

THANK YOU  
FOR COMING



**LOCAL  
ELECTION  
MANIFESTO  
2024**





# **Green Party 2024 local election manifesto**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

**This manifesto is a plan to unleash the power of every community in Ireland.**

**The threat of the climate crisis underpins this manifesto but it is the opportunity posed by climate action that motivates the ideas within. This is our decade to transform how we live for the benefit of everybody. It's a chance to re-imagine our lives that we cannot afford to waste.**

Laws, budgets and infrastructure may be set at national and international levels. But this all comes to life through local government. Ultimately, the transition to a sustainable, fairer, healthier way of life will be the choice made by communities in every town and village across Ireland. The power lies in each place, one by one. Every local landscape, every community centre, every main street, every school or shop or home and farm matters.

We stand for warm homes, safe streets and clean communities. We know that the way to achieve this is better transport, new energy

production methods and support for nature.

The Green Party is a small presence in most local councils but we can make a big difference. Where there are Green councillors, the council moves and innovative ideas get done. With more local representatives, we will fulfil the promises of our manifesto.

We will restore nature everywhere. We will create parks, community gardens and nature trails. We will clean up our rivers, lakes and the sea.

We will make sure people can move freely on our streets. We will expand pavements and

cycle lanes, new bus routes, slow traffic to make our roads safer. We encourage electric vehicles to make the air cleaner and cut noise.

We will see through a cheap energy revolution. We have brought in the legislation and grants that have already underpinned 100,000 home retrofits. A hundred homes a day are now getting solar panels to reduce the use of fossil fuels.

We will bring streets and town centres to life. We will fight the vacancy and dereliction that blights so many towns. Safe, clean towns along with good street furniture will help small businesses thrive.

We will give power to the community. We support markets, community policing, local citizens assemblies and councils which actively engage with you.



We will respond to crisis with compassion. We live in a time when global crises come to our doorsteps. We support sustainable flood relief, resources for the successful integration of refugees and we stand up to those intimidating the new arrivals.

Local authorities in Ireland have a problem delivering the scale and speed of change in needed to provide local services. The world is moving too fast for us to accept this anymore. Your community needs councillors who believe in change and are not afraid to make it happen.

The Green Party has always taken on vested interests. We fight for clean air and water, both of which are vital for our health and we have always championed good planning at a local level, which is how we can build a strong sense of community.

The stakes have never been higher. We know this is our last chance to tackle the climate emergency. Only the Green Party is truly committed to this cause. Voting Green is the only sure way to guarantee that your community will be safe and prosperous in the decades to come. Voting Green is the only way to ensure people and place thrive together.





## **2. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **2.1. Climate**

**Protecting and enhancing our natural environment is essential to all life in Ireland and across the world. The Green Party believes that every action we take must be informed by our understanding of the twin crises we face in climate and biodiversity - this underpins every single action we take and every policy in this document.**

The changes we need to make in the coming decade are substantial but we believe that they can be hugely beneficial to all of our people - urban, rural, young and old. We know that climate action has to be at the heart of all our

policies. This means that our housing policy delivers warm, affordable houses in strong and vibrant communities; our transport policy ensures that those communities can access zero or low carbon, affordable and reliable transport options;



and our energy policy greatly reduces our costly emissions by ramping up renewables while also giving us complete energy security for future generations.

Climate action presents an opportunity. The resources required to tackle climate change, if properly and adequately mobilised, can serve to improve our quality of life. Climate action can help to promote sustainable development, create new jobs and build communities. By following a community-led development framework, climate action can address local priorities and tackle inequality, which will in turn accelerate positive climate outcomes.

We will:

- Accelerate the retrofit of council homes to enhance energy efficiency, cut down on bills and tackle fuel poverty.
- Promote **locally-generated power**, including district

heating schemes, and resale of locally-generated power back into the grid, giving a return on local investment in renewable energy generation. We will encourage and facilitate community groups to avail of community renewable energy projects.

- Zone sufficient land for **onshore wind and solar** and remove barriers to **community renewable energy** projects.
- Work with the Climate Action Regional Offices, Government and neighbouring councils to reach legally-binding climate targets. We will ensure that local authority **Climate Action Plans** are robust, fair and build up resilience to climate impacts. All local authorities will publish annual audits of their carbon footprint and issue reports on progress towards achieving their legally-binding climate targets.

- Accelerate the transition to low-energy LED **public lighting** across the country.
- Provide for **EU offices** in every local authority, to ensure that councils can apply for all available funding streams. We will promote cooperation between councils to access funding and plan climate projects across boundaries. We will push for enough staff to be appointed in key areas such as a Trees Officer and Climate Action Officers.
- We will establish **local climate action funds** in every local authority, to empower community groups to create local solutions to fight the effect of climate change.
- Switch **council fleets** to electric vehicles with charging infrastructure at all depots.



## 2.2. Nature Restoration

**Our goals are to reverse declines in habitat richness, restore biodiversity, improve water quality in lakes, rivers, streams and coastlines. Other goals include reducing flooding, enriching urban environments, improving air quality, protecting against emerging threats and supporting systemic changes bringing about long-term sustainability for future generations.**

We wish to see Ireland blossom again as a country with healthy soils, water and air supporting richer bird, animal, plant and insect life, as it did in the past. We recognise that the health and wellbeing of the biosphere is integral to, and deeply interwoven with, human health and wellbeing.

The Greens in Government have prioritised nature restoration. We created the first ever Minister for Nature, Malcolm Noonan, and under his leadership we have almost doubled the funding for nature and the National Parks and Wildlife Service; established new national parks and marine protected areas; appointed biodiversity officers in every local authority; strengthened

laws around nature protection, and supported the EU Nature Restoration Law at EU level.

We propose to:

- Create '**Green your lane/ street' schemes** so that communities can decide to plant pollinator-friendly plants in their area. We will empower neighbourhoods to convert shared street spaces into green amenity space.
- Consider a new mechanism at local level for designation of important sites for ecology to ensure biodiversity is protected and managed. We will introduce **Local Biodiversity Action Plans**

and corresponding funds where community groups can work with ecologists and have an active role in nature conservation.

- Take the lead in retention and conservation of **hedgerows** with appropriate species and sustainable management, and to protect and restore threatened and diminished biodiversity.
- Mainstream the 'Biodiversity Net Gain' principle for all counties, whereby developments must make a net positive contribution to habitats and plantlife.
- Commit to **restoring native habitats**, native forests, bogs and wetlands and to designate areas for rewilding.
- Develop **pocket parks** which are gardens and community gardens on small, vacant, under-used sites. Increase the number of pollinator-friendly and wildflower areas.
- Require all large developments to include **wildlife corridors**, to link different habitat areas for animals.
- We will fund local authorities to offer contractors **ecology training** across a range of habitats as a pre-qualification for procurement.
- Minimise the effect on biodiversity of nighttime **lighting**, through use of new technologies.

## 2.3. Waste, Litter, and Recycling

**In 2020, we only recycled 29% of plastic packaging overall. Under EU law, we will have to recycle 77% of plastic bottles by 2025 and 90% by 2029. We need to do better to reduce waste and unsustainable consumption.**

This year, we introduced the Deposit Return Scheme, which will drastically help us with our recycling and reuse targets. We have also prohibited many single use plastic products. More action is needed at EU, national and local level to reduce the volume of waste created, and the amount that gets into our environment.

We propose to:

- Increase the number and type of **bins** across the country, including underground waste bins.
- We will prioritise **reducing waste first**, then reusing and recycling. We will reduce waste sent to incineration.
- Work towards publicly provided **waste collection** services.
- Increase the number of **litter wardens** and improve the enforcement process, including the use of CCTV and yearly household bulky waste collections to prevent illegal dumping.
- Introduce new measures to tackle **dog poo** including appropriate numbers of dog waste bins, proper resourcing and administration of dog wardens.
- Ensure that councils lead the way in the reduction and elimination of **single-**

- **use plastics** like coffee cups and kitchenware at council buildings and events.
- Support local movements like **Repair Cafés** and swap shops which help people to repair broken or damaged items rather than discard them.
- Extend opening hours for **recycling centres**, and ensure they are open on Sundays.
- Combat plastic waste on **public beaches and coastal areas** through expansion of the Deposit Return Scheme at council run sites.



## 2.4. Water and Flooding

**Water is one of our most precious resources. Everyone has the right to sufficient and safe water. Yet communities are still blighted by polluted waterways and coasts, affecting drinking and bathing water quality.**

At the same time, the threat of flooding becomes greater every year due to the impact of the climate crisis. These issues are interconnected and require a holistic approach from local authorities.

We propose to:

- Protect homes and businesses in areas where there is high **flood risk**. We will examine the role council parks and lands can play in reducing risk by storing water during floods and support natural flood management such as tree planting, the renewal of wetlands and other mechanisms to absorb water.
- Introduce **permeability** via paving, limiting the blanket concreting of roads and paths, and mandate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) in all new developments.
- Through our planning system, we will prevent construction on **floodplains**.
- Continue progress on **ending raw sewage discharges** in coastal areas. We will introduce a grant scheme supporting infrastructure for the treatment and distribution of water servicing group water schemes and sewage disposal.
- Increase the number of **water inspectors** to at least one per local authority, for year round testing of bathing and river waters.

- Install thousands of **water fountains** in our parks, towns and public spaces to provide free access

to clean drinking water and cut down on plastic pollution.







## 3. FORESTRY AND FOOD

### 3.1. Trees and Forests

Ireland has far fewer trees than most of our neighbours. We want to protect the forests we have and to grow more trees across all local authorities, urban and rural. In government, we've created incentives for to farmers and local authorities to plant mixed native woodlands for improved habitat and water quality.

We propose to:

- Increase native **tree planting** by councils in public green spaces and on streets. Involve communities in community woodland tree planting days organised by the councils, where the council selects suitable native tree species and the locations.
- Plant 1 million trees over the next five years. We will push for a **Tree Strategy** to be published on all of the councils we

sit on, including a long-term urban tree renewal scheme. To complement this, we will employ Trees Officers and protect annual tree-planting and maintenance budgets. We will accelerate the planting of street trees in particular, to improve air quality, carbon abatement and amenity value.

- End excessive **tree felling** in urban, suburban and rural areas around the country by introducing a better tree preservation order process, and ensure

that more heritage trees are protected with a 'prune-first' approach.

- Push for councils to work with State Agencies to plant more **amenity woodlands** on public lands and on the edges of towns and villages.
- Work with central government to set minimum requirements for use of **timber in construction** and renovation of local authority and other publicly owned buildings.

## 3.2. Food

**Since 2020, we have trebled the land area being farmed organically, and will increase this to 10% in the coming years. We have created grants to farmers to install solar panels on farm buildings to provide energy for on-farm use and export to the grid, as well as making the planning process simpler.**

We want to work on local councils across the country to grow the scope of local food

production, to better connect citizens with their food, and to enhance resilience and community spaces.

We propose to:

- Develop a **Sustainable Food Strategy** for every council appropriate for the local context, including a composting strategy.
- Include space in County Development Plans for **community gardens and allotments**. We will introduce a streamlined system for people to apply to their local authority to let and use a community garden, and mandate the local authority to publish a strategy on increasing the number of community gardens.
- Ban the use of **glyphosate** by local authorities in public areas, except for appropriate professional use to control invasive species such as Japanese knotweed.
- Help **local food growers** and artisan producers to sell high quality, sustainably produced food at affordable prices.





## 4. TRANSPORT

**The Green Party wants to facilitate true choice by supporting the development of local, national and all-island public and active transport options. In giving the streets back to people, we can create safer places with less pollution and freedom for individuals and communities to decide how to commute and travel.**

That's why in government, we:

- Reduced public transport fares for the first time since 1947, with a 60% reduction in fares for young people and 90-minute fares in Dublin.
- Flipped the ratio of government investment in transport from 2:1 in favour of roads to 2:1 in favour of public transport.
- Introduced 60 new and enhanced public transport services in towns and villages across Ireland (more than one new service a week). More than 3.2 million passengers travelled on Local Link services in 2023, an almost

seven-fold increase since 2018.

- Reopened train lines that have been dormant for years.
- Built train stations and increased the frequency of services all over the country.

Cars will always be needed for some of our transport needs. However, currently private cars are responsible for most greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector and this is continuing to grow. Cars make up 74% of all journeys, with just 7% of journeys made by bus or rail, 14% by walking and just 2% by cycling. This creates

traffic problems, dangers to other road users and lowers the effectiveness of the alternatives.

With €1 million being spent every day on walking and cycling, Green councillors have been pushing to develop safer and more accessible alternatives.

To continue this, we propose to:

- Work with local communities and businesses to **develop transport plans** for our cities and towns which are focused on walking, cycling and public transport above further car-centric development.



- Support the expansion of **public transport** to provide a better experience, with cheaper fares, more frequent and reliable services, and proper bus shelters. We will extend the LEAP card geographical area to create an integrated national travel service so that regular commuters can make significant savings on travel.
- Support a proactive approach to licensing **rural bus services** and the direct support of existing routes, including school schemes.
- Push for the design and implementation of high quality **cycle lanes and inter-connected cycle routes**, safe enough for everyone from young children to pensioners to be able to use with confidence. Ensure that temporary works do not cut off access to cycleways and footpaths.
- Supply bike bunkers for urban areas and sheltered **bike parking** at public transport hubs. We will introduce 200 new shared EV car and electric bike mobility hubs and introduce EV charging points in sports clubs and at on street locations in every local authority.
- Establish **shared bike schemes** in large towns, as has been successful in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford, Athlone and Mullingar. Promote car and scooter sharing schemes, establishing bye-laws to regulate them.
- Plan for more climate-resistant **roads**, requiring all new roads to be assessed for their lifetime emissions.
- Make walking easier and safer. We will invest in wider, quality footpaths with better disability access, modify traffic light timings to allow **pedestrians** more time to cross with less waiting, and to cross multiple lanes in one go. We will extend the use of zebra crossings

and where pedestrian crossings are signalised, to go green for pedestrians instantly rather than have long wait times.

- Invest in making roads safer with lower speed limits, with a move to 30km/h zones in towns, to protect motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and reduce crashes. We will make infrastructural improvements to tackle speeding and ensure that roads are designed to prioritise **road safety**, particularly that of children and other vulnerable road users.
- Divert heavy goods vehicles from city or town centres, outside of delivery areas.
- Champion the introduction of annual **car-free** days in specific areas, towns and villages to enable local markets and festivals, supporting communities that want car-free neighbourhoods.
- Rollout more charging points for **electric vehicles** in public spaces and council administered areas.
- Support council **parking enforcement** to focus on illegal parking at least as much as pay and display parking. We will support differential parking charges based on vehicle emissions and size.
- Change **County Development Plans** to ensure new developments are inter-connected with walking and cycling permeability.
- Increase the number of properly designed **blue badge bays** in towns, villages and amenity areas.



# 5. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

## 5.1 Homelessness

Homelessness and rough sleeping are an unacceptable human tragedy - the first priority must be prevention. Local authorities need to work with national Government to prevent homelessness before it happens..

This means provision of adequate social housing for those facing homelessness, and in the medium-term the building of more affordable housing and development of secure further tenancy rights. We favour the Housing-First model, with wraparound services for those facing

addiction and other issues.

We propose to:

- Ensure that applications for the **Cost Rental Tenant in Situ and Tenant in Situ schemes** are processed quickly.



- Consider allowing for the mortgage-to-rent scheme to include cost-rental housing in addition to social housing.
- Push for a new Secure Housing / **Homeless Prevention Office** in every local authority, which would have input from the housing section of the local authority, the HSE, local Approved Housing Bodies and homeless services. This office would work with people to source new housing in order to avoid them becoming homeless.
- Seek that every local authority receives any notices to quit as issued.
- We will ensure that the additional supports under the **Homeless HAP scheme** are provided to all those who need it.
- Increase investment in the **Housing First programme** to ensure that those with complex needs are in supported housing with the necessary wraparound services.
- Improve homeless services and provide more temporary **emergency accommodation** so people who become homeless have options close to where their lives are. Local authorities should have a leading role in coordinating homeless services.



## 5.2 Town Centres First: Vacancy and Dereliction

Ireland currently has a major shortage of housing. Equally, we have an affordability crisis as young people struggle to pay high rents. There must be concerted action that works to remove barriers where they exist and to inject capital, momentum and new thinking into national and local housing policy.

Local authorities should provide people with communities; not just housing but the services and opportunities needed to live well. Our core vision for our towns and cities is for them to be vibrant and attractive places to live, work and shop. We support the '15-minute city' model, where all amenities are within walking distance and have worked hard to deliver this across the country, recruiting Town Regeneration Officers for every local authority under the Town Centres First policy. But more effort is needed nationally and locally to make these revitalised towns a reality and unlock the tens

of thousands of vacant and derelict homes.

We propose to:

- Support more robust use of **Compulsory Purchase Orders** against vacant and derelict sites.
- Push for the expansion of internal council resources to maintain the **vacant and derelict sites register**. We will give people, through councillors, a role in the designation of derelict sites and in the elimination of exemption rules, fighting to expand the definition of dereliction in law. We will allow for the sale by public

auction of a derelict site if the local authority does not wish to compulsorily purchase the site after a notice period of 12 months.

- Continue to support the **Croí Cónaithe** scheme to refurbish vacant homes.
  - Bring **council homes** back into use as quickly as possible when they need repairs. We will bring older council-owned buildings and housing into compliance with accessibility and high energy rating standards, where appropriate.
  - Support the transfer
- of responsibility for the collection of the **Derelict Sites Levy** from the local authority to Revenue to ensure better enforcement.
  - Work to ensure that **taxes on vacancy**, such as the Vacant Homes Tax and the Residential Zoned Land Tax, adequately capture the right sites and buildings, so that developers are incentivised to provide housing.
  - Ensure that our councillors' votes on Local Property Tax variations will be informed by the need to fund local public services.



## 5.3 Planning

**Good planning is the root of better outcomes in transport, energy, housing and in delivering on our commitments to decarbonise our economy and society. The Greens have fought for transparency, equity and a long-term approach that delivers truly sustainable development since our inception.**

We propose to:

- Ensure that there are enough **Vacant Homes Officers, architects, planners and Heritage Officers** to speed up licensing and decision making on refurbishing old buildings. We will bring in legislation to create a 'Town Centres First application', which will allow for a faster and more streamlined process for people to upgrade derelict and long-term vacant buildings.
- Embed a **'Retrofirst' policy** into our planning system, requiring developers to demonstrate that they cannot suitably restore the existing building structure before permission is granted for demolition.
- Push for the **Passive House Standard** in all new buildings as a way of greatly reducing heating demands and the future proofing of existing housing stock.
- We will ensure that **new housing** is built in appropriate locations, with an emphasis on areas with existing public transport links and near town centres. We will mainstream sustainable planning requirements for new residential schemes, such as providing infrastructure for rainwater

harvesting, local integrated recycling schemes, natural ventilation and green roofs on buildings.

- Encourage the **redevelopment of brownfield sites** for residential use by providing essential infrastructure, including the compilation of local databases
- Lead the way in **sustainable construction** by actively reducing the use of carbon-heavy building materials, in favour of more timber and recycled materials.

- Task multidisciplinary **Town Teams** with developing a town plan that puts people first and that develops safe, playful public spaces.
- Develop a **compulsory public register** of all publicly and privately-owned land.
- Introduce more rigorous requirements for large construction sites to reduce **air and noise pollution**, as well as traffic and road damage. We will ensure noise monitoring systems and enforcement are adequate to protect communities.



## 5.4 Building Homes and Communities

**This Government has built over 100,000 homes, more than the previous two governments combined. More than 32,000 homes were completed in 2023 alone and we expect 40,000 homes to be build this year. We will use every mechanism to continue this increase in house building in every local authority.**

Thanks to the Green Party, Ireland has built the first Cost Rental housing schemes where tenants can be sure of affordable rents and lifetime tenancies, and created a “tenant in-situ scheme” where tenants are facilitated to stay in their home when their landlord is selling up. We have fought hard for tenants’ rights, securing tenancies of indefinite duration and increasing notice to quit periods.

We propose to:

- Do everything possible to assist in the construction of **new housing** in areas of high need. This will require the hiring of more architects, planners,

tenant managers and project managers in local authorities.

- Ensure that local authorities identify potential sites for, and are actively involved in, the delivery of **cost-rental and affordable housing**.
- Build **100% public housing on public land** in Dublin and Cork. Green councillors will vote in favour of social housing and Traveller Accommodation built to high standards.
- Provide greater enforcement on housing quality, rental properties and planning agreements.

- Ensure that a minimum percentage of council housing is fully **accessible**.
- Consider the establishment of a new '**empty nester**' **scheme** to examine the right-sizing of the national housing stock.
- Work with Fáilte Ireland to ensure that any properties used for **short-term rentals** have the correct planning permission.
- Increase capacity in local authority fire services so that owners of **apartments with construction defects** can agree remediation works and quickly access remediation schemes.





## **6. ECONOMY**

### **6.1. Local Business**

**We have made it our priority to bring business back to our towns and villages. Greens are working to reverse the trend of out-of-town shopping centres and large online retailers sucking the life out of our communities. We want people living, working and spending money in the centre of our cities, towns and villages, leading to a happier, more sustainable way of life.**

Businesses, small and large, want to lead on the transition to a zero-carbon economy. Our job is to create win-win situations for businesses, communities and the climate, giving business a helping hand to make the digital transition.

We are planning for the future and giving businesses certainty. We have established a €14 billion Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund to continue building even in the event of a change in economic conditions. We have accelerated the National



Broadband Plan so that by 2026, all rural areas will have access to broadband and by 2030, all populated areas in the country will be covered by 5G.

In addition to this, we propose to:

- Increase funding and promotion of **Local Enterprise Offices** to ensure that they can help small businesses to cut bills and decarbonise and seek coordination between state agencies so that it is easier for businesses to access grants and advice.
- Give better supports to help **small businesses to go online** and take advantage of the digital transition.
- Support the development of more **remote working hubs** to allow people to work in the communities that they live in, preventing long commutes and improving quality of life.
- Support a **'Living over the shop'** scheme for businesses that wish to make effective use of vacant 'over the shop' spaces. Councils would provide advice and support in navigating regulations and best practice to enable owners bring such spaces back into use.
- Introduce more **night bus services** that will help to support pubs and restaurants in our towns and villages.
- Roll out further measures to allow businesses to trial **e-cargo bikes**, for faster, cheaper and greener 'last-mile' deliveries in urban areas. This will cut air pollution and traffic in our towns.
- Support **markets** so that small food producers and co-ops can survive, flourish and find a home in our communities. We will back markets for food, crafts, and artisans, so that people can buy local produce and support local producers.



## 6.2. Cost of doing business

**Greens want to see strong local community commercial areas, with small and medium sized businesses supported in their crucial role of providing services and spaces to those living near them.**

We must ensure that viable businesses that survived the pandemic and the effects of global events will be supported to continue to employ people and thrive.

We propose to:

- Reduce the Rates Vacancy Refund over time to 0%. **Vacancy** in our town centres needs to be tackled aggressively.
- Work with central government to refine the full range of **revenue raising measures** available to councils to ensure businesses can thrive in town centres. We will be pragmatic in dealing with businesses that are still suffering from the effects of the pandemic on their sales, including consideration of support grants for smaller ratepayers.
- Fund **Business Area Support Grants** to enable business associations in towns and villages to run Shop Local promotions and seasonal events.
- Advocate for a mechanism for **green rates rebates** for businesses that can demonstrate some actions towards mitigating climate change.



## **7. COMMUNITY**

### **7.1. Policing and Community Safety**

**The work of the Gardaí is fundamental to creating safe and secure communities. As part of Government, we have overseen a huge investment in policing. In particular, there has been a greater focus on Community Policing.**

We have also prioritised combating violence against women. We have set up Cuan, the new domestic, sexual and gender based violence agency, to drive a coherent national response. This will help us to achieve our goal

of providing a dedicated Women's Refuge in every county for victims and families experiencing domestic violence.

We propose to:

- Put more **Gardai** on the street - we will use existing forums at local authority level to allow communities to input into local policing strategies.
- In the medium term, invest in the **Garda Youth Diversion** Programme and fight the causes of crime, by providing more space for young people and improving youth work supports.
- Support more investment and the rapid rollout of **Community Policing Teams** throughout the country.
- Push for An Garda Síochána to publish accurate and open **data on crime** in our communities. We also want to see greater diversity within An Garda Síochána, and strengthened oversight structures.
- Give every community access to a **Local Policing Forum** if sufficient demand exists.
- Support the establishment in every county of a dedicated **Women's Refuge** for victims and families experiencing domestic violence.
- Plan our towns and cities to be '**safer by design**', so that our public spaces discourage and prevent crime. This can be done with better lighting, fewer narrow passageways, and passive surveillance.
- We will ensure that **dog pounds** contracted by councils operate in a humane way and promote better animal welfare through every effort of the local authorities.

## 7.2. Thriving Towns and Villages

**We will deliver renewed vibrancy in our towns and villages, while protecting our built heritage. We have continued to fund the maintenance and restoration of heritage buildings and protected structures.**

We propose to:

- Undertake a review of **street clutter** in all towns and cities and remove unused or obsolete street furniture to improve accessibility. These useless items should be replaced with minimum numbers of new benches and seating as places to rest for older persons and people with mobility impairment.
- Increase the number of **public toilets**.
- Identify long-term **vacant commercial units** and consider their transition to potential community infrastructure.
- Through **Capital Funding Schemes**, we will complete long-awaited improvements to our towns and villages and provide communities with the infrastructure they need.
- Push for a Vacant Homes Officer, Heritage Officer, County Architect, Cycling Officer and Landscape Architect for every local authority.
- Support **TidyTowns** groups and work with them to increase the positive impact on biodiversity and climate that communities can make.
- Fund **shopfront improvement schemes** to assist small businesses in refreshing their frontages,

to promote a more appealing townscape.

- Seek to control the over-proliferation of **hotels** in certain areas of our cities, especially where it is damaging the cultural character of the community.

- Build more **Mens' Sheds**. The movement has been a fantastic addition to the quality of life of so many men in Ireland, and Green councillors have supported its growth with enthusiasm. We will continue to seek all opportunities to expand its scope with provision of land and financial and other supports.



## 7.3. Banking and Post Offices

Lively villages need to have banking and postal services available to all. We must retain access to the bank and cash services in our local areas. In Government, we have provided funding of €30 million over three years to support our Post Offices, to ensure that the network of 900 offices remains sustainable into the future.

We propose to:

- Prioritise funding and support for retention of existing **Post Offices** and reopening of them in areas where they have been closed and no other financial outlet is operating.
- Push for the Green Party's

**Public Banking** proposal which would go even further, and make post offices an integral part of a publicly-owned bank, tasked with investing locally in rural communities and businesses.

- Maintain **access to cash** in the community to prevent financial exclusion.

## 7.4 Integration

Migrants are hugely enriching to our society. We welcome those fleeing wars and crises abroad seeking refuge in Ireland, in a spirit of humanity and compassion that we know is shared by the majority of Irish people, in light of our own historical experience.



We support the principle of 'integration from day one' with the overarching aim of empowering people to live independently in the community. We will encourage new arrivals to become involved in community groups and sports clubs. We want our councils to become leaders in welcoming and integrating new arrivals in Ireland.

We propose to:

- Ensure that all **Local Authority Integration Teams** (LAITs) are fully staffed and can help to welcome new arrivals into our communities, including extra resourcing in counties with large numbers of Ukrainians and International Protection applicants.
- Repurpose the **Community Response Fora**, which have been so successful in responding to COVID and in welcoming Ukrainian refugees, to become local integration forums.
- Support **Local Development Companies** and community workers who have played a crucial role in creating inclusive communities. They need increased funding and better coordination between parties involved in integration.
- Ensure that communities are supported in welcoming migrants through **extra resourcing**, especially with healthcare professionals and schools. We want to bring in more structured and cohesive funding streams for integration, so that community groups can access these funds more easily and focus on the important work they are doing.
- Ensure that each local authority has a **local migrant integration strategy**.
- We will use our council buildings to **celebrate our diversity**, including World Refugee Day.



## 8. CULTURE

### 8.1. Arts, Culture, Media and the Gaeltacht

More than ever, the last few years have taught us the crucial importance of the arts, culture and language in our communities. We want to support and foster creativity, with councils at the forefront, through the use of national funding and of council facilities. We will also ensure that local councils are a catalyst for the spread and use of the Irish language.

We propose to:

- Support and enhance our creative culture by building **studios, practice spaces and workspaces** for the creative community,

to accommodate both daytime and night-time cultural and creative activities, help support our communities, artists and nighttime economy. We will work to improve

accessibility to cultural venues for people of all abilities.

- Incorporate requirements for new developments to include provision of artistic spaces and cultural venues in county/city development plans and local area plans. We will mandate a minimum of 5% **creative or cultural space** in large developments.
  - Continue the '**Per Cent for Art**' initiative in all local authorities, whereby 1% of the cost of all public projects is put towards commissioning public art works. We will commission more urban art, murals, and painted utility boxes, in collaboration with local artists.
  - We will appoint **Night Mayors** for our cities to protect and enhance our **nighttime economy**. We want to build on the existing pilot scheme to all local authorities and to promote a diverse nighttime culture
- throughout the country while supporting venues at risk of closure.
- Implement the Local Authority Creative Ireland **Culture and Creativity Strategies** in every local authority.
  - Strongly support our **public libraries**, working with them to develop initiatives to combat loneliness. We will work with schools to guarantee that every child receives a library card when they start primary school, to instil a lifelong love of reading. We will also expand 'Libraries of Things' and 'Toy Libraries' in council libraries and work with local Gardaí to ensure their users and staff are protected from disruption.
  - Continue to support and protect **local media**, and build on the funding we have already put in place for stronger reporting on local democracy.

- Develop local plans in each county to grow and enhance the use of the **Irish language**. We will ensure that local development plans include access to Irish language services in line with the Official Languages Act. We will ensure an expansion of the Irish language shopfronts scheme.
- We will support and facilitate the development of affordable housing on public land in the **Gaeltacht**, subject to a language condition, so that Irish speakers can remain in, or return to live in the Gaeltacht, to ensure the continued vibrance of the Irish-language communities there.
- Develop more play and hang out **spaces for teenagers**, who are often underserved. We will directly ask teenagers and follow the example of the 'Make Space for Girls' campaign to create play spaces that will be sheltered, safe and enjoyable.



## 8.2. Sport and Parks

We propose to:

- Develop **sporting infrastructure** that is accessible for all – ensuring that gender, ethnicity and culture are not barriers to involvement, and work to improve access to local sporting infrastructure for those with disabilities via the Changing Places and other schemes.
- Provide more free **gym exercise equipment** in parks, as well as deposit-based sports equipment in parks.
- Support sports clubs and community groups to apply for funding under the **Sports Capital Programme** to deliver civic sports facilities, prioritising facilities that are shared by several clubs and groups. We will carry out reviews to find out how access to sports facilities can be improved for people of all ages.
- Establish a **Playgrounds Building Fund**, as well as funding skate parks, pump tracks and teenage-focused amenities.
- Enhance and expand the **Slí na Sláinte** routes, and improve access to walking trails.
- Support the development of lidos and outdoor **swimming facilities**.
- Continue to support **female participation** in sports, as well as that of other groups less likely to be involved. We will introduce cycling training for people with disabilities, older people, and children.

## 8.3. Tourism

**We have an opportunity to develop tourism that is sustainable both for the planet and for local communities. By funding greenways, walking trails, and outdoor amenities on bogs, we are creating win-win-win situations for regional development, local towns and a Just Transition.**

Developing existing and new national parks will boost tourism, support local economies and revitalise nature. In 2023, there were 70 greenway projects and by next year we will have increased the number of walking trails from 80 to 150 in just five years.

We propose to:

- Develop **greenways and blueways** nationally and expand the network of walking trails. We will ensure that local communities and farmers are at the centre of the decision-making process in the development of greenway routes.
- Develop the **national cycling network** to encourage sustainable

tourism.

- Recognise and support the **role of tourism** in every county as a part of a just transition for rural communities.
- Ensure that **short-term lets** are kept at a sustainable level and that planning requirements are enforced by local authorities.
- Advocate for **local tourism strategies** with a focus on increasing sustainable domestic tourism. We will support the development of low-impact nature tourism.
- Encourage the development of **eco-campsites** and eco-cabins.





## 9. PUBLIC SERVICES

### 9.1. Childcare and Education

**Before the last local elections, we committed to helping families to deal with childcare.**

Over the past two Budgets, we have reduced childcare fees by 25% (with another 25% cut coming this year), extended breastfeeding breaks and medical leave for parents, and provided additional parents' leave and adoptive leave for same sex couples. In schools, we have ensured that every child in a DEIS school gets a hot meal every day. We want to continue this focus on equality and access for all at the local government level.

We propose to:

- Actively seek and prioritise community-based, non-profit **childcare** providers for all council-owned or council-developed childcare facilities.
- Continue to invest in the **quality of childcare** and ensure that every childcare worker gets paid properly in line with their substantial qualifications



and invaluable work.

- Mandate minimum levels of **childcare facilities** to be provided based on local need and new housing developments.
- Undertake a review in each local authority to ensure that all **childcare premises** have the appropriate space and services and meet all fire safety and air quality requirements.
- Provide grant schemes to facilitate the adaptation of suitably located community, youth and sports facilities to operate as **after-school** service providers which could also be used by community groups operating cooperative childcare.
- Ensure that every child in every primary school gets a **hot meal** every day, as locally sourced and organic as possible. We will introduce biodiversity grants for schools to promote food growing, as well as providing council lands for outdoor learning opportunities, or 'Forest Schools' programmes.
- We will prioritise investing in the **Safe Routes to School** programme and expand it to all schools, to promote safe walking, cycling and scooting for children and their parents. We will mandate 30km (or less) speed limits outside all schools across the country, and aim for every school to have a footpath leading to its nearest village.
- In addition to existing **solar panel grants**, we will provide monitoring mechanisms for schools to track energy saved.
- **Protect libraries and schools** from verbal abuse and aggressive demonstration. We will expand and promote the Yellow and Purple flag systems for inclusivity.
- Explore opportunities to open up **university campuses** to better

integrate their public spaces into the community. We will provide for comprehensive access and parking strategies at local authority level.

- Encourage **walking to schools** by zoning sufficient land in appropriate distance from new housing developments rather than in out-of-town locations.



## 9.2. Health and Disability

**The next few years will see a significant reorganisation of our health service to regionally delivered services and Community Healthcare Organisations. As a result, local leadership is more important than ever.**

We propose to:

- Ensure that the new **Community Healthcare Organisations** (CHOs) are engaged with the needs of local communities and listen to the needs of service users on the ground. We will continue to invest in primary care centres, strengthening community-based healthcare.
- Advocate for **access to GPs** across all areas so that no area, whether rural or urban, is left without access to a general practice doctor.
- Continue to fight for **addiction services** to be locally available and adequately funded through local primary care networks.
- Mandate a minimum number of **breastfeeding spaces** in our County/City Development Plans as well as breastfeeding benches.
- Provide free **period products** in public buildings.
- Provide all local areas with accessible **mental health supports** through primary care facilities. We will continue to advocate for local access to outpatient and assisted living supports and trauma informed services.
- Push for councils to adopt **well-being economy indicators** on health,

nature, education, communities and future generations.

- Continue to advocate for more **accessibility** across council services so that everyone can engage with local democracy and have their voice heard.
- Ensure both our built environment and public transport networks are **fully accessible to people with disabilities** and developed in line with the United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons With Disabilities. We will continue to work for a Universal Design approach to our streets and neighbourhoods and engage with public transport bodies to ensure buses, trains and all other modes are available to all.
- Push for local councils to increase the provision of social housing completed to **Universal Design standards** as a significant percentage of all housing investment.
- Push for a dedicated **Disability Officer** to be appointed in every local authority, to ensure the most inclusive options are implemented in our communities. We will adhere to the Public Sector Duty to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of public sector staff and service users. We will introduce autism-friendly initiatives. We will roll out more inclusive seating as well as dedicated parking spaces for those with hidden disabilities.
- Ensure that people with disabilities can quickly secure **housing adaptation grants**.
- Prepare local strategies to combat **loneliness**.



## 10. REFORM

**Councils are the closest layer of government to the people. However, people often feel unheard by their local authorities, which have been prevented from providing a fast, innovative and transparent service to communities.**

We want to change local government so that it becomes truly representative of the will of people living locally. We want to empower people across the country to directly choose their mayor and hold that person accountable for the development of their cities and towns. We favour the gradual delegation of powers, so that decisions are made at the most local level possible.

We propose to:

- Ensure **transparency** in how the council and councillors operate. We will ensure all local authority meetings are livestreamed and votes are recorded and easily available. We will publish information on how Local Property Tax, parking charges and development contributions are being spent.

- Push for real public consultation beyond the current online surveys. Outcomes from **public consultations** must be considered and reasons provided back to citizens for reaching the final decision.
- Help councillors to be more effective. Ireland has the lowest ratio of councillors to citizens in the EU. We want to provide a **better service to constituents** and recognise councillors' workloads through increased secretarial supports. We want to provide **more training to councillors** so that they are equipped to make big decisions, and in anticipation of devolving more powers to local government in the areas of policing, local economic development, arts, education, tourism and culture.
- **Restore town and borough councils** for effectiveness, subsidiarity, urban representation and better governance. All towns and cities above 30,000 population should have a choice as to whether they want a **Directly Elected Mayor**.



- Ensure that there is **greater diversity and gender balance** at all levels of Irish politics. We will make being a councillor more accessible and family-friendly, especially through the use of hybrid meetings. We will strive to make council committees gender balanced.
- Develop **small "general construction" teams** of directly employed council staff, who can perform small repairs and works without going through expensive and slow procurement processes. We want councils to **take on apprentices**, especially in areas of skills shortages such as construction and retrofitting, which will add capacity and speed up processes.
- Restructure local authorities so that there are **general Council Enforcement Officers** who actively patrol communities, merging the roles of the Dog Warden, Litter Warden and Traffic Warden.
- Work with council officials to undertake an audit of **procured services** to assess whether directly providing these services would be more cost-effective.
- Allocate public service resources fairly. **Counties with high population growth must not get left behind** in terms of public sector staff and fire services.
- Limit election posterage and introduce European-style **designated posterage spaces**. National law needs to change to recognise the changing nature of elections in an internet age. Designated areas will retain the public visibility of posterage without the public resistance and plastic wastage.

Develop innovations to evolve and strengthen our democracy with citizens, such as:

- **Local citizens' assemblies;**
- **'Beta projects'** in councils, so that people can suggest policy ideas for local problems for their council to trial and scale if successful;
- **A greater voice for younger people**, whose futures will depend on the decisions we make now. We will promote and enhance our Comhairle na nÓg. In the medium-term, we propose to **lower the voting age to 16;**
- **Local participative budgeting**, so that residents can set the priorities of the community;
- Standardised **'Report It' applications** across local authorities, so that citizens can easily notify councils of issues.







