

NOW, THE NEXT STEPS



FIANNA FÁIL MANIFESTO 2007

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Introduction by An Taoiseach

The time has now come for the people to decide on Ireland's future. It is a moment of unique opportunity and of historic choice. **Peace and prosperity are no longer dreams, they are here and now.**

Fianna Fáil believes in a future of sustained prosperity nationally, and strong communities locally, where it is good to grow up and safe to grow old. We want to continue working with the Irish people to give Ireland the social, environmental, transport, communications and tourism infrastructure our economy needs and our people deserve.

As part of Our Next Steps Forward we will:

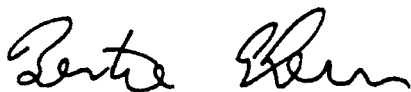
- **Lower taxes**
- **Put 4,000 extra teachers in place**
- **Hire 2,000 extra Gardaí**
- **Open Local Injury Clinics around the country**
- **Increase the State Pension to €300 per week**
- **Invest for the future by rolling out the National Development Plan**

These are some of the specific steps which will secure our prosperity and allow us to use it as a base to build a better Ireland. Our Next Steps Forward are affordable today, tomorrow and in the long run.

We will also continue to be unwavering in our work for peace and justice on this island. As the prerequisite for every element of our nation's progress, peace is our first priority and our highest obligation.

Today Ireland's strong economy and full employment give us grounds for confidence. But in a world of higher interest rates, rising energy costs and intense competition from emerging economies we cannot be complacent. We must ensure that Ireland is one of the most attractive places in the world to live, to learn, to work and to invest.

A strong economy is essential for what we want to do. It will enable us to achieve our vision of an Ireland of opportunity where in every region - from childhood to old age - Irish people can realise their potential, contribute to their community and be genuinely proud of their country.



Bertie Ahern

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The Next Steps Forward for
an Ireland that is Peaceful,
Proud and Strong





The Next Steps Forward for an Ireland that is Peaceful, Proud and Strong

Out of material poverty and a history of conflict, the Irish people are forging lasting peace and one of the strongest economies on the planet.

Today we are showing the world that the forces which burdened our history: sectarianism, disputed boundaries and economic dependency can be overcome.

Fianna Fáil believes that Ireland can achieve a unique leadership role in international affairs based on the strengths our history and values have bestowed upon us. We are determined to make our country a model UN Member State, a bridge between the developed and developing world and a global advocate for the poor.

Ireland will specialise in conflict resolution and the rapid response to humanitarian crisis. Our modern, professional defence forces will advance that role: assisting the poorest of the poor and building peace under a UN flag in the developing world.

At home, the coming years can be a time of great cultural and civic achievement. Our national language will thrive as we support Gaelscoileanna and begin delivery of a 20 year plan for the expansion of our language.

We want peace and prosperity to unleash untapped artistic and cultural confidence. Funding for the arts will be increased and incentives for cultural philanthropy put in place and a new National Theatre, Concert Hall and a landmark Museum at the GPO.

Over the next five years, Fianna Fáil wants to take the Next Steps Forward to an Ireland that is Peaceful, Proud and Strong.



Peace and Unity

The achievement of lasting peace and unity on our island remains the most important objective of Fianna Fáil.

Without peace there would be no prosperity. It is the precious prerequisite for every element of our Nation's progress. To that end, it is our first priority and prime concern.

We stand for Irish unity based on consent and reconciliation. As Ireland's largest republican and nationalist party we have led the debate on unity, striving to convince all strands of nationalist Ireland that violence only embeds partition and corrodes the republican goal of unity between Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter.

Through the determined leadership of Bertie Ahern, we have worked continuously to overcome many hurdles to achieving the historic progress of the last ten years.

We have negotiated delivery of the Good Friday Agreement, demilitarisation, the equality agenda, policing reform and the many other reforms which have shaped a peace based on equality and justice.

We entered the peace process with two goals:

- **To bring all elements of nationalist Ireland to our peaceful analysis of partition and Irish unity.**
- **To secure a historic and lasting peace agreement with the unionist people.**

In the Good Friday Agreement we secured these goals. In the 1998 referendum our analysis was overwhelmingly supported by the Irish people in the first act of all-Ireland self-determination since 1918.

As lead negotiator for Nationalist Ireland and Joint Guarantor of the Agreement, Fianna Fáil in government worked harder than any to build peace – we will work equally hard to maintain it.



The Next Steps Forward for Peace and Unity

The spectacular progress of recent years cannot be taken for granted. We must continue to work for lasting reconciliation and the full delivery of the potential offered by the peace process. This is why Fianna Fáil is proposing a series of further steps forward for peace and unity in our country.

North/South Co-Operation

Fianna Fáil led the negotiating campaign to deliver strong North/South bodies and co-operation and we are determined to ensure that their full potential is realised. We see economic co-operation in this field as central to the future economic well being of the island – the all-island economy is central to all government economic plans. Fianna Fáil in government will:

- **Implement the groundbreaking Comprehensive Study on the All-Island Economy.**
- **Have a fully operational all-island energy market, to include an all-island approach to the renewable energy sector, a second electricity inter-connector and an all-island gas network.**
- **Introduce a Single Electricity Market by November 2007.**
- **Actively support fully integrated and seamless co-operation in the areas of health, education, infrastructural development, communications, planning and other public services.**
- **Press for a single all-island corporation tax of 12.5%.**
- **Continue to progress the North West Gateway Initiative.**

Border Communities

Partition and the Troubles caused huge damage to our border communities. Apart from the social consequences, towns were cut off from natural hinterlands and economic corridors were cut off altogether. We are committed to implementing an unprecedented programme of investment in border communities.

Fianna Fáil in government will:

- **Press for all-island planning and co-ordination in infrastructural investment across the Island over the next decade, to ensure greater provision of services to border communities.**



- **Establish a cross-border Innovation Fund to support education, skills, science and innovation, energy research, regional development, tourism development, poverty, social inclusion and community infrastructure.**
- **Support the development of cross-border projects including:**
 - **The Dublin – Letterkenny/Derry dual carriageway**
 - **The Border Corridor**
 - **The Ulster Canal**
 - **The Bridge at Narrow-Water.**
- **Campaign for the complete removal of North-South cross-border telecoms and bank charges.**
- **Further develop the Dublin-Belfast rail line as part of an integrated rail service serving major population centres, North and South.**
- **Seek to maximise the potential for cross-border cancer services, building on the project to provide services to Donegal.**
- **Support the significant upgrading of higher education capacity in the border region through strategic alliances between education institutions, North and South.**
- **Intensify our efforts to promote graduate mobility, graduate retention and access to people from disadvantaged areas to higher education.**
- **Complete the rebuilding of all border crossings destroyed during the Troubles.**
- **Complete the development of Derry Airport, for which we have already committed almost €11 million.**

Sectarianism

We believe that it is time to put a greater emphasis on tackling sectarianism. The hard reality is that, as politics has progressed in the North, sectarianism has festered and in many cases grown. It represents by far the largest threat to lasting peace and needs urgent attention. Fianna Fáil in government will:



- **Establish a new Anti-Sectarianism Fund to assist projects in interface areas designed specifically to address the root cause of sectarianism and to diffuse tensions.**
- **Increase the Reconciliation Fund to €5 million to improve dialogue between the nationalist and unionist tradition and develop capacity building amongst communities affected by the Troubles, including a focus on isolated border communities.**
- **Provide additional staff and resources to the British Irish Secretariat to improve monitoring of sectarian incidents throughout the North and improve liaison with the PSNI.**
- **Through regular and structured contact with the appropriate authorities and stakeholders including the devolved Government, community groups, political parties and civil society, monitor progress and press for full and timely implementation of the Triennial Programme of the Shared Future.**
- **Review all funding for education and community projects to see where a greater impact can be had on tackling sectarianism.**

Policing

An absolute bottom line for Fianna Fáil has always been the establishment of a professional and impartial police force for the North. We believe the PSNI, with fully implemented Patten proposals, is that force. We also believe that all nationalist parties have a responsibility to be constructively involved as members of the Policing boards to ensure the PSNI delivers and is accountable to the nationalist community. Recent progress on this is extremely welcome.

Fianna Fáil in government will:

- **Monitor the full implementation of the Patten Reforms.**
- **Press for increased Garda – PSNI co-operation including common police training where appropriate.**
- **Provide continued support for the work of the Police Ombudsman.**

Demilitarisation

Fianna Fáil in government consistently argued for a demilitarisation and security normalisation programme from the British. In the 2003 Joint Declaration we secured such a programme and agreement to independent monitoring of that Programme through the IMC. As a result, today British troop numbers stand at their lowest level since the start of the Troubles and all watchtowers have been removed. Fianna Fáil in government will



- **Press for the complete implementation of the British Army demilitarisation Programme negotiated by Fianna Fáil in government.**
- **Negotiate for further reductions in troop numbers, beyond the Programme targets.**
- **Fund an international competition for a permanent landmark peace monument to be located in the border region.**
- **Press for the full decommissioning of loyalist and dissident republican weapons.**



Foreign Affairs

Fianna Fáil has always worked to make sure that Ireland is a constructive member of the international community, prioritising the active promotion of peace and development through the European Union, the United Nations, international agencies and direct action. We are proud of this unmatched tradition and of the work we have completed in recent years to develop this further.

In government we have taken a lead role in advancing United Nations reform, in advancing the Development agenda and in establishing effective systems for civilian response to humanitarian disaster. In recent times Ireland has been amongst the most active advocates for constructive international action in Darfur and Palestine. Through the publication of the first ever White Paper on Development Aid we have brought the development agenda to the heart of Government, increasing spending from €157 million in 1997 to €813 million this year.

The Next Steps Forward on Foreign Affairs

We intend continuing with an active foreign policy in the next five years, based on a series of further steps forward in key areas.

Making Neutrality Count

Neutrality is central to our vision of Ireland as the bridge between the developed and developing world, the intermediary and facilitator in peace processes, the first on the ground in a major humanitarian crisis – the model UN State for the 21st century. Our policy for the next five years is to Make Neutrality Count.

We believe neutrality enhances our standing internationally. Our goal is to use that standing to build peace and deliver development.

United Nations – Ireland The Model UN Member State.

No Irish political party can match Fianna Fáil's supportive record on UN issues. Our goal now is to establish Ireland as the model UN State, a world leader in development assistance, humanitarian rapid response and conflict resolution.

We will:

- **At the formation of the next Government inform the United Nations of Ireland's desire to stay at the forefront of UN reform efforts, placing our full diplomatic resources at the use of the UN.**
- **Place Ireland at the heart of UN efforts to respond rapidly to humanitarian and human right crises in the developing world. Ireland will become the template for other States through the expansion of the Rapid Response Initiative.**



- **Increase the size and capacity of the Rapid Response Corps, the civilian Corps of volunteers trained and equipped by the Irish Government to be on the ground in an area of humanitarian crisis within a short period.**
- **Double the amount of emergency relief supplies held in, and distributed from, our new pre-positioned humanitarian relief centres at the Curragh, Kildare and Brindisi, Italy.**
- **Increase funding to the regional supply depot for Africa, based in Accra, Ghana.**
- **Increase funding by at least €40 million to the Irish Government Emergency Response Fund and increase funding to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund.**
- **Work to strengthen the capacity of Irish and international NGOs to respond more quickly to international emergencies.**

Development Aid

In government, Fianna Fáil has built up one of the best Development Aid Programmes in the world. We are one of the world's top donors and we run a programme widely acclaimed for its effectiveness.

In government we will:

- **Increase ODA to 0.7% of GNP by 2012.**
- **Call on all political parties to commit to support the target.**
- **Increase the number of Programme Countries to a minimum of ten by 2012.**
- **Spend at least €100 million per annum combating HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases in the developing world.**
- **Develop programmes to assist both individuals and institutions to participate in the Aid Programme. This will include the provision of assistance to public and private sector institutions to form development partnerships with similar institutions in the developing world.**
- **Following the establishment of an Irish Aid Information & Volunteering Centre in Dublin, we will establish these centres in Cork and Galway.**
- **Develop Regional Aid Programmes in Southern and Western Africa to address trans-national threats such as disease and food insecurity.**
- **Ensure funding mechanisms for NGOs are accessible and simplified.**



- **Seek to improve the quality and effectiveness of EU aid.**
- **Act on the findings of the Hunger Task Force.**
- **Support the fight against corruption in developing countries by supporting institutions, NGOs and civil society that promote good governance and strive to ensure that our development assistance continues to reach the poor. We will also support the African Peer Review Mechanism.**
- **Provide financial support for events to mark Africa Day, 25 May.**

Conflict Resolution

In order to further promote Ireland as a centre for conflict resolution, in government we will:

- **Establish an Academic Centre for Conflict Resolution, to provide academic and analytical expertise in this area. The Centre will be an academic resource for the Government Conflict Resolution Unit and will draw on cross-border expertise. It will focus on the developing world and liaise with existing conflict resolution and reconciliation groups.**
- **Establish an annual €25 million Stability Fund, overseen by the Conflict Resolution Unit, to fund specific efforts on the area of conflict resolution and post conflict issues in the developing world.**
- **Establish a system of roving ambassadors to crisis regions.**
- **Fund a number of fourth level scholarships in the conflict resolution area.**

Cluster Bombs

Fianna Fáil in Government will continue its campaign for a complete ban on the use of cluster munitions. In the absence of a full ban we will seek agreement on an immediate freeze on the use of cluster munitions pending the establishment of effective international instruments to address humanitarian concerns regarding their use.

Burma

Under a Fianna Fáil led Government, Ireland will not establish diplomatic relations with Burma until Aung San Suu Kyi is released.

Darfur

We will use all avenues, bilaterally, through the EU and through the UN, to focus urgent international attention on the crisis in Darfur and to seek agreement for a lasting, peaceful solution to the crisis.



Middle East

With the EU and the broader international community, Fianna Fáil in government, will press for dialogue, reconciliation and negotiations leading to a two-State solution.

Irish Abroad

Fianna Fáil has led the campaign for the Irish Abroad. Having ended the scourge of forced emigration, since 1997 we have turned with determination to ending the neglect of the Irish Abroad.

For every £1 spent on the Irish Abroad in 1997, we spend €19 today.

In the coming five years we will:

- **Increase funding for emigrant welfare to €34 million per annum.**
- **Maintain the momentum in the campaign for the undocumented Irish. Fianna Fáil Ministers and members of the Parliamentary Party will use every opportunity to lobby on behalf of the undocumented Irish.**
- **Resist all attempts to downgrade the Irish Abroad Unit to unanswerable Agency Status and resist all efforts to divert funds presently allocated to emigrant welfare to the administration of such an Agency.**
- **Complete the process whereby RTÉ can broadcast into the UK.**
- **Work to deliver free public transport for emigrant pensioners when they visit Ireland.**



European Affairs

From the very beginning, Fianna Fáil has led the national debate on Europe. The EU was a key catalyst in Ireland's economic and social transformation. It has helped us to realise the full potential of national sovereignty through the unique arrangement of a community of nations with strong collective action.

In government we have focused on making the EU work for Irish people – cutting prices, driving competition, protecting farm families and protecting our environment.

We have introduced a range of initiatives to ensure that the public are engaged in evolving EU issues. We were the only party to run a genuinely national campaign in favour of the ratification of the Nice Treaty.

Our Presidency of the Council in 2004 has been praised as one of the most effective presidencies ever, including the conclusion of extremely difficult negotiations in a range of fundamental areas.

The Next Steps Forward on European Affairs

We believe passionately in a constructive agenda to use our membership of the European Union to make our country and the wider Union stronger. The EU has been the greatest force for peace and prosperity in the history of Europe and we believe that it must continue to evolve to meet modern challenges and deliver practical improvements in the lives of Europeans.

Therefore, we are proposing a series of next steps forward for Irish policy on EU affairs.

In government we will:

- **Vigorously oppose all moves towards harmonisation of taxation, especially corporation tax.**
- **Support moves to increase competitiveness within the Union through developing research and knowledge capacities, as well as promoting competition.**
- **Propose further measures to improve the quality of communications between the Union and its citizens.**
- **Support efforts to implement a cross-Union approach to energy security and climate change.**
- **Maintain a vigorous stance in defence of Irish maritime communities in all EU Fisheries discussions.**
- **Insist that existing agreements on the CAP be honoured, within the Union and in trade negotiations.**



- Issue an annual call for proposals to assist local events commemorating Europe Day.
- Aim to have Ireland consistently within the top group on the EU internal Market Scoreboard which monitors transposition of EU Directives.
- Support EU moves to ensure airlines have transparent fares, including all taxes and fees, that they end the practice of charging different prices in different states or the same flight and introduce safer flying regulations.
- Press for increased EU supports and more ambitious targets for renewable energy.
- Ensure EU funding to underpin the Peace Process continues.
- Support moves to minimise EU bureaucracy.
- Support moves toward a single European Mortgage Market.
- Continue the work of the National Forum on Europe.
- Work towards an EU wide ban on television advertising aimed at children.

Treaties/Institutional Arrangements

We believe that the Constitutional Treaty represents a balanced response to the needs of an expanding Union.

Therefore, in government we will:

- Support the Constitutional Treaty as the fundamental basis for future negotiations.
- Should the Constitutional Treaty or another acceptable text be agreed, we will campaign vigorously as a party for its ratification by the people.



Defence

Our Defence Forces serve as a protector of the state and a promoter of the international values of the Irish people. Over recent years we have worked hard with Óglaigh na hÉireann to help modernise them and meet new challenges. Our forces are now better trained, better equipped and better motivated than ever.

Defence spending has doubled, with an unprecedented and sustained investment programme having been implemented. The first ever White Paper on Defence, published in 2000 provided a new framework for the on-going management and reorganisation of Óglaigh na hÉireann – including the Permanent Defence Force - the Army, the Air Corps, the Naval Service - and the Reserve Defence Force.

In addition to this massive investment, the modernisation agenda has meant a major change in how the Defence Forces conducts their business. The 2002 Report: “The Challenge of a Workplace” and the 2004 independent review of its implementation ensured that a comprehensive and effective system of measures to tackle problems of bullying and harassment is now in place in the Defence Forces.

Overseas UN peace support missions are now a core activity of the modern Defence Forces. Over the past five years our troops have completed almost 8,000 tours of duty in some of the world’s most dangerous trouble spots. There they are helping protect and save the lives of countless numbers of some of the poorest and most vulnerable people on our planet.

Legislation establishing the independent office of Defence Force Ombudsman was passed in 2005. While major legislation radically improving the procedures for the investigation, summary disposal or trial by court-martial of offences against military law was passed this year. More recently steps have been taken to both encourage more women to pursue a career in the military and to encourage more enlisted personnel and senior NCOs to become commissioned officers.

Fianna Fáil conducted the biggest ever reform of Civil Defence and the Army Reserve. The Civil Defence board was established on a statutory basis and provided with a new purpose built HQ and training centre. The Reserve has been reformed to reflect the configuration of the Permanent Defence Force, while preserving its strong links with local communities and a nation-wide geographical spread. Irish troops will continue to be available to serve abroad on international peacekeeping missions.

The Next Steps Forward for Defence

Fianna Fáil is committed to ensuring that Ireland has a world-class military organisation with the personnel, equipment and resources necessary to fulfil the tasks assigned to them at home at abroad.



In government we will:

- **Prepare a second White Paper on Defence for the period 2011- 2020. The Second White Paper will consider expanding the roles of the Air Corps and the Naval service. This will include increasing the size of the navy flotilla and developing an Air Corps' airlift capability.**
- **Ensure that participation by the Defence Forces in overseas peace support missions continues to be based on the triple-lock mechanism of UN mandate, Government and Dáil approval.**
- **Ensure that investment in the Defence Forces continues to grow, with the full commercial value of all defence property disposals to be received by the Department of Defence for investment in capital projects and new equipment.**
- **Continue the ongoing policy of annual recruitment and maintain the present establishment. This will enable the Permanent Defence Forces to maintain a strength of 10,500 fully trained personnel with an additional provision from 2008 onwards for up to 350 troops to be in training at any given time.**
- **Fast-track the civilianisation of all outstanding agreed posts.**
- **Ensure that our troops have the most modern and effective range of protective equipment, weaponry and training available.**
- **Fully execute the Reserve Defence Forces (RDF) implementation plan by the 2009 target, including improving RDF interoperability with the PDF, and the introduction of procedures to allow suitably qualified RDF personnel serve on overseas duties.**
- **Continue the ongoing policy of recruitment to the RDF through regular and targeted recruitment campaigns.**
- **Develop the role and contribution of the Medical Corps and expand its capacity to deliver a range of medical facilities on UN mandated missions.**
- **Develop the Commissioning From the Ranks programme (both for enlisted personnel under 28 by way of the cadet programme) and by way of regular CFR competitions for NCOs.**
- **Conduct regular reviews of the operation of the equality and anti-bullying measures in the military.**



- **Ensure a major military component in all future 1916 commemorations.**
- **Provide annual subventions to support and encourage the excellent work of the officially recognised veterans groups ONET and IUNVA.**
- **Continue to support the excellent work of Civil Defence through the ongoing provision of new equipment and encourage increased membership of Civil Defence through regular and targeted recruitment programmes.**
- **Ensure that the Office of Emergency Planning coordinates the publication of an annual review of the emergency plans of each functional department, outlining achievements and improvements across all sectors.**
- **Continue the annual programme of major simulated exercises and use these structured exercises to support sustained public awareness and reassurance.**



Irish Language and the Gaeltacht

In recent years Fianna Fáil in government has dramatically changed the level and quality of state activity for the preservation and growth of the Irish language. We believe the Irish language is a valuable national asset and culturally defines our nation within a globalising world.

The funding made available for new and existing Gaelscoileanna under this Government has enabled the phenomenal growth in use of our national language among a new generation. Funding for TG4 has also doubled and we are ensuring the station's independent status, separate from RTÉ. The Official Languages Act now also gives Irish speakers equality in their dealings with the public service. Fianna Fáil has also secured official working status for the Irish language in the EU.

It is clear that there is a new energy in the community behind valuing and developing our language and that this energy, combined with major public policy initiatives, has opened up a new era of opportunity for the language.

The Next Steps Forward for the Irish Language & the Gaeltacht

We are determined to use this period of opportunity to achieve a radical expansion in the numbers of people who can and do converse in Irish. We are totally opposed to any effort to downgrade the status of the language and are committed to a series of significant next steps forward for the Irish language and the Gaeltacht.

Overall

Our overall strategy will involve:

- **Continuing to develop a 20 year Strategic Plan for the growth in the use of Irish and in bilingualism by 2008. Building on last December's 13 point Government Statement on the Irish language, this will be a comprehensive blueprint for the expansion of the use of Irish in every urban and rural area in Ireland.**
- **Increasing support for the public service to develop the capacity to provide comprehensive services through the medium of the Irish language.**
- **Working to extend the number of professionals who are available to serve the Irish language speaking and Gaeltacht communities.**
- **Ensuring that the Irish language and Gaeltacht Affairs are maintained as a major part of the portfolio of a full member of Cabinet.**
- **Supporting the introduction of a Languages Act in Northern Ireland as provided for in the St. Andrew's agreement.**



Growing the Use of Irish in Our Schools & Colleges

Recognising the huge role which the education system has played, and will, play in the future growth of the language, we will place a particular emphasis on Irish in education. Harnessing the huge potential the Gaelscoil movement and improving the quality of Irish in English-medium schools will be a priority for Fianna Fáil in the next five years.

In government we will:

- **Protect the current position of our national language in all parts of the school curriculum and strenuously oppose any proposal to abolish its position in the Senior Cycle.**
- **Implement further changes in the Irish curriculum, with a focus on improving young people's command of the spoken language and move towards more marks for Oral Irish in the Leaving Cert exams as announced.**
- **Build on the provision of in-service for primary teachers in teaching drama through Irish in the 2006/07 school year, by encouraging English medium primary schools to teach more subjects through Irish.**
- **Put in place new arrangements to enable Gaelscoileanna to hire teachers with a strong ability to teach all subjects through Irish.**
- **Establish a senior officials group between the Departments of Education and Science and Community, Rural And Gaeltacht Affairs to enhance the actions of both Departments and their Agencies in addressing challenges in supporting the Irish language including strengthening the teaching of Irish throughout the Education system.**
- **Build on the work done by the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies and the universities in the development of research and teaching of Celtic Studies. We will make Ireland the world centre of excellence for such studies with particular emphasis on research in and the teaching of Old, Classical and Middle Irish.**

Building Vibrant Gaeltacht Communities

It is important that the benefits of economic development do not undermine the role of the Irish language in the Gaeltacht.

In government we will:

- **Build on recent planning laws by setting up a National Monitoring Committee to oversee the clear and consistent implementation of the protections for the unique linguistic identity of the Gaeltacht in a way which supports the continued development of the Gaeltacht without undermining its language and culture.**



- **Develop a comprehensive plan based on the Linguistic Study of the Gaeltacht with clear and effective measures for the continued preservation and development of the language in the Gaeltacht.**
- **Provide for an extension to the Irish language network of crèches in the Gaeltacht. Along with this we will ensure that support is given to crèches which want to set up facilities through Irish nationwide.**



Arts And Culture

We believe that the Arts are an essential part of a healthy society and that Ireland's economic progress has provided a real opportunity to develop the arts. Over the last decade we have implemented the largest sustained increase in funding for the Arts in our history.

Arts Council funding was increased to €80 million in 2007. This builds on earlier increases of about 80% between 1997 and 2002. There have also been significant increases in expenditure for our National cultural institutions, the Irish Film Board, the regional arts infrastructure programme and the National Gallery.

We established Culture Ireland, a new body for promoting Irish Arts abroad.

In addition, we have comprehensively overhauled the legislation governing institutional and policy arrangements in the sector. For example, our Arts Act 2003 defined for the first time in law the role and functions of government in relation to the promotion of the arts inside and outside the State.

The Next Steps Forward for the Arts

We are committed to implementing a range of next steps forward for the Arts which will see participation broaden and deepen in the next five years.

Arts and Education

In government we will:

- **Ensure the implementation of a national, comprehensive strategy for the Arts and Education, beginning at pre-primary and extending from there.**
- **Support training and professional development for the performing arts by creating, enhancing and extending modules of in-service training.**
- **Support measures that are child centred in arts and cultural programmes and develop and enhance child centred policies that impact throughout the country.**

Arts and Participation

In government we will:

- **Encourage and support the strategic development of the arts in local communities, both geographic and communities of interest, for the disadvantaged and for minority groups.**
- **Encourage, promote and foster volunteerism in the arts, drawing on our successful development of volunteerism in sports.**



- **Establish an affiliation of Irish traditional musicians, on the Aosdána model, to honour and assist those who have made an outstanding contribution to Irish traditional music through their musicianship and dedication to teaching the music.**

Arts and Investment

In government we will:

- **Develop a new policy to create and sustain employment in the arts, particularly arts employment that can market, operate and develop our local arts infrastructure.**
- **Provide new tax and other incentives aimed at making cultural and educational philanthropy more attractive. In recognition that higher economic growth can benefit the arts, we will encourage the full participation of the private and corporate sector in supporting the development of our arts infrastructure, and arts programmes and services.**
- **Continue to support the development of the traditional arts.**
- **Create a new combined Cultural Visa and Work Permit that simplifies and speeds up entry by incoming artists and groups to Ireland.**
- **Ensure that dynamic incentives remain available to the film and television sector and develop bi-lateral agreements to maximise the potential of Section 481.**

The Agencies

In government we will:

- **Provide multi-annual funding to the Arts Council that identifies key areas for development, either for organisations, or key strategies in the Arts.**
- **Ensure that the increased level of Arts activity is sustained and developed.**

National Cultural Institutions

We will ensure that our cultural institutions are developed to their highest potential by capital investment in storage, presentation, and digitisation of our national treasures.

In government we will:

- **Digitise the collections of the National Library, the National Gallery, the National Museum and the National Archives.**
- **Establish a Museum of Irish Literature in Parnell Square.**
- **Place the National Theatre, the Irish Museum of Modern Art and the National Concert Hall on a statutory footing.**



- **Complete the construction of a new National Theatre and a new National Concert Hall.**
- **Begin a programme to digitise all State papers.**
- **Complete Phases II and III of the National Museum and Collins Barracks and complete Phases II and III of the National Gallery.**
- **Establish a National Sports Museum.**
- **Roll out ACCESS II.**

Commemoration

We believe that each tradition on this island is entitled to commemorate its past with dignity and respect for others. In recent years we have worked to allow the public of this state to honour those who sacrificed so much for the achievement of independence. The state commemoration at Easter 2006 amply justified this policy.

In light of the seminal importance of 1916, in government we will:

- **Push forward with plans for a substantial commemoration in the lead up to 2016.**
- **Establish the GPO as a museum of celebration of Irish progress and achievement across a broad spectrum as a landmark 1916 centenary project.**
- **Support the creation of programmes of events in all cities and towns in Ireland.**
- **Make available to historians and to the public, records of the Military Pensions Archive in the Department of Defence.**
- **Advance the redevelopment of Glasnevin Cemetery as part of the preparations for 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising.**
- **Restore 16 Moore Street and establish therein an interpretative centre, linked to the refurbished GPO, to honour those who fought in the 1916 Rising.**
- **Ensure a prominent cultural component to the 1916 Centenary commemoration.**
- **Provide a fund to which community groups can apply for support for the refurbishment of existing monuments commemorating events in the 1913-23 period.**
- **Advance plans to commemorate the Irish soldiers who fell at the Somme in 1916.**



Civic Life

Ireland has a deep tradition of active engagement by its citizens in every aspect of our national life and culture. During decades when the capacity of the State was limited by a lack of resources, it was the commitment of the Irish people that so often, formally and informally, provided social services and community leadership as well as a sporting and cultural life for our people.

In today's more prosperous Ireland, we need to identify and understand how public policy helps and hinders active engagement. We need to identify practical steps to encourage more of our people to become involved, and to stay involved, in the life of their own community.

In government, we have prioritised the promotion of volunteerism in communities with the publication of the Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship.

Over the last ten years we have implemented a systematic programme of reform concerning the regulation and oversight of public life in Ireland. We believe that these measures have already had a substantial impact on ending many of the practices which have been exposed through detailed investigation. We have been willing to go much further than most states in allowing investigations into affairs which are in some cases decades old.

The major changes include:

- **The Garda Síochána Act 2005 which provided for the establishment of an independent Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission and Garda Síochána Inspectorate – the first ever independent oversight of the force.**
- **Electoral Acts which have limited and audited donations and introduced serious penalties for the misuse of political funding. Political donations must now be channelled into a special account and it is an offence not to do so.**
- **The Standards in Public Office Commission is in place to investigate breaches.**
- **The Code of Conduct for Office Holders has been introduced with independent oversight.**
- **The Local Government Act 2001 updated the declaration / disclosure regime for Councillors and relevant staff, introducing significant penalties for abuses.**
- **The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour has been introduced.**



The Next Steps forward for Civic Life

Active Citizenship and Volunteering

Fianna Fáil has led the debate to ensure that Irish citizens play active and engaged roles with vibrant Irish communities. In Government we will implement the recommendations of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship.

These recommendations include:

- **Establishing an independent Electoral Commission.**
- **Introduction of a National Active Citizenship theme culminating in a National Active Citizenship week.**
- **Introduction of National Presidential Citizen Awards to recognise outstanding contributions made by individuals to Irish society.**
- **Ensuring that Local Authorities prioritise the provision of community and recreational facilities as part of their Development Plans.**
- **Undertake an audit of existing community facilities to identify gaps and identify opportunities for improved use of existing facilities.**
- **Identify how better use can be made of schools at evening and weekend time to act as community hubs.**
- **Introduction of a formal Citizenship Ceremony.**

Ethics & Investigations

We are committed to continuing the work of ensuring that public life in Ireland achieves the highest standards and that citizens can have full confidence in the regulation of all parts of our democratic system. This is why we are proposing a series of next steps forward for public life.

In government we will:

- **Vigorously implement and improve, where necessary, the full range of ethics legislation.**
- **Implement comprehensive reform of the legislation governing Tribunals of Inquiry so that all future Tribunals operate in accordance with modern and efficient management practices, with focused terms of reference, and in a manner which ensures that the costs and duration of Tribunals are known and controlled.**
- **Act on the findings of all Tribunals which have yet to report.**



Electoral Reform

In government we will:

- **Establish an independent Electoral Commission to take responsibility for electoral administration and oversight.**
- **This Commission will have the function of implementing modern efficient practices for the conduct of elections, becoming a standing Constituency Commission for the revision of constituency boundaries.**
- **It will also take charge of the compilation of a new national rolling electoral register and, due to its expertise, take over the functions of the Standards in Public Office in relation to electoral expenditure.**
- **We will, in its terms of reference, stress the importance of avoiding, where at all possible, the division of small counties or small parts of counties into separate constituencies.**
- **Submit the proposal for re-uniting Leitrim in a single Dáil constituency as a formal Fianna Fáil submission to the Constituency Commission.**
- **Determine the extent of cross-party agreement on the recommendations of the Report on Seanad Reform to advance proposals for implementation.**

Local Government Reform

Local government in Ireland has been transformed over the past decade. 19th century structures have been replaced with modern management systems to meet the needs of today. Local government has led the way in many areas including the first public sector Service Indicators, e-planning systems and a new stronger role in community and enterprise development.

Fianna Fáil will build on this reform by making local government more transparent and more responsive to its customers.

- **We will put customer service to the forefront with:**
 - required response times for correspondence;**
 - 'customer friendly' opening hours;**
 - telephone responses from real people, not machines;**
 - customer training programmes; and**
 - a right of appeal or review of local authority decisions for customers as a further step to greater transparency.**



- **These changes will be set out in a Local Authority Customer Service Charter.**
- **We will ensure that advice given in pre-planning discussions is consistent and does not get overturned every time there is a change in planning staff.**
- **Taxpayers and ratepayers need to know that they are getting value for money. We will modernise the financial and budgetary processes of local authorities so that councillors and the public can readily grasp the options open to the local authority when it comes to spending and revenue raising priorities.**
- **We will complement this initiative by ensuring that local authority spending is overseen by powerful Audit Committees, much like the Public Accounts Committee of Dáil Éireann, with power to summon witnesses and call local authorities to account. These committees will include strong external membership with business/accounting experience.**
- **We will build on the experience gained from the Service Indicators initiative by putting in place more challenging indicators for the years ahead including additional indicators on environmental performance and water quality.**
- **We will review the operation of local government legislation to ensure that the decision making processes in local authorities are rebalanced in favour of the democratically elected representatives of the people.**
- **Fianna Fáil has massively increased investment in the frontline library and fire services. We will ensure that:**
 - The library service responds to changing public demand for services as a result of the revolution in communications technology; and**
 - The fire services operate to best international standards with a new community focus on fire prevention.**

Civil Partnerships

Based on our republican ethos and building on the agenda for equality to which we are committed, we will address the need to provide a legal framework that supports the rights of same sex couples, including by extending State recognition to civil partnerships between such persons so that they can live in a supportive and secure legal environment.

02

The Next Steps Forward for a Dynamic, Sustainable and Progressive Economy





The Next Steps Forward for a Dynamic, Sustainable and Progressive Economy

Today Ireland stands as one of the world's greatest economies. We enjoy the full employment, the good wages and the promising opportunities which the generations that secured our independence could only dream of.

Now, the challenge of our generation is to secure our prosperity and use it as a base on which we can build a better Ireland.

Fianna Fáil has always recognised that a strong economy is the essential precursor to social progress and service excellence. To meet that objective, we will ensure that Ireland is one of the most attractive places in the world in which to live, to learn, to work and to invest.

To strengthen our society's foundations, we will ensure that our taxation system rewards work and enterprise rather than punishes them. We will enhance our productivity and protect employment through building new skills. We will support business development through investment incentives and through innovation, research and development. We recognise and will protect the special contribution made by farming communities to our country and to our sense of self. And we will give Ireland the environmental, transport, communications and tourism infrastructure it needs and deserves.

Under Fianna Fáil, Ireland's economy will generate new and better opportunities and provide new and better resources for all the people of our country. **Our Next Steps Forward will deliver the dynamic, sustainable and progressive economy that will make this possible.**



Finance and the Economy

The Foundations

Fianna Fáil in government has led the transformation of Ireland's economy. We have moved from being a high-unemployment, high-tax and low public investment country to having the lowest unemployment, lowest taxes on workers and highest rate of public investment in Europe.

We reject the shallow ideologies of right and left, believing that a strong economy, the promotion of individual enterprise and increasing investment in public services are fundamentally linked objectives. The record of the last ten years shows that this approach works:

- **Unemployment has been reduced to an historic low, with long-term unemployment now at only 1.3%.**
- **A systematic programme of income tax cuts has been implemented, reducing the top rate from 48% to 41% and the lower rate from 26% to 20%.**
- **Investment in public services has been step-changed, with dramatic increases in the State Pension, child benefit and the numbers of teachers, Gardaí, doctors and nurses at work.**
- **Investment in public infrastructure has been set at the highest level in Europe as a percentage of national income.**
- **A fund now totalling €19 billion has been created to ensure that we can continue to pay decent pensions in the years ahead.**

All of this has been achieved while delivering budget surpluses in nine of the last ten years. Today a full €1 billion per year less is paid in debt interest than was paid in 1997 – money which is supporting a sustained level of higher investment in public services. In government, Fianna Fáil will continue to implement policies that deliver sustainable expansion allowing Ireland to exploit the opportunities presented in good times and to withstand pressure during times of international economic weakness.

Fianna Fáil will always put responsibility first. All the commitments made in this manifesto are dependent on our country's continuing prosperity, something which we will never put at risk. The long-term interests of Ireland are our priority and will never be sacrificed for short-term gain.

A sound economy is the bedrock of social progress. It is an absolute prerequisite for all our ambitions – in health, enterprise, welfare or education. To that end, Fianna Fáil in government will defend prosperity with unrivalled determination. The consequences of that determination are clear: if Ireland ever faces into a global economic downturn we will act prudently, as before. We will deliver this country through any downturn with healthy fundamentals intact – that is, to maintain the lowest unemployment, lowest taxes and highest growth in Europe.



The Next Steps Forward for Finance & the Economy

Sound budgetary management is essential if Ireland is to continue enjoying low taxes and high levels of spending on public goods and services. All of our proposals for the next five years have been framed within the context of a very clear set of assumptions which show exactly how we will approach fiscal and economic decisions over a full term of government.

Our programme will involve us taxing, spending and borrowing less than the opposition – but while we are promising less, we will deliver more.

Economic Principles

Long-term responsibility is the foundation on which our economic policy is built. We will not mortgage our country's future for short-term gain. Our economic policy must accept the reality that we cannot and should not compete on the basis of low wages. If we are to compete effectively and in a sustainable way, we will have to do so through even greater competitiveness in knowledge-driven industries. This is the best and only serious guarantee of high employment and high wages.

Our guiding economic principles for the next five years are:

- **We will aim to achieve further significant, sustainable growth with our programme based on an average growth rate of 4.5%.**
- **We will operate a responsible fiscal policy characterised by broad budget balance and a declining debt burden.**
- **We will deliver the National Development Plan in full, on time and within budget to raise our productivity, to enhance our competitiveness and to secure our future prosperity.**
- **We will invest in increasing the productive capacity of the economy, particularly in terms of ensuring high-levels of high-quality employment.**

Budgetary Policy

Sound budgetary management is essential if Ireland is to continue enjoying low taxes and high levels of spending on public goods and services. Our guiding principles for fiscal policy for the next five years are to:

- **Keep the budget in broad balance and fully within our commitments under the Stability & Growth Pact.**



- **Retain the flexibility to deal with any future shocks.**
- **Set aside a minimum of 1% of GNP per annum to provide for the future pensions of today's workers.**
- **Implement a series of significant and sustainable increases in key public services such as pensions, health and schools.**
- **Keep the overall tax burden low and implement further changes to enhance the rewards of work while increasing the fairness of the tax system.**

Building the Public Wealth

Once our current prosperity is safeguarded, policy must seek to build for the future by raising our productive capacity and in so doing improve our potential to enjoy a better quality of life. That is the context in which the new National Development Plan was framed. With a total cost of €184 billion over seven years, the Plan involves a major acceleration of Government capital investment.

The period to 2013 represents a major window of opportunity in resource terms to tackle, in particular, our infrastructure deficits before other expenditure pressures begin to emerge. At present Ireland has six persons of working age for every older person. This will gradually disimprove over the medium-term so that by 2050 we will have ratio of just two to one. The implications of this are that public spending on pensions, health and long-term care in Ireland will increase from some 10½% of GDP in 2004 to almost 20% of GDP in 2050. Clearly, we now have a unique opportunity to give Ireland the infrastructure it needs and deserves if we are to sustain our current prosperity into the future while simultaneously enhancing quality of life. We must not allow that opportunity to pass us by.

Fianna Fáil believes that the full implementation of the NDP must be the first priority of the next administration and should take precedence over short-termist promises or gestures. The NDP will make our economy and our society stronger and will substantially increase the probability that our good fortune will benefit future generations. It will protect and sustain our prosperity, not threaten it.

Ireland is now an income-rich country. However, we are still poor in terms of our public wealth due to decades of under-investment in infrastructure.

- **To correct this imbalance, Fianna Fáil in government has committed to investing 5.4% of GNP in public infrastructure through the NDP.**
- **This will be implemented through a coordinated, multi-annual programme which is subject to rigorous value for money and quality oversight.**
- **Through sound management of the economy, Fianna Fáil will ensure that this**



resource commitment is maintained over the lifetime of the next government. Closing the infrastructure gap as expeditiously as possible has significant benefits and will enhance quality of life and economic competitiveness for generations to come. We will deliver the public infrastructure which this country needs if it is to sustain and consolidate the gains of the past decade.

Competitiveness and Innovation

Ireland's future prosperity is critically dependent on our ability to trade with the world.

Fianna Fáil will underpin Ireland's success as a highly-productive, trading nation by the following measures:

- **Through the National Development Plan, we will invest over €8.2 billion in Science, Technology and Innovation. This investment will transform the type of R&D and innovation taking place across our enterprise sector.**
- **Our ongoing investment in education and training will ensure that our workforce is equipped with the necessary skills to enhance our productivity and competitiveness.**
- **Under Transport 21, our national infrastructure will be overhauled and upgraded with positive consequences for business costs and productivity.**
- **On return to office, we will instigate a review of the entire economic regulatory environment. This review will be designed to ensure that the existing regulatory regime is operating efficiently, is balancing the needs of users with the requirements of producers and is not imposing excessive costs on the economy.**
- **Recognising the importance of small business to our economy, Fianna Fáil will continue to support and enhance the Business Expansion and Seed Capital Schemes.**
- **We recognise the vital role played by low taxes in our economic success. We guarantee that the 12.5% rate of corporation tax will not be changed.**
- **We will resolutely oppose any attempt to introduce tax harmonisation within the European Union, either directly or through technical measures.**

Under Fianna Fáil, Ireland's dynamic and flexible economy will continue to be one of the most attractive locations in the world to invest, to employ and to do business in.



A Fair Tax System

We have overhauled the taxation system over the past ten years through dramatic and sustainable cuts in rates and increases in tax credits.

However further progress can be made in making the system even fairer. Subject to the controlling economic and fiscal framework, Fianna Fáil in government will implement the following specific approach to tax:

- **Our first priority remains low and middle income earners – therefore our first task will be to use tax credits and bands to keep low income earners out of the standard rate band and average earners out of the higher band.**
- **PRSI, as currently devised, is not a fair tax as it is not levied on incomes above €48,800. Consequently, it is most lightly borne by those on the highest incomes. To eliminate this inequity, Fianna Fáil will abolish the PRSI ceiling for full rate payers and reduce the rate at which this tax is levied from 4% to 2% over the lifetime of the next administration. We will also reduce the rate of PRSI paid by the self employed to 2% from 3%. These moves will eliminate remaining inequality in the income tax system and enhance its progressive nature. The Social Insurance Fund will be reimbursed by the Exchequer for the cost of this reform.**
- **Once these commitments are met, any additional resources will be targeted at further enhancing the rewards of work. Specifically, we are committed to reducing the standard rate of income tax to 18% and the higher rate of income tax to 40% over the lifetime of the next government if economic resources allow.**
- **We will introduce measures to further weight VRT in favour of cars with lower emissions.**

Supporting Home Ownership While Protecting House Values and Jobs

Fianna Fáil is determined to help first-time buyers directly and substantially without disturbing market conditions, driving increases in house prices, and putting the more than 260,000 jobs in construction at risk.

Our approach is good for certainty, good for affordability, good for society and good for the economy.

As the Housing chapter explains in more detail, in government we will

- **legislate immediately to abolish stamp duty for all first-time buyers and make this change retrospective for all deeds presented for stamping to the Revenue Commissioners on or after 30th April 2007.**
- **Implement major changes in mortgage interest relief for first-time buyers and those who bought a house in the past seven years.**



Keeping Ireland Working Jobs, Skills & Advanced Research

Since 1997 no less than 600,000 jobs have been created in the Irish economy, one in four of all jobs. The most remarkable part of this has been the level of well-paid, highly skilled jobs created. We have gone from having Europe's highest rate of unemployment to it lowest – with long-term unemployment now down to 1.3%.

This did not happen by chance. It is the result of the clear choices of a government working in partnership with businesses and employees. Fianna Fáil policies have always been pro-education, pro-business, and pro-low taxes, both at personal, and at corporate level. The 12.5% corporate tax rate has enabled the Irish economy to perform very strongly over the past 10 years and is much admired internationally. Ireland's level of Foreign Direct Investment is now proportionately one of the highest in the world, with over 1,000 overseas companies having substantial international operations in Ireland. Our Small and Medium Enterprise sector is also very strong, employing over 800,000 people.

The Next Steps Forward for Keeping Ireland Working

We fully accept that we can take nothing for granted – that other countries will keep trying to catch up with us. Low-tax, high-investment, pro-enterprise policies have led to spectacular progress for our country and we believe that this approach must be built upon. Fianna Fáil is the party of job creation and we are absolutely committed to maintaining high-levels of good employment, low levels of unemployment and a strong business sector. This is why we are proposing a coordinated series of next steps forward to support the creation of 250,000 jobs over the next five years.

Guiding Principles

Overall, we will implement policies which fit within a key set of principles:

- **Keep taxes on employment low.**
- **Where possible reduce the regulatory burden faced by business.**
- **Significantly upskill the Irish workforce at all levels.**
- **Invest in research and development.**
- **Develop a growing focus on the dynamic SME sector.**
- **Ensure that employment standards are met throughout the economy.**



Tax and Regulation

We have championed and delivered a low-tax environment for business and we have worked to reduce the regulatory burden faced by business.

We will continue to do so and, in government we will:


- **Ensure that our regulatory framework remains flexible, proportionate and up to date.**
- **Keep Ireland's Corporation Tax at its current level at most and veto any EU proposal which might undermine this.**
- **Continue to enhance the Business Expansion Scheme and the Seed Capital Scheme.**
- **Examine measures to limit the ability of local authorities to impose punitive charges on local businesses.**
- **Implement procedures to ensure direct feedback from business on regulatory burdens and publish annual reports on how these issues have been addressed.**

Small & Medium Enterprises

We view small business as big business for Ireland. There are over 250,000 small businesses operating across the country, which employ a total of over 800,000 people or 40% of the workforce. This number is also growing – businesses up by 50% and employment by 79% in recent years. We are committed to helping SMEs grow, becoming more knowledge-based and being a key driver of future success.

In government we will:

- **Encourage financial institutions to provide European Investment.**
- **Fund guaranteed loan finance to small businesses.**
- **Continue to enhance the Business Expansion Scheme (BES) and the Seed Capital Scheme (SCS) following on from changes introduced in Budget 2007.**
- **Make Innovation Vouchers available to small businesses in every sector, to be exchanged for advice, expertise and information from accredited knowledge providers. This will build on the initiative taken this year when Ireland became only the second country in Europe to introduce this scheme to help small businesses.**
- **Actively encourage more "Competence Centres" which will bring together companies that have similar research problems and team them with highly qualified researchers to produce new technologies, bring their results to market and deliver a competitive advantage to Irish industry.**

- 
- **Provide Knowledge Acquisition Grants to enable small businesses in the manufacturing and internationally traded service sectors to gain access to research-based knowledge, expertise and facilities in higher education institutes.**

Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector faces many serious challenges, but has maintained significant employment levels in recent years.

To help the sector to compete more effectively, in government we will:

- **Assist smaller manufacturing firms to realise the potential of information technology by appointing a Director for the R&D programme support structures.**
- **Support upskilling of low-skilled workers in the manufacturing sector by investing more than €2.8 billion over the next six years in upskilling.**
- **Fully co-operate with the High Level Group on Manufacturing established under Towards 2016.**
- **Ensure better exploitation of domestic opportunities to facilitate companies in applying for public sector contracts.**
- **Support the change process in companies through advice and assistance.**
- **Support the establishment of R&D units in manufacturing companies.**

Competition and Consumer Protection

We believe that competition and consumer protection are essential parts of maintaining a vibrant economy. We are determined to ensure that competition thrives and that costs to the consumer are kept to a minimum.

In government we will:

- **Ensure that prices of goods are labelled and transparent so the consumer is well-informed.**
- **Make consumers more aware of their rights through information campaigns and through the education system.**
- **Prevent consumers from being charged extra for using a particular method of payment of their choice - either cash, credit or debit card.**
- **Maintain the ban on Pyramid selling and ensure that penalties are enforced which includes €500,000 fines and /or imprisonment.**



- **On-the-spot fines will be introduced for breaches of consumer law.**
- **Ensure that Consumer Codes of Conducts are published by businesses.**
- **Ensure that the National Consumers' Agency is accessible to all people who have queries or complaints via low-cost calls or web-sites.**
- **Enforcement will be a core focus of the Agency.**
- **Ensure product safety by operating the EU Rapex scheme.**
- **Make sure that the needs of the consumer and national competitiveness are fully accounted for in the pricing decisions of regulators.**
- **Regulate property management companies to ensure that the interests of consumers are protected.**

Managing Economic Migration

We are determined to manage economic migration in a way that protects the rights of all workers, maintains unemployment at the lowest possible level and ensures successful integration.

Fianna Fáil in government will:

- **Continue to issue green cards in respect of occupations where there are skills shortages, including those for example in the information technology, biopharma, engineering and health sectors.**
- **Only grant work permits where it can be demonstrated, following a rigorous labour market test, that suitable employees are not available within the EEA.**
- **Allow workers to apply for and reapply for their own permit and to transfer to another employment in cases of mistreatment. We will also provide for spouses of employment permit holders who are granted residence in Ireland to be granted an employment permit.**
- **Ensure that the employment rights of non-EEA students are protected by requiring them to have work permits which will allow them to work for a maximum of 20 hours a week.**
- **Re-establish an Intra-Company transfer scheme for temporary trans-national top management transfers to enable companies to meet short-term needs.**
- **Ensure that employment permit applications are not approved for wages below the REA/ERO rate or the National Minimum Wage, and that there is full enforcement of employment law to protect workers from being abused.**



- **Increase the number of Labour Inspectors to 90.**
- **Ensure that workers are made aware of their rights through initiatives such as printing the minimum wage on the work permit and providing information in a range of languages.**
- **Protect employees against employers deducting recruitment expenses from pay and retaining workers personal documents.**

Skills for the Future

Fianna Fáil will guarantee that our workforce becomes more skilled at all levels to ensure that we make the transition to a competitive, innovation-driven, knowledge-based economy. To achieve this objective we will invest over €7.7 billion over the next 6 years in training and skills development and will:

- **Expand the role of FÁS and Enterprise Ireland to increase the “employer commitment” to training, particularly in the SME sector.**
- **Invest in SME owner/manager Development Programmes.**
- **Expand the Competency Development Programmes, allowing more workers across all sectors and company sizes the opportunity to upskill.**
- **Fund Regional Skills Advisory Groups which consist of both firms and education/training providers so that the needs of each region are met.**
- **Utilise the National Training Fund to assist companies in improving their employees’ skill sets.**
- **Ensure that FÁS expands the Excellence Through People programmes (ETP) to reach 500,000 workers by 2020.**
- **Expand the Training Networks Programme which will increase the number of training grants given to companies and the Skillsnet Training programme which allows companies to access training**
- **Make it easier to access FÁS apprenticeship programmes by increasing the number of places across the country. We will add to the number of occupations to ensure the continued skills relevance and we will do this in consultation with the Social Partners. We are also committed to updating the present apprenticeship programmes to keep them responsive, competitive and productive.**



Keeping Ireland Ahead at the Cutting Edge

Ireland cannot be successful in the future without sustained investment in developing skills and ideas through research and development. Under this Fianna Fáil-led Government, research and development spending has soared and is crucial to attracting significant international investment. Investment in indigenous R&D is important as Ireland is now rated second in the world for the number of science graduates per 100,000 25-34 year olds in employment.

We live in a new Ireland - prosperous but not without its challenges. The deeper our economic success and the longer it is sustained, the greater the challenges to keep the forward momentum. While Fianna Fáil works to maintain it, we will also take the next steps to introduce greater opportunity for even more people to become involved in our economy and to benefit from its success. The biggest contributor to our economic success has been the exceptional wealth of the intellectual capital available to native and overseas investors. Ireland renowned for the quality of its graduates.

The basis for future growth in prosperity and jobs is further investment in the knowledge, skills and innovation capacity up to fourth level that will drive economic and social development in an increasing competitive global environment. The higher education system must deliver people who will expand knowledge-based business in Ireland.

This will require change and quality improvements in our Universities and Institutes of Education across all key disciplines. Fianna Fáil will actively promote a system-wide form of collaboration that draws on the collective strengths of all our 3rd level colleges. This collaboration will enable companies, both large and small, to access new knowledge, specialist skills and the latest technologies. We have already started this process by publishing the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation which for the first time outlines an “all Government” approach to R&D across nine departments. This involves investing over €8.2 billion up to 2013 across sectors such as Health, Agri-food, Energy, Marine, Geoscience and Environmental research. All of these sectors are huge employers and contribute billions to the economy.

This investment will provide for the continued development of a world class research system, underpinned by the essential physical infrastructure and human resources with the number of PhD graduates set to almost double over the next six years.

In government Fianna Fáil will continue the upward investment to enable Ireland to compete seriously as a “Knowledge Economy”.

Over the next five years we will:

- **Double investment in R&D.**
- **Fully implement the Strategy on Science Technology and Innovation.**



- **Ensure doubling of PhDs in Science, Engineering and Technology.**
- **Simplify grants and supports to businesses to conduct R&D.**
- **Double the spending on BERD (Business Expenditure on R&D) by 2013.**
- **Enhance the R&D Tax credit scheme.**
- **Ensure that there is enhanced industry/academia collaboration to benefit business and secure growth.**



Social Partnership and the Public Sector

Social Partnership has made a critical contribution to Ireland's economic and social development over the last twenty years. It has transformed our industrial relations landscape and has created a broader forum for the consideration of policy. It has created opportunities for the resolution of issues in a way which has supported rather than impaired economic and social development. Our leader, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD, is the architect of social partnership and understands better than anyone how to reconcile the interests of employers, employees and other groups to agree a shared agenda for progress.

Fianna Fáil also understands that a partnership approach with public sector workers is central to achieving improvements in public services. In government, we have sought to ensure that services are delivered to the citizens who pay for them in a modern and accessible way by public servants who are well rewarded for their work. There has been substantial reform in the manner in which public services are planned and delivered – and equally there has been a substantial increase in the numbers and remuneration of public servants.

The Next Steps Forward for Social Partnership and the Public Sector

Fianna Fáil believes that maintaining industrial peace through a strong Social Partnership system and promoting efficiency in the delivery of public services are central to protecting and growing our social and economic prosperity in the years ahead. This is why we are proposing a series of next steps forward on social partnership and the public sector.

Social Partnership

Fianna Fáil established Social Partnership and we are determined to maintain its success in the years ahead by:

- **Working with the social partners to ensure the full implementation of the Towards 2016 Agreement.**
- **Ensuring that pay improvements for public sector workers continue to be linked to delivery and verification of agreed improvements in public services.**

Ensuring Value for Money

Evaluation, improvement in performance and constant modernisation have become part and parcel of people's working lives in the private sector. We will ensure that the delivery of services in the public sector are evaluated and improved in similar ways. The public has a legitimate right to expect



public services to be delivered in an effective manner – in terms of both time and money – and for the right activities to get priority.

The bulk of capital projects are now being delivered on or below budget and, in some instances, ahead of schedule. Building on this performance, all expenditure under the NDP 2007-2013 will be subject, as appropriate, to a robust Value for Money framework. Key elements of this framework include:

- **All projects will subject to project appraisal to ensure that NDP programme objectives and Value for Money are being achieved;**
- **All capital projects over €30 million will require a full cost benefit analysis in line with the Department of Finance guidelines of February 2005;**
- **New procurement arrangements which will deliver greater cost certainty for public capital projects;**
- **NDP Programme Evaluations and Value for Money and Policy Reviews will be published and submitted to the relevant Select Committees of the Oireachtas; and**
- **As provided for under the Budget and Estimates Reform proposals set out in Budget 2006, all Ministers will submit an Annual Output Statement with their Annual Estimates to the relevant Oireachtas Committee. This will detail target outputs for the Estimates and the following years' Statement will set out achievements against target. This process will encompass Exchequer funded NDP spending.**

This robust and transparent process will be augmented by the new requirement for the submission of an Annual Report on NDP progress to the Oireachtas where it will be subject to debate. Other factors such as the Strategic Infrastructure Act 2006 and extra judicial resources will also impact positively on value for money, delivery and Implementation.

Delivering the Government Programme

Fianna Fáil believes setting up a new Delivery Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach will help to ensure that delivery of the Government programme is on track, with early identification of obstacles so that steps can be taken to rectify them.

The Unit will be tasked with:

- **Monitoring and reporting on delivery of the Government Programme.**
- **Developing annual Government Programme delivery targets.**



- **Facilitating the sharing of knowledge regarding best practice and value for money in project delivery throughout Government departments.**
- **Providing the Cabinet with monthly progress updates on the implementation on the Government Programme.**

Public Sector Management

Fianna Fáil will help to foster in the public sector an entrepreneurial spirit, focussed on finding opportunities to improve services for the Irish public. Reform and modernisation should be part of an ongoing process that keeps pace with the needs of Irish society and creates a public sector work environment where talent is valued and performance is recognised.

Fianna Fáil in government will:

- **Support the further opening up of management roles to the best qualified candidates.**
- **Roll out the new Performance Management and Development System (PMDS). It is an essential tool for managing performance and career development for all staff. A consistent evaluation system should identify outstanding performance and highlight underperformance.**
- **Implement improvements in human resource management which ensure that all public servants are helped to develop to the best of their ability.**
- **Support succession and career planning to ensure a talent pipeline for the future leadership of the public sector.**

Decentralisation

In 2003 we launched the largest programme of decentralisation in the history of our civil and public service. This programme is designed to meet the need for balanced regional development, relieve pressures on Dublin, give public servants a greater opportunity to choose the communities they live and work in and to allow for a clustering approach which ensures effective management.

We accept that the initial timetables were too ambitious and that completing the programme will take more work. However, we remain absolutely committed to decentralisation and to the towns designated to host offices.

Fianna Fáil in government will:

- **Continue to move ahead with decentralisation.**
- **Ensure that no public servant is obliged to accept decentralisation against their wishes and that promotion opportunities remain available.**



Transport

A modern society needs a modern infrastructure. Since coming to office, Fianna Fáil in government has moved to correct the impact of decades of under-investment in our transport infrastructure by committing unprecedented development funding to this area.

Our achievements include:

- **An unprecedented upgrading of our road network with clear benefits for quality of life, safety and competitiveness.**
- **Over 200 km of new motorway, 500 km of new dual and single carriageways with over 550km of new roads in construction this year.**
- **A complete overhaul of our rail service in terms of track and new rolling stock.**
- **Over 1,100 new buses for Dublin Bus including 100 delivered over December 2006 and January this year.**
- **Over 600 new buses for Bus Éireann.**
- **QBCs have been introduced successfully in Dublin and are being rolled out in the other cities.**
- **67 New InterCity carriages with 183 new railcars to be delivered in the next two years. Our rail fleet will be the youngest in Europe this year.**
- **The success of Luas, carrying over 26 million passengers annually.**
- **A doubling of capacity for passengers on the DART.**
- **A vibrant aviation sector with 200% growth in passenger numbers at the regional airports, 110% more passengers at Dublin, 100% more at Shannon and an increase of 150% at Cork.**
- **More choice for air travellers with a doubling of routes serviced from Dublin, Cork and Shannon.**
- **A reformed road safety regime with penalty points and mandatory alcohol testing successfully in place and the Road Safety Authority established.**

Ireland now has one of the world's most successful economies. It needs a first rate transport network if it is to sustain and build on that success. But investment in transport is about more than economics. A high quality efficient transport system enhances quality of life for all. That is why Fianna Fáil published and is implementing Transport 21, the first-ever integrated plan for developing transport networks in all parts of the country.



The Next Steps Forward for Transport

We are determined to use the undoubted progress of recent years and continue to accelerate actions that will deliver a modern transport system throughout the country. Therefore we are proposing a series of significant next steps forward for transport in Ireland.

Overall, we will implement a programme of investment and service development which will:

- **Improve safety**
- **Deliver real commuting choice**
- **Cut travelling times**
- **Reduce congestion**

Public Transport

We are committed to a major increase in the capacity and quality of our public transport services, including the full integration of services. Enhanced public transport services will help the environment, reduce congestion and improve quality of life for all.

In government we will:

Substantially improve and expand Luas services in Dublin by:

- **Joining the Green and Red Luas lines.**
- **Extending Luas to Docklands.**
- **Extending Luas to Citywest.**
- **Extending Luas to Cherrywood.**
- **Extending Luas from the City Centre to Liffey Junction (Broadstone/Cabra).**
- **Extending Luas to Rathfarnham subject to feasibility study.**

Improve rail services by:

- **Reopening the Western Rail Corridor from Ennis to Claremorris.**
- **Examining the feasibility of reopening the line from Claremorris to Sligo.**
- **Opening the Cork-Midleton rail service.**
- **Launching Galway-Athenry commuter rail services.**



- **Opening the Navan rail line, initially to Dunboyne, and prepare for services to Navan.**
- **Accelerating construction of the Interconnector between Docklands and Heuston stations.**
- **Opening Metro North from St Stephen's Green to Swords via Dublin Airport.**
- **Opening Metro-West connecting Tallaght and Ballymun through Clondalkin, Liffey Valley and Blanchardstown.**

Improve bus services by:

- **Ensuring that the evolving regulatory regime will deliver service improvements by both private and public operators and that the needs of the consumer rather than the operator will be the prime driver of the marketplace.**
- **Continuing to develop Quality Bus Corridors in Dublin and the other cities.**
- **Doubling the length of bus priority schemes to improve the quality, reliability and efficiency of the fleet of buses serving the Greater Dublin Area.**

We will continue to promote integrated ticketing and smart card technologies which will allow a differential pricing system to be introduced.

We will also plan and deliver strategies for the future development of integrated public transport in Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, including examining the feasibility of Luas systems in those cities.

Roads

The development of a high-quality route network carries significant benefits for our competitiveness, balanced regional development and the safety of our roads.

In government we will complete:

- **The five inter-urban motorways connecting Dublin with Belfast, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.**
- **The Atlantic Road Corridor connecting Letterkenny and Waterford through Sligo, Charlestown, Tuam, Galway, Gort, Ennis, Limerick, Mallow and Cork to motorway standard on most of the routes.**
- **The Border Road Corridor connecting Dundalk to Sligo via Enniskillen**
- **High quality road corridors to the Border, the North West and the West connecting Mullingar and Westport/Ballina/Sligo, Kells and Belturbet, as well as Ardee and Monaghan.**



- **The Eastcoast N11 dual carriageway to Rosslare.**
- **The Dublin to Letterkenny/Derry dual carriageway.**

Funding of the Roads Network

The incoming government will explore an important initiative in the area of funding road development. Institutional investors and small savers would be given the opportunity to subscribe for an infrastructure bond. Initially this would be used to fund a rebuilding of the Dublin to Letterkenny/Derry road and the Dublin Outer Orbital Route subject to feasibility and planning. An index-linked infrastructure bond would be issued by the National Development Finance Agency and set to mature in 50 years time with a fixed coupon. Using risk distribution in line with Eurostat rules, the bond would be structured as off balance sheet financing. The bond would be issued in increments to match capital expenditure as it occurs. It would allow the people of Ireland to invest securely in our future without adding to the National Debt.

Road Safety

In spite of dramatic increases in the number of cars on Irish roads, 2006 saw the second best year for road safety in four decades. In our next steps for road safety, we will:

- **Maintain progress on driving test waiting times, ensuring that the waiting time does not exceed 8 weeks at any test centre in the country.**
- **Compel persons disqualified for drink driving to re-sit their driving test.**
- **Introduce smart-card learner permits and driving licences.**
- **Introduce compulsory alcohol and drug testing for drivers involved in accidents causing injury.**

Aviation

In order to support a thriving aviation industry, in government we will:

- **Support the development of Cork and Shannon airports as fully independent entities offering a range of both long-haul and short-haul routes.**
- **Recognising the opportunity presented by Open Skies, encourage the development of new transatlantic services at Shannon.**
- **Open Terminal 2 at Dublin Airport in 2009**
- **Strengthen the role of the regional airports through continuing capital support, encouraging them to play a full part in fostering regional development.**



Ports

Ports are vital to our economic prosperity, carrying 99% of our exports by volume to the world. In government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Continue to support the State-owned commercial port companies as they invest in improving their infrastructure.
- Undertake a comprehensive study of the role of Dublin Port taking account of location, overall ports policy, transport policy, urban development and the National Spatial Strategy.
- Invest €31 million under the National Development Plan in Regional Harbours to ensure that their potential contribution to the economic and social life of their communities is fully realised.

Regional and Local Roads

Fianna Fáil will:

- Identify key regional roads to be upgraded and will put in place a multi-annual programme, in parallel with Transport 21 to achieve this. The focus of this programme will be on heavier trafficked routes linking our rural towns with each other and with the national road network.
- Spend €4.3 billion on non-national roads under the National Development Plan and in particular accelerate investment in the restoration programme to improve sub-standard roads.
- Support the provision of urban distributor routes around major towns with significant contributions from developers as new areas are opened up for development.



Energy

A reliable and affordable supply of energy is central to many elements of economic and social life. Reducing our dependence on certain forms of energy production is also necessary to achieve fundamental environmental objectives which are vital for the future of this island and the world as a whole.

In recent years, there has been a 600% increase in electricity generated by wind on the national grid and Ireland has become one of the leading centres for wave energy research worldwide and ambitious biofuels targets have been set. Later this year a Single Electricity Market will come into place. We have also facilitated the creation of a Single Electricity Market which will come into place on 1st November 2007.

Fianna Fáil is committed to securing both long-term energy security and a low carbon future for Ireland. Our White Paper on Energy – the first in 30 years – sets out how this can be done.

The Next Steps Forward on Energy

We are committed to delivering a fully sustainable, secure, efficient, affordable and competitive all-island energy market. The hallmarks of the all-island energy market will be reliable supply, highly efficient use of energy, competitive prices and sustainable, diverse energy sources. This is why we are proposing a series of significant steps forward in the field of energy. In government we will achieve the following commitments across each of the three energy pillars:

Security of Supply

In government we will:

- **Ensure that electricity supply consistently meets demand.**
- **Ensure the security and reliability of gas supplies.**
- **Enhance the diversity of fuels used for power generation, especially renewables.**
- **Ensure the development of a landbank of state owned power generation sites to facilitate the entry of new independent generation.**
- **Deliver the East/West and second North/South electricity interconnectors.**
- **Deliver electricity and gas to homes and businesses over networks that are efficient, reliable and secure.**
- **Create a stable, attractive environment for hydrocarbon exploration and production.**
- **Mitigate the impact of any energy supply disruptions by ensuring that contingency measures are in place.**



Environmental Sustainability

In government we will:

- Dramatically accelerate the growth of renewable energy sources in the electricity, heat and transport sectors of the economy. One third of all electricity consumed will come from renewable energy by 2020.
- Introduce co-firing at each of the three peat stations with up to 30% biomass by 2015, which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from those three stations by 900,000 tonnes per annum and will also extend the life of those stations.
- Implement in full, the National Bioenergy Action Plan for Ireland, which will reduce greenhouse gas emission by at least 2 million tonnes per annum.
- Promote the enhanced deployment of green energy technologies and the sustainable use of energy in transport.
- Introduce a biofuels obligation scheme by 2009.
- Stimulate the development of alternative energy sources.
- Maximise energy efficiency and energy savings across the economy with a target of 20% energy savings by 2020 and 33% for public sector.
- National building regulations will be updated during 2007 to reduce energy demand by 40%.
- Support Energy Research Development and Innovation Programmes.
- Establish a dedicated Ocean Energy Development Unit. The Unit mandate will be to develop the sector and work to a target of at least 500 MW of wave and tidal energy by 2020 with an interim target of 75 MW in 2012.
- Aim to create an export-oriented Ocean Energy sector focused on the technologies associated with this exciting sector through R&D supports and grant funding of start-up production in the sector.

Energy- Competitiveness

In government we will:

- Deliver competition and consumer choice in the energy market in support of economic growth and national competitiveness.



- **Oversee the successful introduction of the Single Electricity Market in 2007.**
- **Keep the electricity and gas network infrastructures, as strategic national assets, in State ownership and ensure that these assets are never privatised.**
- **Oversee the transfer of transmission assets to EirGrid, establishing it as the National Transmission Grid Company by end 2008.**
- **Operate ESB's natural monopoly network business under a risk-related rate of return, leading to reduced network tariffs which will be passed on in full to electricity customers.**
- **Reduce the market power held by any one player in price-setting generation plants.**
- **Ensure a sustainable future for the Semi-State Energy Enterprises.**
- **Provide substantial financial support to improve the energy efficiency of existing public housing and assist those on low incomes to avoid fuel poverty.**
- **Expand and develop programmes for energy conservation to ensure the most efficient use of the energy.**



Communications

When Fianna Fáil returned to office in 2002 there were very few DSL broadband lines in the State. Today there are almost 520,000 broadband subscribers in Ireland, with nearly 5,000 new users a week coming on board. Prices are a third of the 2002 levels and speeds are vastly improved. Ireland now has the most competitively priced international connectivity in the EU. Mobile phone roaming charges between the North and the Republic have also been abolished.

We have prioritised improvements in our postal network, with new opportunities for An Post in providing financial services. In broadcasting, we have increased the powers of the ComReg to boost competition and established TG4 as an independent entity.

The Next Steps Forward for Communications

Broadband

A world-class telecommunications sector is critical to our continued economic and social prosperity. We are committed to moving Ireland to the forefront of knowledge-based economies in the world through the provision of open access broadband. A state-of-the-art telecommunications network will be the key infrastructure that will enable this and support information intensive industry and bandwidth-hungry citizens.

In government we will:

- **Complete the roll-out of broadband throughout the country with the National Broadband Scheme (NBS). This will mean that the last 10%-15% of the country, which will never have access to broadband without intervention or support, will now have access to broadband, provided on a technology-neutral basis.**
- **Encourage the progressive shift to IP based Next Generation Networks.**
- **Encourage the separation of Eircom's network from its commercial retail business into a separate entity to be regulated by ComReg, on a fully open-access and transparent basis. We anticipate that this organization will attract funding as a quasi-utility and will play a role in encouraging the development of Next Generation Networks in Ireland.**
- **Tender contracts to provide broadband availability to the final 10% of the country. The successful tenderers will have to commit to deploy technological solutions to allow maximum competition.**
- **Expand the current free telephone rental scheme by providing for free broadband for older people. Industry will be invited to tender for the provision of the new bundled broadband and rental service for older people.**



Broadcasting

Fianna Fáil is committed to creating an environment that encourages the maintenance of high quality Irish radio and television services by both independent broadcasters and RTÉ and securing a viable future for high quality public service broadcasting in the Irish market.

In government we will:

- **Enact the Broadcasting Bill to ensure a comprehensive, modern framework of law for the sector.**
- **Establish the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.**
- **Ensure a speedy right to reply to those who have been defamed in radio or television programmes.**
- **Complete the pilot DTT project and complete roll-out of DTT well in advance of the EU 2012 deadline.**
- **Place reviews of the licence fee on a statutory basis.**
- **Provide increased funding to TG4 for increased Irish language programming.**
- **Maximise the number of home-produced programmes within the RTE schedule.**
- **Digitise the RTÉ archives for use in education and research.**
- **Enable RTÉ to support broadcasting to the Irish community abroad.**
- **Ensure a fair and competitive environment for the independent TV and radio sector.**

Postal Services

Fianna Fáil is committed to ensuring that Irish business and domestic customers enjoy competitively priced, high-quality postal services. In government we will:

- **Ensure a strong, viable post office network, which reaches into every community in Ireland and which properly remunerates all those involved in it.**
- **Develop An Post as a top-class financial services entity to help in that aim.**
- **Ensure that as many Government services as possible operate through the post office network.**
- **Introduce a postcode system to Ireland to ensure a strong competitive postal sector and to reduce costs significantly for consumers, business and the voluntary sector.**



- **Insist on much improved “next day delivery” rates and link them to any future stamp price increases.**
- **Empower ComReg to withhold increases and/or clawback income where delivery targets are not met.**



Environment

Fianna Fáil has dramatically improved the protection of the Irish environment in recent years.

Our emphasis has always been on “environmental policies that work”. Notwithstanding Ireland’s unprecedented economic and physical development over the past decade, the state of our environment has improved in most areas, thanks to pro-active policies and large-scale investment in protecting that environment.

As a result of our policies:

- **Ireland is 100% compliant with EU air quality standards.**
- **New waste water treatment in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and other major towns now means that Ireland is now over 90% compliant with waste water discharges in comparison with just 20% 6 years ago.**
- **96.7% of drinking water is compliant with EU standards.**
- **We now have a record number of blue flag beaches – 81 in 2006.**
- **Ireland’s recycling rate is up four fold on 1997 levels and our 35% recycling target was met eight years ahead of target.**
- **Ireland has ratified the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change and we are committed to meeting our international obligations. We have already successfully decoupled our economic growth from growth in emissions: since 1990 our emissions grew by 23% but our economy grew by over 150%.**
- **Environmental enforcement law has been strengthened and the Office of Environmental Enforcement has been established. This EPA now reports that large scale illegal dumping has been successfully dealt with as a result of these policies.**

The Environmental Performance Index presented to the 2006 Davos World Economic Forum placed Ireland 10th out of 133 countries for environmental policies.

The Next Steps Forward on the Environment

With the scale of the environmental challenges facing the world, it is clear that serious action must go on. This is why Fianna Fáil is committed to taking a further series of major steps forward for the environment during the next five years.

Overall, we are committed to moving Ireland into the top five in the world as measured by the Environmental Performance Index



Climate Change: A Challenge for the Whole World

As a developed country, as a Member State of the EU, and as a responsible nation in the wider international community, Ireland is playing its part in meeting the most important environmental issue facing the world today.

We have been to the fore in participating in the EU Emissions' Trading System and will use all available mechanisms to ensure that Ireland meets its climate change commitments under the Kyoto Protocol.

Meeting our obligations to the future generations requires all sectors in society to play their part. Fianna Fáil in Government will implement a comprehensive range of measures as set out in the new National Climate Change Strategy.

In particular Fianna Fáil believes in the need to commit to a clean and renewable energy future and we commit ourselves to a Green Energy Revolution.

In particular, we will:

- **Increase the use of alternative energies for generating power in order to ensure that one third of electricity consumed in Ireland comes from renewable sources by 2020.**
- **Create new opportunities for our farmers by moving agriculture to a new dual system of food and power production.**
- **Facilitate the establishment of a new bio-fuel industry in Ireland on the back of this new agricultural production.**
- **Improve the energy efficiency of new Irish homes by up to 40%.**
- **Introduce a minimum requirement for the use of bio-fuels in State-owned and public transport vehicles. Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann will move their existing fleet to a 5% bio-diesel blend and will achieve a 30% bio-diesel blend in their new buses.**
- **Continue to use the taxation system to encourage good environmental behaviour and discourage poor practice, for example through rebalancing the VRT and Motor Tax system to reward the purchase of greener cars.**
- **Complete the phasing out of incandescent light bulbs in favour of more energy efficient compact fluorescent bulbs to reduce our carbon emissions and save on electricity costs.**
- **Require the public sector to lead the way on energy efficiency with a mandatory programme of efficiency measures including the sole use of energy efficient lighting and heating in offices, schools and hospitals and other public buildings to produce 33% energy savings by 2020.**



- **Require all street lighting and traffic lighting systems to be energy efficient and replace inefficient systems.**
- **Require carbon offsetting of all official air travel in support of urban forests.**
- **Require the mandatory use of bio-fuel mixes in transport fuels and ensure that there is a nationwide bio-fuel distribution network.**
- **Ensure that the development of renewable energy heating systems is encouraged through targeted grant schemes and facilitated by appropriate planning exemptions.**
- **Introduce smart electricity meters and ensure that energy produced in the home and at work can be sold back into the national grid.**
- **Implement all aspects of Transport 21 to so that the use of public transport becomes a real option for more and more people.**
- **Put in place an Adaptation Strategy to prepare for expected changes brought about by global warming.**
- **Establish a high level Commission on Climate Change to oversee implementation of the Climate Change Strategy.**

Waste Management

Since 1997 there has been a mindset change in Ireland in the way we think about waste and in the way we deal with it. However, we still have some way to go to reach the best standards of waste management in Europe. Fianna Fáil believes in adopting best international practice to tackle the remaining waste management problems facing us. In particular in Government we will:

- **Establish new ambitious waste management targets for maximum prevention, re-use, recycling and modern waste treatment to ensure that we match the best performance in the EU for recycling with the objective that only 10% of waste or less is consigned to landfill (down from 66% now).**
- **Ensure that the landfills currently provided for under regional waste management plans should be the last to be constructed for a generation.**
- **Drive down the cost of waste management charges to householders and business by ensuring that our waste management system is competitive and uses all available technologies to achieve this including the use of waste for generating sustainable electricity.**



- **Ensure the implementation of the National Strategy on Biodegradable Waste which aims to divert 80% of biodegradable waste from landfill through segregated collection of biodegradable waste, and the generation of compost (which will also cut down the use of peat moss).**
- **Expand the network of bottle banks, recycling centres and segregated collection and introduce household hazardous waste collection (e.g. paint cans etc) in all suitable recycling centres.**

Environmental Enforcement

People or businesses which despoil the Irish countryside or break our environmental laws should be punished and should make good any damage caused. We established the Office of Environmental Enforcement in 2004 to lead the fight against environmental crime with the result that large scale illegal dumping has now ceased.

In government we will:

- **Review the level of fines and custodial sentences which can be applied by the lower Courts (where the majority of prosecutions are taken) in cases of pollution, dumping, illegal developments and other environmental crimes, so that the punishment fits the crime.**
- **Ensure that the lower Courts can impose harsher sentences where corporate bodies are guilty of the offence.**

Litter

Despite steady improvements in recent years, the problem of litter in Ireland is still far too widespread. Fianna Fáil has eliminated most plastic bag litter through the plastic bag levy and we put in place an imaginative, industry-funded awareness campaign to address the issue of chewing gum.

In government we will:

- **Increase support to initiatives such as Irish Business Against Litter and the Green Schools Programme which raise awareness on litter issues.**
- **Use the nationwide roll out of the Community Warden Service to increase litter enforcement.**
- **Incentivise local action in dealing with litter, including introducing programmes such as the “adopt-a-highway” for both main and secondary roads.**



- **Examine the use of the penalty points system to deter litter being thrown out of vehicles and the dumping of litter by the wayside.**

Protecting our Water

Recent investment has resulted in increased wastewater treatment capacity equivalent to the needs of 3.1 million people and additional drinking water treatment capacity equivalent to the needs of 1 million people. The quality of our drinking water and the water in our rivers and lakes have shown significant improvement because of this investment. Ireland is the leading country in the EU for implementation of the Water Framework Directive which aims to protect our rivers and lakes. We will maintain that position.

Over the next 5 years Fianna Fáil will work to ensure that Ireland's waters are the most pristine in Europe.

We will:

- **Finish the job of upgrading all our local group water schemes to match the highest drinking water standards.**
- **Ensure that public water supplies deliver a reliable service that are 100% compliant with drinking water standards.**
- **Continue with our investment in waste water schemes to ensure that discharges into our rivers and lakes meet the highest international standards.**
- **Implement higher standards of water protection and ensure that farmers in particular have all necessary supports to operate to these standards.**
- **Ensure that coastal bathing water compliance rises from 96% to 100% and increase the number of Blue Flag beaches around the country.**
- **Introduce a scheme of support for the replacement and upgrade of septic tanks older than 15 years with newer systems.**

Air Quality

The Environmental Protection Agency has reported that Ireland is now in compliance with 100% of the EU air quality standards for all pollutants. However, we want to further improve standards, particularly relating to emissions from the transport sector.



In government we will:

- **Expand the network of air quality monitoring stations to improve national coverage.**
- **Introduce new standards for substances not previously controlled, eg. cadmium, mercury, nickel etc.**
- **Ensure compliance with new limits on fine particulate matter PM10, generated by vehicle engines.**

Chemicals

Thousands of chemicals in everyday use have not been adequately tested for their impact on the environment and human health. The EU has adopted a comprehensive regulatory framework governing the manufacturing and use of chemicals used in Europe with the view to protecting human health and the environment and enhancing competitiveness. We will implement this initiative as a matter of priority in a way which does not impact on the competitiveness of our economy.

Dublin Bay

We will establish a Dublin Bay Area Task Force to maximise the potential of the Bay for the people of our capital city.

Environmental Technologies

We will support the development of Environmental Technologies in Ireland to achieve a win/win situation of improved competitiveness and environmental performance

Built Heritage

In government we will:

- **Complete the national survey of our built heritage within the term of the next Government so that the best of our heritage is protected under our planning laws to a common and consistent standard across the country.**
- **Work on a North/South basis to increase the protection available for the 2,200 remaining thatched cottages in Ireland.**
- **Support the work of the newly established Irish Heritage Trust.**
- **Update and consolidate the law on national monuments to maximise and clarify the protection provided to our archaeological heritage.**
- **Seek designation of Clonmacnoise as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.**



Natural Heritage

In government we will:

- **Complete the designation of those remaining areas proposed for conservation purposes.**
- **Work with farmers and other landowners by putting in place management plans to ensure the long-term protection of these valuable conservation areas.**
- **Resource the national Biological Records Centre as central database to record the richness of Ireland's flora and fauna and as centre of research excellence.**
- **Work on an all-Ireland basis to protect threatened species and reintroduce species which have disappeared from Ireland.**

Nuclear Energy and Sellafield

Fianna Fáil recommits to a policy of non-nuclear power and we strongly believe that nuclear power is neither sustainable nor an answer to Ireland's energy needs. Nuclear power fails on grounds of environmental risk and long term economic costs. We also continue to believe that Sellafield poses an unacceptable risk.

In government we will:

- **Continue to bring political, diplomatic and legal efforts to bear on the UK with a view to securing the safe decommissioning of all nuclear reprocessing facilities at Sellafield.**
- **Press at EU level for the establishment of a strong independent EU Agency to inspect nuclear installations across the EU.**



Tourism

The Irish tourism and hospitality industry is one of the most successful sectors of Irish-owned enterprise, supporting in the region of 250,000 jobs.

In Government we have worked hard to grow the number of overseas visitors from five million in 1997 to 7.7 million in 2006. With new strategies to attract tourists to the regions, the economic, social and cultural benefits of this growth have been felt throughout the country.

We have placed tourism at the heart of the National Development Plan 2007-2013, setting out an investment programme of €800 million in the industry.

The Next Steps Forward on Tourism

Irish tourism is now at an important point in its evolution. The market place is changing rapidly, presenting our tourism sector with both challenges and opportunities. Fianna Fáil is committed to building on the growth we have achieved and sustained since the 1990s. We are confident that, working with industry, the targets set out in the New Horizons Programme will be met, namely ten million overseas visitors generating €6 billion by 2012.

We believe the keys to continued success in an increasingly competitive marketplace will be product investment and innovation, enhanced access, creative destination marketing and human resource management.

Cost competitiveness will remain critical to the future well-being of Irish tourism. However, it is only one of the many dimensions of overall competitiveness. Ireland must maintain its appeal on the basis of successful management of our other competitive advantages. Our goal, with industry, will be to deliver a quality value-for-money experience that vindicates the price.

We are determined to ensure that Ireland is a destination of choice for more international and domestic tourists, with a tourism experience that exceeds expectations in terms of friendliness, quality of environment, diversity and depth of culture. This will be our unique selling point and will be central to our Next Steps for Irish tourism.

Product Investment and Innovation

Fianna Fáil recognises that investment is needed to ensure that our tourism product is among the best in the world and maximises the potential of our environment and heritage.

In government we will:

- **Provide €300 million to assist the industry, tourism agencies and local authorities in delivering the ambitious world-class product outlined in Failte Ireland's Tourism Product Development Strategy 2007 –2013.**



- **Place much greater emphasis on the protection, conservation, interpretation and access to Ireland's natural and built heritage.**
- **Deepen North/South cooperation in tourism, building in particular on the success of Tourism Ireland as a dynamic and innovative cross-border body leading the way on mutually advantageous all-island economic co-operation.**
- **Establish, through Fáilte Ireland, an innovation fund to promote and support the development of tourism products that are new to the Irish market and to promote best practice, particularly in terms of environmental sustainability and accessibility for tourists with disabilities.**
- **Develop with Fáilte Ireland, rural-based package-style holidays through which B & B owners and Farm Holiday operators can offer activities such as walking, angling, golfing and cycling in addition to the provision of accommodation and quality home cooked meals.**
- **Develop a rolling programme of national culture, musical and literary festivals to enhance the Irish tourism product, in particular through the establishment of a new fund of €28 million for the creation of a small number of major annual events over the period to 2013.**
- **Work with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to capitalise on the beauty of the Irish countryside and promote Ireland as a healthy activity holiday destination for walking, cycling, angling, golfing, sailing, equestrian and marine holidays.**

Enhanced Access

Fianna Fáil realises that affordable and efficient transport links to and within Ireland are absolutely crucial for attracting more visitors and spreading the benefits throughout the regions.

In government we will:

- **Open Terminal 2 at Dublin Airport in 2009.**
- **Enhance the capacity of the regional airports to attract more direct international services through the €86 million Regional Airports Capital Grant scheme.**
- **Make rural locations more readily accessible for tourists on shorter visits through the delivery of the extensive plans outlined in *Transport 21*.**



Creative Marketing

Further developing the potential of existing markets will be a priority in the years ahead, while growing new markets will bring new opportunities. Realising the potential of the business, sports and eco-tourism areas will be vital for new growth, as will making the most of the internet as a marketing and booking tool.

In government we will:

- Invest €335 million under the National Development Plan in marketing Irish Tourism.
- Seize the opportunities presented by the Open Skies arrangement with the US to substantially grow the number of US visitors. To this end, we will provide significant infrastructural development in the Mid West area, as well as marketing support to the Shannon region for a transitional period to help consolidate existing markets and develop new sources of business.
- Build on the opportunities presented by the increasing availability of low cost flights from mainland Europe and the UK.
- Undertake a strategic review of new and developing markets to identify the investment and actions needed to realise their potential.
- Put in place a strong promotional programme for the new National Conference Centre in Dublin with a view to doubling the level of business tourism to Ireland from €400 million to €800 million per year over the next ten years. We will also investigate the feasibility of a Regional Conference Centre in the Shannon/Limerick area.
- Encourage the Tourism Agencies to highlight our National Games to a greater degree in their promotional activities and continue the policy of attracting suitable major sporting events to Ireland.
- Seek, with the Tourism Agencies and Local Authorities, suitable areas to develop and promote eco tourism, as well as enhancing the existing Northwest Project, the Green Box.
- Invest in new information and communication technologies for marketing and customer relations management and training.
- Work with the Regional Tourism Development Boards in conjunction with Local Authorities and the Tourism Industry to develop comprehensive, interactive local area tourism web sites carrying details of all possibilities in an area for tourists and with a booking facility.



Competing Through People

With 6,000 new workers expected to join the tourism sector each year to the end of this decade, human resource development will be one of the most vital issues affecting the further development and success of tourism. The addition of an ever-growing multicultural workforce can enhance our tourism product, if they are supported in acquiring skills they will need to enable them to make an effective contribution. We will:

- **Invest €149 million under the National Development Plan 2007-2013 in training and human resources in the tourism sector.**
- **Implement in full the Fáilte Ireland 'Competing through People' programme, which looks to people working in the Industry as a principal source of competitive advantage, and their skills as a key variable in delivering strong business results.**



Agriculture, Food & Forestry

Farmers understand better than anyone the scale of challenges they face through globalisation and development. While farming is no longer a dominant part of our economy, Fianna Fáil absolutely believes that it plays a vital part in the social and economic life of our country which must be supported now and in the years ahead.

In this period of rapid transformation, we have worked hard with farmers to support them and to help them to compete. One of the biggest changes has been the scale of national resources which are now devoted to agriculture – representing a sustained commitment to supporting farmers even where EU supports are not available or are being reduced. Of the overall funding of €8.7 billion provided in the new National Development Plan for the agri-food sector, a total of €6.6 billion will come from the national exchequer.

We have faced criticism from many in opposition for the amount of resources and time spent supporting farmers – including our consistent fight against unfair trade deals and an anti-farmer reform of the CAP. We are proud of our stance and remain absolutely committed to ensuring that farmers have a strong influence over government policy.

The Next Steps Forward for Agriculture, Food & Forestry

The next five years will be critical in many areas for the entire sector. WTO and CAP “Health Check” negotiations will be concluded and it will be necessary to provide a systematic programme of investment and reform to help farmers meet the many challenges ahead. This is why we are proposing a series of ambitious next steps forward for farming, forestry and the food industry and why we are saying that this area will be one of the key priorities for us in government.

Key Objectives

Our programme is based on achieving certain key objectives:

- **Support farm families in order to maximise their choice on how they farm.**
- **Significantly reduce the regulatory burdens faced by farmers.**
- **Invest in developing the new products and new food markets which will bring long-term security for the sector.**

We will maintain a strong, independent Agriculture and Food Department and ensure that agriculture is given a high priority in any future programme for government.



Global Challenges & Negotiations

As decisions affecting Irish farmers are increasingly internationalised, the strongest possible leadership for Irish agriculture is required at the world's negotiating tables. We are committed to providing this leadership. We are also committed to working for ease of access to all markets where demand arises, ahead of our competitors.

In government we will:

- **Secure the highest achievable level of support for the farming sector at EU and WTO levels.**
- **Continue to protect direct payments to farmers, ensure the export subsidies are dealt with in a balanced and equitable way, and promote the need for non-trade issues to be part of any further trade deals.**
- **Do all that is required to protect Irish consumers from imports of agricultural produce that do not meet the same standards as those required of Irish farmers.**
- **Oppose any moves to restrict the live export of animals.**
- **Establish a high level strategic interdepartmental group whose role will be to, on an ongoing basis, identify and work to ease access and fully exploit new overseas markets for Irish food and drink products.**
- **Increase funding to Bord Bia for overseas promotion of Irish food and agricultural produce.**

Family Farmers

Fianna Fáil's commitment to farmers has been without precedent in terms of the goals we are striving to achieve and the level of funding we are putting place to achieve them.

In government we will:

- **Invest in improving competitiveness, enhancing our environment and promoting diversification on and off the farm.**
- **Ensure that farmers have both the freedom to farm and access to all necessary supports, regardless of which path they choose.**
- **Fully implement the Rural Development Programme so that farmers benefit fully from the increased payments and new schemes.**
- **Continue to support low-income farmers through the Farm Assist Scheme and adapt it in consultation with the farming organisations.**



- **Implement measures, including taxation measures, in order to assist farmers in maximising their income from farming and achieving optimum structures and scale.**
- **Further promote the benefits of REPS and achieve a participation rate of 70,000 farmers.**
- **Introduce a new On-Farm Investment Scheme, which will include aid for investment in housing, handling and related facilities, including rubber mats on slats.**

Ensuring Bio-security

Fianna Fáil has successfully dealt with some of the greatest threats to our agri-food businesses and the wider industry in recent years. BSE, Foot and Mouth Disease and Avian Influenza have all threatened both consumer confidence and the industry. The need to be ever more vigilant in relation to our nation's bio-security is essential to protect our reputation as a quality food island.

In government we will:

- **Establish "Biosecurity Ireland" as a division within the Department of Agriculture and Food with a remit to ensure the exclusion, eradication or effective management of risks posed by diseases and pests to the economy, the environment and to human and animal health.**
- **Introduce a new Animal Health Bill to consolidate and amend previous legislation to reflect the changed disease status of our nation's animals.**

Focus on the Consumer

Consumers want choice. However, when it comes to food that choice is best served when maximum information is made available at point of sale and consumption. This is why we have introduced a system of labelling in respect of beef that goes further than other countries in Europe.

In government we will:

- **Further exploit the potential of existing animal traceability systems for the marketing and labelling of food products.**
- **Extend mandatory "country of origin" food labelling to sheep, pig and poultry meat.**
- **Increase nutritional awareness as part of our food advertising and marketing through the development of nutritional and calorific labelling.**
- **Increase support and promotion of healthy food options among young people through programmes such as the School Milk Scheme and the Food Dudes Programme for encouraging the increased consumption of fruit and vegetables.**



Animal Welfare

Fianna Fáil has ensured that some of the highest international standards in terms of farm animal welfare are in place in Ireland. In January of this year, for example, we introduced a new regulation aimed at ensuring the welfare of animals, including cattle, horses, pigs and sheep, is firmly protected during transport. It must always be kept in mind that with high animal health and welfare standards comes a premium for the farmer at the farm gate.

The welfare of non-farm animals is an issue that has for many years fallen between several different stools, to the detriment of the animals concerned.

In government we will:

- **Continue to expand and develop our herd health policies to ensure the highest of standards of animal welfare.**
- **Given its level of veterinary and welfare expertise, consolidate responsibility for the welfare of all animals (including non-farm animals) within the Department of Agriculture and Food.**
- **Review and consolidate where necessary all legislation governing the welfare of non-farm animals.**
- **Continue to push for welfare and other non-trade issues to be included in WTO negotiations.**

Key Sectors

There is no single programme which can be implemented to secure the future of farming, this is why we are proposing action to develop the various key sectors.

In government we will:

Beef Sector

- **Ensure that Irish beef processing facilities are substantially upgraded through the full roll out our €50 million investment programme.**
- **Continue to support the Suckler Herd Quality and Welfare Scheme to ensure that the herd is maintained at its optimum level.**
- **Ensure that our high standards of food safety, quality labelling and traceability will be vigorously promoted to provide a competitive advantage against low cost imports.**
- **Continue to relentlessly pursue the best market returns through Bord Bia, along**



with political and diplomatic efforts.

- Oppose any moves to restrict the live export of animals.

Dairy Sector

- Assist in the creation of an efficient processing sector with a view to securing its longer-term competitive advantage with our €100 million investment package.
- Increase research and development funding for projects in the sector to fully exploit its potential for new products.
- Enhance the Dairy Hygiene Scheme to include feeding systems and increased thresholds for milking equipment and milk tanks.
- Introduce new Herd Health Initiative to deal with non-regulated diseases.

Sheepmeat

- Fully implement the recommendations of the Sheep Industry Strategy Group.
- Increase supports for improved breeding and sheep housing.
- Support a Quality Assurance programme, aid promotion and strengthen labelling with a view to ensuring wider and deepen penetration on home and EU markets.
- Invest in a programme to upgrade processing facilities

Cereals, Pigmeat & Poultry

- Assist and expand the quality Assurance Schemes in these sectors.
- Aid grain storage through the Farm Improvement Programme.
- Extend “country of origin” labelling requirements in respect of pigmeat and poultrymeat.

Horticulture

- In working with growers, continue to support import substitution in the fruit and vegetable sector.

Forestry

- Ensure that forestry continues to give an important income stream to farmers through the Forest Premium Scheme that has been substantially increased under the partnership process.
- Develop new market opportunities for thinning linked to the increased need for renewable



energy sources.

- Review the Forest Environmental Payments Scheme (FEPS) pilot underway with a view to a full roll out in the years ahead.

Bio-Energy – A New Opportunity

- Continue to support research in the biofuel and biomass areas so that we can respond to new opportunities quickly.
- Ensure that the development of bio-energy will be of significant benefit to farmers and rural Ireland.
- Continue our support for our enhanced Energy Crops Scheme.
- Further encourage the growing of willow, miscanthus and other crops for biomass.

Organic Farming & Farmers' Markets

- Strengthen support for the organic sector through the REPS scheme.
- Support the further development of farmers' markets.

Cutting Red Tape

We understand the problems faced by farmers with unreasonable regulatory controls. We are committed to a fair inspection system with the minimum necessary burden of paperwork and regulation consistent with ensuring proper controls.

In government we will:

- Vigorously pursue the simplification agenda at EU level, with the immediate aim of bringing about change in the EU cross compliance checks system.
- Use the 2008 CAP "health check" to best advantage in terms of reducing the burden of paperwork on farmers.
- Work with the implementation group established under the Farmers' Charter to monitor outcomes and ensure that the charter is modified if necessary.
- Ensure that the views of farmers are systematically sought on the paperwork linked to all revisions of schemes.

Food Businesses

In government we will:



- **Consolidate all aspects of the development and promotion of the agri-food industry within the Department of Agriculture and Food and establish a Cabinet Sub-Committee on the food and beverage sector, shadowed by a high level Inter-Departmental Group.**
- **Work with the food industry to ensure that the maximum potential of this key indigenous sector is fully realised.**
- **Expand our Regional Food Forum concept to develop a forum through which researchers, producers, processors and consumers may engage and interact.**
- **Facilitate small food businesses by making available through Bord Bia an increased level of expert advice and support.**

Supporting our Young Farmers

Fianna Fáil recognise that young farmers represent the future of Irish agriculture. This recognition is reflected in the unprecedented levels of training, support and incentives that we have put in place to assist the young farmer. We have significantly improved the monetary value of the Early Retirement Scheme to further assist in the hand-over from one generation to the next and we have substantially increased Installation Aid for young farmers to €15,000.

In government we will:

- **Continue to offer a range of supports to young farmers entering agriculture; including education, taxation measures and direct start-up aid.**
- **Retain stamp duty relief that continues to play an important role in the early hand-over of farms to the younger generation.**

Training our Farmers

Continued support for agricultural education and training is required in response to the increased competitive pressures in farming. There is a strong correlation between education and training levels and farm business competitiveness. Farmers need to be kept up to date with the latest in farming methods and technology. They also require management skills to allow them adapt to the changing market more quickly and as a result, compete more successfully.

In government we will:

- **Continue to support education and training courses for both young and adult farmers.**
- **Ensure that courses are also available at night, at weekends and through e-learning to facilitate part-time farmers.**



- **Introduce a new syllabus for Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science.**
- **Invest in our Agricultural Colleges and restructure the environment through which they are supported.**

Innovation Through Research

Investment in research and development is central to creating a strong future for farming and the food sector. We are committed to implementing the most ambitious and sustained programme for research and development in the history of this sector and directly linking work to benefits on farms and in the creation of good jobs.

In government we will:

- **Further increase the level of funding committed to agri-food research to more than €641 million under the NDP, with a further €289 million for investment in capital infrastructure and marketing for the food industry.**
- **Require all non-core funding to be allocated in a competitive way, ensuring that all institutions competing for research money achieve the highest of standards and that research results in a tangible benefit at farm and food business level.**
- **Ensure regular briefings on developments for farmers and businesses.**



Marine & Natural Resources

We believe strongly in the need to support, protect and develop our marine and natural resources, while also working to conserve diminishing stocks. We will support a long-term sustainable fishing and seafood processing industry for Ireland's coastal communities and help to maintain the social and economic structure of these regions and support the livelihoods of these communities.

While we have had to make difficult decisions to meet our EU obligations in relation to fisheries protection, many positive developments have taken place over the past five years. Our fishery harbours have been, or are currently being, completely modernized. A new Fleet Licensing Policy was introduced to ensure equity, transparency and an independent appeals process. We achieved significant reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, while at the same time maximising Ireland's access to fisheries and we have established Ireland as a Centre of Excellence for Maritime Research.

The Next Steps Forward for Marine & Natural Resources

Marine

The challenge now is to increase the value of the marine sector, bringing more jobs and investment to maritime areas while protecting stocks and the sustainability of the sector. We are confident we can meet the challenge by developing an industry worth almost double its current value. That is why we are proposing the following next steps forward for the sector.

In government we will:

- **Continue to work hard in Brussels, in partnership with the industry, to ensure that the CFP delivers for the Irish fishing sector.**
- **Through sustainable management, in partnership with fisheries organisations, work to maintain the annual 200,000 tonnes of quota fished annually by the Irish Fleet.**
- **Maintain world class fishery harbours at Castletownbere, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Rossaveel, Clogherhead. Progress the major infrastructure projects in Cromane and Greencastle. Each of our Fisheries Harbours has the potential to be a unique and internationally recognised brand. We will work with BIM to build those brands.**
- **Complete the work of fleet restructuring, to create a world-class fleet ideally suited to the stocks, species and sustainable practices of the modern fisheries sector.**
- **Invest in ongoing investment in fleet safety, diversification into inshore fishing activity and marine tourism.**
- **Seafood Development will benefit from an investment of €216 million under the new National Development Plan (NDP). A further €118 million may be made available over the**



life of the plan under the Cawley proposals, which will be available to the sector on the basis of verified progressive change as set out in the Cawley report.

- **Improve our marine environment by implementing environmental and inshore management systems, supporting efficient waste management, environmentally friendly fishing gear and technical innovation.**
- **Support the economic & social development of maritime communities through the provision of training and upgrading of existing skill levels, developing of infrastructure (supply chain) and supporting innovation and product development.**
- **Increase current supports to assist fishermen to make the change-over to more environmentally friendly fishing gear and more fuel-efficient equipment. We will increase grant aid of up to 60% (from 40%) for a range of equipment, from environmentally friendly fishing nets to gear monitoring systems that improve fuel efficiency.**
- **Increase grant funding to our Aquaculture sector to develop technological innovation and environmentally sustainable techniques, including organic farming, and diversification into new species.**
- **Further develop Ireland's reputation as a Centre of Excellence for Marine Research.**
- **Instigate a National Marine Biotechnology Initiative to place Ireland as a world leader in this important sector. We see a role for the Marine Institute, SFI, Enterprise Ireland, the IDA and Universities in this.**
- **Optimise the amount of indigenous, renewable energy within our energy mix, which can be used safely and at a fair price to consumers. To this end, we will increase the opportunities for offshore wind and ocean and tidal energy generation.**

Natural Resources

Our overarching objective of securing our national energy supply will be a key driver in the development of Ireland's approach to hydrocarbon exploration and production.

In government we will:

- **Encourage investment in oil and gas exploration off the Irish coast and optimise the value of any oil and gas finds for Ireland. We will work to maximise the level of exploration activity, while ensuring a fair return to the State from these activities.**
- **Manage exploration licences in a manner that encourages timely exploration.**
- **Modernise and consolidate all mineral development legislation.**

03

The Next Steps Forward for
Opportunity, Security and Quality
of Life for Every Community





The Next Steps Forward For Opportunity, Security and Quality of Life for Every Community

Economic prosperity is the platform from which we will strengthen communities, combat isolation and ensure a better quality of life for all. We will put the needs of children and families first as we roll out playgrounds, community centres and sport facilities all over the country.

Balanced development across the island will be promoted by strengthening the nine Regional Gateways, prioritising inward investment proposals for the regions and completing key projects such as the Atlantic Gateway and the Western Rail Corridor to Claremorris. We will also invest €300 million in a Gateways Innovation Fund.

We will ensure that all new homes are built with access to schools, childcare, health centres and community centres, requiring developers to commit land for these necessary community facilities. 90,000 social and affordable homes will be built and a new model of environmentally efficient housing will ensure reduced energy consumption and good insulation from noise pollution.

We will prioritise measures to help people feel safer in their homes, at work and on our streets. 2,000 more Gardaí will be hired, new Anti-Social Behaviour Action Teams will crack down on menacing behaviour, and non-violent offenders will have to carry out community services under a new system of Community Payback.

For Fianna Fáil prosperity is a social and civic as well as an economic concept. Our Next Steps Forward for Opportunity, Security and Quality of Life for Every Community will ensure that all our people, wherever they live, have local facilities and services to be proud of.



Community

Vibrant communities are the lifeblood of Irish society. Our communities are built around clusters of families, friends, neighbourhoods and parishes. In modern Ireland it is vital that we work together to ensure that thriving communities remain central in our society.

In Government we have prioritised communities nationwide with significant investment in community facilities through schemes such as the Sports Capital Grants and the Once-Off Community and Voluntary Grants. Across a range of policy areas, investment has also been ongoing in your community through Programmes such as the Community Services Programme, the Community Development Programme, the Rural Social Scheme, CLÁR and RAPID, and the Community Employment Programme. In addition to this Government investment, Dormant Accounts Funds are targeting a range of disadvantage in a transparent way.

In recognition of the importance of thriving communities, Fianna Fáil in government has led the debate on Active Citizenship. Following on from the huge effort shown by the Irish people in events such as the Special Olympics, we have prioritised the promotion of volunteerism in communities with the publication of the Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship.

The Next Steps Forward for Community

Fianna Fáil will launch a radical Community Development Plan to deliver community infrastructure for all our communities.

The Community Development Plan

This programme will assist balanced regional development, develop greater social cohesion and a fairer dispersal of public funds. It will produce greener communities and protect our heritage.

We will leave no town or village behind as we roll out community infrastructure such as playgrounds, community centres, local markets, recycling, sports and recreational facilities throughout the country.

The Plan will be underpinned by a €150 million Community Development Fund to be established over a five-year period.

Communities, who identify a gap in community infrastructure which is not already under construction or in advanced planning, can apply under the Community Development Plan for funding to fast-track provision of the service. Local authorities will co-ordinate funding requests to ensure consistency with local plans. Many of the community services outlined are already built or in construction – our goal is to ensure that no community is left behind.



This Community Development Fund will provide financial assistance in addition to that already provided for in the NDP. The goal is to provide Government with a mechanism to provide fast-tracked provision of Community infrastructure for a rapidly growing nation.

A Delivery Unit at the heart of Government will monitor implementation and ensure value for money.

Under the Plan towns with a population of 1,500 or more could apply via their local authorities for funding to facilitate provision of the following Community Services where they are currently not in place, under construction or in an advanced state of planning.

- **Recreation and facilities, including a swimming pool, access to parkland, a sports centre, facilities for Special Olympics clubs, cycle-paths & walkways, and all-weather mini pitches.**
- **Children’s facilities including a playground, a youth café and sports facilities.**
- **Local and prompt access to medical treatment and referral, with a health centre, a GP Co-op and Community Nurse services.**
- **Access to quality, environmentally friendly produce, with a farmers’ market and assistance in achieving Fair Trade Town status.**
- **A well-stocked public library with free access to ICT facilities.**
- **Environmental resources such as comprehensive recycling facilities, and smart meters, wind power, wood pellet burners and solar panels on community and educational facilities. There will also be an Urban Forestation Programme using Irish species.**
- **Initiatives to promote local businesses, such as a Community Enterprise Centre and access to upskilling opportunities.**
- **Arts, Heritage and Tourism facilities, including Urban Arts Schemes, a Tourist Information Centre, access to an Urban beautification scheme, and other arts and culture facilities.**

Communities of 500 or more could apply for funding for:

- **Farmers’ Market**
- **Playgrounds**
- **GP Centre Access**
- **Community Centre**



- **Recycling Facilities**
- **Public Recreation Facilities – parkland etc.**
- **Afforestation Programme using Irish species (trees to line streets etc)**
- **Arts Schemes**

We will also provide broadband access to the remainder of the country and make funding available for community websites.

Ensuring that delivery is systematic and rapid, Fianna Fáil will put in place a Community Development Plan Unit, in the heart of Government, to drive the Programme, monitor implementation and provide regular reports to cabinet.

Additional Services

We are by no means limiting Community Services to those outlined here.

Areas of high social exclusion, geographic isolation and those areas set out for development in the National Spatial Strategy will continue to receive additional and focused provision of infrastructure and services.

When returned to Government we will embark on a short nationwide public consultation, including public meetings to consider what additional Community services should be included in the Plan. We are determined to have as much community input as possible in the roll-out of the Plan.

Creating Vibrant Rural Communities

Fianna Fáil in Government has always been committed to rural communities. Since the foundation of the party, our core aims have included maintaining sustainable, strong and vibrant rural communities.

Over the next five years, we will:

- **Ensure that services being delivered for towns under the Community Development Plan above are easily accessible to rural communities.**
- **Maintain and develop a separate Department for Rural Development.**
- **Greatly enhance and extend Rural Transport Initiative nationwide.**
- **Invest in the provision of broadband in rural areas.**



- **Double funding for CLÁR Programme to enable rural infrastructure deficits to be tackled.**
- **Expand the Rural Social Scheme to provide additional income for farmers and fishermen by increasing the number of places available.**
- **Provide a well funded rural enterprise policy to focus on a broad spectrum of rural enterprise with a special emphasis on artisan and small food production.**
- **Pursue the possibility of using former railway infrastructure as recreational trails for cycling etc. in partnership with Iarnród Éireann.**
- **Set up a National Monitoring Committee to oversee the consistent implementation of the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines.**
- **Ensure that the giving by a farmer of permission on to his/her land for recreational purposes will not be used to jeopardise him/her in receiving planning permission on his/her own land.**
- **Implement a major programme to promote rural countryside recreation to be implemented by a dedicated unit / division of staff in consultation with stakeholders.**

Transport

- **We will build on the success thus far of the RTI and provide universal rural transport by extending Rural Transport Programme nationwide.**
- **We will provide park and ride services in all gateway cities.**

Community Wardens

We will extend the successful pilot scheme of Community Wardens nationally. Working with community groups and schools, these wardens can act as guardians for the more accessible community facilities. They will help to ensure the upkeep of the local area and serve as a focus for voluntary activity within communities.



Balanced Regional Development

We believe that balanced regional development is essential. Fianna Fáil introduced Ireland's first National Spatial Strategy to support social and economic development throughout the country. The National Development Plan [2007-2013] follows this strategy to put in place a comprehensive and systematic programme to develop infrastructure, services and investment in all regions, focusing on the National Spatial Strategy Gateways as the drivers of development within their region. The results of this investment are having a significant impact:

- **The population of all regions is rising, with the West experiencing its first sustained population rise since the Famine.**
- **Employment grew by 4.9% in the Border/Midland and Western region up to 2006. It grew by 4.1% in the Southern/Eastern region for the same period. The biggest increase as in the south East at 7.5%, whereas Dublin employment growth was 4.1%.**
- **Over 55% of Foreign Direct Investment went to the BMW region in the past five years.**
- **We are well on the way to completing the inter-urban motorway network between Dublin and the five biggest cities on the island.**
- **We have built major waste water treatment plants to facilitate development and new homes in Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford and other gateway and hub towns.**

The Next Steps Forward for Balanced Regional Development

Over the next five years, investment in the regions under the National Development Plan 2007-2013 will be focused in accordance with the priorities of the National Spatial Strategy.

We will ensure that the nine regional Gateways develop a critical mass of population to offer a real alternative to growth in the Dublin Region. As attractive places to live, work and do business, they will become drivers of regional economies, supporting balanced regional development and contributing to the overall economic and social performance of the country.

We will put in place infrastructure in the key areas of growth, not only to cater for current demand, but to ensure that there is plenty of capacity available in serviced land, transport and community facilities to attract inward investment.

Atlantic Gateways

We believe that a linked metropolitan corridor from Waterford through Cork, Limerick/Shannon to Galway – complimented by direct links between Waterford and Limerick - offers the best option of developing a national counterpoint to Dublin and the Dublin/Belfast economic corridor.



This Atlantic Gateways concept is about making people and investors sit up and take notice of the potential of a second great metropolitan corridor on the island of Ireland. This will be based on the availability of high quality infrastructure, third level education and quality of life. We don't just want bigger cities - we want to create great places to live.

Strategic Transport Links

The Atlantic Gateways corridor will be complimented by new road and rail transport links joining the country's Gateway towns and cities as set out in Transport 21. We will re-open the Western Rail Corridor from Ennis to Claremorris and examine the feasibility of reopening the line from Claremorris to Sligo. The inter-urban motorway network will link Dublin to our biggest cities, the Atlantic Road Corridor will link Cork to Letterkenny/Derry and the new Border Corridor road will run from Sligo to Dundalk.

Gateways Innovation Fund

The new €300 million Gateways Innovation Fund will support innovative projects in urban regeneration, transport and other "Quality of Life" projects. Local authorities will bid for funding and will be expected to deliver significant matching finance from the public and private sectors. The Fund will be a practical way of accelerating development of the gateways.

Inward Investment/Enterprise Support

We will actively prioritise inward investment proposals for the regions. The Gateways towns and cities will become Gateways of Expertise and Innovation to drive development throughout their regions.

To this end, each agency involved in the enterprise sector will identify specific measures for prioritising action in the regions.

North West Gateway Initiative

We will work with the new Northern Executive to ensure that the economic and social benefits of peace are fully felt in Donegal, Derry and surrounding counties. Delivering the centrepiece Dublin – Derry/Letterkenny dual carriageway will be a core priority of Fianna Fáil as we continue to develop the huge potential of the Northwest. We will work to increase cooperation in areas including spatial planning, education and skills, health and improvements in infrastructure. Investment in Derry Airport by Fianna Fáil in Government will continue as recognition that it plays a vital role in Donegal and Ireland's future.



Reinvigorating Our Cities And Towns

The urban renewal incentives schemes, coupled with direct Government investment, have transformed the centres of Ireland's cities and towns.

Over the next five years, Fianna Fáil will continue to invest in urban renewal and will refocus our approach to encourage high visible impact and the attractiveness of our streetscapes.

We will particularly focus on remaining areas of development potential such as dockland areas. Over the next five years we will continue to support and encourage the development under-utilised dock and harbour areas such as Cork, Dublin, Galway and Sligo.

Cork Docklands

Fianna Fáil in Government will fully support the important redevelopment of Cork Docklands. Working with the new Cork Docklands National Steering Forum we are committed to the transformation of this area. When complete, it will supply 20,000 housing units, significant financial and retail employment, and a new cultural and leisure quarter to the people of Cork and the entire Munster area.



Local & National Sports Facilities

Sport and recreation are central to Fianna Fáil's agenda of more inclusive and stronger local communities. Sport can play a major role in personal, community and general development as well helping to alleviate stress, obesity and other health concerns.

In government we have operated a consistent policy of expanding support for sport at all levels. An unprecedented programme of refurbishment and development of facilities has been accompanied by funding for expanding participation in sporting activities.

Some 6,700 local sports projects have been funded under this Government at a total cost of €568 million. There has been a special focus on providing sports facilities in disadvantaged areas. 23 public swimming pool projects have been completed since 2000 and a further 15 are currently under construction at locations throughout the country.

We have also provided significant investment in national sports facilities for a wide range of sports such as Gaelic Games, soccer, rugby, aquatics, boxing, horse and greyhound racing, and tennis.

The Next Steps Forward for Our Local & National Sports Facilities

The support of sports activities is now substantially more generous and more inclusive than at any time. Our objective is to increase participation in sport at all levels, while also ensuring that Ireland's elite sports persons can train and perform in top-class facilities.

Improving Local Facilities and Expanding Participation

Over the next five years, we will continue to promote the development of a wide range of local sports facilities around the country, to improve participation and provide healthy social outlets for people of all ages.

In government, we will:

- **Roll out the Local Sports Partnership programme on a nationwide basis to promote the development of sport at community level.**
- **Fund Special Olympics clubs in every town.**
- **Support a new Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme, prioritising need and disadvantage.**
- **Continue to support the Irish Sports Council as the statutory agency for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport.**



- **Complete a national audit of local sports facilities and put in place a long-term strategic plan to ensure the development of such necessary facilities throughout the country.**
- **Increase the development of public play and recreation areas for children.**
- **Promote a national advertising campaign highlighting the health benefits of sport and exercise.**
- **Change the application criteria of the Sports Capital Programme grants to require only 10% of own funding / contribution where applicants are located in a recognised area of urban disadvantage such as RAPID and a Local Drugs Task Force area.**

National Level

Fianna Fáil is proud of how well Irish elite sports persons have performed on the international stage. We are determined to promote continued future success through investment at all levels and to ensure that Ireland has truly world-class national sports facilities.

In government, we will:

- **Further develop the Sports Campus Ireland development at Abbotstown - incorporating the Irish Institute of Sport - and including the development of a new 25,000 seater stadium to accommodate athletics and field sports.**
- **Provide a National Stadium at Lansdowne Road so that our National Rugby and Soccer teams have a first-rate facility in which to play their games.**
- **Support elite athletes in preparation for the 2008 and 2012 Olympics and develop proposals for Ireland to be used as a base for other national teams in advance of the London Games.**
- **Continue with the unprecedented growth and development of our horse and greyhound industries.**
- **Continue with the implementation of our effective and modern anti-doping programmes, which have earned well-deserved recognition internationally.**

Sports & Schools

- **While schools can only meet some of children's physical activity needs, we are determined to ensure that they can play their part through improved PE facilities and new programmes. In government we will:**



- **Provide a dedicated fund for investment in PE facilities for schools, make PE mandatory at second level, and put a revised PE curriculum for senior cycle students in place.**
- **Promote greater sharing of school and community sports facilities and make it a condition of the Sports Capital Programme that facilities be made available to schools where appropriate.**
- **Encourage more schools to apply for funding under the Sports Capital Programme by collaborating with their local sports clubs.**
- **Initiate a financial support package aimed at introducing primary school children to swimming. Such a support package would be aimed primarily at the costs of transport to and from pools.**

Women in Sport

Research shows that only 10% of women take part in sport and physical activity. Innovative programmes will be developed in conjunction with the Irish Sports Council to ensure that there is a greater involvement of women in sport and physical activity.

In government we will:

- **Ensure that Local Sports Partnerships have an official dedicated to the promotion of girls and women's involvement in sport.**
- **Appoint a member of the Irish Sports Council to deal with all aspects of women in sport, including the gender proofing of all Sports' Council decisions.**
- **Establish a Forum on Female Participation in Sport in conjunction with the Irish Sports Council to make recommendations on all issues.**
- **Create an Annual Women's Sports Award Scheme.**

Volunteerism

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our local sporting organisations. We are determined to encourage them and to better recognise their contribution.

In government, we will:

- **Recognise the importance of volunteerism in the promotion of sport through the expansion of our Volunteer Awards scheme for persons in sport.**



Housing

One third of all houses in Ireland have been built since Fianna Fáil came into Government in 1997.

Housing output is now running at over 93,000 homes per annum compared with under 34,000 in 1996. In order to provide housing to meet the needs of our young and growing population, we are now building houses at a level five times greater than the European average.

Fianna Fáil recognises that the economic success has created difficulties for first time buyers and we have been pro-active in taking steps to help those who have found it difficult to purchase their own home.

Working on the twin fronts of providing social housing and tackling affordability, we have:

- **Doubled the money provided for social housing to €2billion per annum, twice the level of 6 years ago.**
- **Upped output from the local authority housing programme in 2006 to its highest level in 20 years – 6,500 homes.**
- **Required builders to provide a portion of affordable and social houses when developing housing schemes.**
- **Established the Affordable Homes Initiative to provide 10,000 affordable homes by using State lands, and the Affordable Homes Partnership to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing in the Greater Dublin area.**
- **Provided for the housing needs of almost 65,000 households through our various social and affordable programmes over the period of the Government.**
- **Put in place sufficient funding and accommodation to deal with emergency homeless need in Dublin.**

We have also improved tax reliefs and the stamp duty regime for first time buyers and introduced comprehensive new laws to protect those who depend on the private rented market.

The Next Steps Forward on Housing

The number of people seeking housing in Ireland will continue to be high in the next five years. A range of actions are required to ensure that the housing provided is capable of meeting the diverse needs of our population. This is why we are now proposing a series of Next Steps Forward on housing.



Overall Objectives

We will adopt flexible housing policies which recognise that a new Ireland needs to be responsive to the changes in the way we live today. Our overall housing objectives for the next five years are to:

- **Maintain a high level of housing construction, based on sound planning and a diversity of provision.**
- **Expand delivery of social and affordable housing options to meet the needs of 90,000 households. This expansion will assist in ensuring continued high housing output to take up any slack arising from the expected slight slowdown in overall housing completions.**
- **Plan strategically for the needs of a changed population to reflect a more dynamic population which moves more often, includes many new migrant and supports the elderly in their own home.**
- **Achieve a further significant fall in homelessness.**
- **Bring a new focus on quality in the provision of housing.**

Supporting Home Ownership While Protecting House Values and Jobs

Fianna Fáil has worked hard to support home ownership, through a near trebling of housing supply, major improvements in the availability of social and affordable housing and significant increases in mortgage interest relief. We have ensured that first-time buyers pay no stamp duty on new homes or on second hand homes costing under €17,500, while reduced rates apply for second hand houses costing more than that.

We are determined to help first-time buyers directly and substantially without disturbing market conditions, driving increases in house prices, and putting the more than 260,000 construction jobs at risk.

Our approach is good for certainty, good for affordability, good for society and good for the economy.

In government we will implement a series of measures to help young people and families both to buy their first home and to meet their mortgage repayments.

Specifically we will:

- **Legislate immediately to abolish stamp duty for all first-time buyers and make this change retrospective for all deeds presented for stamping to the Revenue Commissioners on or after 30th April 2007.**



- **Increase in Budget 2008 the ceiling on mortgage interest relief for first-time buyers and those who bought a house in the past seven years, from €8,000 to €10,000 for single people and from €16,000 to €20,000 for couples or widowed persons.**
- **As income taxes are reduced, we will keep the rate of mortgage interest relief at 20% for all home owners.**
- **From 1 Jan 2008, mortgage interest relief will be worth up to €167 per month for a single person and €333 per month for a couple or widowed person. A couple or widowed person with a joint mortgage of up to €400,000 over 33 years at an interest rate of 5% or a single person with a mortgage of up to €200,000 will be able to claim interest relief on the full amount of interest on their loan.**
- **Under our proposals the maximum relief available to a single person under a Fianna Fáil government will be €2,000, while for a couple or a widowed person it will be €4,000.**

A Step Change in the Provision of Affordable Housing

In addition to the Affordable Housing Schemes already introduced, Fianna Fáil believes that there needs to be a step change in the provision of affordable homes in areas where affordability problems have resulted in large numbers of young people seeking homes far from their place of work.

We will take two major initiatives to increase the provision of affordable houses to 5,000 houses per annum above existing commitments. We will:

- **Extend the remit of the Affordable Homes Partnership.**
- **After only one year in existence the Affordable Homes Partnership, operating in the Greater Dublin Area, has been every successful in engineering land swaps for affordable housing, in identifying new lands for the provision of affordable housing, and in providing clear, good quality information to people interested in acquiring affordable housing.**
- **We will extend the remit of the Partnership nationwide to cover areas where affordability is a problem to accelerate the provision of affordable housing.**
- **Introduce new incentives for the provision of Affordable Housing.**



- **Urban renewal tax incentives have proved extraordinarily successful in upgrading the centres of towns and cities throughout the country. Having done their job the urban affordable houses in specified locations.**
- **We will put in place an appropriate tax incentive scheme to operate in these areas in association with the Affordable Homes Partnership.**

Social Housing

In Government we will:

- **Ensure that all local authority housing is subject to the highest standards of design and that good community facilities are provided, especially for younger people.**
- **Bring a renewed focus on the regeneration of problem estates. Ballymun has shown how it can be done and Fianna Fáil will provide the resources to tackle substandard estates in other areas of the country. The new Sustainable Communities Fund will be resourced in supporting communities preparing for regeneration projects and in assisting them to tackle anti-social behaviour.**
- **Expand the paths to home ownership to assist the maximum number of people in gaining a stake in their own home.**

Management Companies

In order to address the many real problems which have emerged with the operation of management companies, in government we will:

- **Introduce legislation to govern the management of apartment complexes and other similar developments. This will set out the rights and duties of management companies and agents as well as tenants. The objective will be to ensure transparency and accountability for all concerned and the protection of home-owners investment in their property.**
- **Clearly set out the duties of local authorities in relation to the provision of services for all residential developments.**



Travellers

The numbers of Traveller families on unauthorised sites has fallen from 1,207 to fewer than 600. In government we will continue to invest significant funds in this issue to end the problem of unauthorised sites through the provision of good quality authorised sites and accommodation.

Homelessness

Government funding for tackling homelessness has increased seven fold from 1997 to €50.4 million in 2006. Fianna Fáil's focus, in line with the Homeless Preventative Strategy, will be to assist with the long term and sustainable housing of vulnerable people who are in danger of becoming homeless. With necessary care support we can move people from emergency accommodation to independent living.

Land Use

Fianna Fáil in Government will ensure that sufficient active land management will facilitate the delivery of housing to meet the needs of different income and demographic groups.

Education & Community Facilities

We are determined to ensure that provision is made for proper education and community facilities where new communities are created. In government we will:

- **Ensure that no rezoning of land for residential development can take place without a prior commitment of an appropriate proportion of land for schools, childcare, health centres and community centres.**
- **Ring-fence funding for the provision of schools and extensions at an early stage when new housing is being constructed.**
- **Ensure that all children have access to a modern playground in their own community and that teenagers are also catered for by the provision of youth cafes, skateboard parks etc.**

Quality Living Spaces

Creating sustainable towns and cities in a new wealthier Ireland means that we must up our game when it comes to urban design, the quality of our homes, parks and recreation facilities which we provide for our community.

Over the next five years Fianna Fáil will:

- **Introduce new urban design guidelines for building new housing developments so that future generations can look back with pride with the environment which we are building today,**



- **Require all new apartments and other high density developments to comply with minimum design standards dealing with space, light, noise protection, recycling facilities, recreational facilities and so on.**
- **Ensure that existing public parks and recreational areas are protected and enhanced and develop a network of ‘people’s parks’ and ‘urban woods’ to enhance the experience of living in our towns and cities.**

Environmentally Efficient Housing

Fianna Fáil believes all the new homes should be built to the highest environmental standards. We will work to develop a new model of environmentally efficient housing which will:

- **Reduce energy consumption,**
- **Maximise water efficiency and the reuse of rainwater for non-drinking purposes, and**
- **Ensure that noise insulation levels protect the quality of life of home owners.**

Our approach will be to ensure that any initial costs for higher standards are offset by the long-term savings in running costs.



Justice

Fianna Fáil emphatically believes that there is no such thing as an acceptable or inevitable level of crime. We believe that ensuring that people feel safe in their homes, workplaces and communities must always be a fundamental objective of government.

Since 1997 we have:

- **Increased the number of Gardaí by 3,000, compared with declining numbers in the years before we came to power;**
- **Established the Garda Reserve;**
- **Built 1,300 new prison places;**
- **Undertaken a significant capital programme to modernise our prisons, including the replacement of the Mountjoy complex;**
- **Introduced a comprehensive package of anti-crime measures enhancing the powers of An Garda Síochána and improving the criminal justice system with tougher penalties for a range of crimes;**
- **Set up Operation Anvil to crack down on gun crime;**
- **Reduced road fatalities through the introduction of penalty points and mandatory alcohol testing and continuing high rates of road traffic law enforcement by the Gardaí;**
- **Put in place ten year mandatory jail sentences for anyone convicted of possessing drugs with a street value of €12,697 or more;**
- **Introduced Anti Social Behaviour Orders; and**
- **Reformed crime statistics so that a much truer picture is available, even though maintaining the old procedures would have provided better headlines for us.**

We have also understood the importance of preventative measures – implementing a new approach to youth diversion and prisoner rehabilitation.

The Next Steps Forward on Justice

A steadily rising population leads to many pressures – as do international trends in terms of drugs and firearms. While we reject efforts to caricature and demonise young people, the simple fact is that certain types of anti-social behaviour are today more prevalent. This requires a willingness to adapt policies and continue to innovate in order to protect the interests of the community. Therefore we are proposing a series of next steps forward to promote justice in our country.



Overall Approach

Anyone who claims there's a simple answer to the issue of crime doesn't understand the nature of crime. We are absolutely committed to a firm but fair approach which is based on three fundamental policies:

- **Prevention - We believe in investing money to try and stop people becoming criminals in the first place.**
- **Policing - A strong Garda presence in every community is a central part of promoting public order and giving public peace of mind.**
- **Punishment - People who commit crimes deserve to be punished, both through spending time in prison and participating in programmes capable of achieving real rehabilitation.**

Prisons

Prisons help to make us safe by removing offenders from our streets. But they can also reduce crime by rehabilitating prisoners and stopping them re-offending. Progress made over recent years has shown that it is possible to reduce re-offending by delivering the right programs in the right way. In government we will:

- **Invest significantly in rehabilitation for prisoners. We will set annual rehabilitation goals and targets. By 2012 fully resourced and staffed rehabilitation programmes will be available to the entirety of the prison population.**
- **Ensure that a prisoner's rehabilitation needs are assessed on entering prison and that an appropriate programme is offered based on risk assessment and rehabilitation needs. Such programmes will consist of work, counselling, health services and education modules as well as offence-based programs.**
- **Ensure that prisoner remission will only be earned by participation in rehabilitation programmes. Refusal to participate will result in loss of remission.**
- **The current 25% remission will be reduced to 10%.**
- **Remission higher than 10% will only be available where rehabilitation programmes are successfully completed and the offence did not involve violence.**
- **Put in place similar conditions for those on remission as exist for those on bail regarding where they reside, who they associate with etc.**



- **Extend measures to make prisons drug-free. These will include a prohibition of physical contact with prisoners, drug tests on arrival (and regularly thereafter) with appropriate penalties, and severe penalties for those who act as conduits for drugs.**
- **Continue to invest in the modernisation of our prisons and ensure that our prisons meet current international standards.**
- **Ensure that major prisons contain high security wings/sections to house those convicted of particularly violent crimes or those who pose a danger to other prisoners or prison staff.**
- **Introduce a Prison Discipline Strategy to ensure that Ireland has facilities and procedures for enforcing prison discipline which meet the highest international standards and to monitor and review the operation of the new prison rules.**

Community Payback

There are alternatives to prisons for certain categories of non-violent petty offenders. They should be expected to make amends to the people and communities they have harmed. All restorative justice schemes will operate in co-operation with the Gardaí and Courts. In government we will:

- **Build on the community service order regime by introducing a 'Community Payback' Scheme that will require offenders who are not subject to automatic long prison terms to provide real services for the communities they have damaged. These would include cleaning streets, painting over graffiti, repairing public facilities, etc.**
- **Give victims and communities a greater say in what work offenders do as part of their community service, including, where appropriate, direct reparation in cash or kind.**

Parental Responsibility

In government we will:

- **Provide for a system of parental responsibility for criminal damage and costs incurred by victims of their children's anti-social behaviour in addition to recently enacted provision for parental supervision and compensation orders.**
- **Foster a 'Parents Plus' approach to support families and parents and will establish local programmes to help parents, including parenting classes for those whose children have been identified as most at risk of future anti-social behaviour.**



Anti-Social Behaviour

We will send out a clear signal that anti-social behaviour will be prosecuted and the perpetrators and/or their families will be held accountable.

In government we will:

- Create ASBATs (Anti-Social Behaviour Action Teams) in each local authority area.
- Increase penalties under the Public Order Act especially for alcohol-related disorder and increase the fine for supplying alcohol to under 18s from €1,500 to €5,000.
- Expand Garda powers to issue “stay away orders” where there is harassment in public places / at a person’s home or witness intimidation.
- We will legislate to allow Gardaí to issue “restriction orders”, which would be used in emergency situations to restrict named persons from traveling to, or from certain places, for defined periods of time.
- Increase the CCTV grant aid system for community groups and organisations as part of a nationwide CCTV rollout in all major county towns.
- Establish special Garda units to deal with anti-social behavior on public transport.
- Legislate for mandatory jail terms for violent unprovoked assaults and specifically criminalise the practice of so-called “happy slapping”, i.e. the making and publication of videos of violent assaults.
- Expand the role of community wardens.

Gardaí

The Gardaí must be well motivated, well equipped and professionally managed. We are committed to a programme of expansion, investment and reform for the force.

In government we will:

- Further increase Garda numbers to 15,000 by 2010 and 16,000 by 2012.
- Rapidly improve the ratio of civilian staff to Garda officers across all areas of the organisation, including specialist areas, thereby releasing further Gardaí to visible, front-line policing duties in the community.
- Provide for an increased number of promotion posts to ensure that management is not over-stretched by this expansion.



- **Use the extra capacity to target communities experiencing significant anti-social behaviour and crime which impacts on people in their daily lives.**
- **Introduce a Garda Charter setting out targeted Garda response times and levels of service which the public can expect including frequency of high visibility patrols in urban and rural communities.**
- **Conduct regular detailed analyses of Garda-to-population ratios to ensure every region in the country has appropriate policing.**
- **Ensure that special operations such as Operation Anvil continue and are based on Garda management study of crime patterns.**
- **Support the Garda Reserve and ensure that its strength reaches and is maintained at 10% of the Garda strength.**
- **Task the Garda Inspectorate with assessing the need to establish a dedicated Missing Persons Unit, including a response network similar to 'Amber Alert' in the USA.**
- **Introduce conditions governing the use by a suspect of the Garda interview video. Contravening these will be a criminal offence.**

Drugs

While the current National Drugs Strategy will be reviewed in 2008, the focus of drugs policy in the coming years will continue to be on illegal drugs that do the most harm and on the most vulnerable drug misusers, their families and communities. Given the increased prevalence of cocaine and poly-drug abuse, the availability and range of treatment options will continue to be tailored and increased to meet the needs of an evolving situation.

In government we will:

- **Open two cocaine specific treatment centres, in addition to pilot projects for cocaine approved under Emerging Needs Fund.**
- **Implement the recommendations of the working group on Drug Rehabilitation including extra detox beds and community employment specific places.**
- **Develop and strengthen the range of projects being undertaken through the Local and Regional Drugs Task Forces. We will continue to work with the task forces on identifying local needs to counteract the problems of drug misuse.**
- **Continue to use the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund to assist in the development of youth facilities (including sport and recreational facilities) and services**



in disadvantaged areas where a significant drug problem exists or has the potential to develop. The Fund will be extended to further towns mainly in Leinster.

- **Expand the successful Drug Court programme and provide Judges with the option of sentencing certain offenders to mandatory drug treatment programmes in addition to prison.**
- **Increase Garda search powers in relation to drug crime along the lines of the new random breath-testing model for drink driving to allow random searches at particular places, times and events where senior Gardaí believe there is a risk of drugs being present.**
- **Support targeted Garda anti-drug use programmes in schools and third-level institutions.**
- **Expand the Criminal Assets Bureau operational presence in each Garda Division with the introduction of additional criminal assets profilers and CAB liaison officers in each Garda Division with appropriate training and links into the urban CAB success**
- **Require all mobile phones to be registered with name, address and proof of identity in order to stop drug-pushers using untraceable, unregistered phones.**

Organised / Gangland Crime

Fianna Fáil pioneered the most effective measure against gangland activity with the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB). Fianna Fáil will build on this achievement and further hinder the development of criminal empires by:

- **Introducing divestitures, which require defendants to divest themselves of interests in tainted enterprises, impose restrictions on the future activities and investments of an individual, and order the dissolution or reorganisation of any enterprise.**
- **Introducing trusteeships will allow the Courts to empower trustees to run organisations where they are infiltrated or controlled by criminal elements.**

Sentencing

Fianna Fáil will build upon the recommendations of the Final Report of the Balance in the Criminal Law Review Group and in government we will:

- **Establish a Judicial Sentencing Commission under the auspices of the Courts Service. This Commission will be comprised only of serving judges from each of the State's courts and its powers will include the power to establish sentencing guidelines. These guidelines will improve the consistency of judicial sentencing without impairing the independence of trial judges in specific cases. Trial judges will be required to follow the Commission's guidelines or to explain why the guidelines are not being followed in any particular case.**




- **Introduce a formal review process, on an annual basis, to assess the effect of the stringent new mandatory sentence regime for drug crime introduced in the Criminal Justice Act 2007. This process will be carried out by representatives of the Government, the DPP, and the Gardai in consultation with the Courts Service (as appropriate) and will determine whether further amendments to the operation of the system are required.**
- **Introduce a formal annual review to assess the effect of the stringent new bail regime introduced in the Criminal Justice Act 2007. This process will be carried out along the lines of the mandatory sentence for drug crime review above will determine if further amendments to the operation of the bail system are required.**
- **Provide for the DPP to appeal against lenient sentences in the District Court and allow the DPP to make submissions at sentencing stage.**
- **Build on the “two strikes and you’re out” mandatory sentencing regime recently introduced for drug crime by introducing similar proposals in respect of violent crime and sexual offences.**

Court Procedures

In government Fianna Fáil will conduct a root-and-branch reform of court procedures which will consolidate and modernise the current court procedures, which date back to the Victorian era. This reform will have two guiding principles – support for victims and increased efficiency in the system.

In particular, we will:

- **Introduce means to ensure that criminal trials can no longer be collapsed because of legal technicalities. This will include legislation and, if necessary, appropriate amendment to the Constitution.**
- **Introduce new pre-trial procedures to deal with admissibility of evidence to save overtime, and the time of jurors and the court.**
- **Permit the Court greater discretion in respect of how trials are to be conducted and give enable it to give directions as to document exchange and scheduling of witnesses.**
- **Put in place a structure whereby the defence will accept certain kinds of technical evidence by certificate of Gardaí unless they can show good reason why Gardaí should have to be physically present in court and will put in place a structure whereby technical evidence, particularly search warrants, are presumed to be valid unless contradictory evidence can be produced.**

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- **Extend in legislation the inference that can be drawn from the failure or refusal to answer reasonable questions and make evidence of such failure or refusal admissible as evidence in court.**
 - **Introduce procedures so that the defence should provide the prosecution with a list of intended witnesses and put structures in place to ensure that the prosecution is on notice of the points of defence raised by the defence in advance.**
 - **Provide, in non-criminal matters, lawyers' clients with a right of application to the Court where they contend that their legal bill is excessive and includes wasted costs.**

Witness & Victim Support and Legal Aid

In government we will:

- **Establish a statutory Victims Support Agency and set up a Victim's Council to formulate victim policy.**
- **Protect the identities of witnesses and victims at identification parades through the installation of one-way glass in Garda stations.**
- **Re-instate the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board so that the victims of violent and sexual crime receive compensation for their injuries.**
- **Introduce a right for the State to recover from the perpetrators of crime the amount paid out by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in respect of that crime. The procedure for this recovery will be streamlined, including by way of permitting the sentencing judge to make an order directly against the perpetrator, rather than the State necessarily being required to launch a separate civil suit.**
- **Ensure that that an accused who can afford to defend themselves does not obtain legal aid by requiring those seeking legal aid to complete a statutory declaration prior to attending court. Supplying inaccurate or untruthful information will be an offence punishable with a fine and/or imprisonment.**

Domestic Violence and Crimes Against Children

In government we will:

- **Hold a referendum on the rights of children in line with the Referendum Bill published this year. This will include a provision allowing the Oireachtas to legislate for the exchange and collection of information in relation to suspected child abuse. If the referendum proposal is approved by the people, Fianna Fáil will introduce legislation which will**



underpin our vetting system and allow the Garda Central Vetting Unit to disclose, subject to appropriate controls, to potential employers, information about the serious risk of child abuse.

- **Establish a Domestic Violence Prevention Office which will provide a unified service for victims of domestic abuse. This will incorporate legal advice, counselling, court accompaniment, protection and welfare services.**
- **Set up a Domestic Violence Fund under which we will increase the number of refuge spaces.**
- **Provide that each Garda region will have a team extensively trained in the area of domestic violence.**
- **Expand the mechanism by which sexual offenders are monitored after their release from prison, including by the expansion of resources to the probation service and the Garda Vetting Unit.**
- **Persons who are the subject of Sex Offenders Orders will be actively monitored and where State agencies are concerned about the behaviour of a particular offender, the Gardaí will have the power to apply to Court for orders restraining released offenders from visiting certain places or approaching certain people.**
- **Gardaí will also have the power to require individual sex offenders to provide specific information about their movements and activities, over and above that generally required from all offenders.**

Rape, Sexual Assault and Sexual Exploitation:

Fianna Fáil will improve services at all levels for victims of rape and sexual assault including by providing enhanced initial medical treatment, supplementing existing Garda procedures and training, and tailoring court procedures.

In government we will:

- **Provide an entitlement to free full separate legal advice, assistance and representation to complainants in cases of sexual violence.**
- **Mandate the HSE to ensure sexual assault treatment centres are established in all regions, with on-call staffing.**



- **Create a new offence of supplying and administering 'date rape' drugs.**
- **Bring in tougher penalties for trafficking, ensure greater prosecution of traffickers and improve support services for their victims, particularly for those who are the victims of sexual exploitation.**
- **Provide for the forfeiture of all material gains from the production, sale and distribution of illegal pornography.**
- **Ensure that all sexual offenders are assessed before their release from prison to identify the level of supervision and regulation needed.**
- **Introduce a Sexual Offences Bill which will consolidate and modernise all criminal law in the area of sexual offences in a manner which is clear, unambiguous and uncompromising in its objectives of protecting victims - particularly children - from sexual crime, and punishing the perpetrators of such crime.**



Islands

Fianna Fáil has always recognised the special value and rights of our offshore island communities – assigning responsibility for this area to a senior Minister for the first time ever. Our islands are rich sources and custodians of our heritage, culture and our Irish language.

Fianna Fáil in government, has overseen a programme of comprehensive investment in island infrastructure that has delivered great improvements in access to the islands. An Enterprise Scheme for islands to develop enterprise and tourism products on the islands has been initiated so that our islands continue to grow as popular tourist destinations. Working with Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann we have supported rural development on our islands.

The Next Steps Forward for Our Islands

Our vision is of strong island communities which can sustain their unique heritage and way of life in tandem with meeting the needs of modern living. We will deliver on a number of key next steps forward to ensure practical delivery of this vision.

Infrastructure

Fianna Fáil in government, will complete the infrastructure programme, ensuring low-cost high quality access services to the islands with fixed and competitive tariffs for passengers and freight.

Enterprise & Community Development

In government we will:

- **Develop the potential of language based and countryside recreation based tourism and services through the new rural development programme and through Údarás na Gaeltachta.**
- **Provide broadband on all islands.**
- **Change the law to enable Údarás na Gaeltachta to provide development services on a contract basis to non-Gaeltacht islands thus ensuring parity between all islands.**
- **Introduce a specific scheme for offshore islands to incentivise and support the production of island-produced and consumed renewable energy by island co-ops or other island based organisations for community buildings and public lighting.**
- **Ensure that Islands through Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann will have their own dedicated LEADER Partnership Company.**
- **Invest through the Community Employment Scheme, the Job Initiative Scheme, the Rural Social Scheme and the Community Services Programme in providing top class community services on islands.**
- **Ensure that play facilities are provided on islands.**



Developing Health and Educational Facilities and Services

In government we will:

- **Improve health facilities on the offshore islands to ensure that they are fully equipped to deal with routine and where necessary emergency medical situations.**
- **This will include the provision of proper facilities for visiting nurses, dentists and other health care practitioners.**
- **Provide tele-medicine facilities to allow our most remote island communities and medical practitioners access to doctors and consultants in our specialist hospitals.**
- **Provide better ante and post-natal services on islands.**
- **Maintain all existing second level schools where at all possible and carry out an assessment to ensure the most suitable educational services for islands without a secondary school.**

The Next Steps Forward To A Future That is Healthier, Fairer and More Inclusive

In ten years our country has made huge progress. The historic problem of mass unemployment has finally been overcome. Where once we were known throughout the world for emigration, now we are renowned for innovation. Our public finances are strong and there is a real sense of opportunity. We should enjoy this stunning turn around in our economic fortune: we have all worked hard for it.

But success has also brought new challenges for us as a society.

How do we maintain social cohesion in an increasingly wealthy and multicultural Ireland? How can we make sure that no-one gets left behind and that all our children get the support they need to reach their full potential? How can we ensure that older people have the financial, social, care and medical supports that they need? How can our education system prepare our young people for the society and economy not just of today, but of 20-30 years from now? And how can we develop our healthcare system so that it provides the world-class service that the Irish people deserve?

We are determined through our Next Steps Forward to address each of these issues.

Fianna Fáil has never regarded wealth creation as an end in itself. Rather it is the engine that drives improvements in our social services – giving us the money to increase child benefit, build more playgrounds and sports facilities, hire more teachers, nurses and doctors and dramatically improve pensions.

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04

The Next Steps Forward to
a Future that is Healthier, Fairer
and More Inclusive





The Next Steps Forward To A Future That is Healthier, Fairer and More Inclusive

In ten years our country has made huge progress. The historic problem of mass unemployment has finally been overcome. Where once we were known throughout the world for emigration, now we are renowned for innovation. Our public finances are strong and there is a real sense of opportunity. We should enjoy this stunning turn around in our economic fortune: we have all worked hard for it.

But our success has also brought new challenges for us as a society.

How do we maintain social cohesion in an increasingly wealthy and multicultural Ireland? How can we make sure that no-one gets left behind and that all our children get the support they need to reach their full potential? How can we ensure that older people have the financial, social, care and medical supports that they need? How can our education system prepare our young people for the society and economy not just of today but of 20-30 years from now? And how can we develop our healthcare system so that it provides the world-class service that the Irish people deserve?

We are determined through our Next Steps Forward to address each of these issues.

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Health

The challenges faced by health services throughout the world are intensifying all the time and Ireland's is no exception. In addition to the pressures from a rising population and constantly evolving treatments, the Irish public health system has also had to tackle a long history of underdevelopment.

This position is changing fast.

In recent years the largest programme of building, refurbishment, recruitment, service development and structural reform in the history of our health services has been underway. This programme has delivered a substantial increase in the numbers benefiting from services every year and it has delivered a substantial improvement in patient outcomes – the core objective of any health service.

With 300,000 extra treatments a year and rising life-expectancies for those being treated, there has been enormous progress.

Over the last ten years:

- **We have quadrupled investment in health from €3.6 billion to €14.5 billion. Along side Norway, we now invest the highest proportion of national income in public medical facilities.**
- **We have cut waiting times for operations from years to months.**
- **We have increased acute bed capacity by over 1,600.**
- **We have worked with the HSE on a hospital by hospital basis, to reduce waiting times in A&E. Over the last year, the number of people waiting has more than halved and in three quarters of our hospitals, nobody waited more than six hours in recent months.**
- **Infant mortality has fallen by a third.**
- **Mortality rates in coronary care have decreased by 50%.**
- **There has been a 15% decrease in mortality rate from cancer in the under 65 age group; a key goal of the National Cancer Strategy achieved three years ahead of target. An investment of €1 billion since 1997 has led to more than 40,000 extra cancer patients being discharged from our hospitals. More people are being treated and more people are surviving cancer.**
- **We have delivered an historic expansion in services for older people with a five fold increase in home care packages over the last two years.**
- **We have increased the number of consultant posts from by 852 to 2,144 including a trebling of the number of A&E consultants.**



- We have doubled the number of student nurse places and introduced a degree course in nursing.
- We have embarked on the largest reform programme in the history of the State: the newly unified HSE has taken over from the old Health Board system; we have introduced a new consultants' contract.
- We have introduced the smoking ban which has benefited the health of the whole population.
- We have established the new Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQUA) to monitor compliance with standards in all healthcare settings and to enforce the highest standard of care in nursing homes and other residential care settings.
- We undertook the first complete overhaul of regulation of doctors by appointing a majority of lay people to the Medical Council for the protection of the public and patients.
- We reformed the regulation of pharmacy for the first time in 130 years, opening up the market to young Irish pharmacists who qualified in other EU countries.
- We have increased the number of student places in pharmacy, physiotherapy, speech and occupational therapy.
- We approved the building of the new national Tertiary Children's Hospital at the Mater Hospital site in Dublin.

The Next Steps Forward on Health

A challenge as large as building a health system of the quality which the public rightly demands requires further sustained actions. That is why we are proposing a series of ambitious next steps forward for our health system.

Over the next five years, our core objectives will be to:

- Help people to maintain good health through health promoting initiatives and a new Personal Health Check entitlement.
- Ensure all communities have accessible, high quality primary healthcare services, with longer daytime provision and access to urgent out of hours medical services within one hour.
- Increase the numbers of beds, consultants, nurses and other professionals in our hospitals and, through the reform of key work practices and continuing substantial investment, deliver faster and better care for patients.



Promoting Good Health

The fundamental objective of public health policy is good health, and the most effective way of maximising good health is to prevent illness or treat it as early as possible. Building on our substantial record in recent years, Fianna Fáil is proposing a series of next steps forward in the areas of public health programmes and screening services.

Health Promotion

We will invest comprehensively in health promoting activities and awareness campaigns to achieve higher life expectancy, better health status and faster recovery from illness.

- **We will expedite the delivery of a National Strategy for Tackling Obesity, putting in place a cross-departmental group to ensure implementation, with regular reports to Cabinet.**
- **We will prioritise and intensify measures to tackle alcohol and drug misuse among all sections of the population and in particular among young people. Specifically, we will:**
 - Use the education system and public awareness campaigns to highlight the damage caused by binge drinking.**
 - Put in place a fund for the provision of a countrywide network of youth cafes where young people can meet in a safe, legal, alcohol-free and healthy environment.**
 - In recognition of the growth of home drinking and our continuing high rates of binge drinking, we will develop a code of practice on the sale of alcohol with the off-licence trade.**
 - Use the taxation system to promote low alcohol or alcohol-free products.**
 - Introduce a ban on direct TV advertising of alcoholic products before 9pm.**
 - Double the penalties for all offences relating to the sale of alcohol to children, the purchase of alcohol for children and the breach of the restrictions on the presence of underage persons on licensed premises.**
 - Provide early intervention programmes in all social, health and justice services to ensure early detection and appropriate responses to high risk drinking.**
- **The Office of Tobacco Control will be mandated to carry out and publish a comprehensive review of anti-smoking programmes targeted at young people by all Departments and Agencies.**



- **The recent development of a cervical cancer vaccine opens up the possibility of effectively ending cervical cancer within a few generations. We believe it should be available as a universal public health entitlement once recommended by experts.**

Personal Health Check

This year, the final element of the first national screening programme for breast cancer will be completed. This has provided extremely valuable experience of how to roll-out such a service and to engage the target public. It has already delivered substantial improvements in the early detection and successful treatment of breast cancer.

Fianna Fáil believes that now is the time to develop a freely available and personalised national programme to provide for the prevention and early detection of illnesses for both men and women.

To be called the Personal Health Check, the new programme will be developed as follows:

- **An expert group will develop guidelines for the Personal Health Check based on the best available national and international evidence of what works well.**
- **On reaching certain milestones determined by the expert group they will be invited to attend a GP or Primary Care Clinic for a Personal Health Check.**
- **General health examinations, and other tests recommended by the expert group, will be carried out.**
- **When the results are returned, those tested will receive an invitation to return for a consultation where the results will be explained and they will be given a plan relevant to them.**
- **Where the results show a serious concern, the person will immediately be referred to appropriate expert care.**
- **Implementation of such an ambitious plan will take time but we believe that the programme can be established and operating nationally within five years.**
- **The Expert Group will be established in 2007, with a requirement to report by mid-2008 at latest.**
- **Phased implementation of the Expert Group recommendations will begin in 2008, with the national roll-out plan to commence in 2009.**



Primary Health Care

We will implement the €2.1 billion capital investment programme outlined in the NDP for the development of modern primary care facilities. Specifically, we will:

- **Extend the GP out-of-hours service nationwide to ensure that patients can be seen within one hour of their call. This will give access to on duty GP care 24 hours a day. GPs will be fully equipped to ensure that their expertise and skills minimise the need for their patients to attend an A&E unit.**
- **Ensure that there is a primary care team serving every community, with particular reference to new and rapidly growing areas. Five hundred new primary care teams will be funded by 2011. This will include an extension in front-line posts to ensure integrated, accessible services for patients in the community.**
- **Introduce improved supports for GPs who work in remote and disadvantaged communities – both for those starting out and those already established. These will include improved start up funding towards premises, equipment, security, professional support and cover.**

GP Card/Medical Card

We have done more than any government since the introduction of the medical card 35 years ago to make sure that families and single people on low incomes can visit their GP free of charge, either with a full medical card, or the GP visit card. Over the next five years, we will continue this work. Specifically, we will:

- **Index the income thresholds for medical cards to increases in the average industrial wage.**
- **Implement an annual publicity campaign and make applications easier so as to increase uptake amongst those who are eligible for cards.**

Hospitals/acute Care

We will implement the €2.4 billion acute hospital capital programme outlined in the National Development Plan. Under this Programme, we will expand the range, quality and capacity of hospitals throughout the country and we will introduce key reforms in work-practices for the benefit of all patients.

In general, we believe the interests of public patients must be protected and that the best way to do this is to invest in expanded services and to end practices which serve to reduce public capacity and make effective management difficult.



In government we will:

Hospital Beds

- **Increase the number of dedicated public-only hospital beds by 1,500. 500 will be provided through the public capital programme and 1,000 by moving private practice to separate facilities.**
- **Implement the plans for co-located facilities because this represents the quickest and most effective way of ensuring that public capacity is both increased and ring-fenced. It also represents the only serious way of implementing a comprehensive reform of the consultant contract.**

Waiting Times

- **Ensure that the Patient Treatment Register is operated for all in and out-patient referrals. We will extend measures to ensure all patients have access to data concerning waiting times.**
- **Implement a proactive system whereby every person who is waiting for treatment for three months automatically receives a written offer of treatment.**
- **Allow Orthodontic cases to be referred to the NTPF by creating an “Orthodontic Fund” to treat children who have been waiting longest.**
- **Ensure that any child under five waiting more than three months for occupational or speech and language therapy, can access these services automatically through the National Treatment Purchase Fund.**

Consultants

- **We will double the number of consultants, appointing an extra 2,000 and bringing the total number to 4,000. However, this must be on the basis of the full implementation of reformed work-practices.**
- **Specifically, we will appoint these new consultants on the basis that they will:**
 - Carry out public-only service in public facilities,**
 - That all contracted time will be personally worked, and**
 - A team-approach is implemented to ensure 24 hour availability of consultants to patients over 24 hours resulting in faster decision-making.**
- **The continuing development of our hospital services depends on the reform of the consultants’ contracts. We believe in negotiated agreements, but the absence of one will not be allowed to frustrate the expansion in services.**



Accident & Emergency/Local Injury Clinics

- **We want to ensure:**
- **That only those in need of the high level of expert attention available at an A&E department attend for treatment.**
- **That patients are assessed immediately and treated quickly.**
- **We will further increase the number of A&E consultants available round-the-clock in A&E departments.**
- **We will further develop chest pain and respiratory clinics to ease pressure on A&E.**
- **We will establish a national network of Local Injury Clinics. These will deal with cases which do not require the sort of urgent care which only a full A&E can provide.**
- **They will be staffed by doctors, nurses and other professionals who will provide speedy diagnosis, commence treatment immediately or refer patients for more urgent attention as required.**
- **They will be located in places which maximise public accessibility. In some cases this will be on hospital sites or within primary healthcare clinics.**
- **These clinics will work closely with primary care teams to ensure appropriate follow up and ongoing care.**
- **While final details will require more detailed expert input, we estimate that each Centre will require a start-up capital budget of up to €2 million and on-going recurrent funding of up to €400,000.**
- **Our target is for 20 of these clinics across the country within five years.**

Hygiene/Infection Control

MRSA is one of the major challenges facing our health service and requires a significant change in hygiene and prescribing practices. In 2005, we introduced the first ever national hospital hygiene audit with the results for each hospital being published. Since then we have seen a steady improvement in the cleanliness of our hospitals. In the lifetime of the next government, we will:

- **Support the establishment of a new position of hygiene standards enforcer who will ensure adherence to strict protocols for the control and prevention of all infections.**



- **Significantly reduce MRSA in our hospitals and take into account the need to guard against infection in the refurbishment of existing hospital and the construction of new hospitals.**
- **Establish a specific MRSA Fund which will incentivise hospitals to achieve excellence in hygiene standards.**
- **Continue to carry out regular hygiene audits without notice, at minimum annually, and publish the results.**

Cancer Services

We want to make the full range of cancer services accessible to patients throughout Ireland in accordance with best international practice.

- **The Breast Check service will complete its national roll-out this year. We are committed to extending access to the programme to women not covered at present, in accordance with clinical guidelines.**
- **We will put in place a national network for radiation oncology (radiotherapy) services over the next five years.**
- **We will introduce a new universal entitlement to the cervical cancer vaccine as outlined earlier.**
- **The Personal Health Check will include referral of men for early screening for prostate and other cancers as recommended by experts.**
- **The new Cancer Control strategy launched in 2006 will be fully funded in the NDP and we will establish Managed Cancer Control networks each serving a population of one million people.**
- **Networks will consist of primary, hospital, palliative and supportive care.**
- **Cancer Centres will lead and deliver the care required.**
- **We will significantly invest in diagnostic equipment and facilities for cancer patients.**



Accountability

Through case-mix funding and other initiatives, there has been a substantial move to incentivise those hospitals which offer higher and more effective levels of care to the communities they serve. We are committed to continuing this programme. Regional balance and public accountability is a core element of our plan to develop services. We will ensure that an annual report of activity is prepared, published and widely distributed within each region.

Mental Health Services

Fianna Fáil, in government, has nearly trebled investment in mental health services, from €326 million in 1997 to €835 million in 2006. We have also increased the number of consultant psychiatrists by 50%. The comprehensive Vision for Change strategy published in 2006 sets out a major programme of investment and reform over the next seven to ten years for the modernisation of mental health services for children, adolescents and adults with mental health difficulties in hospitals and community settings

In government we will:

- **Invest in and fully implement the Vision for Change Strategy and provide further additional funding to support the recovery model of Mental Health service provision.**
- **Ringfence funds from the sale of existing mental hospitals, estimated to be approximately €800 million, to fund community-based services.**
- **Ensure that multi-disciplinary Community Mental Health Teams provide services based on need, in the community, the home and through assertive outreach.**

Suicide

The heartache and turmoil associated with suicide has become an all too common feature of modern society. Fianna Fáil is determined to tackle this problem from every angle.

In government we will:

- **Implement, as a matter of urgency, the recommendations of Reach Out - the national strategy for action for suicide prevention - and the Recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Sub-Committee on the High Level of Suicide.**
- **Adopt a target of reducing the rate of suicide by 20% by 2012.**
- **Develop initiatives to target those most at risk, promote well-being, raise awareness and reduce stigma.**
- **Improve services and supports for marginalised groups, particularly those with mental health difficulties.**



- **Increase the range of supports to families and communities affected by suicide and bereavement.**
- **Collate accurate data on suicide and conduct and fund research on prevention methods.**

Community and Continuing Care

Fianna Fáil has worked hard over the last ten years to develop and support the delivery of care at community level by investing in local step-down facilities, providing generous home-care packages and expanding home help services and increased funding for private nursing home care. Over the next five years, €2.1 billion will be invested in the Primary, Community and Continuing Care capital programme and we will:

- **Continue to implement measures to ensure the availability of real alternatives to hospital for those who require lengthy convalescence.**
- **Starting in 2008, increase funding to the NTPF on an annual basis over the lifetime of the Government to secure step down beds and rehabilitation services for patients. This additional funding will be ring-fenced for the above purposes and will be set at €20 million for the first year.**

Maximising Independence

- **Fianna Fáil believes that all older people should have the opportunity to stay in their own home for as long as possible. This is what our older people want and we will support them in their choice. We will also support their family carers to continue their caring role.**
- **We will help local and voluntary organisations to establish and run community based facilities that will provide the care services necessary to support older people.**
- **We will strengthen and develop stroke rehabilitation services.**

Nursing Homes

- **The demand for nursing home places will continue to increase and the public is entitled to expect high quality and appropriate supports for all residents. We will only fund places in nursing homes that meet the highest standards of nursing care set by HIQA.**
- **While our main focus will be on providing more and better home care services to allow people to remain at home, we will provide for ten new 50 bed Community Nursing Units in the next five years.**



- **We will expand the system of inspection to ensure more comprehensive and regular inspections. All inspection reports will be available to residents and their families and published.**
- **We are committed to a standard framework for admission to and payment for nursing home facilities. We will take the financial burden for the residential care of their elderly parents from families and we will ensure that older people are not forced to sell the roofs over their heads to pay for their nursing home care.**

Palliative Care

- **Fianna Fáil will ensure that the needs of all people who require palliative care are met whether this is needed at home, in the community or in a specialised hospice.**
- **We are committed, within the next five years, to removing the regional disparities in the provision and funding of palliative care. We recognise the tremendous contribution of the Irish Hospice Foundation and the various community organisations providing palliative care and we will continue to work with these bodies to improve services.**

Overall Structural Reform

The establishment of the HSE is a central element of the future development of services. We understand that it has only been possible because of the dedication of staff throughout the country. Three years into the structural reforms it is reasonable to review how effectively it is operating and, especially, to ensure that team work and communication are working to the fullest extent.

- **We are committed to carrying out such a review and to ensuring that staff have an opportunity to propose ways in which the HSE can work more effectively.**

Nurses

Over the last ten years, we have transformed the position of nurses in our health system. Not only have we increased the number of nursing posts and implemented various reforms to enhance responsibilities, we have also introduced nursing degrees: the most significant development for many years in the nursing profession. There has been a 94% increase in student places in nursing since 1997. Our next steps for nursing will see the further development of the profession.

- **With nurse-practitioners beginning to operate within the system and a range of other changes, we see the status of nurses increasing – just as the number of nursing posts will increase with our proposed capacity increases.**
- **We are committed to keeping open the benchmarking process to nurses.**



Doctors

Our next steps forward for health will require a further significant increase in doctor numbers in all parts of the system.

- **We are committed to implementing the restructuring of medical education including an increase in training places and post-graduate medical degrees.**

Other Health Professionals

- **Our next steps forward will ensure that we increase the supply of professionals needed to meet our ambitious plans to develop new services for persons with disabilities, and to improve and sustain our primary healthcare and hospital services.**

Cross-border Health Initiatives

We will continue to deepen all-Ireland cooperation in relation to health services for the benefit of communities on both sides of the border and maximise the use of valuable facilities and expertise in both jurisdictions.



Education

Fianna Fáil has always prioritised education as the key not only to our nation's social and economic progress but to the individual fulfilment of our people. Every substantial expansion in education provision, from the introduction of free second level education to the establishment of the Institutes of Technology, has been initiated and implemented by Fianna Fáil.

In 1997 we took over from a Government which had voted to cut teacher numbers and freeze direct school funding. We set out to change the agenda of Irish education to one of systematic development and we have succeeded.

- **Primary schools, so long neglected, have seen direct funding rise by nearly 200%**
- **10,000 new teaching posts have been created.**
- **Class sizes and the Teacher:Pupil Ratio have been reduced.**
- **Support for children with special needs and those from disadvantaged areas has been dramatically improved.**
- **The largest school building programme in Irish history has been undertaken, benefiting thousands of schools.**
- **New services such as the National Educational Psychological Service, the National Educational Welfare Board and the Behavioural Support Service have been set up and are being expanded.**
- **The first revisions in four decades of key curricula have been implemented in schools.**
- **45,000 more third level places have been created.**
- **An entire new research tier for universities and colleges has been created.**

We are fully aware of the many needs which have still to be addressed, but our period in office has seen the most sustained increase in funding and participation in the history of Irish education.

The Next Steps Forward for Education

We see education as central to achieving our goals of protecting and growing Ireland's prosperity and ensuring greater social inclusion. Therefore we are determined to take a series of significant further steps forward for education in the next five years.



Overall Objectives

In government, our key overall objectives will be:

- To implement significant further improvements in the human and financial resources available to our schools.
- To ensure that the quality of buildings and equipment available in all parts of the education system are significantly improved.
- To make each element of the system more inclusive and responsive to the needs of marginalised groups.
- To develop our third level institutions as world-leaders in research and development, helping Ireland to maintain and build on its undoubted progress.

Extra Teachers and Reform of Teacher Training

The 10,000 extra teachers now working with our schoolchildren are a clear demonstration of our commitment to improving school staffing. The priority which special needs provision received in the last five years was absolutely necessary and we believe that we were right to concentrate new teaching posts in that area. We see the opportunity of a broader impact in the next five years. In government we will:

- Increase the number of primary teachers by at least 4,000. This will enable us to reduce class sizes.
- Prioritise reductions in the size of classes in the core subjects of Irish, English and Maths at second level.
- Reform the initial teacher-training programmes, ensure that all teacher-training colleges reserve places for students from disadvantaged areas, and prioritise high quality in-career professional development for teachers and principals.

Improved Funding For Our Schools

We are committed to building on the major increases in direct school funding in recent years to ensure that our schools have much improved resources.

In government we will:

- Increase day-to-day funding for our schools in real terms, and will double the capitation grant for primary schools. Grants to schools for the employment of support staff such as secretaries and caretakers will also be increased significantly.



- **Complete the process of equalisation of funding at second level within two years.**

High Quality School Buildings & Planning For New Schools

We are determined to ensure that schools are modern and available when needed. To this end, we will implement a significant number of improvements in how school building projects are planned, funded and delivered.

In government we will:

- **Invest €4.5 billion in providing new schools and improving existing ones, increase the Minor Works grant and abolish the local contribution to building projects.**
- **Put in place clear procedures, on foot of a legal planning directive, to be followed by all local authorities to ensure that provision for educational facilities is planned well in advance of need and in agreement with the Department of Education.**
- **Improve the arrangements for acquiring sites.**

After Hours and Holiday Time Programmes

In order to meet a significant and growing need of working parents, enable children to benefit from a broad range of positive activities, and ensure that schools and other facilities are being better utilised we will:


- **Invest in and support the roll-out of school-age childcare, whereby children will be given access to a range of after-school and holiday time activities, with a major focus on sports and the arts.**

Promoting Students' All-round Development

Fianna Fáil believes that our schools should help young people to reach their full potential not just academically, but socially and personally as well. We also believe that schools have a role in instilling a sense of civic pride and responsibility in their students.

In government we will:

- **Provide a dedicated fund for investment in PE facilities for schools, make PE mandatory at second level, and put a revised PE curriculum for senior cycle students in place.**
- **Promote greater sharing of school and community sports facilities and make it a condition of the Sports Capital Programme that facilities be made available to schools where appropriate.**
- **Increase the role of the arts as part of a well-rounded educational experience.**

- 
- Increase the number of guidance counsellors at second level.
 - Ensure that education is provided in road safety at different stages of the school system, including a specific transition year course.
 - Involve Community Health professionals in the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education and provide greater support for teachers in this area through improved teaching resources and access to training.
 - Require all primary schools to implement the Stay Safe child abuse protection programme.
 - Include the national anthem in the primary school curriculum, teach school children about the role and significance of our national flag, and instil in them respect for the place of other nations' anthems and flags.

Curricular Change to Meet Skills Needs and Ensuring a Broader Range of Educational Opportunities

Fianna Fáil is determined to ensure that our school curriculum is in tune with the needs of a modern society and economy. We are also committed to ensuring that there is a wide range of opportunities available so that all children, whatever their abilities or interests, can reach their full potential.

In government we will:

- **Prioritise the introduction of new curricula in Maths and in Leaving Certificate Physics and Chemistry, supported by teacher training.**
- **Ring-fence funding for science laboratories, improve science equipment in our schools, and ensure a greater focus on high quality science education at all levels.**
- **Implement new Leaving Cert curricula in engineering, architectural technology, economics, agricultural science and art.**
- **Encourage more schools to offer alternative curricula such as the Junior Certificate Schools' Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied course.**
- **While encouraging higher rates of school completion, increase access to alternative educational provision for young people who do not wish to continue in the formal school system. Financial and other support for such centres will also be improved and put on a multi-annual basis. We will increase the number of Youthreach places in line with our Towards 2016 commitments and will support the development of similar services for younger students who discover that the mainstream second level school is not suitable for them.**



Promoting the Irish Language In Our Schools & Colleges

In recent years a new dynamism has developed behind the teaching of Irish and through Irish in our schools. We are determined to strengthen this by:

- **Improving teacher training, reforming the curriculum to place greater emphasis on the spoken language, and providing an enhanced support service for schools.**
- **Funding the development of a comprehensive range of materials and resources to support teaching through Irish.**
- **Providing a scholarship scheme for children from disadvantaged areas to attend courses in the Gaeltacht and funding summer courses in the children's own local areas.**

Schools ICT

Integrating ICT successfully in our schools is essential not only to equipping students with good IT skills, but can also improve the education experience and help to improve young people's motivation to learn. Therefore, in government we will:

- **Implement a comprehensive Schools ICT Strategy, supported by a dedicated capital investment programme and addressing schools' needs for technical support and maintenance. It will also cover the training needs of teachers.**
- **Give the opportunity to second level students to acquire an ECDL qualification in computers by the time they leave school.**

Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Literacy and Numeracy Skills

For Fianna Fáil education is a powerful weapon in the fight against inequality. In recent years we have dramatically increased investment in measures to tackle disadvantage. We have ensured that children in disadvantaged areas are in smaller classes, get free school meals and have access to a range of after school activities. We have also expanded programmes to improve home-school links and set up a new national service to tackle absenteeism.

In government we will:

- **Complete the roll-out of the DEIS Action Plan to ensure a comprehensive package of targeted supports for schoolchildren in the most disadvantaged areas.**
- **Increase coordination between state agencies that provide help for families at risk.**
- **Ensure that all children will be tested in literacy and numeracy at two stages during their primary school education.**



- **Prioritise early intervention to improve literacy and numeracy skills in disadvantaged areas, with special intensive reading and maths programmes for children who are having difficulties and a focus on family literacy.**
- **Provide increased funding for school libraries and greatly improve the level of support provided for book loan schemes.**
- **Recruit extra staff to the Educational Welfare Board and the National Educational Psychological Service, both of which will prioritise disadvantaged schools.**

Special Education

We are committed to ensuring that all children receive an education that is appropriate to their needs and abilities. We recognise that this requires a mix of different educational responses and will intensify our work to ensure that an appropriate placement is available for every child. In government we will:

- **Implement the Education For Persons With Special Educational Needs Act in full, giving children with special needs, the right to an Individual Education Plan and putting in place a new appeals procedure.**
- **Increase the number of psychologists in the National Educational Psychological Service to 200 within three years.**
- **Explore the potential to spread the expertise built up in special schools by developing them as centres of excellence and outreach facilities that work with mainstream schools, with procedures for dual enrolment.**
- **Train more speech and language and occupational therapists. The HSE will ensure that there is much greater access to these services.**

Promoting Successful Integration In Our Schools

We believe that immigration has enriched the school experience for Irish children by giving them the opportunity to learn about other cultures and ways of life. We are determined to ensure successful integration and to meet the language and other needs of newcomer children.

In government we will:

- **Further increase the number of language support teachers from 1,450 to 1,800.**
- **Improve teacher training and give extra supports to schools with large numbers of students with different languages and cultures to improve home-school links.**
- **Provide access to English language classes for adult immigrants.**



School Buses

This year we are investing €165 million in the school transport service - compared with just €50 million in 1997. Over the next five years we will prioritise further investment in the school transport to ensure a high quality service.

Expanding Adult Education Provision

Fianna Fáil knows that while our young people are now amongst the best educated in the world, many adults had only limited educational opportunities available to them in the past. We have worked hard to improve access to a range of education options for adults from basic literacy to third level qualifications. In government we will:

- **Increase the number of adult literacy training places by 4,000, on top of the extra 3,000 places being put in place in 2007, and provide dedicated funding for English language training for targeted groups.**
- **Increase the number of places on the Back to Education Initiative to 10,000 and expand the VTOS scheme.**

Improved Opportunities in Further and Higher Education

In government we have provided for a dramatic expansion in participation rates. We have increased the number of PLC places by 60% to more than 30,000. 55% of 17-19 year olds entered third level in 2005, compared with 44% in 1998.

In government we will:

- **Further increase third level participation rates, with a special focus on those from disadvantaged areas.**
- **Introduce a new system of means-tested free fees for approved part-time courses. Together with incentives for colleges to offer more flexible and diverse course structures, this will enable more people with work or family commitments to avail of opportunities at third level.**
- **Enable more students to qualify for the top-up grant.**
- **Evaluate the success of the new alternative entry arrangements for medical education with a view to determining if similar changes should be made in the application procedures for other high-points courses.**
- **Promote more explicit arrangements for student transfer between institutes of technology and universities and open new routes of access from the further education sector to the third level sector.**



- **Develop the further education sector to enable it to play a strong role in providing employment relevant education and training opportunities and serve as a gateway to higher education. Priority will be given to addressing the capital and equipment needs of the sector.**
- **Provide a multi-annual capital fund of €2 billion for higher education institutions to support investment in the development of modern campus facilities with leading edge teaching and learning infrastructure, and to ensure that institutions have the capacity to meet emerging needs while accommodating growing numbers of students accessing higher education.**
- **Prioritise quality assurance in our colleges and provide targeted funding to support the student role in the QA process.**
- **Appoint two student representatives to each of the HEA and the NQAI.**
- **Fully examine Waterford Institute of Technology's case for university status.**

Developing A Strong Fourth Level Research Sector

In 1997 the entire research budget of the Department of Education was zero. Since then we have invested €1.2 billion in third level research. We know that developing a strong fourth level sector is key to protecting current jobs and attracting new ones. In government we will:

- **Continue to reshape, reform and strengthen undergraduate education to support the skills needs of society and the development of fourth level education.**
- **Dramatically increase the research capacity of our third level colleges.**
- **In doubling our output of PhDs by 2013, sustain and enhance quality through the establishment of graduate schools to achieve structured quality PhD training and enhanced postgraduate skills.**
- **Ensure that the support for research in the humanities and social sciences is developed to achieve a doubling of PhD numbers.**
- **Further develop the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLII) to support the expansion of high-quality research places.**
- **Develop flexible and attractive career paths for researchers.**
- **Ensure that there is enhanced industry/academia collaboration to benefit business and secure growth.**



Children

Over the last ten years, Fianna Fáil in government has put the interests of children at the heart of Government. In 2000, we published the National Children's Strategy which proposed a fundamental change in the attitude of Government to children and set out an ambitious agenda for the development of services for children.

The Strategy has been reinforced by the creation of the Office of the Minister for Children in which key government officials, whose job it is to look after the interests of children have been brought together to deliver the best possible services for children. The Minister for Children attends Cabinet meetings, ensuring that the interests of children are taken into account in an unprecedented manner across all areas of government.

There are many concrete developments to point to:

- **The investment of €24.8 million in playgrounds around the country.**
- **The quadrupling of Child Benefit and the introduction of the Early Childcare Supplement of €1000 per annum. Taken together, these payments mean that a family with two children under the age of six, irrespective of income or employment status gets an untaxed payment of €5,840 a year from the State – up from just €914 in 1997.**
- **The increases in maternity leave so that mothers of new-born children can now take a full six months paid and four and a half months unpaid leave.**
- **The creation of nearly 36,000 new childcare places and the upgrading of 26,000 existing places with an investment of over 560 million euro.**
- **The full implementation of the Children Act 2001.**
- **The reform and resourcing of the juvenile justice system and the creation of the Irish Youth Justice Service.**
- **The commissioning of the first ever National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland to increase our understanding of children's lives and provide a sound evidence base for future policy development**

The Next Steps Forward for Children

We believe that further significant changes are required to ensure that all of our children have the opportunity to enjoy childhood and develop to their full potential. Therefore we are proposing a series of next steps forward for Ireland's children for the five years ahead.



Constitutional Amendment

We believe the fundamental law of our land should fully reflect our commitment to value and protect childhood. That is why we have proposed the inclusion in our Constitution of a new dedicated Article on Children. Under its provisions the State will acknowledge and affirm the natural and imprescriptible rights of all children. Nothing in our proposed article will undermine the role of parents. However, it will ensure that the best interests of the child are put centre stage in the adoption and care systems and in all custody disputes. Specifically, it will put an end to the tragic position which forbids children in long-term care or the children of a marriage from being adopted by loving parents.

The new Article will also greatly strengthen the protection we afford to children by permitting the carefully regulated exchange of information about suspected child abusers and by allowing the Oireachtas to introduce legislation which would make it impossible for those who take sexual advantage of children to claim the defence of honest mistake about the age of their victims.

- **On return to office, we will put our proposal to the people within one year.**

Childcare

Over the last ten years, we have built a childcare sector virtually from scratch.

In government we will:

- **Increase the rate of the Early Childcare Supplement and Child Benefit.**
- **Ensure that every child has access to an affordable pre-school place by 2012.**
- **Through the investment of €1.3 billion provided for in the NDP, create an extra 50,000 new childcare places by 2010.**
- **Ensure a supply of affordable childcare premises by requiring housing developers to provide a monetary contribution or provide a site to local authorities for childcare facilities, the location and type of which will be decided in consultation with the County Childcare Committees. We will also require local authorities to provide childcare facilities as part of their social housing plans, subject to an examination of existing supply.**
- **Continue to provide tax relief and capital grants for investment in childcare facilities.**
- **Where possible, and where there is evidence of need, provide childcare facilities on the same site as or adjacent to primary schools.**
- **Continue to support not for profit childcare providers through capital and staffing grants, and provide funding on a multi-annual basis to allow for more effective planning.**



- **Prioritise expansion of pre-school facilities for children with intellectual disabilities.**
- **Implement the National Childcare Training Strategy and work with providers to support the delivery of quality early education. We will continue to provide tax incentives to childminders to encourage registration and support the development of networking and training opportunities.**

Giving Parents More Time With Their Children

Since 1997, we have increased maternity leave from just 14 weeks to 26 weeks. We are conscious however that many working parents, with small children in particular, find it difficult to balance work and family commitments.

Over the next five years we will:

- **Increase paid maternity leave by five weeks and make all leave after the first 26 weeks available to either parent.**
- **Work with the social partners to promote the greater availability of family-friendly work practices.**

A New System of School Age Childcare

We recognise the need for care places for the school going children of working parents.

- **We will further invest in and support the roll-out of affordable school-age childcare, whereby children will be given access to a range of after-school and holiday time activities, with a major focus on sports and the arts.**
- **Services will be provided in schools or in other suitable premises, and will operate until 6pm and on a full-day basis during school holidays.**

Tackling Childhood Disadvantage

We know that early intervention is the key to improving the lives of children and their families in severely disadvantaged areas. We need to change the way we work with families in these areas.

- **We will increase the rate of the Early Childcare Supplement and Child Benefit, while building on the Qualified Child Allowance.**
- **We will accelerate the establishment of Children's Services Committees in each county so that all the statutory agencies work together in a strategic way and use resources more efficiently for the benefit of children.**



- **We will build on the experience of ground-breaking initiatives for disadvantaged children, such as those undertaken with Atlantic Philanthropies under the Early Intervention and Prevention Programme by applying the lessons learnt from these projects, in a targeted way, to economically and socially disadvantaged communities across the country.**
- **We will bring together statutory and voluntary agencies in a collaborative approach to the delivery of services with the engagement of the communities.**

Child Protection

Since 1997, we have enacted a substantial body of legislation to protect children from sexual and other forms of abuse. We have also established the Garda Central Vetting Unit to ensure that those working with children are screened.

- **Our proposed amendment to the Constitution will further strengthen our ability to protect our children by allowing the Oireachtas to legislate for the exchange of information about suspected child abusers. It will also allow for the creation of offences of absolute or strict liability so that those who sexually abuse our children will no longer be able to claim mistake about their victims' age as a defence in court.**
- **We will provide extra resources to the Garda vetting service.**
- **We will develop an all-Ireland approach to child protection. We will put in place the necessary structures and systems to increase cooperation on vetting and the exchange of all relevant information about those who work or seek to work with children and vulnerable adults.**
- **We will require all primary schools to implement the Stay Safe programme.**

Foster Care

Fianna Fáil in government has strongly supported foster parents and we have passed legislation to strengthen their rights as guardians.

- **Our constitutional amendment will give children in long-term foster care a second chance by allowing for them to be adopted by their foster families if it is in their best interests.**



Recreation and Play

Fianna Fáil in government has invested significantly in play facilities. In the last six years, the number of play grounds around the country has increased from 200 to over 500.

- **Over the next five years, we will continue to invest in playgrounds around the country under the National Play Policy so that every child in every community has reasonable access to at least one modern playground.**
- **We will put in place a fund for the provision of a countrywide network of youth cafés where young people can meet in a safe, legal and healthy environment.**

Youth Justice

In government, Fianna Fáil has fundamentally reformed the juvenile justice system. The Children Act 2001 has provided the legal basis for modern system whose guiding principles are prevention, diversion, education and rehabilitation. That Act is now implemented in full. In 2005, following a detailed review, responsibility for youth justice and the implementation of the Children Act was transferred to the newly formed Irish Youth Justice Service which now reports directly to the Minister for Children

Over the next five years, we will bed down the new structures and ensure that youth offenders are diverted from crime as early as possible. With an overall budget of €400 million, we will:

- **Fund the implementation of a range of new community sanctions which came into force last March as an alternative to detention and which will be operated by the Probation Service. These community sanctions will include sanctions against the parents of offending youths.**
- **Double the number of Garda Youth Diversion Projects and fund the development of other programmes for children who offend.**
- **Invest in the provision of modern detention facilities for youth offenders.**



Improved Pensions and Better Supports For Older People

Fianna Fáil has always prioritised improvements in the standard of living and quality of life of older people. From the free bus pass to the major pension increases of recent years, our policies have made a big difference in enabling older people to live fuller lives.

In 1997 and 2002, we set ambitious targets for substantially increasing what we have renamed as the State Pension - we have not only met those targets, we have exceeded them. We have also introduced Personal Retirement Savings Accounts to provide a State contribution to personal pension savings and put in place a new initiative to encourage SSIA savers to invest in personal pensions. While other countries are facing into a very serious threat to their public finances and the need to curtail benefits due to a looming pension crisis, we established the National Pension Reserve Fund into which is placed 1% of national income every year. We have ensured that the money will be there to pay the pensions of today's workers when they retire.

Major improvements have been also made in both the Household Benefits Package and the National Fuel Scheme. We have prioritised improved support for carers, expansion of community based supports and improvements in the quality and availability of hospital and residential care. This year alone, 2,000 extra home care packages are being provided on top of the 2,000 put in place last year. In addition, 780,000 extra hours of home help will be delivered, 1,100 day places are being provided and 800 extra residential care beds are being rolled out.

The Next Steps Forward for Improved Pensions and Better Supports for Older People

Fianna Fáil recognises that not only have older people made a huge contribution in building the successful country that we have today, they have so much more to give. We want to enable them to stay socially active and involved in their local communities. We are committed to ensuring improved security of income in retirement. And we are determined to provide better medical and care supports, so that they can be confident that they will have help when they need it.

On top of the substantial changes outlined in the health chapter, we are determined to take a further series of significant steps forward for older people.

Pensions

The Green Paper on Pensions represents a comprehensive examination of the challenges and options facing Ireland in ensuring that all our people have adequate pension coverage. With half of the working population not part of any personal or occupational pension scheme and few having the security of defined benefit schemes, it is vital that major steps are taken in the coming years to improve pensions.



In Government we will:

- **Increase the State pension to at least €300 per week by 2012.**
- **Seek to develop imaginative proposals in the context of the Green Paper on Pensions, following a comprehensive consultation under the partnership process, with particular emphasis on an SSIA type initiative.**
- **Aim to secure the target of at least 50% of pre-retirement earnings from all sources including social welfare supports, private and occupational pensions, and savings and investments.**
- **Complete the scheme introduced in Budget 2007 to provide a personal pension payment for pensioner spouses in receipt of the Qualified Adult Allowance. The payment will be set at the level of a full rate Non-Contributory State Pension and the income limits will be improved to enable more people to qualify for it. The role and economic contribution of spouses working on the farm will be better recognised within the social insurance system.**
- **Extend the Age Allowance to Qualified Adults over 80 years old.**
- **Remove anomalies identified in the pension system.**
- **Ensure women are treated fairly in pension provision.**

Abolition of Compulsory Retirement

Today, the retirement age of 66 does not adequately reflect many people's abilities or expectations. In the private sector, there is no mandatory retirement age but an obligatory retirement age is normally set in the employee's contract. Those reaching retirement age should be allowed to retire if they wish, but those who would prefer to stay at work should be facilitated in doing so.

In Government, we will:

- **Introduce phased retirement which allows workers a greater say in their retirement age.**
- **Increase the State Pension for every year that a person over 66 delays taking it. Thus, additional PRSI contribution made after the age of 66 are added to the pension when it is drawn down.**
- **Extend the amount those in receipt of the State Non-Contributory Pension are allowed to earn without it affecting their pension entitlement.**



National Strategy for Older People

In light of the growing involvement of many Departments and agencies in this area, and of the successful model for developing policy relating to children and people with disabilities, we will develop a New National Strategy for Older People to include:

- **The development of operational plans by Government Departments clearly setting out objectives relating to older people.**
- **Joined up thinking on initiatives serving older people.**
- **Ongoing mechanisms to monitor progress and identify challenges.**

We will also designate a Minister of State for Older People.

Education and Retraining for Older People

Fianna Fáil believes that older people should be enabled to return to education and training if they so wish.

In Government, we will:

- **Set up a training programme for all those over 50 for the teaching of computer literacy.**
- **Through the availability of mature student places and the introduction of a new system of means-tested free fees for third level education, enable more older people to go to College.**

Making It Easier for Older People to Stay in Their Own Homes

It is in everyone's best interests that older people are supported and encouraged to remain self-reliant and to remain actively involved in the well-being of themselves and their families, friends and the wider community. Central to this is the provision and support for older people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. In Government, we will:

- **Continue to provide support services for homecare.**
- **Extend the Slán Abhaile programme. This programme provides older people with practical alternatives to long stay residential care by providing enhanced home support services.**
- **Provide funding to local authorities for the provision of specialised housing units for older people which is both affordable and appropriate to their housing needs.**
- **Facilitate the building of retirement villages.**



Social Affairs

Fianna Fáil believes that the true measure of economic progress is to be found in the achievement of social goals. Over the last ten years we have used the unprecedented resources generated through sound economic policies to implement a systematic programme of improvements in social supports. The biggest measure of this is to be found in the dramatic reduction in poverty which has been achieved.

250,000 people, including 100,000 children have been lifted out of poverty since 1997 – the largest fall in poverty in such a short period ever measured in Europe.

Some of the measures which have made this possible include:

- **The basic rate of social welfare payment has been increased by 123.7%. This represents a real increase of 58.2 %.**
- **The implementation of a National Action Plan for Social Inclusion working across Government.**
- **Long-term unemployment has been cut by two-thirds.**
- **Families with children have received special attention, with child income support trebled.**

The Next Steps Forward on Social Affairs

The achievements of the last ten years confirm that we have the possibility of becoming one of the few countries in the world to effectively eliminate consistent poverty. If returned to government it is our intention to implement a further series of significant steps forward towards achieving our republican goal of equality of opportunity for all.

Carers

Having originally created the Carers' Allowance, we have recently extended the numbers entitled to receive it by over 60% and have implemented a wide range of improvements in the range of services available to carers. In the next five years we will:

- **Further increase eligibility for the Carers' Allowance.**
- **Double the non-means-tested Respite Care Grant to €3,000 per person cared for.**
- **Extend the National Fuel Allowance Scheme to cover eligible carers.**
- **Develop a programme of caring for carers, and implement the National Carers Strategy.**



Lone Parents

Understanding the high risk of poverty faced by lone parent families, we will implement a range of reforms to income support, including removal of the cohabitation restriction, replacing Lone Parents' Allowance with a new and improved family friendly allowance, and relaxing restrictions on work while retaining the social welfare payment.

Child Income Support

Following the dramatic increases in child income support which we have implemented, and having helped lift 100,000 children out of poverty, we intend to continue prioritising the interests of families with children.

In government we will:

- **Amalgamate Qualified Child Allowances and Family Income Supplements in order to develop a second tier of income support targeted at the poorest families.**
- **Continue to increase Child Benefit.**
- **Implement significant improvements to the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance and the School Meals Programme.**

Rent Supplement Scheme

- **The standard means test for Rent Supplement will be kept under review and we will provide enhanced financial incentives to take up part-time employment, training, education or other progression items – minimising where possible, the impact of the sudden withdrawal of social welfare payments. The emphasis will be on the provision of appropriate long-term housing solutions rather than on moving retention thresholds at which some or all of the social welfare payment is lost.**
- **We will urgently examine the development of a mortgage support system for people on low incomes in order to reduce long term reliance on rent supplement.**
- **We will ensure that people on the Rental Accommodation Scheme are pro-actively helped to move to housing accommodation appropriate to their individual needs**

Coverage for Farm Spouses

- **The role and economic contribution of spouses working on the farm will be better recognised within the social insurance system, following on from Budget 2007 which allowed recipients of Farm Assist to make PRSI contributions for the first time.**



Disability

In Government we will:

- **Invest further in the Citizens' Information Board to enable them to engage advocacy officials to assist people with disabilities in accessing their entitlements.**

Free Travel

Having successfully delivered the commitment to All-Ireland Free Travel for pensioners, and removed the 40 years old restriction on peak time travel, we will:

- **Urgently examine the introduction of Free Travel for Irish citizens of pension age particularly those resident in the UK when visiting Ireland, and press the European Commission to examine a similar EU wide scheme.**
- **As part of the modernisation of customer services, replace the existing paper travel pass with a plastic card which can be used on all public transport services which offer the facility of free travel.**

Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)

- **The success of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) will be further enhanced by the establishment under legislation of a new structure with national leadership for the 21st century which maximises and recognises the current local voluntary involvement together with a strong professional role aimed at continuing to provide strong and confidential support for its clients.**
- **MABS will also be given a central role in increasing access to affordable credit for low income earners and social welfare customers.**

Family Support

We will continue to fully resource the Family Support Agency and its programmes of Counselling, Family Resource Centres, etc.



Disability

Fianna Fáil was the first Irish party ever to set out a comprehensive commitment to addressing the specific needs and rights of people with disabilities. In the last ten years there has been a dramatic change in terms of legislation, planning, specialist service provision and access to mainstream services and activities for people with disabilities. This has been achieved as a direct result of consultation with people with disabilities their families and carers and includes the following actions:

- **The first National Disability Strategy has been developed and commenced. The Strategy sets out a comprehensive package of legislation, policies and targets. €220 million will be spent on residential and community facilities alone. Delivering the Strategy is part of the core business of Government, of all Departments and public bodies.**
- **Equality legislation for people with disabilities has been enacted which has been praised internationally as modern and forward-looking.**
- **World Class disability legislation has been enacted providing for independent assessment of needs, a statement of service provision and improved accessibility of public services. Six Government departments have set out sectoral plans to improve the services they provide for people with disabilities. A mandatory quota for the employment of people with disabilities in public services has also been put in place.**
- **Thousands of day, residential and respite care places have been created and extra sheltered accommodation places have been put in place.**

The Next Steps Forward for Disability Services

Fianna Fáil in Government is determined to continue to prioritise the interests of people with disabilities over the next five years, through a series of significant next steps forward. We are committed to ensuring that the Strategy is driven and managed from a whole of Government perspective and it will be overseen and supported by the Department of An Taoiseach. Fianna Fáil, will for each year of the Programme for Government, set out the objectives and outcomes to be reached in the NDS having regard to the vision and long term goals for people with disabilities as set out in Towards 2016.

Health & Children

In government we will:

- **Commence, by June 2007, the provision for an independent assessment of need for all children with disabilities under five years as a legal right.**
- **Build on this by providing a legal right to independent assessment of need for all persons with disabilities.**



- **Implement appropriate standards in service delivery to people with disabilities.**
- **Improve data and information gathering in the health services in order to more effectively plan and deliver health services to people with disabilities.**
- **In addition to redeveloping the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dún Laoghaire, we will also increase the existing rehabilitation bed capacity.**

Education

In government we will:

- **Complete the roll out of the Education For Persons With Special Educational Needs Act, giving all children with special needs the right to an Individual Education Plan to ensure the best outcome for them, and putting in place a new appeals procedure.**
- **Ensure that all teachers and assistants have access to specialist training.**
- **Provide for improved access to lifelong learning for adults with disabilities.**

Communications

In government we will:

- **Fast forward subtitling and sign language interpretation targets for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and audio description for people who are blind or visually impaired.**
- **Ensure An Post will address access issues at company owned post offices within two years.**

Enterprise and Employment

In government we will:

- **Put in place a comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities which will help people into work in all sectors.**
- **Ensure the implementation of the quota for the employment of people with disabilities in the public sector.**
- **Allow people with disabilities to work without losing key essential medical card cover after 3 years.**
- **Ensure that people with disabilities have full access to accessible vocational training.**
- **Provide access to flexible and responsive supports and programmes to enable people with disabilities to gain, retain and progress in employment.**



Environment and Local Government

In government we will:

- Make public buildings, footpaths, parks, information and services more accessible to people with disabilities, with real targets set and achieved.
- Plan from the outset for accessibility of public services and local authority facilities.
- Reform the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme to improve equity and targeting.
- Enforce building regulations to ensure appropriate accessibility for new buildings, as well as buildings which undergo major refurbishment.
- Ensure that developers are reminded at pre-planning stage of their obligations to make buildings accessible.

Welfare

In government we will:

- Offer people with disabilities further improved pathways to participation in employment or education, avoiding the benefits trap.
- Implement the Citizens Information Act, which provides for an independent personal advocacy service for people with disabilities.
- Continue to make improvements in the support for Carers.
- Publish a review of the Cost of Disability payment.

Transport

In government we will:

- Implement our strategy for making public transport accessible, with detailed actions for implementation in the areas of air, bus, taxi, rail and sea transport.
- Address illegal parking in disabled car park spaces through enforcement, increased fines and public awareness.
- Review the eligibility criteria for disabled driver and disabled passenger scheme and other adaptation schemes.

Asylum, Immigration & Integration

Most western countries experienced a surge in asylum and economic immigration in the last decade. This has brought with it many challenges in a country such as Ireland where there has been no significant historical experience of dealing with immigration. It has also brought new opportunities to broaden our social and cultural horizons.

In recent years we have worked hard to improve the asylum and immigration processes and promote successful integration. We have:

- **Dramatically expanded the staffing of the Refugee Applications Office to ensure that decisions are made much faster.**
- **Made the strategic decision to welcome workers from the new EU member states to fill vacancies in the services, construction and other sectors.**
- **Brought in new legislation to establish a green card system for people with much-needed skills.**
- **Provided 1,450 language support teachers in our schools to meet the needs of children whose first language is not English.**
- **Put in place the National Anti-Racism strategy to root out racism and promote tolerance and understanding.**

The Next Steps Forward on Asylum, Immigration & Integration

We understand that further significant action is required to ensure that our asylum system is robust, that a comprehensive immigration policy is implemented and that our new residents are integrated within the wider community. Therefore we are proposing a number of next steps forward in this area.

Asylum

We recognise that asylum is a complex, long-term issue that requires action at national, European and international levels. We will ensure that Ireland fully meets its obligations under the 1951 Geneva Convention and other international human rights organisations, to which Ireland belongs.

In addition we will:

- **Integrate the present asylum and pre-deportation examinations into one streamlined process that will deal with cases in a speedy manner.**
- **Ensure that the functions currently carried out by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) are subsumed into the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS).**



- **Establish a new body with an expanded remit, the Protection Review Tribunal, to replace the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. The Protection Review Tribunal will ensure that applicants continue to have access to a fair appeals process, while providing additional powers to the Chairperson to ensure greater consistency in decisions across the system.**
- **Act to uphold the integrity of the asylum applications system by providing for a more effective removals system for failed applicants.**

Immigration

Fianna Fáil recognises that a fair and strategic immigration policy is imperative to sustaining a strong economy. We welcome immigrants who come here to work legally to support Ireland's development and we will help them to become full and active participants in Irish life. In government we will:

- **Speedily enact the proposed Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill. The Bill will:**
- **Overhaul the body of Irish immigration legislation which dates back to 1935.**
- **Set out in an integrated approach, the whole process for foreign nationals coming to the State, staying here and, when necessary, being required to leave.**
- **Ensure that one of the conditions of residence in Ireland will be an undertaking to keep the peace, be of good behaviour and comply generally with the law of the land.**
- **Further develop the scheme for family reunification for family members of non-EEA national workers in the State.**
- **Introduce a scheme for establishing a status of long-term resident which will apply to persons with more than five years' residence in the State.**
- **Progress in the context of the Employment Permits Act 2006, the introduction of a "green card" or permanent labour migration system for people with certain skills.**
- **Complete the phased implementation of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service.**

Integration

We understand the need to ensure that our new residents are welcomed and that effective integration is supported. Therefore, we will:

- **Develop a national integration policy, based on equality principles and taking a revised and broader view of social inclusion which builds on the experience of other countries.**



- **Create an Office of the Minister for the Integration of Immigrants under the direction of a dedicated Minister of State to implement the national integration policy. The Office will bring together in one administrative unit key officials from relevant government departments who provide services to immigrants.**
- **Increase the number of language support teachers to 1,800 and review language requirements across government.**
- **Continue to promote national campaigns aimed at challenging racism and promoting understanding of diversity.**



Economic and Fiscal Framework

Fianna Fail will always put responsibility first. The long-term interests of Ireland are our priority and will never be sacrificed for short-term gain. We believe that our spending and taxation commitments are the right policies for Ireland. They are also sustainable and will be delivered, in a strong economic environment, alongside responsible budgetary outturns. The following conservative assumptions underpin our economic and fiscal framework:

- **Average economic growth of 4.5% per year in real terms**
- **Average economic growth of 7% per year in nominal terms**
- **Average earnings growth of 4.5% per year**
- **Employment growth of 2.5% per year**
- **Average increase in base current expenditure of 6% per year**
- **Average rate of return on the National Pensions Reserve Fund of 7% per annum**

Our policies of targeted spending increases and tax reforms are fully affordable against this economic backdrop. Our detailed economic and fiscal framework which we are publishing in full shows that we can deliver the National Development Plan, deliver on our spending and taxation policies and return an excellent, responsible budget performance. Specifically:

- **We will return an average budget surplus of 0.5% of GDP over the 2007-2012 period**
- **The General Government Debt will decline to 18.5% of GDP by 2012**
- **The net debt will be reduced to less than 3% of GDP by 2012**



Economic & Budgetary Framework 2007-2012

Receipts and Expenditure	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<i>Receipts - Current</i>						
Tax Revenue	49,170	52,956	57,034	61,425	66,155	71,249
Non-Tax Revenue	565	594	612	630	650	675
Total	49,735	53,550	57,646	62,055	66,805	71,924
<i>Expenditure - Current</i>						
Net Voted	37,277	39,513	41,884	44,397	47,061	49,885
Non-Voted	4,425	4,406	4,609	4,841	5,082	5,330
Total	41,702	43,919	46,493	49,238	52,143	55,215
Current Budget Balance	8,033	9,631	11,153	12,817	14,662	16,709
<i>Receipts and Expenditure - Capital</i>						
Receipts	1,483	1,477	1,513	1,456	1,470	1,510
<i>Expenditure - Current</i>						
Net Voted	7,548	8,537	8,954	9,059	9,187	10,573
Non-Voted	2,552	2,662	2,784	2,915	3,054	3,204
Total	10,100	11,199	11,737	11,973	12,242	13,777
Capital Account Balance	-8,617	-9,722	-10,224	-10,517	-10,772	-12,267
Exchequer Balance before Manifesto	-584	-91	928	2,300	3,891	4,442
Manifesto Net Spending Commitments	44	888	1,333	1,788	2,313	2,875
Manifesto Net Taxation Commitments - Indexation	0	280	683	1,124	1,632	2,224
Manifesto Net Taxation Commitments - Reforms	0	841	1,148	1,591	1,853	1,996
Exchequer Balance	-628	-2,100	-2,235	-2,202	-1,907	-2,652
Adjustment to reach GGB	2,822	3,342	2,766	2,867	2,984	3,077
General Government Balance	2,194	1,242	531	665	1,077	425
GGB/GDP	1.2%	0.6%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%
General Government Debt/GDP	22.8%	21.6%	20.8%	20.0%	19.1%	18.5%
NPRF/GDP	11.4%	12.3%	13.1%	14.0%	14.8%	15.7%
Net Debt/GDP	11.4%	9.3%	7.7%	6.0%	4.3%	2.9%



Net Spending Commitments above NDP	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Pensions to at least €300 per week*		76.1	162.7	266.0	381.9	512.6
ODA to 0.7% of GNP*		77.2	164.4	264.5	378.3	511.5
4,000 Teachers		42.0	87.8	133.0	177.3	200.3
2,000 Gardai		48.4	63.2	79.3	106.4	135.8
Double Primary School Capitation*		7.6	16.7	27.7	40.8	56.5
Free 3rd-level fees for part-time students (means-tested)		25.4	26.9	28.5	30.3	32.1
Second-level Funding Equalisation		9.0	9.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Personal pensions for spouses in their own right*		16.1	33.6	52.7	73.5	96.0
Increase number of child psychologists in NEPS to 200		0.6	1.2	1.9	2.6	3.6
Maternity Leave - Additional 5 weeks paid		13.3	27.9	42.4	57.6	73.5
Double Respite Care Grant		6.0	14.0	24.5	38.3	56.2
Extend National Fuel Allowance Scheme to eligible carers		3.0	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.8
Free public transport for emigrant pensioners		5.0	5.3	5.6	6.0	6.3
Extending GP Services		15.0	15.9	16.9	17.9	18.9
2000 Hospital Consultants		70.0	148.4	236.0	333.5	441.9
500 New Public Hospital beds (1500 in total)		92.5	129.9	171.3	217.4	268.3
Local injury clinics		9.6	11.9	14.4	17.2	20.2
Step-down facilities		20.0	21.2	22.5	23.8	25.2
Children - 3 months before NTPF		5.0	5.3	5.6	6.0	6.3
Personal Health Check		70.0	111.5	118.2	125.3	132.8
Housing Measures - Stamp Duty and Mortgage Interest Relief	44.1	81.1	87.3	94.0	101.3	109.1
Community Development Fund		30.0	30.0	30.0	30.0	30.0
Landmark Peace Monument		5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Europe Day events		0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Emigrant Welfare*		1.6	3.6	6.1	9.1	12.7
Peace and Reconciliation*		0.2	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.0
Anti-Sectarianism		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
1916 Museum		9.5	10.1	2.2	2.4	2.5
Museum of Irish Literature		00.	0.0	7.3	7.7	2.5
General Contingency		148.6	141.0	132.8	124.0	114.6
Total Net Expenditure Increase	44.1	888.1	1,332.7	1,787.9	2,313.2	2,874.7

Note: * refers to cost of proposals above increase in base



Taxation Commitments	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Indexation					
Index Bands, PAYE and Personal Credits	400	975	1,605	2,331	3,177
Net Cost of Indexation	280	683	1,124	1,632	2,224
Tax Reforms					
Abolish PRSI Ceiling	-270	-318	-342	-369	-397
Halve A Rate PRSI	660	775	835	899	969
Reduce Self-Employed PRSI to 2%	202	237	255	275	296
Marginal Cut	155	255	275	296	319
Standard Cut	410	620	1,175	1,465	1,578
Home Carer Credit	45	70	75	81	87
Gross Total Tax Reforms	1,201	1,640	2,273	2,647	2,851
Net Total Tax Reforms	841	1,148	1,591	1,853	1,996
Annual Net Package Tax Indexation and Reforms	1,121	709	884	770	735
Net Total Indexation and Reforms	1,121	1,830	2,714	3,485	4,220

