

GENERAL
ELECTION
MANIFESTO

2024



INDEPENDENT
IRELAND

**Common Sense
Solutions for a
Better Ireland**

A Manifesto For Real Change

A New Era Of Reform,
Accountability and
Common Sense Politics



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A new era of reform, accountability and common sense politics

There is an appetite for real political change in Ireland. Many people feel underrepresented and feel "politically homeless" as a result of the established political parties appearing to ignore their concerns on many issues.

As a nation, we face numerous long-standing and critical challenges. Crises in housing and healthcare, combined with new challenges such as the rising cost of living, immigration pressures, and a green agenda that disproportionately targets our agricultural sector, have left many in "middle Ireland" feeling disillusioned. This is despite the fact that Ireland's agricultural industry is among the most sustainable and environmentally friendly in the world.

In response to these issues, the people are seeking a political party grounded in practicality and fairness. Independent Ireland offers that common-sense solution.

The gap between a city centric cabinet and the needs of the people of rural Ireland means we must redress the balance and listen to the needs and concerns of all of the people of Ireland. Independent Ireland intends to redress that balance.

We will return the focus to the people who elect us, we will listen to the issues and needs of the electorate and rebuild trust in politics by delivering for the people we serve. We will bring common sense back into politics by delivering common sense solutions and delivering on our promises.

This document includes a summary of our key policies - full policy proposals are available in our individual policy documents available for download at www.independentireland.ie



For too long, the established parties have failed to deliver for the people of Ireland. Independent Ireland will deliver the real change we need.



**INDEPENDENT
IRELAND**

Our Core Pledges To You

We will deliver a new independent oversight body recruited from the private sector to tackle government waste, radically improve efficiency and deliver accountability and value for taxpayers money.

We will freeze green taxes which are regressive and impact lower and middle income families the most. We will address the profiteering by private companies making hundreds of millions from the asylum industry. We will reform the procurement process across government sectors to improve efficiency and cut waste. We will complete an immediate forensic review and reform of the NGO sector which estimates suggest, cost the taxpayer in excess of €7 Billion Per Year (over €6,000 per household).

**Affordable homes for “Generation rent”
Declare a housing emergency.**

We will implement immediate reform of planning laws to enable property owners to build on their own land, reduce VAT on building supplies, deliver large scale building projects to end families living in emergency accommodation and deliver supports for students in third level education.

**More healthcare staff, reduced
waiting lists, easier access to care.**

We will issue medical cards to all cancer sufferers for the duration of their care. Deliver new accommodation supports for healthcare staff and introduce post graduate contracts to retain our medical staff. We will increase services provided by smaller hospitals to reduce waiting times.

**Freeze regressive “Green taxes”
reward workers, support older people**

We will expand lower rate tax bracket to earners under 75k per year. Abolish USC, Property Tax and PRSI for over 65's. Deliver reduced childcare costs and early learning supports for providers. Freeze and reform carbon tax and make hard work pay.

**1 Billion Euros in additional supports
for agriculture**

We will deliver increased supports and new schemes to support farming and agriculture. We will oppose any mandatory cull of the national herd and fight any derogation increase. We will renegotiate quotas for Irish fishing vessels and increase supports for fishermen/women

**Secure our borders , new courts
to deal with illegal immigration**

We will introduce special courts to deal with illegal immigration. All International protection applications and final appeal dealt with within 180 days. Will we end emergency planning for IPAS Centres and enforce existing planning regulations for IPAS. End “Self deportation” and expedite deportation orders rapidly

**Tough on crime, safer cities and
safer rural communities**

We will introduce tougher sentencing for violent crime, sexual crime and crimes against children. Introduce new accommodation supports for Gardai to retain and attract new members and increase funding to rural community watch schemes. Independent Ireland will continue to firmly oppose hate speech legislation.

Department of Efficiency and Reform

Independent Ireland is committed to ensuring that taxpayers' money is managed responsibly, efficiently, and transparently.

In the first year of operation, we target a minimum of €2 Billion per year by improving efficiency in government departments, Saving the taxpayer in excess of €10 Billion over the course of the next government and allocating funds to deliver common sense policy solutions.

Overspending and waste within the public sector not only erode trust in government but also divert resources from essential services. Unfortunately, numerous government projects in Ireland have been marred by overspending, delays, and poor financial management, leaving taxpayers footing the bill.

To address these systemic issues, Independent Ireland proposes the establishment of an Independent Watchdog for Government Spending. **The Department of Efficiency and Reform**, a new independent entity recruited from the private sector, dedicated to monitoring and improving public sector spending. This policy outlines the structure, function, and benefits of this proposed office.

Structure and Appointment Process

- Establish the Department of Efficiency and Reform, operating similar to Revenue Commissioners or HIQA.
- Private Expertise: Appoint Commissioners for Public Expenditure through a competitive tender process targeting qualified private professionals (private sector efficiency consultants, solicitors, auditors, accountants, actuaries).
- Regional Scope: Assign commissioners to geographic areas for independent oversight of public funds.
- Create department to address procurement and tendering process to streamline and improve efficiency with implementation of timelines and goals for delivery of projects.

Benefits and Rationale

- Improve accountability and efficiency in public expenditure.
- Reduce government bureaucracy by leveraging private expertise.
- Enhance taxpayer confidence through transparent and dynamic oversight.
- Encourage public sector spending practices aligned with private sector standards.

Powers and Responsibilities

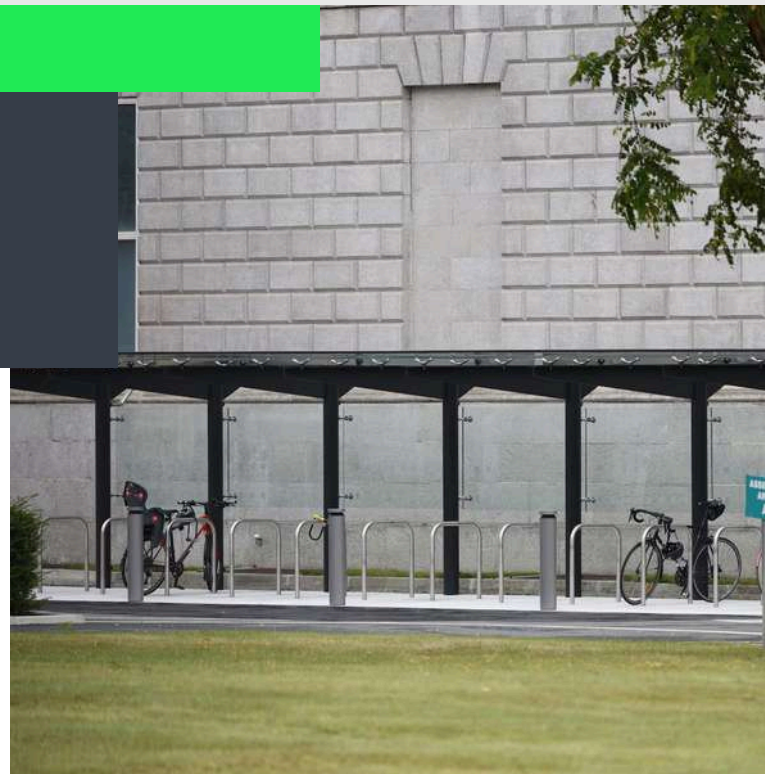
- Conduct unannounced audits and inspections of public bodies, NGO's and agencies.
- Investigate waste, inefficiencies, or mismanagement of funds.
- Issue recommendations or corrective measures, escalating unresolved issues to the Comptroller and Auditor General.
- Powers codified in legislation, with authority similar to HIQA's inspection framework.

Costings

- **Set up Costs:** €45 million.
- **Annual Operational Budget:** €15 million/year.

Savings

- The goal for will be to deliver 10% savings of 2024 government spend over the course of the next government..



Housing and Planning

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

A Housing Emergency

- Declare a housing emergency to expeditiously implement solutions to the housing crisis;
- Incentivise vacant property development: Increase housing stock by introducing tax incentives for property owners to renovate and rent or sell vacant properties; and for those who change property usage to create accommodation;

Achieve affordable rents for tenants by making tax-free all rents lower than €1,000

- Extend the Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP) to all landlords (not just those renting to Ukrainian refugees), and increase the allowable amount to €1,000 from €800;
- This will reduce inflationary pressure, deflate rent prices, and reduce government expenditure in Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) and other schemes;
- It will also be profitable for landlords, ensuring their participation;
- The Government would receive less in tax but spend less in HAP and other schemes;
- Increase landlord participation in the revised ARP scheme by making it voluntary and permitting landlords to opt-out, should their tenants move out;
- This would prevent landlords from being "locked-in" to Rent Pressure Zone (RPZ) rates; the fear of which would prevent their participation in a revised ARP scheme;



Infrastructure Investment

Increase infrastructure funding for community and social housing to an additional €600 Million Per Year:

Increase infrastructure funding for community and social housing: Allocate more funds to build and maintain sewage, water, and internet to allow construction of community and social housing throughout the country, which will provide affordable housing and reduce homelessness;

-This will allow for dispersion of people to avoid impacting high density areas;

-It will also allow people to downsize and remain in their community, freeing up housing space for the next generation;

Emergency Housing

- Promote modular, prefabricated, and log cabin housing: Encourage the use of modular, prefabricated, and log cabin construction methods to reduce building time and costs, increasing the supply of affordable housing more quickly;
- Allow downsizing senior citizens to remain near their families and retain their independence by doubling the size of rear extensions (in areas with insufficient infrastructure and community housing);
- Refurbish derelict state-owned properties and properties under state stewardship to provide sustainable accommodation to homeless families and children in their local communities;

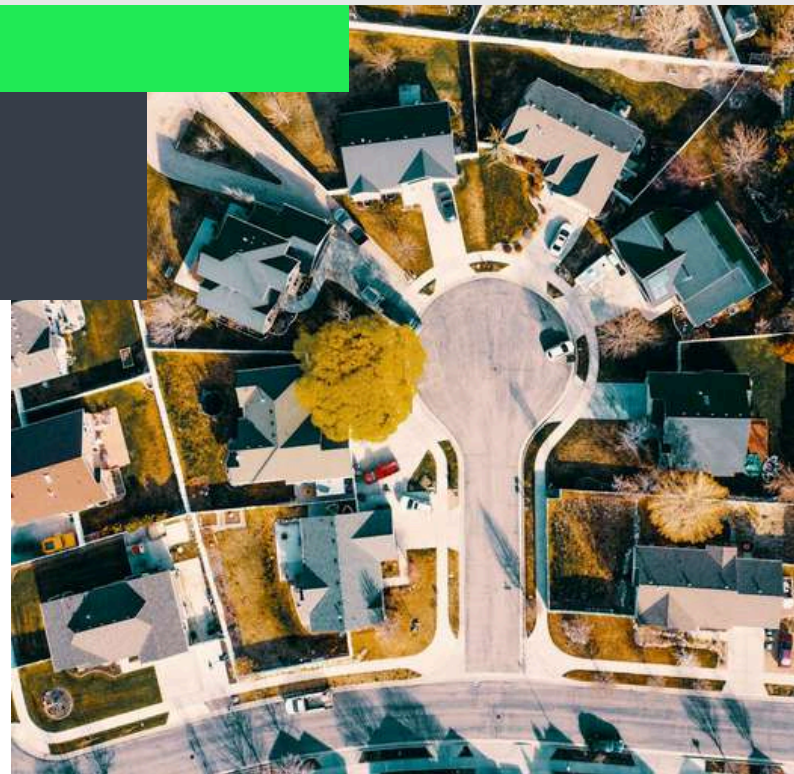
Housing and Planning

Efficiency in Housing

- Provide standard designs for 2, 3 and 4 bedroom social and affordable homes to increase efficiency and drive down costs.
- Incentivise vacant property development: Increase housing stock by introducing tax incentives for property owners to renovate and rent or sell vacant properties; and for those who change property usage to create accommodation.
- Reduce VAT on building materials to spur construction, increase supply of homes, and reduce costs.
- Overhaul public procurement policy to ensure contractors with track records of building in the public and private sectors can tender for the construction of affordable and social housing.
- Prioritise people with strong ties to the community for social housing, which will benefit both the community and the beneficiary.

Comprehensive Planning Reform

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



City Planning Reform

Allow planning within cities to permit developers to build up within reason, and with community buy-in.

Costings

- See costings on page 25



Download our full policy:
www.independentireland.ie/housing

Cost Of Living

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

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

Reducing Taxes, Rewarding Hard Work, Cutting Energy Costs

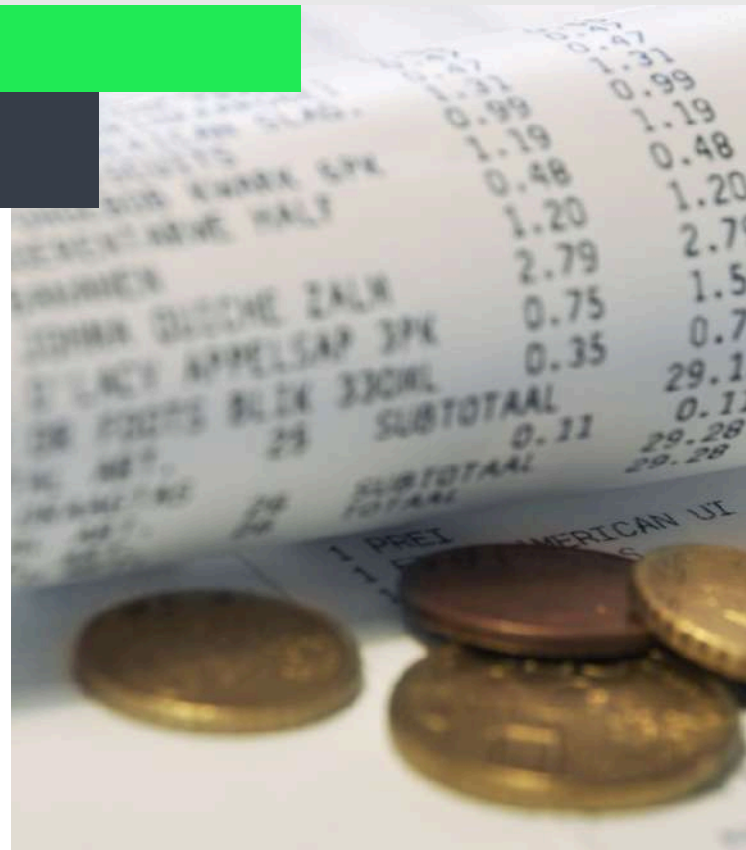
- Abolish USC & PRSI contributions for pension-aged people who continue to work;
- Increase tax relief for those contributing to private pensions;
- Freeze all "green taxes" – review the effectiveness of the stated purpose and adjust accordingly. If they are not serving their stated purpose of reducing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

Reducing Costs, Supporting Communities, and Controlling Government Spending

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

Supporting Front Line Workers

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



Cost Of Living

Improved Services and Support for Communities

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



Reducing Costs, Supporting Communities, and Controlling Government Spending

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



Costings: See costings on page 25

Health

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

Addressing the Shortage of Healthcare Professionals

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

Addressing the hospital bed shortage

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



Supporting Young People and Carers

- Abolish means testing for carers.
- Include nutrition education in school curriculum to reduce preventable illnesses.
- Restore funding for the school dentist to prevent long-term dental problems.
- Ensure VAT is not increased for gym memberships. Support gym owners to ensure the service they provide in promoting health is respected.

Reforming Medical Card Issuance

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



Health

Modernising Mental Health and Eldercare Services

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

Implementing Effective Oversight of the Healthcare System

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

Supports for People with Disabilities, Autism, and Additional Needs

- Improved Funding for Caregivers:
- Increase salaries and enhance training for those caring for individuals with profound disabilities.
- Expansion of Residential Care Facilities:
- Invest in and resource additional residential care facilities to provide essential services and respite for families of individuals with profound disabilities.

State Accommodation and Respite Services:

- Increase funding for the construction and development of accommodation and respite facilities for individuals with profound disabilities.



Education and Training for Specialists:

- Expand college places and training programs for Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Speech and Language Therapists to address shortages and meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Support for Advocacy Organisations:

- We Fully support both state and non-governmental organisations advocating for individuals with autism and additional needs to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met.

Read our full policy: www.independentireland.ie/health



Agriculture and Fisheries

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



Key Policy Positions

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

Broad Support For All Farmers: Today and in The Future

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

Agriculture and Fisheries

Fisheries

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

Dairy

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

Beef and Suckler

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

Sheep

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

Equine

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



Pigs and Poultry

- Invest in infrastructure and promote free-range practices;

Exports, Tillage, TAMS, Environment

- **Exports:** Ensure continuation of live export markets and oppose EU policies that threaten them. Support live export of dairy calves and weanlings from all herds;
- **Tillage & Horticulture:** Implement €300 per hectare of a supplemental subsidy in addition to basic payments;
- Maintain funding for current schemes in the tillage sector;
- Explore the feasibility of resurrecting industries that have closed in recent decades; for example, sugar beet production and processing;
- Introduce urban allotment scheme;
- **Organic:** Reopen organic scheme for farmers who wish to engage in organic farming and eliminate the duplication of form-filling in the organic sector and schemes;



Agriculture and Fisheries



TAMS

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

Education

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

Environmental

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

Forestry

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

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

EU Common Agricultural Plan (CAP)

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

Young Farmer Supports

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

Land Distribution

- Establish a Farmland Management Agency for fair land distribution;

Turf Cutting

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

TB

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

Costings: See costings on page 25

Law and Order

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

Tough On Crime, Protect Free Speech

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



Increased Support for Gardai

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

Taking Innovative Steps to Improve Law and Order

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

Costings: See costings on page 25

Immigration

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

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

Opposing Illegal Immigration

- Obligate IPAS centres to follow the same planning regulations as every other entity in the country and allow individuals, communities, and businesses to file objections with the relevant planning authority;
- Require airlines to provide scans of passports presented pre-flight to identify people who destroy or lose their identity documents;
- Acquire the use of secure airport detention facilities for undocumented arrivals and people awaiting deportation;
- Support immediate deportation of IPAS applicants convicted of violent or sexual offences;

Opposing Illegal Immigration

- Support automatic refusal of IPAS applicants who have prior serious criminal convictions;
- Deport incarcerated foreign nationals immediately after their prison sentence ends;

Expediting IPAS Applications and Eliminating Wasteful Spending

- Expedite IPAS applications to be completed within a defined time frame.
- Hold Special court sittings to address and deal with these cases and hire 300 new case officers. We will pay these new salaries with money we save by not providing room and board to 30,000+ new arrivals each year:
- Expedite the appeal process and complete it within 30/60/180 calendar days:

Safe Country – 30 days after arrival;

Unsafe Country – 60 days after arrival;

All Appeals exhausted – 180 days after arrival;

- Curtail automatic medical cards to IPAS applicants, ensuring the same criteria is applied to IPAS applicants as is to existing residents;



Immigration

Expediting IPAS Applications and Eliminating Wasteful Spending

- Impose VAT to the contracts of hotels accommodating IPAS applicants to stop incentivising damage to tourism;
- End private accommodation reimbursement altogether for future arrivals and eliminate the migrant housing industrial complex;
- Communities that wish to accommodate IPAS centres should be empowered to do so on a not-for-profit basis and should be supported and funded by the state for the buying and doing up of unused properties;
- This model would create greater community buy-in and the community would benefit from funds generated;
- This will stop the overinflated state system;
- Implement a requirement that permanent residence permit applicants must take a six-month course on Irish history and culture and pass an exam, provided in English and Irish only;
- Allow for revocation of naturalised citizenship in cases where a naturalised citizen is convicted of serious violent or sexual crimes.

Costings: See costings on page 25



Improving Legal Immigration

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

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

Climate Transport and Technology

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

Key Policy Positions

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



Ensuring a Just and Economically Viable Transition to Greener Technology

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



Climate Transport and Technology

Transport

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

Technology and Investing in the Future

- Expand investment into of anaerobic digesters and other means of reducing nitrates and methane emissions;
- Conduct a full inventory of all existing carbon sequestration to ensure public policy is properly informed so decisions are scientifically made. Currently, only cultivated woodlands are accounted for in our statistics, which ignores thousands of miles of hedgerows, wild woodlands, etc.
- Conduct a full review of warmer homes scheme criteria and delivery to accelerate the program and improve accessibility;
- Reform state aid rules for community-owned renewables projects and revise taxation, including VAT implications, for non-profit community groups;



Technology and Investing in the Future

- Make Ireland a global leader in **Green Tech**, no longer should we be followers of ineffective and often harmful policies that are not fit for purpose in Ireland;
- Create **“Green Technology and Innovation Tax-free Zones”** for entities who create high-end jobs in rural areas. This will ensure people developing new technologies understand rural ways of life, and benefit local economies;
- Create **self-sustaining “Data Centre Zones”** while preserving the aesthetic and domestic industries in rural Ireland, which are the existing backbones of local economies;
- Modernise and **reform planning process for wind farm development**, including a cost-benefit analysis of subsidies; harmonize regulations with other EU countries
- Encourage a **realistic transition to HVO** and Hydrogen based fuel systems;
- **Ensure climate action does not destroy Irish food independence.** Ireland cannot outsource its carbon footprint (and food production) to developing nations in the name of climate change; a whole-of-planet approach is needed;

Costings: See costings on page 25

Education

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

Increased Funding For Education

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



Ensuring an Education System That is Fit For Purpose

- Oppose any politicisation of education;
- Ensuring that Irish culture, tradition, and language remain cornerstones of our education system;
- Ensure all sexual education is age-appropriate;
- Reform school transport and the "close school" rule, which deprives many children of access to transport and restricting their educational opportunities;
- Amend means tests for educational grants for third-level education to take pressure off the middle class, who are disproportionately burdened by education costs;
- Create a low-interest, government-backed student loan scheme available to all secondary school graduates;
- Add road safety to secondary school curriculum;
- Deliver Youth Workers equitably throughout the country, to adequately serve all areas;



Education

Ensuring an Education System That is Fit For Purpose

- Include nutrition education in school curriculum and increase physical education;
- Place a greater emphasis on physical education as a physical, mental, and emotional health measure. Ensuring the diverse needs of pupils are met in terms of physical education is vital to cultivating a healthy populace.
- Promote education on safe and responsible social media use;
- Provide emotional health education to all pupils;



Costings: See costings on page 25

Provide increased vocational and apprenticeship opportunities

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

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

Download our full policy: www.independentireland.ie/education



Irish Language and Gaeltacht

An Ghaeltacht

The Irish language is a living language. There have been huge strides taken over the years to increase the number of people speaking Irish. Yet the state has failed to develop the infrastructure needed to achieve the level of service that the public demand. Funding for organisations supporting the Irish language has declined dramatically in recent years yet according to a Conradh na Gaeilge report into the development of the language over the next 5 years (An Plean Fáis 2024–2029), 2 out of every 3 people surveyed believed that the state needed to provide more support to promote the language.

The same report showed that 1 of every 2 people surveyed would like the opportunity to speak Irish more often. The desire is clear. The need is also clear. The Irish language is one of the most important cultural identifiers we have as a people. It is a gift that has been handed from generation to generation and has survived centuries of attempts to stifle its use. In a world where globalisation and cultural homogeneity is rife, the language is that connection with the sense of place and community that every independent society needs to flourish.

Of course, employment in the Gaeltacht is intricately linked to the Gaeltacht's viability. The Údarás must ensure that preservation and promotion of the Irish language is at the heart of it's work. There are 26 language planning areas, and it is necessary to provide adequate funding for those communities involved in language planning in those areas in order to ensure that the language planning efforts are successful. Accordingly, it is necessary to provide extra funding for the Údarás to ensure that the necessary resources can be made available to every language planning area.

There is a lack of fairness about the funding being provided by Údarás na Gaeltachta.



The changes in the capital budget of the state agencies that are responsible for the creation of employment between 2008 and 2022 is portrayed in the graph on page 21 of the Conradh na Gaeilge report. It is evident that the Údarás na Gaeltacht budget decreased significantly in 2008 and, even by including the increase to €14.5 million which was announced in 2021, the Údarás is lagging the other two agencies significantly.

The Údarás na Gaeltachta capital budget has decreased from €25.5 million in 2008 to €14.5 million in 2021 (the Údarás capital budget has not changed since 2021 even though the inflation rates associated with capital projects in the Gaeltacht are increasing), which equates a decrease of 43%. Even allowing for the slight increase in the recent budget, this is still nowhere near what is required.



Irish Language and Gaeltacht

Údarás na Gaeltachta

- Increase funding for Irish language planning initiatives coordinated by Údarás na Gaeltachta to strengthen Irish as a community language. This should include doubling the current budget for language planning and expanding the number of Irish Language Planning Officers, with a focus on creating a key Gaeltacht hub village/town in each Gaeltacht area;
- Provide a commitment to renew the Language Planning Process for an additional seven years, given that a number of plans will have reached their expiry in 2026;
- Provide Údarás na Gaeltachta with dedicated Local Enterprise Office (LEO) funding and powers. Údarás currently fulfils LEO functions within the Gaeltacht but does not receive specific funding for this function, leaving Gaeltacht areas at a disadvantage compared to non-Gaeltacht regions. This would require an initial allocation of €4.5 million per annum for LEO-type supports;

Costings: See costings on page 25



- Allocate €7.5 million per annum over five years to Údarás na Gaeltachta for the development of outdoor recreation infrastructure in Gaeltacht areas, enhancing both community amenities and tourism potential. This funding would support the creation and improvement of walking trails, cycling routes, and swimming facilities, as well as associated signage and interpretive materials in Irish and English. The investment would not only improve quality of life for Gaeltacht residents but also boost sustainable tourism, creating new employment opportunities in the outdoor recreation and hospitality sectors.

Download our full policy: www.independentireland.ie/irishlanguage



Neutrality and Defence

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

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

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

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



Costings: See costings on page 25

INDEPENDENT IRELAND MANIFIESTO COSTINGS

Full Breakdown Available at www.independentireland.ie

Policy	Additional Annual Cost (€M)
Housing	2,950 (plus current budget of 6,900)
Health	728
Cost of Living	1,670
Agriculture	1,012
Immigration	120
Law and Order	800
Education	320
Climate Transport, Technology	720
Irish Language	50
Neutrality & Defence	220
Total Manifesto Proposal Costs	8,590 Per Year
Proposed Savings	Annual Savings Target
DOER Target Savings	-2,100
Immigration Target Savings	-480
NGO Target Savings	-500
Total Manifesto Target Savings	-3080
Net Manifesto Costs	5,510 Per Year