions.

6.1.4 If a vote is taken on a Motion of Confidence or a Motion of No Confidence, the decision to accept the motion will require only a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote excluding abstentions.

6.1.5 Where there are more than two options involved, a Modified Borda Count (that is, a multiple choice referendum) may be taken instead of a vote in accordance with Rules and Procedures.

6.2 Policy Groups may be set up according to the procedures under Article 5.4. A Policy Group shall have a Convenor whose initial task is to recruit the Policy Group in conjunction with the Spokesperson. The composition of the Policy Group shall be subject to acceptance by the Policy Council or the Policy Steering Committee. If necessary the Policy Group may contain sub-committee structures with named sub-Convenors. The Convenors shall work with the relevant Spokesperson in devising policy. The Convenor shall report to Policy Council from time to time when requested, or on their own initiative, and/or to Convention when appropriate.

6.3.1 Spokespersons shall be appointed by and accountable to the Executive Committee in consultation with the Party Leader. They shall represent the public face of the Party in their

relevant policy area. In exercising their policy role, Spokespersons are also accountable to the Policy Council.

6.3.2 Spokespersons shall work in conjunction with the Policy Group and Convenor in their relevant area to devise Party policy.

6.3.3 All members of the Parliamentary Party shall be appointed as spokespersons.

6.4 Policy position papers and accompanying action-oriented resolutions shall be circulated to all Constituency Groups, Regional Groups, the Party Leader and public representatives who shall have the right to propose written amendments to Policy Council or National Convention meetings at which the policy is to be considered, in accordance with Rules and Procedures.

6.5 A substantive resolution, with or without amendments, adopted by Policy Council or Convention, shall then become the policy of the Party.

6.6 Policies for specific Regional Groups, Constituency Groups and Local Groups shall be adopted by the Regional Group, Constituency Group or Local Group concerned, within the general policy constraints as defined by Convention and elaborated by Council.

6.7 The Executive Committee may delay the publication of an approved policy document in the short term if it feels that publication may be damaging to the Party. However, it cannot delay publication indefinitely or send it back to Policy Council for reconsideration once the document or the relevant elements of the document have been approved in accordance with the democratic processes of the Green Party.

## **7. NATIONAL CONVENTIONS**

National Conventions shall be of two types: (a) Annual and (b) Special.

7.1 Annual Conventions shall take place at intervals of not less than 9 months and not more than 15 months and shall be called by the Executive Committee.

7.2 The Executive Committee shall call a Special National Convention if requested by five or more Constituency Groups or may call one on its own initiative.

7.3 At all Conventions, all paid-up members of the Party shall be entitled to attend, speak and vote, except as specified in section 7.4.

7.4 If the Executive Committee considers that the number of members of the Party has grown to such an extent that Conventions organised under section 7.3 are not practicable, the Policy Council shall adopt Rules and Procedures for Conventions to be held on a delegate basis, with Regional Groups and/or Constituency Groups and/or Local Groups being represented proportionally. The number of members for the purpose of establishing

the ratio of delegates shall exclude members in their probationary period. The decision of the Policy Council on the issue of proportionality shall be final and binding.

7.5 The Annual Convention shall take steps to make the members of the Party and general public aware of Party policies coming out of the Policy Groups, by means which shall include:

- (a) Presenting Green issues to the public;
- (b) Discussing and passing resolutions on matters of topical concern;
- (c) Enabling Party members to meet and interact with others in the Party;
- (d) Hearing, discussing and accepting, or referring to Policy Council for elaboration, reports from the Executive Committee, from Policy Groups, Spokespersons and from the Parliamentary Groups and Local Government Group.
- (e) Debating resolutions in context relating to the contents of the foregoing reports, as referenced in 7.5(d). These resolutions shall form part of the policy development procedure, for subsequent elaboration by Policy Council.
- (f) Receive a presentation by the Treasurer on the audited financial statements of the Party. Also receive an update on the current year Annual Budget.

The Annual National Convention shall also:

- (f) hear, discuss and accept, with or without amendments, an annual financial report and budget for the coming year;
- (g) elect 3 trustees, an honorary treasurer and an auditor;
- (h) elect members of the incoming Executive Committee;
- (i) elect the Appeals Committee;
- (j) revise this Constitution, according to the procedures in Section 10; (k) adopt Rules and Procedures;
- (l) elect the Deputy Party Leader.

The Trustees, Honorary Treasurer, Auditor, Executive Committee, and Appeals Committee take up their positions at the conclusion of the Annual Convention and remain in office until the conclusion of the next Annual Convention.

7.6 Special Conventions shall consider only the issue or issues for which they were called, which shall be set out in documentation circulated in advance by the Executive Committee, subject to Rules and Procedures.

7.7 Conventions shall be conducted according to Rules and Procedures.

## **8. FINANCE**

Only the Party nationally shall have the right to use a bank account in the name of the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas. Other Party bank accounts shall always be named explicitly with the name of the Constituency, Regional or Standing Committee of the Party to which it belongs, including the words Green Party / Comhaontas Glas or Green Party in Northern Ireland as appropriate.

8.1 The primary funding sources shall be:

- (a) Annual membership subscriptions paid by Members;
- (b) Profits of fund-raising events organised internationally, nationally, regionally, at constituency level or locally;
- (c) Donations and bequests from individuals or Labour Unions;
- (d) Contributions from the salaries and expenses of elected representatives;
- (e) Such funding as may be available from state or EU finances;
- (f) Organisations which serve a social, political or environmental ethos in line with existing Party policy.

8.2 (a) The proportional share of these sources to be allocated to national, regional, constituency and local activities shall be laid down annually as part of the Executive Committee's Party budget process.

(b) The state funding paid to the Parliamentary Party Leader under the terms of the Parliamentary Activities Allowance and including the Guidelines for Party Leaders, shall be allocated by the Executive Committee in consultation with the Party Leader.

8.3 Constituency, Local or Regional groups may receive donations from small or local businesses within their constituent area, providing that these donations adhere to auditing and ethical rulings by the Executive Committee.

8.4 The Executive Committee retains the authority to request and enforce the return of donations from corporate entities to Constituency, Local or Regional groups (excluding GPNI) where said donations are ruled to:

- directly conflict with the core ethos of the Party, or
- introduce undue conflicts of interest, or
- breach national donation regulations.

8.5 The accounts of the Party (excluding GPNI) shall be audited annually by an Auditor or firm of Auditors chosen by the Annual Convention for that purpose, and presented to Convention in a Financial Report, which shall have been circulated in advance, according to Rules and Procedures.

## **8.6 Trustees**

(a) The National Convention shall elect three Trustees who shall take up office upon such conditions as to tenure as may be determined by the Executive Committee.

(b) The property and assets of the Party shall vest in the Trustees on their appointment for the period of such appointment and, in the application of such property and assets, the Trustees shall be subject to, and comply with, directions of the Executive Committee. In the event of the Trustees or any of them refusing to comply with such directions the Executive Committee shall be entitled to remove said trustees or any of them from the office of trustee of the Party.

(c) Where property is held by a Regional Group, Constituency Group or Local Group such property shall vest in Trustees appointed by the relevant group who shall be elected in accordance with the relevant group's rules and procedures and who shall hold such property on such terms and subject to such conditions as may be imposed by the relevant group or council.

8.7 National Trustees shall receive agendas and minutes of the Executive Committee, and may attend meetings where financial matters are on the agenda.

8.8 Regional and Constituency Trustees, where these exist, shall receive relevant agendas and minutes, and may attend relevant meetings where financial matters are discussed.

## **9 PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES**

9.1 A Selection Meeting shall be called by the Local Group if it covers the entire electoral area concerned. If it does not, then it shall be called by the Constituency Group. If neither covers the entire electoral area concerned, it shall be called by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee may call a Selection Convention if it considers that the Local Group or Constituency Group is unduly delaying doing so.

9.2 The procedure, timetable and basis of representation for the selection and de-selection of Party candidates shall be subject to Rules and Procedures.

9.3 Any Party member wishing to stand as a candidate for the Party in a constituency where there is no Constituency or Regional group of the Party must have been approved by resolution of Executive Committee, which may lay down such conditions as it sees fit.

9.4 The Executive Committee may add a candidate for acceptance at selection meetings, or reject a candidate supported locally. A candidate so rejected may have recourse to the Appeals Committee. The procedures of the Appeals Committee shall conform to the principles of natural justice and the decision of the Appeals Committee shall be final. Specific reasons in writing must be given by the Executive Committee to the Constituency Group(s) for rejection of a selected candidate.

9.5 Election candidates standing for the Party must be members of the Party not in their probationary period. An elected representative may go forward for selection for as many terms of office as they see fit.

9.6 Public Representatives if and when elected shall be accountable to the Party directly at Local, Constituency, Regional or National level whichever is appropriate to their electoral standing, through Standing Committee representation at Policy Council and National Convention, and at Executive Committee.

9.6.1 Public Representatives should where possible live in, work in, or have some other relevant connection with the Constituencies which they represent.

9.6.2 Public representatives shall accept briefings from Policy Group convenors and Spokespersons regarding Party policy, and shall make use of the latter in support of press conferences and other public events where relevant and feasible.

9.6.3 A public representative should demonstrate Green ideals by his/her style of life as well as by the spoken word.

9.6.4 In clear matters of conscience, an elected representative who is at variance with Party policy previously agreed upon shall be free, with the assent of the Executive Committee, to abstain on that issue. He/she shall be free to express his/her personal views while stressing the Party position.

9.6.5 In matters of strategy, such as agreements with other parties, elected representatives shall follow the decisions of the Executive Committee, except as covered by section 5.8.2.

9.6.6. Elected representatives shall be expected to adhere to all agreements reached, to attend votes as appropriate and to behave themselves in a manner becoming a Green Party elected representative. Failure to abide by Green Party procedures shall result in losing all Party privileges, for a specific period, this shall include de-selection as a Party Candidate for the next election. Such losses of privileges shall be dealt with as a suspension or deprivation of office in accordance with section 4.5.

9.6.7 A Green representative shall be required to remit whatever portion of their remuneration to Party funds as is decided beforehand by the Executive Committee. A Pledge shall be signed to this effect on adoption as candidate as approved by the Executive Committee.

9.6.8 A Green Party public representative or member of the Executive Committee shall not accept any money or benefits in kind, or retain any gifts, in connection with their political work.

## **10 REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION AND STANDING ORDERS**

10.1 This Constitution shall be subject to amendment at National Conventions, by consensus or, in its absence, by two-thirds majority of delegates present and voting.

10.2 Convention Rules and Procedures must provide for proposed Constitutional amendments to be made available for consideration by all Constituency Groups, associated Local Groups where these exist, and Regional Groups, in advance.

10.3 All bodies within the Party may initially adopt their own Standing Orders, Rules and Procedures, keeping the Executive Committee informed. When specific Rules, Procedures or Standing Orders are adopted by Convention or Policy Council, they will become binding. Standing Orders, Rules and Procedures that have been previously in use shall remain in force under this Constitution to the extent that they are compatible with it, until explicitly revised. The Rules and Procedures referred to anywhere in this Constitution shall be the Rules and Procedures adopted by Convention or Policy Council and, to the extent that such Rules and Procedures are silent, the Rules and Procedures adopted by the appropriate body within the Party and, to the extent that these are silent also, the Rules and Procedures previously in use insofar as they are compatible with this Constitution.

10.4 Amendments to Standing Orders, Rules and Procedures may be introduced in the form of Convention or Policy Council resolutions.

10.5 The Executive Committee shall interpret the terms of this Constitution, all Standing Orders and Rules and Procedures in operation within the Party, and any interpretation given by the Executive Committee shall be final and binding on the membership of the Party unless and until same is overruled by Policy Council or National Convention. In this context Policy Council or National Convention, if properly requested to do so under Standing Orders and/or Rules and Procedures adopted for the conduct of Policy Council or National Convention meetings, may overrule any interpretation given by the Executive Committee and thenceforth the interpretation given by Policy Council or National Convention shall prevail; provided always that nothing in this clause shall invalidate or be deemed to invalidate the interpretation of the Constitution, Standing Orders or Rules and Procedures given by the Executive Committee or any action taken by any member of the Party in compliance with that interpretation up to the time of the overruling decision of Policy Council or National Convention.

## **11 OPERATIVE DATE**

This Constitution shall come into full force and effect on 30 August 1997 (hereinafter called the 'Operative Date') at the conclusion of the proceedings of the Convention at which it is

adopted, at which time operation of the preceding Constitution shall cease forthwith, but without prejudice to all acts done and decisions validly made under that Constitution.