Draft Programme for Government 2025

Securing Ireland's Future

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Securing Ireland's Future

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Introduction

At a time of geopolitical upheaval and challenges to democracy, the Irish people have given a significant mandate for a Government which can provide stability and deliver progress. Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Independents have come together in partnership to form a stable majority to deliver an ambitious programme and five Budgets.

The Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael parties, as well as the independent representatives, who will participate in and support the new government, are committed to delivering for all people and all regions across our shared island over the next five years.

This is a programme of investment and reform, backed by ambitious and credible actions, which will protect those things which our country values and relies upon, while also supporting significant progress in addressing critical social, economic, political, demographic and environmental challenges.

We commit to:

- Delivering a strong and stable economy, the homes that people need, providing high quality and accessible public services and the infrastructure required to sustain a growing society.

- Improving our competitiveness in a changing world; protecting jobs and supporting businesses and the agri-food sector; and taking the necessary actions to both prepare Irish enterprise for new challenges and to position Ireland ahead of emerging economic trends.

- Ensuring our communities thrive and making our villages, towns and cities safer; to support a caring society and to continue the focus on addressing poverty and social exclusion.

- Providing a step change in the supports and services required by people with disabilities.

- Investing further in a world class education system and affordable, accessible and high-quality childcare; improving transport services; and providing better healthcare.

- Balanced development for all regions and improving living standards across all parts of the country.

- Sustained action to tackle the climate crisis, to decarbonise the economy and harness the digital and AI revolution to deliver effective and modern public services and to grow the economy.

- Enhancing our position and influence in international affairs and ensuring that Ireland is a positive and active contributor to the European Union; and providing sustained action and focus to deliver the understanding and links which are essential to building a permanent peace and reconciliation between all parts of our island.

The goals that we have set are ambitious and they will be matched by a tireless focus on delivery. We are committed to working together on the basis of this shared programme to provide a secure, caring and progressive society for all.

Réamhrá

Agus cúrsaí geopholaitíochta ina gcíor thuathail agus dúshláin roimh an daonlathas, tá sainordú suntasach tugtha ag muintir na hÉireann le haghaidh Rialtas atá in ann cobhsaíocht a sholáthar agus dul chun cinn a sheachadadh. Tá Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael agus Ionadaithe Neamhspleácha tagtha le chéile i gcomhpháirtíocht chun tromlach seasmhach a chruthú chun clár uaillmhianach agus cúig Bhuiséad a sheachadadh.

Tá páirtithe Fhianna Fáil agus Fhine Gael, chomh maithe le hionadaithe neamhspleácha, a bheidh rannpháirteach sa rialtas nua agus a thacóidh leis, tiomanta beart a dhéanamh de réir a mbriathair do chách agus do gach uile réigiún ar fud ár n-oileán comhroinnte sna cúig bliana amach romhainn.

Is clár infheistíochta agus athchóirithe é seo, le bearta uaillmhianacha agus inchreidte chun tacú leis, lena gcosnófar na rudaí a bhfuil meas ag pobal ár dtíre orthu agus na rudaí a mbraitheann sí orthu, agus tacaíocht á tabhairt don dul chun cinn suntasach ó thaobh dul i ngleic le dúshláin fhíorthábhachtacha shóisialta, eacnamaíochta, pholaitíochta, déimeagrafacha agus chomhshaoil ag an am céanna.

Geallaimid an méid seo a leanas:

- Geilleagar láidir agus seasmhach a chur ar fáil, na tithe a theastaíonn ó dhaoine, seirbhísí poiblí d'ardchaighdeán agus inrochtana a sholáthar mar aon leis an mbonneagar is gá leis an tsochaí atá ag fás ag coinneáil ag imeacht.

- Feabhas a chur ar ár n-iomaíochas i ndomhan atá ag athrú, ag cosaint post agus ag tacú le gnólachtaí agus le hearnáil an agrai-bhia; agus ag déanamh na mbeart is gá chun fiontar na hÉireann a ullmhú le haghaidh dúshláin nua, agus chun Éire a chur chun tosaigh ar threochtaí eacnamaíochta atá ag teacht chun cinn.

- Cinnte a dhéanamh de go bhfuil ár bpobail faoi bhláth agus ár gcuid sráidbhailte, bailte agus cathracha a dhéanamh níos sábháilte; tacú le sochaí chomhbhách agus leanúint den bhéim ar aghaidh a thabhairt ar an mbochtaineacht agus ar an eisiamh sóisialta.

- Mór-athrú a chur ar fáil maidir leis na tacaíochtaí agus na seirbhísí a theastaíonn ó dhaoine atá faoi mhíchumas.

- Infheistíocht a dhéanamh i gcóras oideachais den chéad scoth agus i gcúram leanaí inacmhainne, inrochtana agus d'ardchaighdeán; feabhas a chur ar sheirbhísí iompair; agus cúram sláinte níos fearr a chur ar fáil.

- Forbairt chothrom i gcás na réigiún uile agus feabhas a chur ar chaighdeáin mhaireachtála ar fud gach cearn den tír.

- Gníomh marthanach a dhéanamh chun dul i ngleic leis an ngéarchéim aeráide, an geilleagar a dhícharbónú agus leas a bhaint as an réabhlóid dhigiteach agus IS chun seirbhísí poiblí éifeachtacha agus nua-aimseartha a sheachadadh agus chun an geilleagar a fhás.

- Ár staid agus ár dtionchar i ngnóthaí eachtracha a fheabhsú agus cinnte a dhéanamh de go gcuireann Éire go dearfach agus go gníomhach leis an Aontas Eorpach; agus gníomh agus fócas marthanach a chur ar fáil chun an tuiscint agus na naisc a sheachadadh atá ríthábhachtach chun síocháin agus athmhuintearas buan a chothú idir gach cearn dár n-oileán.

Tá na spriocanna atá leagtha síos againn uaillmhianach agus beidh béim sheasta ar an seachadadh ag gabháil leo. Táimid tiomanta de bheith ag obair lena chéile ar bhonn an chláir chomhroinnte seo chun sochaí sheasmhach, chomhbhách agus fhorásach a chur ar fáil do chách.

Growing our Economy

Growing our Economy

Ireland is a small, open trading economy; that openness has been a key pillar of our continued economic success. Through a strong foundation of Irish and multinational exporting companies, together with a highly skilled workforce and increased global trade, we have built a strong industrial base which has created jobs, grown exports, promoted innovation, and raised our standard of living.

We can never take that economic success for granted. The open economic model which we rely on, based on a strong enterprise economy, free trade, competitiveness, and innovation, is facing new headwinds which we must prepare for. The positive, global economic environment, which has benefited Ireland for many years, is no longer guaranteed.

To protect the future security of our economy, we will set out a plan to increase productivity and the competitiveness of our domestic and international businesses.

We will take actions to fully realise the economic potential of the digital and AI revolution, and the development of new clean technologies which will be key drivers of growth and the decarbonisation of our economy.

Ireland must be a champion of reform within the EU to ensure that economic growth and job creation is prioritised. Economic growth is not only essential to creating jobs and higher living standards, it is also essential to improving our public services.

This Programme for Government sets out a strong enterprise and fiscal framework which will prioritise economic and employment growth, competitiveness, fiscal responsibility, investment in innovation, energy and decarbonisation.

This Government will:

- Deliver a clear and credible macroeconomic and fiscal framework, prioritising continued economic resilience, through investment in capital spending and funds for future needs.
- Publish a new whole of Government Action Plan for Competitiveness and Productivity within 12 months, with a key focus on reform. This plan will cover industrial policy, reducing the cost and regulatory burden on business, investing in infrastructure, digital regulation and reform, energy reform, international trade and research and development, and innovation.
- Ensure that there is a targeted approach to supporting and developing key economic sectors, including a new strategy on semiconductors, and in areas

where we have a strong competitive advantage, including in pharma and medtech, ICT and digital, financial services and the agri-food sector.
- Work to ensure that Ireland becomes a global innovation leader, ensuring we are agile and Ireland is positioned to support fast-growing, new companies.
- Continue to build up our research capacity and to increase the level of research and development being undertaken in our enterprise base, ensuring that innovation is supported, from concept to commercialisation and scaling up.
- Publish and implement a new National Digital Strategy to fully realise the economic potential of the digital and AI revolution, and the development of new clean technologies which can be key drivers of growth and the decarbonisation of our economy.
- Use the resources of our diplomatic missions and agencies to deliver ambitious targets.
- Support a new US-based Economic Advisory panel which would be made up of senior Irish or Irish-linked decision makers in key business sectors.

Enterprise and Employment

- Developing Ireland's enterprise base will remain a key focus for Government over the next five years – from backing small businesses and start-ups, to scaling up indigenous firms and enhancing our attractiveness as a location for foreign direct investment. We will strive to reduce costs for business, cut through unnecessary bureaucracy, ensure access to finance and invest in vital infrastructure to help businesses succeed. If we are to sustain economic prosperity and continue to grow jobs, we must keep a laser focus on competitiveness and innovation over the next five years

300,000 Extra Jobs

This Government will:

- Target the creation of 300,000 extra jobs by 2030, supported by strategic investments, supportive enterprise policies, and a focus on fostering a vibrant economy

Competitiveness and Productivity

This Government will:

- Publish an Action Plan for Competitiveness and Productivity within 12 months, which will target making Ireland the most supportive environment for indigenous businesses and the most attractive location for startups and foreign investment. This action plan will include tax and wage policy, access to finance, education and training, energy and utility policy, infrastructure and digitisation.
- Publish Enterprise 2035 as a long-term ambition for enterprise growth and job creation over the coming decade. Engage with Irish SMEs, startups and exporters to review the supports available from our enterprise agencies.
- Assess all elements of labour market policy that impact on the viability of SMEs.
- Work to ensure that Ireland is the most secure location for data storage, management, and services within the EU.
- Recognise the importance of digital infrastructure to the current and future

growth of the Irish economy.
- Recognise the central role data centres play in contributing to economic growth and the enterprise economy, and ensure efficient grid usage, and that waste heat capture for district heating systems and other uses is prioritised.
- Work with likeminded EU member states to ensure the fair application of state aid rules.
- Boost participation in Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI) to increase competitiveness and productivity for Irish companies and create more jobs.
- Develop a new National Life Sciences Strategy to ensure that this important sector remains competitive and ensure Government adopts a coherent and ambitious approach to future opportunities.
- Shape the EU's competitiveness challenge in a manner that benefits both European and Irish citizens.
- Support an open, multilateral, rules-based trade system, promoting free trade policies and economic growth.
- Support an ambitious EU trade agenda, promoting new Free Trade Agreements, with proper assurances regarding sustainability, human rights and the protection of our agricultural sector.
- Ratify the CETA trade agreement, benefitting Irish SMEs.
- Work with other EU countries to protect the principles of EU economic policy centred on competitiveness, innovation, and a level playing field.
- Work to deepen the EU Single Market and create a genuine digital single market.
- Work with EU partners to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy in EU Directives and Regulations to facilitate business operations.
- Publish and resource new regional enterprise plans and ensure detailed consultation with local authorities, regional assemblies, enterprise agencies, higher education bodies, industry and others.
- Reform the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme to ensure it is responsive in meeting local needs.
- Bring forward an updated legal framework for the co-operative model.
- Consider the development of economic Strategic Development Zones in the regions.

Supporting Small Business, Hospitality and Retail

- The Government will bring forward measures to support SMEs, in particular the retail and hospitality sectors, acknowledging the increased cost pressures on these sectors and this will entail changes to VAT, PRSI and other measures. These measures will be implemented as part of the normal budget process.

This Government will:

- Establish a new Small Business Unit in the Department to back small business, ensuring they have support and a dedicated focus in government. Set up a Cost of Business Advisory Forum. This Forum will include a review of all business taxes and costs and ensure businesses are consulted before new legislation or policies are introduced that impact small businesses.
- Rigorously implement the SME test to scrutinise every new piece of legislation and regulation for its impact on SMEs, ensuring that any obligations that increase business costs are phased in and that there is consideration of the broader implications of any decisions affecting businesses across government.
- Undertake a look-back exercise to identify regulations that are now redundant to reduce unnecessary

red tape, asking each government department and regulatory agency to submit a list of such regulations.
- Conduct a comprehensive review to assess the cost structures for SME and family-owned businesses to identify areas where costs can be reduced.
- Ensure a skilled labour force by providing practical support for on-the-job training and apprenticeship schemes and consider additional measures to support SMEs in accessing training funded by the NTF and reduce the costs associated with taking on apprentices.
- Ensure Local Enterprise Offices are resourced to help local businesses and adjust Enterprise Ireland's mandate to better support small indigenous exporters and enhance its funding model. Further consider the role of local authorities in supporting local SMEs.
- Review the operation of Local Enterprise Offices and publish a new National Strategy within 12 months.
- Assist businesses in adopting sustainable practices and digital technologies and work to support policies that increase retail digitalisation.
- Take steps to tackle retail crime (see Justice section for further information).
- Promote awareness of the Small Companies Administrative Rescue Process (SCARP) to protect viable jobs and businesses.
- Continue to support InterTrade Ireland in helping SME businesses to identify and pursue public procurement opportunities across the island of Ireland.
- Efficiently implement the ICOB scheme of 2024.

Supporting Ireland's Entrepreneurs and Start-Ups

This Government will:

- Consider the development of a national start-up hub for entrepreneurs to engage with all government departments and agencies, fast-track the start-up process, and collaborate with fellow entrepreneurs.
- Support the National Digital Research Centre (NDRC) and transfer responsibility to the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment.
- Support the National Enterprise Hub and ensure seamless access for SMEs.
- Consider the development of a new fund structure to de-risk investment in start-ups and scale-ups.
- Promote the uptake of the new Enterprise Ireland €250m Seed and Venture Capital Scheme.
- Explore options to further incentivise venture capitalists to invest in local companies. This aims to attract more international capital, positioning Ireland as a prime location for venture capital investment.
- Develop an all-island innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Continue to review and simplify the current Business and Enterprise Tax system to promote innovation and economic growth.
- Maintain support for the Angel Investment Scheme.
- Scale up Enterprise Ireland's global presence to support Irish businesses in key markets.
- Examine the regularity of SME reporting and filing requirements.
- Support SMEs to adopt and implement best practice for Cyber Security.
- Work closely with the Irish Stock Exchange to ensure future growth, focusing particularly on small-to-medium-sized fast-growing companies.

Helping Irish Companies Scale Globally and attracting more inward investment

This Government will:

- Work closely with IDA Ireland to publish a new five-year strategy to 2030, planning for global changes and opportunities, with a particular focus on digitalisation and sustainability.
- Work with IDA Ireland to target at least half of IDA investments outside of Dublin and expand our network of advanced manufacturing facilities.
- Facilitate collaboration between larger FDI companies and indigenous firms, particularly focusing on digitisation and the green transition.
- Support new clusters to facilitate collaboration and collective action among related companies, as well as partnerships with higher education institutions and public sector bodies.
- Support efforts to help domestic Irish businesses scale up, enabling more Irish companies to grow internationally while retaining a substantial workforce in Ireland and abroad.
- Examine options to enhance the Research and Development Tax Credit, reward innovation and digitalisation and ensure Ireland has the global best in class incentive to encourage innovation by domestic and international companies.
- Progress and prioritise the Irish National Semiconductor Strategy to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the European Chips Act.
- Target a 50% increase in large Irish exporters and 2,500 additional Irish-owned exporters by 2030.
- Launch new calls under the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) to promote collaboration between Ireland's world-class research base and industry to pioneer new technologies and support the emergence of innovative start-ups.
- Review and consider expansion of the IDA land bank, including consideration of new advanced manufacturing facilities in strategic, regional locations, and developing next generation, strategic sites.
- Expedite the publication of a Private Wires Policy Framework.
- Support Irish SMEs to access the supply chains of large Multi-National Companies that are based in Ireland.
- Support intellectual property rights for medicines to drive innovation and competitiveness.
- Work to progress recommendations of the Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce, which are central to renewable energy planning, recognising the region's potential.

Protecting Consumers

This Government will:

- Commence an independent review examining the role of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission in protecting and enhancing consumer protection. This will examine the further strengthening of legislation and the creation of two separate agencies to better deliver against these mandates of competition and consumer protection.
- Ensure a future structure better delivers the advocacy, information and advice needs of consumers.
- Ensure that legislation and guidelines regarding the disclosure of commercial content by online influencers are up-to-date and effective.
- Strengthen competition by promoting price transparency in all sectors.

Supporting Workers

This Government will:

- Recognise the work of the independent Low Pay Commission, ensuring fair wages whilst also supporting the viability of small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Support the central role of the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court in industrial relations and employment rights.
- Work to promote a diverse and equal workforce for all sections of society, including from minority or disadvantaged communities.
- Develop a Code of Practice to support the hiring of workers with a disability.
- Work with employers and across Government to improve employment of people with disabilities and ensure that supports for entrepreneurs and enterprise are accessible to all, including people with disabilities with a goal of reaching at least the EU average.
- Ensure citizens with disabilities can access employment on an equal basis to others by focussing on building skills, capacity and independence, and develop bridges from special schools into employment.
- Continue to ensure employers make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities in the workplace.
- Continue to promote the target of at least 40% for representation of each gender on boards to ensure Ireland remains aligned with international gender balance norms.
- Promote flexible working arrangements that benefit both workers and employers, ensuring a balanced approach.
- Publish an Action Plan for collective bargaining in 2025 in line with our commitments under the EU Directive.
- Implement the Department's actions under the Zero Tolerance Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Strategy.

Social Entrepreneurship

This Government will:

- Continue to support the vital role of social entrepreneurship, recognising its value in the local economy and society.
- Review the vital supports available for social enterprises from State Bodies.
- Establish a forum to promote a more integrated approach to social entrepreneurship across government departments and build on Ireland's first National Social Enterprise Policy.
- Consider an annual Social Enterprise Empowerment and Development allocation (SEED) to unlock the potential of the social enterprise sector for sustainable job creation, affordable childcare provision and community services.

Public Finances

We recognise that a strong economy is essential to a healthy and thriving country and we are dedicated to managing the public finances responsibly and equitably for our citizens. Building and protecting economic prosperity is central to social cohesion, delivering high-quality public services and achieving our environmental objectives.

The decisions of the previous government allowed our country to successfully overcome a series of major, international, economic shocks. Our pro-European and pro enterprise economic model has resulted in our present position of economic strength with full employment, falling debt and inflation levels, significant investment in our two long term funds and budget surpluses.

We are acutely aware of the changing global and geopolitical landscape which poses risks to our economic strengths. As an open trading economy, Ireland is more exposed to policy changes, so the economic decisions we make now are crucial to ensuring how we best protect and safeguard our country and our people for the years and decades ahead.

Our core principles for managing the public finances over the next five years will be to:

- Increase public sector investment to address infrastructural deficits including using windfall receipts to address strategic gaps in key areas.
- Build up the two long term savings funds in preparation for fiscal challenges including demographic changes, climate resilience and dealing with future shocks.
- Run Budget surpluses and fund appropriate levels of current and capital expenditure growth to meet the needs of our people and address the challenges of our growing population.
- Run progressive budgets through the lifetime of the government.
- Reduce public debt as a share of national income.

Our commitments for the management of our public finances to safeguard our country are:

- Prepare and submit a new Medium Term Fiscal Plan setting out sustainable budgetary plans for the next five years. Setting out a budgetary path, the Plan will provide an anchor to support sustainable public finances and the delivery of progress on key social and economic priorities of Government, including the protection of the long-term prospects of our country.
- The Plan will reflect the choices to be made in relation to tax and expenditure policy (taking account of both voted and non-voted expenditure) to support economic and societal growth and development. It will be published at the same time as the Summer Economic Statement in mid-2025.
- Implement a pro-enterprise tax policy, supporting long term investment in high quality jobs.
- Prioritise early review of the National Development Plan which will be completed in July 2025.
- The review of the National Development Plan will encompass all public capital investment and will utilise State funds (including the Apple Escrow Fund, other share sales, broader State funds including the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund) to support increased capital investment levels in housing including funding the LDA, and will improve our infrastructure, especially energy, water, transport and health digitalisation.
- Commit to fully funding the Future Ireland Fund (FIF) and the Infrastructure, Climate, Nature Fund (ICNF) as set down in legislation.
- Following the completion of the existing agreement, seek to negotiate a new national wage deal to strengthen our public services, drive public service reform and recognise the contribution of workers in the delivery of public services.

Taxation Priorities

This Government will:

- Maintain a broad tax base to guard against the need for counter-cyclical fiscal policy in the event of a downturn and to prepare for future budgetary challenges relating to population aging.
- Implement progressive changes in taxation if the economy remains strong, including indexing credits and bands to prevent an increase in the real burden of income tax.
- Continue to engage constructively

on international tax reform through the OECD process, recognising the need for our corporate taxation policy to reflect the globalised nature of trade and industry. Maintain a tax system that supports innovation and entrepreneurship to ensure that Ireland remains an attractive place to sustain and grow an existing business or to start and scale up a new business.
- Acknowledging the increased energy cost pressures on households and businesses, bring forward taxation measures to help contain energy costs, including with regard to VAT.

Managing the public finances in a downturn

In the event of an economic downturn and unexpected deterioration in the public finances:

- We would maintain capital spending to support the continued growth of the economy.
- We would also postpone changes to income tax credits or bands, as we did in Budget 2021.
- We would work to protect the funding of existing level of public service delivery.

Financial services & Banking

Ireland has a world leading financial services sector supporting employment, driving economic activity and attracting investment. It is essential the sector is supported to innovate, enhance its competitiveness and take advantage of opportunities in new areas like fintech and green financing. The Government also commits to further action to drive down insurance costs impacting households, motorists and businesses, to support our credit union sector and tackle fraud to protect our citizens.

This Government will:

- Progress and publish an implementation plan for consideration in Budget 2026 taking into consideration the Funds Review recommendations to unlock retail investment and opportunities to grow this sector in Ireland.
- Create 9,000 new jobs in international financial services by 2030. This ambitious target will drive growth and enhance Ireland's reputation in the global market.
- Continue to implement the Ireland for Finance Strategy and develop a new strategy for the period 2026 - 2030 seeking to further build on the success of the sector. This will have a particular focus on the further development of the sustainable finance sector.
- Explore opportunities to enhance the Irish Stock Exchange as a vital source of equity and growth for indigenous businesses.
- Maintain access to cash and support its continued acceptance in our economy.
- Complete the task of normalising the domestic banking system to best serve the interests of the economy.
- Ensure best practice is maintained in relation to the Central Bank of Ireland's independent oversight and supervision of the financial sector in Ireland.
- Publish a national financial literacy strategy to support improved financial knowledge and understanding.
- Collaborate with industry leaders to establish a National Fintech Hub, fostering innovation and supporting fintech initiatives.
- Simplify and modernise our regulatory framework to ensure Ireland remains competitive within the EU and globally, facilitating continued investment.
- Attract private market investment into the economy through an enhanced regulatory framework, promoting regional growth and improving financial futures for Irish citizens.

- Actively encourage the development of regional financial services centres across the country.
- Support the Women in Finance Charter to promote gender diversity and inclusion within the financial services sector and across the public sector.
- Enhance Ireland's funds and asset management offerings to position Ireland as a leading hub for Sustainable and Green Finance, catering to evolving investor needs and the drive for better access to sustainable capital.
- Continue to support Abhaile, the National Mortgage Arrears Resolution Service, to help people out of mortgage arrears and ensure the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears is enforced.
- Support the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman in its critical role in supporting customers to deal with complaints in a fair, transparent and timely manner.
- Advance the Savings and Investment Union to enhance investment opportunities across Europe.

Insurance

This Government will:

- Retain a dedicated minister for Financial Services, Credit Unions and Insurance. This role will ensure focused oversight and advocacy for insurance reform.
- Publish a new Action Plan for Insurance Reform with a focus on encouraging further competition in the market and working with stakeholders to enhance transparency and affordability across all types of insurance.
- Ensure adequate competition and a fair market in respect of underwriters and brokers.
- Expand/Support the Office for the Promotion of Competition in the Insurance Market to ensure Ireland remains an attractive market for insurance and develop a subgroup to assist existing insurers in expanding their offerings.
- Legislate for a 'Right to be Forgotten' for cancer survivors, requiring insurers to disregard a cancer diagnosis where treatment ended more than 7 years prior to application (or more than 5 years if the applicant was under 18 at the time of diagnosis), taking account of EU requirements.
- Introduce tougher penalties for those who commit insurance fraud.
- Maintain the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Insurance Reform to ensure that insurance issues continue to receive a high level of focus and cross-government coordination.
- Continue work to develop new guidelines to set clear rates and scales of fees for all forms of civil litigation and take further steps to resolve cases outside of court, promoting transparency, competitiveness and fairness in legal costs.
- Proactively engage with the international insurance market, including through trade missions, to continue to attract more competition.
- Facilitate faster data release from the National Claims Information Database to ensure that data collected is readily available to support market transparency.

Credit Unions

This Government will:

- Retain a dedicated minister for Financial Services, Credit Unions and Insurance.
- Position credit unions as community-centric financial institutions integral to their local communities, small businesses and farmers.
- Engage with the Central Bank to review credit union lending limits to enhance their ability to serve members.

- Support the digital transition for credit unions in adopting new technologies and to comply with the Digital Operational Resilience Act.
- Expand the role of Ireland's credit union sector in the housing market.
- Amend the legislation to bring the credit union sector into the scope of the Dormant Accounts Act.
- Draft a five-year strategy for the credit union sector to ensure they can fully leverage new opportunities.

Tackling fraud

This Government will:

- Working in collaboration with relevant agencies and industry stakeholders, act on the measures contained in the National Payment Strategy to effectively tackle fraud including the establishment of a fraud database.
- Examine the feasibility of implementing an SMS scam filter that functions like email spam filters to help reduce scam messages.
- Advocate for national and EU legislation that permits online platforms to only advertise financial products from companies regulated by their competent national authority, helping to eliminate fake endorsements.

Tourism

Strengthening Ireland's Tourism Sector

This Government is committed to growing Ireland's tourism industry. Through support for Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland, we want to showcase Ireland as a high-quality and accessible destination for both national and international visitors.

Expanding our tourism offering

This Government will:

- Work with Fáilte Ireland to develop a balanced regional spread of tourism throughout the country, promoting and advancing the Hidden Heartlands, Ireland's Ancient East, the Wild Atlantic Way and Dublin.
- Launch the Year of the Invitation, extending a global invitation for visitors to reconnect with Ireland, following on from the success of The Gathering in 2013. This event will inspire local communities to organise welcoming events, celebrating Irish culture and reconnecting with the global diaspora.
- Invest in regenerative tourism projects in the Midlands with the help of the EU Just Transition Fund.
- Develop the tourism potential of lands in State ownership.
- Develop a strategy to sustainably promote the 'Ireland of Islands' as a unique tourist experience, marketing our small island destinations.
- Publish and implement a new national tourism policy to 2030, setting out a vision to grow visitor and employment numbers in the sector across Ireland.

- Work to develop long-term, sustainable, well-paid careers in the tourism industry, and expand courses in tourism and hospitality. This will be achieved by engagement with the Department of Further and Higher Education as they increase investment in this sector, utilising the National Training Fund.
- Support and expand our food and beverage tourism offerings, showcasing the best of local produce.

Improving Access to Ireland's tourism destinations

This Government will:

- Conduct a review of National Aviation Policy to maximise use of our airports. (See Transport section for more detail).
- Work with local authorities and national bodies to improve public transport options and infrastructure to key tourism spots, making travel more convenient for visitors.
- Continue the development of greenways and cycle routes across Ireland expanding scenic options for tourists.
- Collaborate with partners north and south of the border to expand blueways, enhancing water-based tourism and recreational opportunities.
- Work with local authorities and Fáilte Ireland to enhance and upgrade the Wild Atlantic Way and develop a new and innovative coastal route along the East and South coast.

Unlocking Rural Ireland's Tourism Potential

One of rural Ireland's greatest strengths is its stunning natural amenities. Every county has its own unique natural assets from forest parks, mountain trails, rivers, greenways, bogs and beaches. We have seen the huge economic benefits that major Greenway projects have delivered for local towns and villages. There is huge untapped potential in other parts of the country to develop similar amenities and market these to domestic and international visitors.

This Government will:

- Develop a connected network of greenways and cycle routes across Ireland.
- Develop more blueway projects across the country enhancing water-based tourism and recreational opportunities.
- Continue to invest in key regional tourism projects under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.
- Through the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme invest in the development of new walking trails, cycle ways, tidal pools and other unique amenities at local level.
- Work with Coillte to continue to invest and upgrade visitor amenities at our Forest Parks across the country.
- Working in partnership with landowners, continue to expand and increase investment in the National Walks Scheme creating flagship walking and hiking trails across the country.
- Ensure that the LEADER Programme continues to have a strong focus on Rural Tourism.

Agriculture and Food

Farmers are the custodians of our landscape, ensuring sustainable food production for a growing world population as well as a major driver of the rural economy.

This Government will support farmers and the agri-food sector by using every policy lever available and ensure vital farm payments are protected and expanded.

As Ireland will hold the EU presidency in 2026, protecting farmers and farming at EU level will be an absolute priority for this government in terms of the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Protecting and enhancing farm incomes

Strengthening farm incomes for our 130,000 family farms is an absolute priority for this Government. We will continue to support the suckler, beef, dairy, sheep, pig, poultry, tillage, horticulture and organics sectors along with vital farm schemes.

Sucklers/Beef

The Government will:

- Increase scheme supports for suckler farmers over a five-year term in office and ensure straightforward measures to encourage uptake.
- Financially incentivise the use of genetically superior beef AI/stock bulls.
- Promote the Protected Geographical Indicator (PGI) for Irish Grass Fed beef as a premium brand in overseas markets, while developing new PGIs to enhance the value of Irish food exports.

Sheep

The Government will:

- Increase scheme supports for sheep farmers over a five-year term in office and ensure straightforward measures to encourage uptake.
- Examine the feasibility of a scouring plant for wool in developing an Irish wool brand.

Tillage

The Government will:

- Invest significantly in the tillage sector over five years to maintain and grow the sector.
- Examine facilities for processing of Irish crops and explore openings for oilseed and milling wheat processing.

Dairy

The Government will:

- Increase scheme support to the Dairy Beef scheme over a five-year term in office and ensure straightforward measures to encourage uptake.
- Support dairy-beef systems by implementing the Dairy Calf to Beef action plan.

Poultry and Pigs

The Government will:

- Increase market access for poultry and pig products, while funding capital investments in these sectors in order to improve animal health and welfare.

Horticulture

The Government will:

- Increase capital investment support via the Horticultural Grant.
- Work to increase new people into the sector, providing more education and training places.
- Recognise Irish strawberries as a heritage crop and ensure their continued production.

- Assist in the upgrading of production facilities, particularly glass houses, to ensure efficient production systems and reduction in energy usage.
- Maintain access to plant protection products while protecting public and animal health.

Organics

This Government will:

- Continue to support the promotion and marketing of organic products in order to increase returns to producers.
- Maintain the Organic Farming Scheme.

Protecting important farm supports

The Government will:

- Continue to fund the vital income support provided through the Areas of Natural Constraints scheme to farmers in designated areas who face significant hardship.
- Review payment rates on designated land under the Farm Plan Scheme.
- Review investment items and reference costs under the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS).
- Examine a mechanism to engage with stakeholders on the design of national agriculture schemes.
- As part of the development of the next CAP, ensure schemes fully consider the impact of designation of land and seek to reflect the financial impact of designation of land on farmers in the framing of future CAP schemes.

A strong CAP that works for farmers

This Government will:

- Fight at EU level for a fully supported CAP with an increased budget.
- Work at EU level to simplify the CAP post 2027, ensuring simplified payments for farmers, along with balanced and proportionate controls.
- Reduce the administrative burden and red tape that famers encounter by ensuring flexibility in the design of schemes and stakeholder input at all times.
- Work at EU level to secure new funding streams, which are separate to CAP, to support farmers in meeting environmental responsibilities.
- Ensure access to a farm capital investment scheme.
- Accelerate IT capabilities in the Department of Agriculture in order to enhance systems and avoid payment delays.

Supporting inter-generational farm succession

This Government will:

- Ensure a Farm Succession Scheme that supports generational renewal.
- Act on the recommendations of the Commission on Generational Renewal in Farming who are examining the current policy framework, along with available policy tools and supports available to encourage young people into the sector.
- Update the eligibility criteria for the Farm Succession Partnership tax credit by revamping support and eligibility criteria.
- Review the eligibility criteria for the Succession Planning Advice Grant to ensure better take-up.
- Examine young farmers' financing options, which entails targeted installation aid or low-interest loans.
- Continue the current array of key agricultural tax reliefs.
- Support farm transfers by reviewing the tax-free threshold for Capital

Acquisitions Tax.
- Ensure Ireland remains an exemplar in agricultural education by investing in agricultural colleges and facilities.

Supporting farm families

This Government will:
- Work with the Department of Health to examine the Fair Deal Scheme in order to ensure it does not impede succession planning and recognises the distinctive position of agricultural land.
- Deliver a scheme that recognises the category of farmers known as the 'Forgotten Farmers'.
- Increase the Traditional Farm Buildings grant.
- Ensure sufficient employment permits to support the agri food sector including the equine, dairy, horticulture, fish and food processing industries.

Retain the Nitrates Derogation at EU level

This government will do everything within its power to make the case at EU level to secure the retention of the Nitrates Derogation given our unique grass-based production model. We will work with famers, industry, state agencies and local authorities to develop evidence-based solutions to assist farmers in improving water quality.

This Government will:
- Establish a Cabinet Committee on Water Quality chaired by the Taoiseach to coordinate water quality improvements across all sectors.
- Work with farmers and industry to secure Ireland's nitrates derogation at EU level, by implementing the Nitrates Derogation Renewal Plan in support of retention.
- Expand the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP).
- Continue to support the EIP Farming for Water scheme by increasing funding. This vital scheme improves water quality in priority areas nationally and directly aids farmers with advice, support and resources.
- Enhance collaboration on water testing by improving partnerships between farmers, Teagasc and the EPA in order to uphold water quality.

Harnessing renewable energy in the Agriculture Sector

This Government will:
- Reward farmers for producing energy for their private use or by selling excess energy to the electricity grid to diversify their income.
- Examine community-led ownership models for renewable energy production as an additional income stream for farmers.
- Promote solar uptake on farms and continue the 60% TAMS grant to support farmers to install solar PV systems.
- Introduce planning guidelines for solar farms and provide certainty in the development of solar energy in agriculture.
- Offer financial incentives for the National Biomethane Strategy. We will target the production of up to 5.7 Tera Watt Hour (TWh) of biomethane by 2030.

Opening new markets and increased transparency in the food supply chain

This Government will:
- Accelerate work in opening up new markets for Irish food products.
- Update and introduce a new food

strategy to succeed Food Vision 2030 in consultation with farmer and industry stakeholders.
- Give An Rialálaí Agraibhia (the Agri-Food Regulator) enhanced powers to ensuring transparency in the food supply chain with regard to providing market information.
- Work with like-minded EU countries to stand up for Irish farmers and defend our interests in opposing the current Mercosur trade deal.
- Protect vital live export markets as an important income source, while maintaining the highest animal welfare standards.

Driving food security and sustainability forward together

We will support the Irish agricultural sector so that it continues to be a world leader in carbon-efficient food production.

This Government will:
- Assign funds from the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund to the agricultural sector.
- Ensure that all measures under the Nature Restoration Law (NRL) will be completely voluntary for farmers.
- Work intensely to ensure that rewetted and restored lands remain eligible for CAP payments and ensure dedicated funding streams for voluntary actions.
- Ensure there is adequate farmer representation on the Nature Restoration advisory committee.
- Progress Ireland's Nature Restoration Plan and ensure restoration actions on State lands.
- Complete the second phase of the Land Use Review, which aims to balance environmental, social and economic consideration.
- Follow through on the findings of the review of ACRES to address challenges in its operation. We will ensure that this €1.5 billion flagship agri-environmental programme continues to provide an important income support to farm families, while improving biodiversity.
- Continue to acknowledge the special economic and social role of agriculture and the distinct characteristics of biogenic methane and support the progress made to date by farmers and industry in reducing emissions.
- Maintain support to farmers on High Nature Value lands.
- Introduce a National Framework for Carbon Farming to guide the development of a Carbon Farming Scheme to strengthen farm incomes.
- Maximise soil health and fertility, such as through the Soil Sampling Scheme.
- Continue funds supports to farmers to invest in capital infrastructure including nutrient storage.

Women in agriculture

This Government will:
- Examine potential barriers for women farmers within the taxation system to ensure greater inclusivity and fairness.
- Implement the National Women in Agriculture Action Plan to support gender equality including:
  * Promote female succession.
  * Liaise with Revenue to address any taxation barriers to female participation.

Income Volatility Tool

This Government will:
- Examine a new farm income volatility taxation measure to safeguard farmers from markets rising and falling.

Strengthening animal welfare

This Government will:

- Introduce more robust sanctions for animal welfare violations and ensure inspection teams are well-resourced in carrying out their enforcement role.
- Maintain premier animal welfare standards by advancing a zero-tolerance culture in animal care and safety.
- Increase funding to animal welfare groups.
- Upgrade regional veterinary laboratories.

Equine and Greyhound sectors

This Government will:

- Continue to support our equine sector's status as a global leader and deliver on key strategic infrastructure projects.
- Support the development of the sport horse sector. Enhance the marketing and breeding of Irish sport horses.
- Ensure the continued support to the Horse and Greyhound Fund, considering the vital economic and social contribution generated by these sectors in rural areas.
- Ensure that Rásaíocht Con Éireann continues to provide financial support for the Irish Retired Greyhound Trust (IRGT) and contributes to rehoming greyhounds.
- Make additional resources available to enhance both animal welfare and traceability in our equine and greyhound industry.
- Bring forward a Control of Horses Bill to modernise legislation in this area and to ensure a consistent approach to enforcement powers around detention, notice and release of stray horses seized by local authorities.

Farm safety

This Government will:

- Continue to prioritise improvements in farm safety, health and well-being through strengthened supports.
- Place a specific focus on farmer mental health and well-being, recognising the unique challenges faced by the sector.
- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing across the farming sector.

Innovation in Agriculture, Food, and the Marine

This Government will:

- Support investment in research and development in the agtech and food sectors to help deliver advancements and encourage collaboration.
- Develop Ireland's bioeconomy through a coordinated approach that harnesses Ireland's natural resources and competitive advantage.
- Support advancements around food and nutrition through support for food hubs and other initiatives that encourage innovation in food production and processing.
- Ensure a comprehensive strategy to support local and artisan food and drink producers in developing Irish food culture and production.

National TB Eradication Strategy

This Government will:

- Review and update the National TB 2030 Eradication Strategy by working in collaboration with farmers and industry.
- Ensure appropriate staffing of the Wildlife Control Programme and resource regional veterinary offices to carry out this vital work.
- Ensure the Irish Deer Management Strategy Group action plan is sufficiently resourced.

Foresty

This government will continue to support the forestry sector and provide attractive financial incentives to farmers to plant given the beneficial environmental impact.

This Government will:

- Ensure that our €1.3 billion Forestry Programme delivers a licensing system that is effective, while continuing to provide and promote financial incentives for farmers to plant.
- Review upfront planting costs.
- Ensure a balanced mix of tree types, including a strong diversity of the species planted, with an increased proportion of broadleaves nationally. Work to develop more commercially viable crops.
- Continue to implement the current Forestry Programme.
- Work with all stakeholders to remove any barriers to plant and fell trees within the current Forestry Programme.
- Work collaboratively with the ESB to support and accelerate the timber and vegetation clearance programme.
- Continue to support the Ash Dieback scheme.
- Continue to promote and ensure financial support for farmers engaging in Agroforestry.

Veterinary and Farm Contracting Services

This Government will:

- Expand the number of trained vets through the enlargement of our veterinary education footprint.
- Assess the requirement for an additional veterinary college.
- Set up a farm contracting working group to consider training, support and taxation measures.

Fisheries and the Marine

We deeply value the role of fisheries in the future of our country and the communities that rely on this activity for their livelihood.

We will stand up for fisheries in quota negotiations to return the maximum yield, while maintaining stock levels according to the latest scientific evidence.

We will also maintain support for the inshore fishing sector, aquaculture as well investing in our State Fishery Harbour Centres and public marine infrastructure.

This Government will:

- Re-establish a Minister of State for Fisheries/Marine who will work closely with the Cabinet Minister.
- Publish a five-year Fisheries Sector strategy that will include an examination of the processing sector.
- Continue to support and promote improvements in fisheries and aquaculture.
- Examine incentives for fishers to land their catch in Irish ports, with a view to support the domestic processing sector.
- Fight at EU level for Common Fisheries Policy reforms that ensure fairer quotas for Irish fishers and due recognition is given to the proportion of fish species caught in Irish waters.
- Promote the sustainability of fish stocks, while ensuring sufficient supply of species to allow fishers into the future derive a fair return.
- Liaise with fishing stakeholders and request that Revenue examine the current tax allowances for the sector and bring forward recommendations on how the taxation system can further support its progression.

- Explore fleet adjustment measures and consider any changes given the ever-evolving scientific advice on fish stocks.
- Support the Seafood/Offshore Renewable Energy Working Group in providing an important bridge to facilitate discussion on issues arising from the interaction of these sectors, and to encourage open dialogue between stakeholders.
- Defend Irish Fishing interests ahead of the 2026 review of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement and in discussions on third countries.
- Work at EU level to increase supports to the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.
- Ensure the promotion of marine education courses and degree programmes with a view to increasing enrolments.

Coastal Communities

This Government will:

- Ensure the diversification of coastal economies and establish new openings beyond traditional industries.
- Support coastal communities towards benefitting from the development of offshore renewable energy projects.
- Review and strengthen conservation measures for marine ecosystems and wildlife. We will also expand Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)and establish wildlife sanctuaries.
- Continue to support the sustainable development of our aquaculture sector and modernise and streamline aquaculture licencing in the State through legislation changes.
- Set up a Maritime Regeneration, Development and Conservation Fund. This fund will support harbours, marinas, and tourism development as well as actions to address coastal erosion.
- Liaise with Fáilte Ireland to launch a Marine Tourism Strategy. This will be aimed at drawing domestic and international tourists to our coastal villages.
- Market eco-tourism by providing support to wildlife activities such as whale and dolphin watching. We will also safeguard marine species while expanding the tourism industry.
- Establish initiatives that will protect our maritime cultural heritage.

Delivery and Reform

Delivery and Reform

Public Expenditure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation

Ireland has a strong economy and has full employment. Our life expectancy is one of the highest in Europe and we have a highly educated workforce.

The State plays an essential role in people's daily lives, supporting them with vital public services in areas such as welfare, health, education, and security. We must ensure that these services meet the needs of our citizens in all the ways in which they depend on the support of the State.

The number of people living in Ireland is estimated to exceed six million by 2030. As our population grows, it is essential that people can continue to avail of those public services when they need them, in a timely and efficient manner, through increased access and improved delivery. This will mean better use of data to plan and provide for the maintenance of existing levels of services and meeting changing demographics.

In the past five years there has been more than €65 billion invested in capital infrastructure projects across our country to improve people's lives. This Government is very aware that we need to do more to improve our country's infrastructure and to meet population growth.

We want to ensure that projects are delivered in a timely manner and that value for money is always paramount.

This Government will:

- Establish a new Unit for Future Planning to forecast demographic changes and ensure accurate estimates of the demand for essential services and employment.
- Work to lower the cost of services for users and for the State itself by ensuring there is a focus on reform at the heart of all Government decision making to deliver best use of resources and to deliver best outcomes for people and communities.
- Transform our public services by expanding the services to meet the demands of a rapidly growing population and applying the latest technologies and maximising the potential benefits of AI to better plan for and deliver those services.
- Empower people to access a host of public services easily, whether online or in person including through

enhanced digital platforms. Ensure the integration of digital services across government departments as an alternative access channel for users, including through continued investment in the Digitalisation of Life Events and the Digital Wallet, and establish a single digital unit to enhance the delivery of public services online.
- Support the work of the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) in the digitalisation of public services.

Value for Money in State Spending

Our country has a large public and civil service, and they do tremendous work across the country on a 24/7 basis. The political and administrative systems work closely together to implement government priorities, and it is important that there is administrative and political accountability.

It is essential that public projects are an efficient use of taxpayers' contributions. As we plan for increased capital investment, a focus on value for money is even more critical. While many projects are completed on time and within budget, we must ensure that all projects are delivered effectively – both for those who will use them and for the taxpayer.

This Government will improve how public services are delivered by improving investment, culture and productivity. We will also heavily invest in modern technologies and digitalisation to enable us to improve services.

This Government will:
- Support the work of the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) to provide critical economic and value-for-money analysis.
- Review the public procurement process to make it more transparent and work to ensure greater participation from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ireland in the procurement process.
- Deliver necessary improvements in how government departments report capital spending on an annual basis to ensure greater transparency and oversight of expenditure on a regional basis. We will consider the need for statutory reporting obligations, as appropriate. Continue to support external oversight of the National Development Plan, including the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board and the Major Projects Assurance Group.
- Ensure the Office of Public Works (OPW) and its structures deliver best value for money outcomes on all projects.
- Promote the 'Where Your Money Goes' website so that citizens are informed as how their money is being spent.

Staffing and reforming a Public Sector for the Future

We recognise the critical role that public sector workers play in delivering essential services. Successive public pay agreements have acknowledged their contributions and promoted stability in industrial relations. In line with the future pay agreements, we will continue to focus on a reform agenda, ensuring that our public and civil service evolves to meet the needs of modern Ireland, facilitating the delivery of improved public services.

We will continue to ensure that the civil and public service attracts and retains the best and the brightest, working for the State.

This Government will:
- Negotiate a new public sector pay deal, linked to a reform agenda, to succeed the existing deal which recognises the central contribution of workers in the delivery of better public services.

- Broaden the experience of those working in the public service by further improving structures for talent development.
- Continue to support the apprenticeship model within the civil service to support skill development and recruitment.
- Offer a paid internship programme targeted at underrepresented groups and individuals to provide them with valuable experience in government departments.
- Undertake a programme of workforce planning to identify the optimal staffing model within the public sector to meet the needs of our changing demographics.
- Review the Civil Service Blended Working Policy Framework and consider how the implementation of this approach best delivers public services and supports the productivity of the public sector.
- Implement the Civil Regulation and Public Service Management (Amendment) Bill.
- Support the upskilling of public sector workers to ensure that they have the digital skills to enhance service delivery, particularly in areas such as data utilisation, AI integration, and user-friendly design.
- Ensure that cash is accepted by public bodies.
- Complete the review of the Freedom of Information Act and consider any proposed recommendations.

Our Digital Future

Ireland as a Leader in the Digital Economy and Artificial Intelligence

The Government is committed to ensuring that Ireland is a leader in the digital economy and artificial intelligence.

This Government will:

- Update the National Digital Strategy to bring together digital policy and regulatory responsibilities and lead on delivery of these objectives across all Departments and Agencies.
- Invest to make Ireland an EU centre of expertise for digital and data regulation and being a regulatory hub for companies operating across the EU Digital Single Market.
- Realise the full benefits of digitalisation, including AI, to increase productivity of Irish businesses.
- Work with our EU partners to ensure that Ireland and the EU is well-placed to benefit from the innovation and investment potential of new technologies like AI, while also protecting privacy and other fundamental rights.
- Provide citizens with the choice of better public services online, while increasing the efficiency of service delivery though digitalisation of public services, particularly in health.
- Implement an eInclusion Strategy to ensure no one is left behind by the move to a digital society.
- Ensure that small businesses are helped to achieve basic digital intensity, towards the target of 90% by 2030.
- Reform funding eligibility for digital grants and consultancy to ensure it is simplified and accessible.
- Promote the new Grow Digital Portal, which will help businesses self-assess their digital needs.
- Invest in digital skills at all levels, from

basic digital literacy for all citizens to being a leader in higher education and research in areas like Artificial Intelligence and Quantum Computing.
- Ensure that the skills necessary for AI deployment, AI innovation and AI support are provided through our education and professional learning networks.
- Resource and implement the new EU Online Safety Framework to protect vulnerable groups from online harm, and tackle disinformation.
- Seek financial and other support for data interconnections with other EU member states and with countries around the world, building on Ireland's existing strengths on data interconnections.
- Deliver a new National Cybersecurity Strategy in 2025 and promote a centre of excellence for cyber security skills.
- Complete research on the impact of digital devices on our classrooms and consider the report's findings. AI has the potential to enhance education and inclusion and we will ensure it is used appropriately in education settings.

Delivering Broadband

The Government is committed to the roll-out of highspeed broadband under the National Broadband Plan. The increase in Remote Working following the pandemic has been hugely positive for rural Ireland enabling people to live and work in their own community. We recognise the immense opportunities that connectivity can generate for work, education, health, and rural development.

This Government will:
- Complete installing high-speed fibre broadband to 1.1 million people, including homes, farms, and businesses nationwide, by 2026.
- Tackle broadband blackspots that are not included in the National Broadband Plan Intervention Area currently and which will unlikely be served by commercial operators.
- Maintain support to the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce in removing mobile phone and internet black spots, especially along roads and rail networks. We will examine the role of 5G in helping to overcome these blackspots.
- Increase the number of remote working hubs and ensure dedicated spaces to support local entrepreneurs and start-ups as well as a potential landing space to be used by workers in FDI companies.
- Support Learning and Career Development through Connected Hubs
- Work to provide all schools with high-speed internet broadband, so as to prepare students for a digital future with seamless access to technology resources and adaptive learning methods.

Infrastructure

The Government recognises that delivery of essential infrastructure is a key driver in attracting and retaining investment in Ireland, growing our economy, fostering regional development, delivering on our housing targets and achieving our ambitious climate goals.

Delivery of large-scale projects vital for the economy and society in areas including energy, transport, water, flood defences and climate resilience can be subject to timing challenges. Issues include the planning process, legal challenges, inconsistent timelines in sponsoring agencies (government departments, state agencies,

local authorities, higher education institutes or other state bodies) in completing appraisals and developing business cases as required under the Infrastructure Guidelines, and multi-annual funding requirements.

Delays to project delivery result in higher costs and hamper our ability to provide the necessary infrastructure to service a modern society and economy. It also represents a real risk to our competitiveness and to our attractiveness as a location for foreign direct investment.

Stable, long-term delivery of essential infrastructure is a priority for the Government. To ensure projects are delivered as early as possible and within budget, this Government will:

- Prioritise early review of the National Development Plan which will be completed in July 2025.
- Review and reform the prioritisation process of capital projects in key agencies.
- Create a dedicated Infrastructure Division in a re-named Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation. The Division will be led by a Deputy Secretary General.
- Task the new division to work with stakeholders to advise Government on strategic project selection and prioritisation, aligned with national priorities and making maximum use of resources.
- Ensure the division develops a sustainable pipeline of projects, allowing for continued investment over the medium to long-term to deliver upon the ambition of the National Development Plan.
- Create a Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure, chaired by the Taoiseach, to drive infrastructural delivery, accountability and value for money.
- Broaden the remit of the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) in the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) to provide expert advice for major infrastructure delivery as required by sponsoring departments or agencies.

Mindful of the need to ensure projects represent value for money, the Infrastructure Division will:

- Work directly with sponsoring agencies including Government departments, the Office of Public Works and state agencies to expedite delivery of project assessments, appraisals, business cases and other stages of the approvals process with a view to aiding quicker decision making.
- Review the Infrastructure Guidelines and create a Public Investment Act, requiring sponsoring agencies to meet timelines on development of project appraisals and other evaluations so as to reduce delays in decision making and embed value for money across all capital projects.
- Assist sponsoring agencies in complying with local, national and EU environmental and development standards.
- Ensure relevant expertise in project management, procurement, planning, engineering and other disciplines is available within the Division to aid timely delivery.
- Work with stakeholders to develop mechanisms to reduce delays in obtaining sanction when directly employing relevant specialist expertise.
- Meet with sponsoring agencies regularly to review progress of projects.

Accelerating Housing Supply

Accelerating Housing Supply

Housing is a major social and economic challenge that touches every generation. This Government will prioritise a radical step change in housing supply to rise to that fundamental challenge.

Housing supply has increased significantly over the past decade. The first ever cost rental homes and affordable purchase homes have now been built and occupied; first time buyer numbers are at their highest rate since the mid-2000s and the highest social housing build in half a century has been achieved.

However much more needs to be achieved.

We will accelerate the progress made under Housing for All with a new fully funded, radical and realistic housing plan to get more homes built. This Government will place special emphasis on supporting home ownership.

Increasing supply is the key to addressing the housing crisis and the Government will pursue every action possible to support people out of homelessness and give children the best start in life. We will build record levels of social homes and launch a new Starter Home programme to support people to get the keys to their first home.

We will continue to tackle vacancy and dereliction with enhanced compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers and an ambitious grant system.

Most importantly we will build on the momentum generated to achieve our target of delivering more than 300,000 new homes by the end of 2030. The State will take the lead in driving down costs, reducing red tape, overhauling our planning system and supporting direct delivery. This will be underpinned by an ambitious, all of government approach that utilises both the public and private sector to drive on delivery.

More Homes

This Government will:

Targets

- Introduce a new, all of government national housing plan to follow Housing for All, underpinned by a multi-annual funding commitment.
- Ramp up construction capacity to build over 300,000 new homes by the end of 2030 in line with the revised Housing Targets to meet both existing and future demands.

Planning & active land management

- Implement the Planning and Development Act 2024.
- Fully resource the Ministerial Action Plan on Planning resources including the recruitment of additional planning staff to help deliver homes faster.
- Create a regularly updated, public audit of zoned, serviced, and unzoned land, informed by a national land audit, to help plan for 300,000 homes by the end of 2030.
- Increase the quantum of zoned and serviced land, to accommodate new homes, through the implementation of a revised National Planning Framework.
- Ensure the Planning and Environment Court is sufficiently resourced to swiftly deal with planning litigation.
- Enact a new Compulsory Purchase Order Bill with streamlined and strengthened CPO powers to activate under-utilised land for home building.
- Continue to implement the Land Value Sharing, Residential Zoned Land Tax and Vacancy taxes, with protections for active farmers, to penalise land hoarding and ensure zoned land is developed.
- Require local authorities to facilitate a pre-planning meeting for every new significant residential, community and infrastructural development above a set threshold, as directed by the Minister.
- Examine and develop a Green City pilot, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Infrastructure

- Support Uisce Éireann in the delivery of key strategic projects in our cities and regions. Security of water supply is critical to delivering our housing and economic national priorities.
- Introduce statutory timelines for preconnections, water / waste water and energy connection agreements, to ensure large developments can proceed without delay.
- Establish a new procedure for large developments above 100 units where a developer can meet local authority planners and Uisce Éireann on site to iron out issues at pre-planning stage.
- Invest additional capital in Uisce Éireann to support reaching our new housing targets. We will prioritise water and waste water infrastructure to deliver the capacity to facilitate housing development in our towns and villages.
- Ensure Uisce Éireann prioritises the delivery of the Small Towns and Villages Programme.
- Continue to implement the scheme targeting Waste Water Collection and Treatment needs for villages and settlements without access to public waste water services.
- Establish a new Towns and Cities Infrastructure Investment Fund to replace the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF).
- Prioritise housing infrastructure in the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) operational practices.
- Integrate the existing Housing Delivery Groups into a new Strategic Housing & Infrastructure Delivery Office under the Minister for Housing to help co-ordinate and accelerate home building by unblocking infrastructure delays. This office will also co-ordinate investment in the servicing of zoned lands for homebuilding.

Investing in Towns & Urban Renewal

Under the new Towns and Cities Infrastructure Investment Fund, this Government will:

- Create a new strategic fund to invest in infrastructure, to acquire land, assemble sites, de-risk sites in existing towns and

cities to maximise their potential growth.
- Support the development of new transport orientated development towns as necessary, replicating the development of Clonburris and Adamstown.
- Continue and expand URDF investments in projects to regenerate the public realm.
- Include all towns with a population over 10,000 in the designation of 'key towns' and ensure towns which fall slightly below the population thresholds are considered for applications under this Fund.

Reducing delays and red tape

- Introduce a single stage approval process for all standardised Social Housing and affordable housing projects
- Introduce a National Housing Procurement Strategy to support housing standardisation and use state spending and regulatory power to reduce costs delays.
- Ensure State policies support the collaborative development of standard house and apartment types to drive efficiency, reduce costs and support viability.
- Establish a Central Housing Construction Supply Unit in the Department of Housing to coordinate, monitor and track all major public sector construction projects to ensure accelerated delivery.
- Establish Land Activation Units in each Local Authority.
- Create a Land Price Register.
- Work with the EU Commission to revise State Aid rules to provide a new investment platform for affordable and sustainable housing.

Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)

- Set up a MMC Innovation Fund via the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF), to directly fund new housing factories, and the expansion of existed factories.
- Leverage state capital investment to promote MMC and set binding targets for MMC use in at least 25% of all State-backed housing.
- Overhaul and resource the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) to ensure all-encompassing regulatory certs are issued in a timely manner, harmonising Irish regulations with EU regulations to open up new market opportunities.
- Promote the use of timber in new buildings and ensure multi storey timber frame residential units can be built.
- Expand the role of Ireland's credit union sector in the housing market.
- Increase co-ordination and additional resourcing of organisations' training programmes; and develop and fund more dedicated apprenticeship and internship options for MMC in housing.

Land Development Agency (LDA)

- Further capitalise the LDA out to 2030.
- Increase the LDA housing delivery targets up to 2030.
- Strengthen the LDA's CPO powers.
- Accelerate the transfer of under-utilised state lands appropriate for residential development to the LDA.
- Streamline the consent and approval process for the LDA.
- Mandate the LDA to work with developers approved under the Croí Cónaithe Cities scheme to provide a cost rental back stop for such developments to increase viability of apartments for sale.

Apprenticeships

- Target 12,500 new apprentices annually by 2030, with two-thirds of them in craft/construction, and strengthen links between education providers and the sector.
- Increase permits for residential construction workers and actively recruit abroad through state agencies and embassies.

Financing the Housing Market

- Achieve stable and predictable policy to attract and retain private investment combined with record state levels of funding to finance the €24 billion per annum needed to build 60,000 homes annually by 2030.
- Develop new financing sources, especially for brownfield sites and small builders, with support from Home Building Finance Ireland (HBFI), the Housing Finance Agency (HFA) and domestic banks as well as state support of equity investment.
- Introduce Cost Rental backstops, allowing local authorities and the LDA to reduce financial risk.

Starter Homes

This Government will:

- Launch a new, comprehensive Starter Home programme across the public, private and AHB sector, which promotes home ownership and secures long-term rental tenures for young people and fresh start applicants.
- Support and deliver an average of 15,000 starter homes per year, driven by an expanded First Home Scheme, the Help to Buy support, in addition to other schemes.

Help to Buy scheme

- Retain and revise the Help to Buy scheme.
- Extend the Scheme until 2030.

First Home Scheme

- Work with the banks to expand the First Home scheme to first time buyers of second-hand homes.
- Extend the scheme to 2030.
- Increase the First Home scheme targets in keeping with the increase in starter home targets.

Starter homes provided by local authorities

- Repurpose the Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme to become part of the Starter Home programme to enhance uptake.
- Increase the geographic spread of Starter Home Schemes by collaborating with local authorities to expand affordable purchase options in all counties.

Local Authority Home Loan

- Create a new central national administration point for the scheme.
- Ensure the maximum loan values align with current house prices, keeping the scheme accessible.
- Examine the expansion of the Local Authority Home Loan to allow a separated or divorced person to buy the full mortgage on a home.
- Examine how the Local Authority Home Loan could support non-bank lender mortgage holders.

Croí Cónaithe

- Continue the Croí Cónaithe Cities scheme to support the construction of apartments for owner occupiers.

Protect Houses and Duplexes from bulk purchases

- Maintain the Owner Occupier Guarantee in planning regulations for houses and duplexes and keep the stamp duty surcharges under review to ensure they prohibit bulk purchases.

Homebuyer Help Package

- Set an 8-week conveyancing target for the legal profession.
- Significantly reduce the time taken for the Probate Office to process applications to extract grants of probate.
- Fully implement e-conveyancing by 2027, reforming outdated legal practices such as wet signature requirements.
- Accelerate registration of land titles.
- Establish an expert group to make the home bidding process clearer and more transparent, drawing on international best practices.
- Task the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission with creating a step-by-step home-buying guide and establishing a dedicated portal for reporting bad practices.

Social Housing

This Government will:

- Continue to roll out the largest social housing programme in the history of the State, building on average 12,000 new social homes per annum, with local authorities playing a key role in the delivery of this goal.
- Conclude the review of the Approved Housing Body (AHB) sector to ensure economies of scale are achieved and delivery expertise is enhanced for these strategic delivery partners.
- Focus local authorities and AHBs on reformed delivery models in achieving new targets and restrict the ability of local authorities or Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to bulk purchase developments at the end of the construction process.
- Introduce a new voids programme, implement long term strategic reforms and mandate local authorities to establish voids frameworks to improve the turnaround of vacant social housing units. Require local authorities to provide tenant names to AHBs before project completion for quicker move-ins.

Reduce homelessness and protect vulnerable households

This Government will:

- Reaffirm our commitment to the Lisbon Declaration, and work towards ending homelessness by 2030.
- Provide emergency accommodation for everyone who needs it with special supports for children impacted by homelessness.
- Ensure a holistic, cross departmental approach to homelessness prevention.
- Create 2,000 Housing First tenancies to help eliminate long term homelessness.
- Require local authorities to prioritise the leasing of one-bedroom units, addressing the immediate needs of single households.
- Focus social housing allocations on getting families out of long-term homelessness.
- Continue the Social Housing Tenant in Situ Programme to prevent homelessness, with annual targets

and budgets assigned for each local authority.
- Fully implement the Youth Homelessness strategy.
- Reform the 1988 Housing Act.
- Implement the revised Housing Adaptation Grant limits and eligibility criteria.
- Ensure full draw down of Traveller accommodation funds.

Supporting a Better System for Renters and Landlords

The Government will:

- Progressively increase the Rent Tax Credit.
- Build more cost rental units through the LDA, local authorities and Cost Rental Equity Loan funding to AHBs, embedding cost rental as a category of tenure on a permanent basis.
- Keep the income criteria for cost rental under review to ensure sufficient cohorts of tenants qualify for the scheme.
- Continue the Secure Tenancy Affordable Rental investment (STAR) scheme to support affordable rents while reviewing its criteria, to ensure greater take up by the private development sector.
- Help renters seeking to become home buyers with a series of targeted measures through the tax system and the First Home Scheme.
- Protect Renters and Landlords from abusive practices by:
  * Establishing a Rent Price register.
  * Enhancing the enforcement powers of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) and establishing statutory timelines for dealing with complaints.
- Continue to review the effectiveness of the Rent Pressure Zones.
- Continue the landlord tax credit.
- Earmark certain cost rental units for key local workers.

Tackle vacancy & dereliction

This Government will:

- Extend the vacancy and dereliction refurbishment grants to 2030, continuing to review the grant levels and expand targets in line with an increase in housing targets.
- Ensure that every local authority has an expanded vacant property team in place to help bring vacant properties back into use.
- Improve the administration of the vacancy and dereliction grants.
- Continue the Local Authority Home Loan bridging finance to support the use of the vacancy and dereliction grant.
- Streamline and update legislation governing CPO powers and derelict sites.
- Ensure local authorities update, implement and enforce their derelict sites register.
- Roll out the new special Local Authority Mortgage for vacant properties.
- Create an ‘Above the Shop’ living refurbishment grant by topping up the vacant and derelict refurbishment grant. This will help make spaces above retail premises liveable.
- Introduce further ‘Above the Shop’ living incentives through a commercial rates reduction pilot scheme.
- Continue the Repair and Lease and Buy and Renew Schemes for five more years, targeting 1,000 additional homes annually by building on best practice as demonstrated by Waterford City and County Council.
- Introduce a cost rental version of the Repair and Lease scheme on a pilot basis.
- Ensure existing water and waste water connections for vacant and derelict properties are credited in the calculation of new connection charges levied, to derisk the cost of bringing properties back into productive residential use.

Help owners of defective houses and apartments

This Government will:

- Establish a Buildings Standards Regulatory Authority to strengthen the oversight role of the State in respect of the design and construction of buildings.

Defective Multi-Unit Developments

- Continue to implement an interim remediation scheme for defective apartments.
- Roll out Retrospective Payment pathfinders.
- Legislate and implement a comprehensive remediation scheme including retrospective payments for defective apartments.

Defective Concrete Block Scheme

- Continue to implement the Defective Concrete Block Scheme.
- Undertake the planned review of the scheme.
- In line with legislation, expand the scheme to counties impacted by the issue.

Pyrite

- Extend eligibility for the Pyrite remediation scheme to include homes with damage category rating of 1 with progression.

Improving Management for Apartment and Duplex Owners

- Move responsibility for the Multi-Unit Development Acts to the Department of Housing to streamline support for owners' management companies and improve oversight.
- Establish a unit in the Housing Agency to regulate owners' management companies to ensure effective governance.

Practical Housing Options for Positive Ageing

This Government will:

- Mandate local authorities to find suitable sites for housing specifically designed for older adults, ensuring accessible options within local communities.
- Simplify and make it easier to convert houses into separate living spaces, allowing older adults to continue living in familiar surroundings while adapting to changing needs.
- Examine the requirement for exempted development to the rear of a dwelling to be physically attached to the main dwelling house.
- Review and Standardise the Older Persons Housing Financial Contribution Scheme.
- Support AHBs in developing and managing senior housing with onsite support services, fostering safe, supportive communities.

Rural Housing

- Continue to support one-off, rural housing.
- Continue to support one-off self-builds through the Help to Buy Scheme and the First Home Scheme.
- Ensure each Local Authority develops serviced sites to facilitate the construction of 3-10 housing units, within at least three towns and villages in their administrative area, on an annual basis via the Ready to Build Scheme.
- Support group water schemes and private well grants.
- Implement the special rural water investment scheme (the unsewered villages scheme).
- Review planning and transport guidelines for national secondary roads to facilitate housing, community and industrial development.
- Protect and expand the Vacant and Derelict refurbishment grant scheme.

Protecting Our Environment

Protecting Our Environment

Our climate is rapidly changing. Human activity, primarily caused by greenhouse gas emissions, has caused global surface temperatures to rise 1.1˚C above 1850-1900 levels. In 2023, Europe experienced the fastest continental warming and faced significant impacts from climate change. Atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO2) concentrations are currently higher than at any time in at least 2 million years. The science is unequivocal; continued greenhouse gas emissions through the burning of fossil fuels will lead to increased global warming.

Time is of the essence as global warming continues. The Government is committed to taking decisive action to radically reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and to achieve a 51% reduction in emissions from 2018 to 2030, and to achieving net-zero emissions no later than 2050.

Climate action is not just better for the environment and the planet. When it is done right, climate action provides warmer, more comfortable homes; cleaner air; more liveable and walkable communities, and better transport connectivity across our island.

In delivering climate action, we will secure a better, healthier, and more resilient future for Ireland and secure the advantages for our industrial base as a leader in renewable energy, while ensuring energy security and sustainability. We want to achieve energy independence by harnessing our untapped renewable energy resources.

We will work at home and abroad to mitigate against the worst effects of climate change and prevent catastrophic levels of global warming.

Our Climate Goals

In 2023, we achieved a nearly 7% reduction in emissions, equating to almost one tonne less climate pollution per person. The Government's approach will ensure continued climate progress while growing the economy.

This Government will:

- Deliver actions to achieve a 51% reduction in emissions from 2018 to 2030 and net-zero emissions no later than 2050.
- Set ambitious targets to reduce

greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 and ensure we have the correct mix of incentives and regulations to deliver those aims across all sectors of the economy.
- Publish an annual Climate Action Plan, placing a focus on a smaller number of strategic and impactful actions across all sectors, and publish a quarterly progress report.
- Strengthen the delivery structures to deliver the Climate Action Plan through the Climate Action Delivery Board.
- Enhance and improve the Governance Structures to deliver the Climate Action Plan and the underpinning legislation.
- Recognise the distinct characteristics of biogenic methane, as described by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and advocate for the accounting of this Greenhouse gas to be re-classified at EU and international level.
- Complete a review of greenhouse gas emissions on a consumption basis, with a goal of ensuring that Irish and EU actions support the reduction of global emissions, as well as on our own territories.
- Support the Just Transition Commission's work to listen to communities, address their concerns, and ensure they benefit from the green transition.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

The Government is committed to accelerating Ireland's progress toward the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, addressing critical areas such as poverty eradication, climate action, and improved living standards for all. These goals represent a global commitment to a better future, and we will adopt a coordinated approach to drive impactful action both at home and abroad.

This Government will:
- Implement a Whole-of-Government Strategy to fully integrate the SDGs into national policies and initiatives, ensuring that each goal is actively pursued across all levels of government.
- Ensure there is continued support for climate finance delivered through Ireland's Overseas Development Aid programme, particularly in areas where communities are vulnerable to climate impacts.
- Actively support climate initiatives to address the severe effects of drought, famine, and lack of clean water in collaboration with international partners.
- Support the work of young people to help their communities and promote the Sustainable Development Goals.

Futureproofing Ireland's Built Environment

The Government is committed to making Ireland's buildings more sustainable and energy-efficient, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and lowering energy costs for households. By promoting retrofitting, renewable heating, and solar energy, we aim to make homes warmer, cheaper to heat, and less reliant on fossil fuels.

This Government will:
- Ramp up our targets to deliver more B2-equivalent home retrofits each year from 2026 to 2030, with a focus on lower income households.
- Revise and improve the provision of grants and financing models for homeowners who wish to retrofit, enhancing energy efficiency and reducing costs. Ensure all grants and schemes are accessible to older people in our community.
- Support group retrofitting projects, allowing neighbours to upgrade their homes together with guided support,

making the process easier and more economical, and develop innovative finance solutions.
- Increase the number of Sustainable Energy Communities.
- Build on the pilot schemes and develop a mechanism to allow private homes in social housing estates to opt into retrofitting projects at an adjusted cost, creating a fair opportunity for all residents.
- Promote the €500 million Home Energy Upgrade Loan Scheme, offering low-interest loans for home energy upgrades, from €5,000 to €75,000.
- Target older homes still using oil to switch to renewable heating systems, lowering carbon footprints and costs. Consider the use of sustainable biofuels to reduce emissions from existing home boilers where deep retrofits are not possible in the short term. Improve traceability in HVO procurement to ensure the product is from sustainable sources.
- Enact legislation in 2025 to accelerate the roll out of district heating systems.
- Implement new regulations to encourage the use of timber in new building projects, supporting sustainable building materials.
- Explore if legislation could be enacted to divert surplus renewable energy, that would otherwise be wasted, to homes in fuel poverty.
- Explore mechanisms to incentivise households to adopt renewable energy sources for their homes.

Leading a Revolution in Renewable Energy

The Government is committed to achieving 80% of Ireland's electricity generation from renewable sources by 2030. To reach this goal, we will establish a clear regulatory pathway, enable network upgrades, improve port facilities, and ensure a dependable schedule of renewable energy auctions. We are focused on ensuring that local communities benefit from Ireland's renewable potential, with job creation, community ownership, and tangible economic returns.

This Government will:

- Develop a comprehensive plan to accelerate energy generation, connectivity, and planning processes. The plan will emphasise renewable sources to provide certainty for industries making short- and medium-term investments. This plan will also guide the development of data centre infrastructure in alignment with our decarbonisation objectives and growing Ireland's knowledge-based economy.
- Ensure that the necessary investment is made through the electricity transmission and distribution system by operators in the electricity grid. Explore how a range of other funding sources, such as from the European Investment Bank, can be utilised.
- Prioritise investment into our electricity grid to update our power generation systems to enhance security and affordability for consumers and businesses.
- Explore funding models of the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme and the Public Service Obligation (PSO) levy which would reduce electricity bills for households and businesses.
- Take all necessary action to ensure and protect Ireland's energy security.
- Develop and accelerate the roll-out of new electricity interconnectors, to ensure Ireland is well positioned to be a net exporter of electricity to the UK and the EU.
- Support the development of an interconnected energy market within the EU.
- Establish national renewable energy

clusters, co-located with training and education centres, to allow local people to benefit from jobs and investment opportunities.
- Commission an independent review into the speed and level of passthrough from wholesale prices to retail prices, with an additional assessment of the overall price dynamics and an overall focus on the competitiveness of the Irish economy.
- Prioritise a review and reform of the legislation underpinning the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU).
- Emphasise that low costs for households and businesses are a central tenet in the updated mandate of the CRU.
- Intensify the transition to lower-cost renewables in electricity generation, and transition away from expensive imported fossil fuels.

Accelerating Renewables

This Government will:
- Deliver 9GW of onshore wind, 8GW solar and at least 5GW of offshore wind by 2030.
- Move to holding at least one Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auction per year to ensure that Ireland continues to bring renewable energy projects onstream at a fast pace.
- Prioritise the publication of Wind Energy Development guidelines, having regard to international best practice and standards.
- Fast-Track Offshore Wind Development by prioritising the publication of Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs) and ensure the relevant agencies are sufficiently resourced to accelerate these developments.
- Utilise the new Planning Act to fast-track developments.
- Develop a strategic, regionally balanced approach to upgrades of ports to realise the economic potential of facilitating renewable energy projects.
- Support Irish Companies to integrate into the offshore wind supply chain.
- Expand the Offshore Wind Energy Taskforce to include IDA Ireland and focus on attracting and retaining capital investment to drive offshore wind development.
- Ensure quarterly reports from the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Taskforce to the relevant cabinet committee.
- Ensure the managed development of solar energy and battery power through the development of national planning guidelines.
- Ensure that cutting-edge research and development in renewable energy is supported, including in wave, tidal, and hydrogen energy, and utilise a number of test sites.
- Provide more upskilling and training opportunities across the green economy, including in retrofitting and renewable energy development and maintenance.
- Expand support for Centres of Excellence on college campuses to foster partnerships between academia and industry, developing new solutions to cut emissions.
- Ensure a policy is put in place to streamline repowering and life extension of existing onshore wind farms that are nearing end of life.

Empowering Communities in Renewable Energy and Making Climate Action Accessible

The Government believes that communities hosting renewable projects should directly benefit.

This Government will:
- Support communities to secure grid access for local renewable projects.
- Ensure community gain arrangements

are in place and consider permanent, cheaper electricity as a possible option under community gain schemes.
- Facilitate employment opportunities in constructing, maintaining, and servicing renewable infrastructure, integrating local businesses into the supply chain.
- Promote the Small-Scale Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (SRESS) to simplify market access for community-owned solar and wind projects.
- Explore ways to use surplus renewable energy to help reduce energy poverty, ensuring that renewable energy benefits all communities.
- Continue to increase the uptake of smart meters and ensure their de-carbonisation potential is fully realised.

Supporting Economic Growth with Renewable Energy

The Government aims to leverage renewable energy to attract new industries and support existing ones.

This Government will:
- Develop Green Energy Industrial Parks to attract large-scale investments in regional locations, co-located with renewable generation.
- Advance battery development and take-up to allow portable energy and reduce grid dependence.
- Work to progress recommendations of the Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce central to renewable energy planning, recognising the region's potential.
- Encourage State agencies to service large parcels of land near sources of renewable electricity to add economic value.

Data Centre Policy

The Government recognises the criticality of digital infrastructure in economic growth and the delivery of public services. This importance will only grow with the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

This Government will:
- Allow data centres that contribute to economic growth and efficient grid usage, such as prioritising waste heat capture for district heating systems and other local uses.
- Enhance data centres' use of renewable energy sources, energy efficient technology and effective solutions, such as waste heat capture to reduce their carbon footprint.
- Scale up investment in critical infrastructure and in our electricity grid which will be advantageous for customers and enhance the data centre footprint to support continued FDI investment.
- Provide nationwide 5G for high-speed, low-latency connectivity, which is important to the tech sector and data centres.
- Expedite the publication of a Private Wires Policy Framework.

Supporting Industry to Decarbonise

The Government is committed to helping Irish industries reduce emissions through investment in efficient, low-carbon technologies.

This Government will:
- Launch a Roadmap for Industrial Heat Decarbonisation.
- Develop a targeted roadmap to help manufacturers transition to low-carbon heating solutions in their production processes.
- Work with heavy industry to reduce

emissions, including commissioning research on delivering zero carbon cement and look at international best practice.
- Increase take-up of grants to support small businesses in adopting energy-efficient technologies, cutting costs, and reducing their environmental footprint.

Accelerating Decarbonisation and Modal Shift in Transport

Modal change in Transport is vital to the delivery of our climate change objectives. Policies to deliver this will include accelerating the electrification of the transport system, including electric bikes, electric vehicles, and electric public transport (see further information in Transport section.)

Supporting A Sustainable Transition in Agriculture

The Government recognises the special economic and social role of agriculture and the distinct characteristics of biogenic methane, as described by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and this will be recognised in plans to achieve targets within the agriculture sector.

This Government will:
- Support Irish farmers and food producers to continue to produce world-class food whilst reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving economic, social and environmental sustainability in agriculture.
- Assist farmers and the agriculture sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by supporting the adoption of practical abatement measures.
- Provide sustainable diversification options for farmers to generate new or additional sources of farm income.
- Support activities such as forestry planting that deliver carbon abatement.
- Work with farmers and rural communities to realise the transition opportunities from energy efficiency, renewable electricity and heat, efficient food production and nature-based solutions.

Promoting a Circular Economy

The Government is committed to ending the wasteful cycle of take-make-consume-throw-away, promoting sustainable practices that extend the life of products and reduce waste.

This Government will:
- Support enterprises in the circular economy such as repair and refurbishment centres.
- Provide investment in sorting technology in Ireland's materials recovery facility (MRF) network to improve recycling processes and rates.
- Revise public procurement guidelines for waste minimisation within 12 months to ensure the Government supports waste reduction and circular economy principles.
- Ensure the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) plays a leadership role in embedding green public procurement across the public sector, including through setting minimum mandatory green public procurement criteria in the public sector and ensuring compulsory reporting to monitor progress.
- Publish a plan to expand producer responsibility schemes to take accountability for the full lifecycle of products.
- Work with EU Member States to encourage the further reduction and prevention of plastic packaging and consider ways to increase the use of

compostable materials.
- Continue and expand the Clean Oceans Initiative to collect, reduce and reuse marine litter and clean up our marine environment.
- Require each local authority to create a circular economy strategy focused on waste reduction, with a particular emphasis on food and construction waste.
- Set Waste Reduction Targets in appropriate sectors of our economy, encouraging sustainable practices.
- Support development of waste management infrastructure. Assess the need for a new waste to energy facility and maintain a renewed focus on zero waste infrastructure.

Public Sector Leading on Climate Action

The Government is committed to ensuring government departments, local authorities, and State agencies lead by example in climate action, integrating sustainability into all aspects of the public service. By setting clear targets and policies, we can drive innovation, reduce costs, and support Ireland's climate goals.

This Government will:

- Mandate each government department, local authority, and State agency to publish a renewable energy plan within the first year of government, detailing how they can increase their use of renewables.
- Ensure every government department Statement of Strategy includes Climate Action and decarbonisation as a key priority.
- Strengthen the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.
- Develop a programme to improve the energy efficiency of public buildings.
- Install solar panels, renewable energy sources, or connect to district heating where feasible in suitable public buildings, including to schools and third level institutions across Ireland.
- Continue the transition of the State's vehicle fleet to zero-emissions.
- Increase the provision of EV charging points at public buildings.
- Support local authorities to implement tailored local climate action plans.
- Mandate local authorities to expand and promote biodiversity and support urban ecosystems.

Carbon Tax for a Sustainable Future

We are committed to using the carbon tax as a key tool to encourage a shift away from fossil fuels and invest in a sustainable future. This approach ensures those who are most vulnerable receive targeted support, making the transition fair and equitable.

This Government will:

- Continue with the planned carbon tax increases, aligning with recommendations from the Climate Change Advisory Council and scientific experts.
- Continue to use carbon tax revenues to fund social welfare measures, agri-environmental schemes and retrofitting.

Improving our lived environment

The Government is committed to tackling littering and illegal dumping, creating cleaner cities, towns, and villages across Ireland. Through stronger enforcement, regular clean-ups, and ambitious waste reduction targets, we aim to keep our public spaces beautiful and support a more sustainable approach to waste.

This Government will:

- Increase penalties to deter littering and illegal dumping, ensuring those who harm our environment face significant consequences.
- Target dumping black spots and use tools like CCTV and drones to monitor dumping hotspots, making it easier to catch and penalise offenders.
- Work with local authorities for cleaner public spaces to ensure cities, towns, and villages are cleaned more thoroughly and regularly, improving quality of life and community pride.
- Continue efforts to raise air quality standards, especially in urban areas, ensuring healthier environments for all.
- Prioritise urban greening of the existing built environment in cities, towns and villages

Preparing for Climate Adaptation and Extreme Weather

The Government is committed to protecting Ireland's present and future generations by investing in climate adaptation measures to manage the impacts of extreme weather events. We recognise the need to support communities, businesses, and ecosystems as climate risks continue to rise.

This Government will:

- Develop an Extreme Weather Event Assistance Scheme for homes, community organisations, farmers and businesses.
- Streamline and simplify the delivery of flood relief initiatives to address the threats posed by river and coastal flooding .
- Advance the National Coastal Change Management Strategy and initiate three pathfinder schemes in selected coastal areas.

Protecting Heritage and Nature

Ireland is rich in unique natural and historic heritage, a vital national asset that we must cherish, protect and bequeath to future generations.

Since 2020, we have significantly increased funding to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), established Ireland's first Marine National Park and new legislation now requires all public bodies to integrate biodiversity into their plans and policies. The Infrastructure, Climate & Nature Fund will also ensure ongoing protection for our environment for future generations.

Building on this progress, we will implement a comprehensive action plan to strengthen our national heritage. This active commitment to heritage and nature is grounded in partnership with local communities and sustainable conservation, ensuring that Ireland's unique environment and cultural landmarks are cherished for years to come.

This Government will:

- Create new national parks and increase funding to the NPWS to support its operation and visitor experiences.
- Acquire key national heritage assets, prioritising state acquisition at both national and local level.
- Further develop and strengthen the NPWS as Ireland's leading natural heritage agency.
- Implement a Conservation Plan for the Curragh, establishing a management plan to ensure its preservation, with careful consideration of which agency is best suited to manage this historic landscape.
- Create an NPWS internship programme encompassing traditional skills, ecology, wildlife rangers and advanced nature research.
- Promote and encourage an expansion

of Dark Sky Ireland national parks and reserves.
- Develop Ireland's Nature Restoration Plan with prioritisation of restoration actions on State lands and in consultation and partnership with farmers and local communities on voluntary measures. Commit to clear targets within the National Biodiversity Plan, working closely with local authorities to achieve meaningful progress in each area.
- Continue to invest in managing the spread of invasive species.
- Continue to support local authority biodiversity officers in their work to protect our natural environment.
- Continue to invest in the Community Monuments Fund, the Historic Structures Fund and the Built Heritage Investment Scheme.
- Support applications for additional UNESCO recognition sites to showcase Ireland's heritage internationally and examine the role of the National Monuments Service in the progression of these applications.
- Examine further measures to increase the level of donations of cultural and heritage goods to the national collections, including raising the annual ceiling for donations and ensuring a broader group of institutions can benefit.
- Work with stakeholders on an all-island basis to conserve, refurbish, and improve access to built heritage and archaeological sites, promoting cultural unity and heritage appreciation.
- Review the 1995 Heritage Act.
- Explore the creation of a National Centre of Excellence for Traditional Skills.
- Create a Heritage Research Unit within the Heritage Council.

Protecting and Enhancing Inland Fisheries

The Government is committed to preserving our inland fisheries and recognises their contribution to the rural economy and their environmental benefit. We will work to ensure our inland waters continue to be sustainable and well-managed to support both local communities and ecosystems.

This Government will:

- Bring forward an action plan to maintain healthy fish stocks and safeguard inland fisheries as an important resource for rural areas.
- Protect and recognise the Great Western Lakes as salmonoid waters, so they will continue to be pristine habitats for native fish species.
- Modernise and consolidate legislation pertaining to inland fisheries.
- Carry out an independent review of Inland Fisheries Ireland.
- Work to provide robust oversight and accountability by engaging with the inland fisheries sector.

Investing in our Future

Investing in our Future

Children and Young People

Early childhood is a time of great opportunity to shape a child's development and build a secure foundation for their future. For children to achieve their full potential they need opportunities for care and education and parents or guardians need to be supported in providing the best start that every child deserves. We will continue to support the work of the Ombudsman for Children and ensure that the voices of children and young people are reflected in the development of policies that affect them.

Affordable, accessible and high-quality childcare

Affordable, accessible, and high-quality childcare is not just about giving children the best opportunities, it is also about enabling families to make decisions that work for them.

We will continue to grow State involvement and investment in the sector, while working in partnership with private providers, recognising this is an important element of supply.

To ensure this change works for everyone we will undertake a broad consultation and publish a detailed Action Plan to build an affordable, high-quality, accessible early childhood education and care system with State-led facilities adding capacity. This plan will enhance parental choice through ongoing support for public, private and community provision, as well as childminders.

This Government will:

Affordability

- Progressively reduce the cost of childcare to €200 per month per child through the National Childcare Scheme and explore options to cap costs for larger families.
- Ensure childcare providers' fees are open, transparent and equitable and readily available to parents.
- Review and increase core funding, ensuring the fee cap is maintained and that the model is open, transparent and equitable, and that early years educators in the private sector benefit from Employment Regulation Orders.
- Reduce the administrative burden on providers.

Access

- Resource and transform the Supply Management Unit into a Forward Planning and Delivery Unit within the Department to identify areas of need, forecast demand and deliver public supply within the childcare sector where required.
- Provide capital investment to build or purchase state-owned childcare facilities, to create additional capacity in areas where unmet need exists.
- Plan the development of State-led facilities in tandem with the school building programme, including Irish-medium naíonraí.
- Work with schools to host before and after-school care, and examine start-up supports for groups involved in after-school activities.
- Review the 2001 Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities to ensure childcare spaces are provided and put into use.

Early Years Educators

- Continue to implement Employment Regulation Orders to attract and retain early years educators.
- Remove barriers in education and training for early years educators to broaden access to the profession.
- Introduce an 'Earn and Learn' apprenticeship model enabling childcare staff to gain qualifications and advance their careers.
- Examine the establishment of a professional register for childminders and early years educators, reflecting professionalisation of the sector.
- Deepen co-operation and shared learnings between early years education and the Department of Education Inspectorate.

Quality and Inclusion

- Examine and expand the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) and make it available to younger children.
- Continue to build up the Equal Start programme, ensuring children experiencing disadvantage can access and participate fully in early learning and childcare.
- Explore making available an extra hour of ECCE each day in the second year of preschool.
- Evaluate options to amend the ECCE eligibility criteria.

Childminders

Childminding plays a significant role in the provision of early years and school aged care and should remain a viable choice for parents.

This Government will:

- Extend the National Childcare Scheme to childminders working in the family home, with sensible regulations that fit home-based care.
- Support childminders through the Tusla registration process and expand access to local training opportunities.
- Continue to provide grants that help childminders improve safety and quality through essential toys, equipment, and technology.

Reducing Childhood Poverty

Child Poverty is not inevitable, and by ensuring a determined focus we can lift more children out of poverty, giving them the futures they deserve.

This Government will:

- Set an ambitious child poverty target ensuring a focus on inequality.

- Retain the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office in the Department of An Taoiseach to break down silos between departments and drive delivery of measures aimed at reducing child poverty.
- Work to increase funding and expand the capacity and network of Family Resource Centres.
- Explore ways to better support non-profit, community and social enterprise organisations.

Supporting Families

This Government will:

- Explore the establishment of a managed savings account for newborns with an initial once-off contribution by the State, ensuring lower income families benefit most from its inception.
- Expand the provision for newborns and their parents of a Baby Bundle, comprising essential items to support them from day one.
- Drive the early establishment of the Assisted Human Reproduction Regulatory Authority, commit to commencing the Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Act 2024 and promptly enact supplementary legislation.
- Introduce paid surrogacy leave.
- Enhance support for breastfeeding with a government-wide strategy, funding for community initiatives, more lactation consultants in hospitals and communities, and increased support for voluntary breastfeeding groups.
- Ensure the full implementation of the Zero Tolerance Strategy recognising the harm domestic, sexual and gender-based violence has on children and young people.

Youth Services

Youth work services play an essential role in improving outcomes for young people by providing safe spaces, support and new opportunities.

This Government will:

- Implement the Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028.
- Strengthen the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme.
- Continue the rollout of the UBU – Your Place Your Space Scheme.
- Support the work of Young Social Innovators to make the social innovation space accessible to all young people, create new future pathways and allow our youth to have their voices heard.

Support for Foster Carers and Kinship Care

Foster carers play an essential role in our care system, and we are committed to developing and implementing a comprehensive action plan that takes a cross-government approach to foster care.

This Government will:

- Increase the Foster Care Allowance and ensure increases in the new Initial Placement Payment.
- Examine pension provision for foster carers to acknowledge their long-term commitment and ensure valued support after their fostering years.
- Examine the Back-to-School Clothing and Footwear Allowance eligibility criteria to allow flexibility for foster carers.
- Improve support for kinship care to enhance outcomes for kinship families.

Strengthening Tusla and protecting children in State care

This Government will:

- Support Tusla and ensure their structures are robust, responsive and capable of safeguarding every child in need.
- Update the Child Care Act, 1991.
- Ensure Tusla is supported in recruiting and retaining vital frontline staff and foster carers.
- Increase training opportunities and support programmes for Tusla staff and carers to enhance service quality.
- Work with further and higher education institutions to increase the supply of graduates and allied health professionals, such as social care workers.
- Develop a national plan on alternative care to include a short-term action plan addressing current issues in accessing appropriate care places, and a longer-term vision for how the care system will operate into the future.
- Expand Barnahus nationally and strengthen measures aimed at preventing violence against children.
- Ensure effective and mandatory co-operation between state agencies by putting the inter-agency committee on vulnerable children on a statutory footing.
- Examine ways to further support all young people as they age out of state care and foster care.
- Establish a National Child Death Review Mechanism on a statutory basis.

Recognising and learning for our past

This Government will:

- Continue to deliver the Action Plan for Mother and Baby Homes Survivors.
- Build the National Centre for Research and Remembrance.

Online safety

Growing up online offers our children endless opportunities to learn, engage and play but it also presents serious risks which can have devasting consequences. We must all work to make the internet a safe place for children to express themselves.

This Government will:

- Support and fund Coimisiún na Meán in enforcing the Online Safety Code.
- Work with Coimisiún na Meán to inform children, young people, and their parents about their rights online under the new safety framework.
- Examine ways to enforce age verification obligations on online service providers and hold them to account for failure to do so.
- Work with stakeholders to tackle the use of recommender algorithms to protect children from harmful content.
- Continue to provide funding and support to Hotline in its role and commence
- an appropriate advertising campaign to advise the public of the existence of this reporting channel.
- Act on the Online Health Taskforce's recommendations to improve digital well-being.
- Work to deliver a new EU Child Sexual Abuse Directive that protects children and young people and holds digital platforms to account.
- Support and fund Online Safety Programmes for schools, giving them more flexibility in how to use it.

Education

Education is at the heart of all of our ambitions as a country. Excellent and innovative education and training are essential to delivering a fair society and a strong economy.

This Government will:

- Deliver a learning experience for students to highest international standards.
- Use education to break down barriers for groups at risk of exclusion.
- Equip learners of all ages and abilities to participate and succeed in a changing world.
- Support Ireland to be a leader across a broad range of fields, including scientific, cultural, enterprise and public service.
- Support students and all those who work in the education sector.

A world class Education System

We will seek to continually improve our education system to equip students with the skills they require to succeed in a rapidly changing world. Ireland has one of the strongest education systems in the world, as evidenced by our high rankings in all forms of student achievement. Our economy and society benefit hugely from the high quality education that is available to all citizens, and we must always demonstrate greater ambition for our sector.

This Government will:

- Continue the programme of reform of Senior Cycle to ensure that students benefit from up-to-date curricula, more diverse skills development and assessments, and reduced stress levels.
- Focus on actions to improve literacy and numeracy.
- Invest in ICT and the development of appropriate digital skills in our schools, and embed ICT and coding in the curriculum, so that children and young people have the skills necessary to stay safe in a digital world, whilst also developing the skills necessary to contribute to a thriving digital industry and economy.
- Increase the take-up of foreign languages in our schools and expand the teaching of modern foreign languages in primary schools.
- Continue to implement the SPHE/RSE curricula and provide resources and training for their effective delivery.
- Seek to increase choice for parents by ensuring that families can access both non-denominational and faith-based education.
- Hold a convention bringing together all stakeholders in education.
- Expand the Active School Flag to a greater number of schools, especially secondary schools, through continued funding support.
- Expand the School Transport Service to include 100,000 additional students by 2030 and
  - Implement the terms of the School Transport Review to reduce distance criteria and expand eligibility
  - Ensure better management of applications system and timely communication to parents and families
  - Carry out an independent assessment on the feasibility of removing the exclusion of drivers aged over 70 from the School Transport Scheme
  - Explore flexible work options to attract more drivers including women.
  - Ensure the financial sustainability of the scheme.
- Introduce new Music Education Hubs so that more students can benefit from structured and ongoing instruction in music.

- Expand opportunities for students to attend Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí.
- Expand the highly successful BLAST and Creative Schools Programmes.
- Work towards aligning Irish language curriculums with the Common European Framework of Reference to enhance spoken Irish at primary, post-primary and third levels.
- Develop a new curriculum for Irish Sign Language for primary and post-primary students up to Leaving Certificate level.
- Continue to increase the number of schools offering Physical Education as a Leaving Certificate exam subject.

Supporting Schools

We are fortunate in Ireland to have some of the best schools in the world, supported by excellent staff and voluntary boards of management. These schools provide a rich, nurturing and supportive environment in which students can learn and grow. We want to support this work by ensuring that schools are adequately funded and supported to achieve their ambitions.

This Government will:

- Increase capitation funding to schools of all types to ensure that schools can meet the elevated day-to-day running costs and reduce the financial burden on families.
- Aim to reduce the general Pupil Teacher Ratio at primary level to 19:1 over the term of government and introduce targeted measures in schools with very large classes.
- Trial new administrative supports and arrangements for principals and boards of management to reduce the non-educational aspect of their workloads.
- Introduce a new national Small Schools Project for all 1,300 small primary schools to protect these school communities and develop new administrative supports.
- Establish a fund for schools to support new initiatives and encourage collaboration between clusters of schools, fostering creativity and shared learning.
- Roll out nationwide common application systems to reduce stress on parents and students during application periods.
- Increase funding supports for student teachers, working to increase diversity within the profession and with a view to increasing supply.
- Expand the provision of after-school and childcare in school buildings and campuses, in tandem with the school building programme, to provide better access for parents and communities.
- Develop a workforce plan for the education sector to ensure that we continue to attract, retain and return people into the sector and that the appropriate conditions and supports exist to ensure that they meet the needs of children and young people, society and the economy over the coming decades.
- Conduct a review of leadership and continuous professional development supports to ensure that school management structures are adequately equipped to manage changes to the education system.
- Improve teaching and learning methods, especially as schools adapt to digital learning and the opportunities presented by artificial intelligence.

Investing in School Buildings

Schools are more than their physical buildings, but there is no doubt that modern and fit-for-purpose facilities are beneficial for teaching and learning. We will increase funding for school buildings.

This Government will:

- Continue to strengthen forward planning within the Department of Education in collaboration with local stakeholders to identify future needs and to ensure provision of school places keeps apace with delivery of local housing and population growth.
- Support the School Building Unit in the timely delivery of school building projects.
- Ensure, through the NDP process, that adequate funding is available for new school places in areas of demographic growth, new special education provision, essential refurbishment and maintenance, ICT and digital and climate action.
- Increase the Minor Works Scheme payment and ensure it is paid on an annual basis.
- Ensure that the Summer Works Scheme operates every year to ensure good maintenance of school buildings.
- Prioritise the development of Physical Education halls and sporting facilities (including yards and play areas) for schools in conjunction with the Sports Capital Fund to deliver for both schools and communities.
- Drive the implementation of the new guidelines for schools to open up their facilities to communities outside of school hours.

Ensuring our education system works for all

Education should be inclusive of all students, recognising that particular students may need particular supports. We will continue our work to tackle all forms of disadvantage in education and promote inclusivity.

This Government will:

- Establish a new DEIS Plus Scheme to support schools with the highest level of educational disadvantage to improve educational outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- Expand and strengthen measures to address the problems which exist with school attendance, including examining how youth services can partner with the formal education system to improve engagement with young people.
- Expand the Home School Liaison Co-ordinator Scheme with new posts for schools demonstrating high need.
- Implement a range of recommendations from the recent Report on the Review of Out-of-School Education Provision to support school completion.
- Expand the Junior Certificate School Programme School Library Programme to include additional schools.
- Enhance guidance services in schools to ensure that all students have access to high-quality guidance.
- Continue to expand and improve the Free Hot School Meals programme and ensure that suppliers adhere to robust guidelines on the nutritional value of meals, the dietary requirements of students, reduce food waste and utilise recyclable packaging.
- Provide free schoolbooks to all children in the free education system and introduce changes as needed to the operation of this scheme.
- Promote the expansion of the Transition Year Programme and address the barriers that might prevent take-up by students.
- Promote uniform swap shops in all primary schools, making uniforms more affordable and supporting sustainability.
- Provide more Community Link Workers to schools to support Traveller and Roma students and their progression in education.
- Review and enhance educational supports for Traveller and Roma students.
- Pilot Wellness Initiatives in high-need

areas to develop new models of best practice.
- Continue to support and promote the development of student councils in schools to give students a voice in decision-making.
- Provide free period products in schools to ensure no student is held back due to period poverty.

Supporting students with additional educational needs

It is vital that every student is supported to reach their full potential, and that our education system is fully inclusive of every student. We will continue to build the capacity of the education and disability sector to provide better services for children and young people, and provide specialist services to those children and young people who need it.

This Government will:

- Continue to increase the number of special schools and special classes across the country to ensure that children can go to school within their local community.
- We will streamline the delivery of modular accommodation for special classes and special schools so that it is in place in advance of the school year.
- Promote the potential for special schools and clusters of mainstream schools to work together innovatively to offer high-quality inclusive and integrated education, and support the co-location of special schools with mainstream schools.
- Introduce a new common application system for children applying to special schools and classes to make it a more straightforward experience for parents.
- Work to standardise admissions timelines across schools.
- Hire additional Special Education Teachers and Special Needs Assistants to provide greater support to students and schools.
- Create a dedicated National Therapy Service in Education, beginning with special schools. To implement this ambitious new programme and ensure a sufficient supply of therapists, this Government will:
  * Double the number of college places for speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, educational psychologists and any other specialists required.
  * Create new expedited qualification routes for professionals with relevant skills and experience.
  * Examine the provision of funding supports for those seeking to upskill into therapy programmes.
  * Provide therapy assistant posts within the education sector to maximise therapists' ability to deliver bespoke therapy services.
  * Ensure that the model of therapy provision allows children in SEN classes and mainstream to access essential therapies, in addition to those in special schools.
- Complete the review of the EPSEN Act and make sure that it meets the needs of children with special educational needs.

In addition;

- Work with relevant stakeholders to collect data to create more targeted, effective services for children with special needs.
- Expand access for teachers to undertake professional development in special education provisions, particularly when opening new special classes, and in using therapies.
- Improve supports for students with special educational needs who are transitioning to new stages of school e.g. pre-school to primary, improve data sharing between schools and provide

career guidance in special schools.
- Make special education modules and placements in special schools or classes a universal part of initial teacher training, which will be subject to assessment.
- Continue to expand the free-of-charge Summer Programme for students with special educational needs, particularly the in-school provision of the programme.
- Expand Early Intervention Classes where appropriate and ensure that children have access to supports at the earliest possible stage.
- Reform the Drumcondra Tests which are used to gauge student learning to include assessments for dyslexia.
- Introduce a specific programme to support students with exceptional abilities.
- Develop an appropriate mechanism to allow additional time for students with specific needs and in certain circumstances and also ensure that those who use assistive technology can do so in State examinations.
- Seek to ensure every school for the deaf has qualified Irish Sign Language interpreters, enabling full participation in education for deaf and hard of hearing students.
- Complete the SNA workforce development programme, providing clarity on their role and career paths.
- Engage with schools who are on the AERS independent list on practical matters that relate to the educational needs and welfare of children, such as special needs inclusion, NEPS, NCSE, Tusla, teacher training and other matters as might be pertinent.

Safer, healthier children

The wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and we must ensure that schools receive adequate supports to help their students to meet the challenges of today head on and to thrive.

This Government will:
- Work with school leaders to ensure schools are smartphone-free zones to protect student wellbeing and learning.
- Review the mental health and wellbeing pilots that are ongoing in primary and post-primary schools and expand them.
- Ensure the implementation of the actions in the Zero Tolerance Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence.
- Implement and monitor the roll-out of the Behaviours of Concern guidelines to ensure the needs of children with special educational needs are met.
- Expand the FUSE anti-bullying programme to reach more students and schools.
- Promote digital literacy and online safety education in schools, especially through Webwise in collaboration with Coimisiún na Meán and other organisations to ensure children understand online safety risks and increase supports against bullying, online abuse and expanding counselling resources.
- Continue to implement digital literacy and online safety education in schools and launch public awareness campaigns to educate and support parents.
- Introduce a holistic wellness programme that addresses urgent health and social issues facing young people today including:

    * A Comprehensive Wellness Approach, focusing on physical activity, nutrition, emotional wellbeing, and positive social behaviour in schools, promoting at least 60 minutes of physical activity throughout the full day for children of all abilities.

* Mandate the Local Sports Partnerships to collaborate with schools to promote inter-school competitions, sports festivals, and collaboration with parents, local sports clubs, and national sporting organisations to create a dynamic, inclusive approach to physical activity.

Support Survivors of Historical Abuse

This Government will:

- Complete the passage of legislation to provide supports to survivors of abuse in industrial schools and reformatories.
- Cognisant of the experience of survivors of historical abuse and in line with their wishes as per the scoping inquiry of Mary O'Toole SC we will as a priority establish and support the work of a Commission of Investigation as agreed by Cabinet in September 2024.

Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

A cornerstone of our economic success story has been the availability of a highly skilled and talented workforce. Since Ireland embraced FDI and enabled access to second-level education for all, knowledge and talent has been the pillar of our economic strategy. The knowledge economy remains key to our international competitiveness. Ongoing investment in further and higher education is core to our ambition of delivering sustainable economic growth. The Government will ensure that this investment also offers opportunity to everyone, while remaining agile to address the key skill challenges faced by our country as well as new and emerging technology and work practices.

A well-resourced further and higher education sector is essential not only to develop the talent for our economy, but to support local communities as employers and in nurturing cultural and sporting activities.

This Government will:

- Close the core funding gap by unlocking the National Training Fund.
- Develop a borrowing framework for technological universities and ensure a clear pathway for Technological Universities to access capital funding for initiatives including student accommodation.
- Support universities to meet their carbon reduction targets under their Climate Action Plans.
- Continue to support the Technological Sector Advancement Fund.
- Ensure that where a higher education institution operates across multiple campuses in a region, that there is balanced senior management representation based across the campuses.

Increase access to Further and Higher Education

Fair and equal access to quality further and higher education regardless of socio-economic status, ability or geographical location will be a hallmark of this

Government's approach to the Further and Higher Education sector.

This Government will:

- Provide more further education and training places nationally.
- Continue to reduce the Student Contribution Fee over the lifetime of the Government to ease the financial burden on students and families at the start of each academic year, in a financially sustainable manner.
- Increase maintenance grants and reform SUSI to better meet the needs of students.
- Examine the introduction of a placement grant for students on mandatory placements.
- Continue to implement a Colleges of the Future programme, allowing young people to access high-level education close to home.
- Continue to invest in the Student Assistance Fund.
- Increase financial support to postgraduate students particularly in areas of critical skills shortages.
- Expand free part-time courses to assist more people to gain or enhance their qualifications.
- Increase the number of third-level pathways outside the Leaving Certificate points system and introduce a single application process for apprenticeships, further and higher education.
- Work with the sector to reform the CAO system to ensure that young people are best served by it.
- Seek to increase the percentage of students receiving their preferred choices.
- Review the financial supports available to adult learners and promote access to education and lifelong learning.

Improve supports for students

Access and inclusion will be at the heart of everything we will do, breaking down barriers to ensure everyone is provided with opportunities to reach their potential.

This Government will:

- Introduce a 'Second Chance' to ensure students going through a 'repeat year' or changing courses on one occasion can access the Free Fees Initiative to avoid them being penalised and having to pay higher rates of fees.
- Continue to support students experiencing mental health and wellbeing challenges.
- Continue to rollout active consent workshops.
- Examine the continuation of fee supports where there is a clear continuation of a student's original primary degree to an advanced qualification in the same discipline.
- Support students with disabilities to have a clear path into employment, avoiding any barriers to entering the workforce.
- Expand the Programme for Access to Higher Education (Path 4) courses to ensure equity of access to further education.
- Examine the provision of the Personal Assistants Initiative for persons with a disability in third level institutions to ensure consistency.
- Create a website to provide students across Ireland with comprehensive information on third-level pathways, supporting students on an all-Ireland basis.
- Support universities in adopting a trauma-informed practices to handle discrimination and violence, introduce targeted reporting systems, and provide funding to support victims and survivors.

Boosting Skills and Apprenticeships

By focusing on apprenticeships and skills, this Government will boost the opportunities available to young people, achieve important social goals and meet key targets, particularly in housing and climate action.

This Government will:

- Expand the CAO system to include more apprenticeship options.
- Expand the skills categories that can avail of the National Training Fund to include sectors such as healthcare and education.
- Grow apprenticeship registrations to at least 12,500 by 2030, and develop and launch a new 5-year Apprenticeship Action Plan for 2026-2030 to set a strategic vision for the sector and expand the skills categories.
- Work with the National Skills Council to update apprenticeship curriculums to meet today's industry standards.
- Ensure new courses in Green Skills supporting Ireland's transition to a green economy and establish industry centres of retrofitting excellence nationwide.
- Double the number of places in high-demand healthcare professions, such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.
- Ensure the Apprenticeship Employer Grant maximises the number of people starting and completing apprenticeships.
- Maintain the Gender Based Bursary and bursary funding to encourage participation from underrepresented groups in apprenticeships.
- Continue to invest in the National Construction Training Centre at Mount Lucas, Co. Offaly, to address future demands for construction skills.

Achieving excellence in Research, Innovation and Science

Research and innovation are key drivers of economic progress, but also essential to improving our health and social wellbeing. Ireland must remain a location of choice to realise our ambitions.

This Government will:

- Increase funding for research which adds value to our economy, grows future job opportunities, and strengthens our competitiveness.
- Continue to fund Taighde Éireann to maintain Ireland's global competitiveness and stimulate growth across regions, promote and fund outstanding Irish research and innovation at home, in Europe, and globally.
- Ensure that distinct funding programmes for research in the Humanities and Social Sciences are maintained.
- Encourage greater STEM uptake in further and higher education.
- Increase supports available to PhD or early post-doctoral students to encourage emerging researchers.
- Publish annual details of research funding to improve transparency.
- Foster closer collaboration between educational institutions and industry, formalising postdoctoral employment structures and funding graduate research programmes to sustain economic growth.
- Work with industry and higher education institutes to provide expanded programmes of short and micro credential courses to upskill/reskill our pool of talented people for future jobs.
- Expand EU Research and Innovation Partnerships with small and medium sized businesses.
- Maximise Horizon Europe engagement.
- Support groundbreaking research that bridges academia, industry, and government, leveraging Ireland's tertiary sector expertise.

- Promote inclusive research by ensuring institutions have the necessary supports for faculty and researchers with disabilities.
- Establish a formal pathway for third-level researchers to inform government policy on critical issues based on internationally recognised research.
- Enable the transformation of Technological Universities to more comprehensively deliver on the skills and innovation by introducing new academic career paths, contracts and professorships in TUs.
- Strengthen all-island collaborations and continue to support the North-South Research Programme through the Shared Island Fund.
- Continue to support the role of the Government Science Advisor.
- Promote greater international researcher mobility.
- Scale up exchange programmes and secondments between academia and Government, to enhance policymaking.
- Ensure discovery research and pioneering analysis is supported and facilitated without funding being tied to commercial outcomes or immediate breakthroughs.
- Examine a new funding stream for bricks and mortar facilities e.g. laboratories and libraries along the lines of the former Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions.
- Encourage academic and research involvement in public life and in contributing to the solution of societal challenges such as healthcare, housing and infrastructure.
- Continue to progress membership of CERN, ESA and other international collaborations

Invest in Student Accommodation

Affordable student accommodation is an essential part of the social infrastructure of higher education institutions and its availability can have a significant impact on the lives of students and the communities in which they are located. It is of particular importance to students who do not have the means to access higher education, or students who need to be away from home to access greater opportunities.

This Government will:

- Develop a multi-annual plan to urgently deliver new student accommodation, including through state financed purpose-built student accommodation on public or private lands.
- Enable Technological Universities to borrow funds to provide for on-campus student accommodation.
- Examine measures to boost the take-up of the Rent-a-Room Relief Scheme.
- Ensure student accommodation leases align with the academic year, making it easier for students to secure housing only for the months they need.

Transport

As an island nation with a dispersed population and an open economy, good connectivity within the country and with the rest of the world is essential to foster continued economic growth, for communities, and our tourism industry.

By investing in diverse transport options—public transport, active travel, roads, maritime, and aviation—we will enhance connectivity across urban and rural areas,

giving people more choice and supporting sustainable growth.

Given our geographical location at the periphery of Europe, Ireland is critically dependent on air and maritime connectivity. The Government recognises the importance of these sectors and is committed to creating an environment which will increase connectivity with our continental neighbours and international trading partners to support the supply chain and foster trade, investment, outward travel and the expansion of our tourism industry.

Developing a strategic public transport network

This Government will:

- Ensure the newly re-focussed Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation streamlines the delivery of major transport projects, from planning to execution.
- Provide extra funding for the improvement of transport networks countrywide to promote increased business investment in the economy and the supply of new housing.
- Review and enhance the NDP funding envelope to deliver on existing, strategically important transport infrastructure commitments, and meet the funding needs of new or accelerated potential projects and programmes.
- Progress all key public transport infrastructure in the National Development Plan and consider new public transport projects in the review of the NDP.
- Focus on linking new housing developments to public transport and schools through Transport Oriented Development, ensuring easy access for residents and visitors.
- Ensure each metropolitan area has a tailored transport strategy including frequent bus services and light rail where appropriate.
- Work collaboratively to act on the recommendations from the All-Island Strategic Rail Review to improve connectivity across the island of Ireland.
- Develop additional track capacity, electrification, increased line speeds and new routes to enhance and develop rail services.
- Examine the further expansion of free public transport for children.
- Roll out contactless fare payments on all public transport and keep fares low and affordable.
- Upgrade real-time tracking of services, including via TFI app, for accurate updates on when next service is due with timely notification of any delays, cancellations or outages.
- Commission an independent feasibility study into continuing MetroLink from the city to South West Dublin.
- As part of the NDP review, examine further investment in light rail for our cities.
- Develop sustainable transport options in the growing commuter belt.
- Expand feeder/shuttle bus services to commuter stations from surrounding towns and villages.
- Create a Transport Security Force under the National Transport Authority, which would operate and have similar powers to the Airport Police and Customs officers.
- Ensure that public transport operators provide safe and accessible access for all passengers.
- Identify, research and coordinate delivery of behavioural change initiatives to support modal shift and reduce car dependency, focusing on wider societal benefits of the change.
- Develop a sustainable funding model for PSO services into the future.

Enhancing Rail Infrastructure

This Government will:

- Work collaboratively to act on the recommendations from the All-Island Strategic Rail Review to improve connectivity across the island of Ireland.
- Fully commit to existing projects in the National Development Plan and, as part of the NDP review, develop additional track capacity, electrification, increased line speeds and new routes to enhance and develop commuter and intercity rail services.
- Work with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to improve the punctuality and reliability of inter-city and commuter rail services coming into Dublin city and grow additional capacity.
- Increase funding for the protection and renewal of the rail network through agreeing a new five-year Infrastructure Manager Multi-Annual Contract in 2025.

Improving bus services

This Government will:

- Expand bus services in cities and continue to strengthen local urban transport in towns.
- Ensure Bus Connects delivers promised benefits for public transport users.
- Continue upgrading the bus fleet, improving service reliability and comfort.
- Increase Local Link services in rural areas to better connect villages, towns, and cities.
- Continue the roll-out of Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan and investment in new town bus services.
- Work to enhance and support the delivery of a skilled workforce to maintain and operate public transport vehicles.

Supporting Taxis and Local Transport options

This Government will:

- Collaborate with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to improve local taxi service provision.
- Mandate the NTA to run a number of pilots enabling ride-sharing platforms to operate to improve rural connectivity.
- Extend the ten-year vehicle limit for taxis registered in 2015, offering another year of service.
- Continue the scrappage scheme to help taxi and hackney drivers replace older vehicles with electric models, supporting a greener fleet.
- Support the expansion of the taxi fleet.
- Task the NTA with undertaking a review of the area knowledge module of the Small Public Service Vehicle (SPSV) Driver Entry test and make recommendations as appropriate.
- Work with the NTA to allow flexible pick-ups on Local Link and other bus routes in rural communities, as appropriate, enhancing service accessibility.
- Work to integrate Local Link transport routes with health services to improve access for individuals seeking care.
- Develop sustainable transport options in the commuter belt, including provision of shuttle buses to train stations from surrounding towns and villages.
- Work with local authorities and relevant agencies to develop affordable Park and Ride facilities on the outskirts of major towns and cities.

Active Travel

This Government will:

- Invest in dedicated infrastructure for walking and cycling, in consultation with communities and people of all abilities including older people and people with disabilities, to promote active travel

across Ireland for those commuting or enjoying the countryside.
- Increase investment in greenways, blueways and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to encourage active travel and develop urban trailways.
- Expand the Safe Routes to School initiative, in consultation with communities and people of all abilities including the elderly and people with disabilities, making travel safer for young people.
- Provide a dedicated maintenance budget to each local authority to maintain active travel infrastructure, including footpaths.
- Establish mobility hubs in each local authority area, offering integrated transport services like bike and scooter sharing, EV charging, car sharing, and carpooling.
- Promote a universal design approach in active travel projects to ensure accessibility for everyone, including people with disabilities, allowing more community members to participate fully and independently.
- Review the structures and operation of the NTA to strengthen their engagement with local authorities, communities and stakeholders.
- Ensure better collaboration by the NTA with local communities during consultation phases.
- Implement necessary changes to ensure local active travel projects are delivered directly by Local Authorities through direct funding from the Department of Transport.
- Offer a bike scheme specifically for third level students, mirroring the bike-to-work scheme, and coordinate bike and e-bike rental programmes across further and higher education campuses.

Roads investment

The Government will invest in all road projects in the current National Development Plan and consider additional important road projects as part of the NDP review.

This Government will:

- Provide multi-annual funding clarity for roads budgets so agencies can plan accordingly.
- Increase funding for new roads as part of the NDP review and the maintenance of existing roads.
- Increase funding for the protection and renewal of the road network to address maintenance backlogs.
- Establish distinct budgets for road maintenance and new road construction starting in 2025 to ensure sustained investment in the network.
- Fund a matching road maintenance catch up programme for local authorities with poor pavement surface conditions and utilise advanced imaging technology to expedite repairs.
- Continue to progress construction of the Narrow Water Bridge and support the local authorities on both sides of the bridge in developing the new tourism opportunities it will bring.
- Improve connectivity with the Northwest by working with the Northern Ireland Executive to deliver the A5 road upgrade. Further enhance road connectivity to and from the North-West.
- Provide additional funding for the Local Improvement Scheme and Community Involvement Schemes (CIS).
- Progress the digital solution to replace the paper discs on vehicle windscreens.

Road safety

The Government is committed to reducing road deaths and creating safer roads for everyone in Ireland.

This Government will:

- Support the implementation of Ireland's Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030, increase public awareness and crack down on dangerous driving.
- Increase the number of average speed and static speed cameras to curb speeding and encourage safer driving.
- Introduce new road safety cameras to automatically detect mobile phone use and non-wearing of seat belts.
- Review a graduated penalty points system.
- Enhance driver training and introduce re-education courses as a judicial sanction for those who commit road traffic offences.
- Maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of road safety enforcement and proceedings in court to include freeing up Gardaí from the need to attend court for road traffic offences, digitising all relevant documents and ensuring that information is shared in real time between the Courts Service, An Garda Siochána, the Department of Transport and other relevant agencies.
- Invest in high-powered roads policing vehicles and continue to upgrade the Garda fleet to support effective enforcement.
- Allow the public to upload dashcam footage of dangerous driving to a new Garda portal, making it easier to report incidents.
- Use ongoing data analysis and local knowledge to identify accident-prone areas and focus road safety interventions where they are most needed.
- Invest in infrastructure improvements to enhance road safety.
- Work to advance the development of advanced safety system technology to improve road safety (e.g. requirements around drowsiness detection, blind spot information systems, advanced braking systems).
- Consider recommendations from the ongoing review of the Road Safety Authority to strengthen overall road safety measures.
- Enact the National Vehicle Driver File Bill to ensure Local Authorities have access to relevant data on road traffic collisions (to inform road improvements) and to expand real time data access for An Garda Siochana to driver and vehicle information.
- Continue the work underway to consolidate the Road Traffic Acts legislation.

Accelerating the transition to electric and sustainable transport

This Government will:

- Work with local authorities and State agencies to develop decarbonised zones in our urban areas, focusing on pedestrianisation, cycling facilities, and use of renewable energy across all transport modes.
- Develop a new Sustainable Mobility Action Plan which promotes sustainable modes and transport-oriented development to address congestion, improve air quality and reduce noise, and enhance attractiveness and accessibility of cities, neighbourhoods and town centres.
- Develop a new National EV Infrastructure Strategy which ensures EV charging is ahead of demand and in line with EU mandated obligations, including neighbourhood charging for those who do not have access to home charging and charging across the main transport arteries.
- Continue to electrify the rail and bus fleets.
- Substantially increase the number of publicly available EV charging points, ensuring better coverage nationwide, and reduce the average distance between EV recharging points.

- Ensure Local Authorities allocate space for EV chargers in town plans and mandate new commercial carparks to provide EV chargers.
- Launch a national EV recharging infrastructure data strategy to enable real time data to be made available on mobile devices on the location and availability of all EV charger locations across our road network
- Examine the current EV grant system and the introduction of additional incentives with a view to increasing take-up of EVs and replacing older, polluting vehicles.
- Review customs duties on second-hand EV imports to make EVs more affordable.
- Consider grants for solar storage batteries to encourage EV ownership and allow users to store energy for charging at optimal times.
- Conduct a review of the Bike to Work scheme to boost take-up among all workers.

Aviation

This Government will:

- Work with stakeholders to achieve our objective of lifting the passenger cap at Dublin airport as soon as possible.
- Ensure relevant agencies engage effectively with all communities impacted by noise, flight movements and airport operations.
- Conduct a review of National Aviation Policy to maximise use of our airports in the regions including Donegal, Ireland West (Knock), Shannon, Cork and Kerry.
- Continue to invest in the Regional Airports Programme and develop a new Regional Airports Programme 2026-2030.
- Work with all stakeholders to quickly progress the Waterford Airport project to lengthen and widen the runway, building on the previous Government decision of 2019.
- Engage with all relevant stakeholders to establish air connectivity between Dublin and Derry City airports.
- Improve connectivity and public transport to all airports.
- Develop a National Sustainable Aviation Fuel Policy Roadmap and support Shannon Airport as a hub for testing new aviation technologies.
- Develop Air Cargo Infrastructure and assess the feasibility of an all-island (North-South) approach to strengthening speed to market and competitiveness of indigenous and FDI exporting firms.
- Finalise and publish a policy framework for Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), often known as drones, to guide high-level strategic planning and development of the UAS sector in Ireland through supporting growth and innovation while ensuring safe and secure operations and addressing environmental and other concerns.

Maritime

This Government will:

- Support investment in our commercial and passenger port infrastructure through a new National Ports Policy.
- Work with ports to support investments to facilitate offshore renewable energy development including constructing, maintaining and servicing renewable infrastructure, with a regionally balanced approach.
- Support our commercial state ports to access funding streams.
- Ensure our ports have the current and future capacity to meet the needs of a growing economy.
- Perform resilience testing on all ports and sea routes to ensure contingency plans are in place.
- Improve rail connectivity into our

strategic national ports for persons and freight.
- Conclude and enact the Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Accidents) Bill 2024, which will facilitate the establishment of the Marine Accident Investigation Unit as well as providing for the regulation of offshore service vessels, including offshore renewable energy service vessels.
- Progress the ILV Granuaile vessel replacement programme with the Commissioners of Irish Lights.

Logistics and Road Haulage

This Government will:
- Support the sector to ensure the efficiency of the supply chain and to maintain competitiveness.
- Support decarbonisation of road freight and commercial coaches with fuels such as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), hydrogen, and biomethane.
- Examine the taxation of HVO used for commercial freight to support sustainable transport solutions.
- Engage with EU to allow incentives for lower emission fuels including biogas and HVO.
- Deliver on the Road Haulage Strategy through 2031 to support a resilient logistics network.

Supporting & enhancing transport services for people with disabilities

This Government will:
- Expand the Travel Assistance Scheme nationally.
- Develop a vehicle upgrade initiative for disability service providers.
- Support localised and community door-to-door services to connect people with disabilities with community services and employment.
- Extend the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Taxi Grant Scheme.
- Progress the review of the Disabled Drivers Scheme.
- Work to reduce the 24-hour notice requirement for disabled users of rail services.
- Ensure all public transport operators provide safe and accessible access for all passengers.

Irish Coast Guard

This Government will:
- Complete the roll out of the Transformation Programme for the Irish Coast Guard, including an independent review of the role of the Coast Guard volunteer.
- Build on the recent enhancements to the IRCG's Search and Rescue (SAR) function provided for under the new SAR contract, which includes a fixed wing element for the first time, to deliver enhanced search and rescue support for our public, industry, and our coastal and island communities in particular.
- Provide support to voluntary search and rescue organisations.

A Caring Society

A Caring Society

Building a Healthier Future

Accessible, Affordable, and High-Quality Healthcare for All

Through the ongoing implementation of Sláintecare and sustained investment, reform, and leadership, this Government will ensure access to high-quality patient care, reduce waiting times and further cut the cost of accessing care.

Having reviewed the recent two-year agreement, we will develop a multi-annual funding approach for our health service, which will be linked to productivity, staff levels and the delivery of services for patients.

This Government will foster collaboration with Northern Ireland on healthcare, research, training and education to achieve improved health outcomes for everyone on the island of Ireland.

Our healthcare workforce

This Government is committed to ensuring adequate and safe staffing across our health service, ensuring that the workforce keeps pace with population and demographic changes.

This Government will:

- Recruit additional doctors, nurses, dentists, and health and social care professionals, and reduce reliance on contract and agency workers.
- Consider measures to attract and retain staff in the health and social care sector. We will also develop a new workforce plan to address immediate staffing shortages and longer-term needs.
- Promote advanced practice roles for health and social care professionals and increase the number of Advanced Nurse Practitioners.
- Increase the number of healthcare college places in nursing, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and health and social care professions (including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy).
- Increase the number of public-only consultants.
- Establish a working group to examine the potential for flexible and fair, defined periods of service to the HSE for healthcare graduates.
- Establish an advanced leadership training programme for managers and senior clinicians.

Delivering faster access to care

This Government is committed to delivering faster access to care and to reducing waiting times.

This Government will:

- Further reduce waiting times, targeting all patients to be seen within the Sláintecare target of 10 and 12 weeks.
- Increase capacity by between 4,000 and 4,500 new and refurbished inpatient hospital beds across the country.
- Increase ICU bed capacity by at least a further 100 beds.
- Provide more community beds.
- Build four new elective hospitals (Cork, Dublin (2 sites) and Galway).
- Establish six surgical hubs in Cork, Dublin (2 sites), Galway, Limerick and Waterford, and explore the provision of an additional surgical hub for the North-West in a timely manner.
- Open the National Children's Hospital.
- Continue the transition to regular hospital care being available to patients 7 days a week.
- Ensure greater access to diagnostics in the evenings and weekends.
- Ensure even more routine healthcare services are available in the evenings and weekends.
- Allow more health professionals to make direct referrals to specialist services or tests.
- Continue to fund the National Treatment Purchase Fund.

Paediatric spinal surgery

This Government is committed to maintaining the Paediatric Spinal Surgery Management Unit and ensuring ongoing improvements in paediatric orthopaedic services to ensure that children with scoliosis and spina bifida are treated quickly and safely.

This Government will:

- Resource the Paediatric Spinal Surgery Management Unit.
- Coordinate spinal services across hospitals.
- Increase staffing and resources to ensure adequate surgical capacity.
- Use private capacity, both domestically and internationally, to support our public service.

Urgent and emergency care

This Government is committed to further reducing Emergency Department (ED) overcrowding and enhancing urgent care services nationwide.

This Government will:

- Increase the number of consultants in emergency medicine by a further 50% and ensure more senior staff are rostered in emergency departments during weekends and public holidays for better decision-making.
- Ensure patients have more access to diagnostics in the evenings and at weekends.
- Continue to review capacity in emergency departments.
- Expand trauma services, including facilities in Dublin, Cork and Galway.
- Standardise the opening hours of Injury Units to ensure a consistent 7-day service from 8am to 8pm and open at least an additional 12 Injury Units.
- Develop a network of Rapid Outpatient Clinics.
- Continue to roll-out virtual wards and introduce virtual urgent care, based on the model successfully introduced in Australia.
- Invest in our ambulance service and continue the development of new ambulance stations and paramedic education and training facilities.
- Support and expand the Pathfinder

ambulance service.
- Commit to advancing the full implementation of the recommendations of the HSE/Dublin City Council Joint Ambulance Service Delivery, Task and Finish Group.
- Continue to increase capacity and open more beds at UHL and across the Midwest and take account of the HIQA recommendations.
- Act on the final report of the National Taskforce on the Non-Consultant Hospital Doctor (NCHD) Workforce.

Supporting General Practice

This Government is committed to supporting General Practice.

This Government will:
- Publish the Strategic Review of General Practice, and bring forward a new, modern GP contract.
- Examine the possibility of expanding the Structured Chronic Disease Management Programme to include more conditions and seek to provide access to more adults with these conditions.
- Ensure full national coverage for GP On Call.
- Increase the number of GPs through a combination of international recruitment and increased training places.
- Provide additional supports for GP practices in rural areas and areas of increased need.
- Provide targeted supports for newly qualified GPs and to GP practices that take on newly qualified GPs.
- Explore the recruitment of HSE-employed GPs.
- Expand the GP Access to Community Diagnostics Scheme.
- Introduce a tuition fee support scheme for Graduate Entry Medicine.
- Provide more graduate entry medicine programmes focused on preparing students for careers in rural and remote medicine, ensuring those in under-served areas have access to skilled healthcare professionals.

Cutting costs for patients

This Government is committed to making healthcare more affordable and will build on the significant work done to achieve this.

This Government will:
- Expand free GP services to children up to at least 12 years, and keep its further extension under review.
- Consider further reductions in the Drugs Payment Scheme.
- Explore further ways to reduce hospital car parking charges.
- Continue to extend access to free contraception.
- Seek to further increase medical card income limits.
- Ensure that the planned rollout of free HRT medicines is available at no cost for the drug/product.

Community care and pharmacy services

This Government is committed to ensuring people can access as much care as possible in their home and in their community.

This Government will:
- Open more primary care centres and expedite the delivery of the existing pipeline to construction.
- Continue to expand our enhanced community care teams.
- Appoint a Chief Pharmacist within the Department of Health.
- Further expand the services provided by pharmacists and introduce a Common Conditions Service.
- Streamline community pharmacy HSE

reimbursement procedures.
- Review the pharmacy fee structure.
- Support pharmacists to adopt a proactive approach to managing medicine shortages.

Cancer care

This Government is committed to enhancing cancer care in Ireland, ensuring better prevention, timely access to treatment, and improved quality of life for patients and survivors.

This Government will:

- Allocate ringfenced funding to cancer services.
- Actively promote the increased uptake of all screening programmes
- Extend the BowelScreen cancer screening programme.
- Extend the ages for BreastCheck screening programme in line with updated standards from HIQA.
- Evaluate the current lung cancer screening pilot in line with WHO criteria and develop recommendations for a way forward.
- Undertake a review of European screening and early detection programmes including for prostate and gastric cancers, to guide any further expansion of screening programmes.
- Implement Ireland's Roadmap to Cervical Cancer Elimination.
- Extend the Laura Brennan HPV Catch-up Vaccination programme to anyone under 25 who missed it.
- Protect diagnostic pathways and invest in infrastructure and equipment to meet target treatment times outlined in the National Cancer Strategy.
- Continue to invest in local cancer support groups.
- Implement the Model of Care for Psycho-Oncology for patients up to 24 years of age.
- Fund universal access to hairpieces, post-mastectomy products and specialised bras.
- Ban the sale of tobacco products to people under the age of 21.
- Increase the number of clinical trials, with a strong focus on cancer drugs.
- Increase supports for cancer survivors and continue to invest in community cancer support services.
- Expand the Acute Haematology Oncology nursing service.
- Expand the Acute Oncology Service and facilities for people being treated for cancer, ensuring they do not have to go through the general emergency department.
- Develop a skin cancer awareness campaign.
- Explore ways to ban commercial sunbed use.

Women's health

This Government is committed to further developing the transformation in women's healthcare.

This Government will:

- Provide a comprehensive women's health programme in general practice including advice on contraception, sexually transmitted infections, screening, fertility and pre-conception and support for women experiencing menopause.
- Build the new National Maternity Hospital.
- Ensure that all maternity hospitals provide equitable access to termination of pregnancy services.
- Complete the national network of twenty-one same day, see and treat gynaecology clinics.
- Continue to expand specialist services in endometriosis.
- Increase our network of menopause clinics and develop a model of care for

menopause.
- Develop a plan to make free period products accessible in more locations.
- Expand eligibility to State-funded IVF.
- Establish the new AHR Regulatory Authority to support Assisted Human Reproduction and establish our first public Assisted Human Reproduction treatment centre.
- Develop a successor to the National Maternity Strategy.
- Invest in additional supports for breastfeeding.
- Examine the introduction of free pelvic floor physical therapy sessions for women after childbirth.
- Require hospitals to improve their environments, spaces and supports within maternity services to better assist and support individuals dealing with pregnancy loss or critical neonatal illness.
- Deliver the first inpatient mother and baby mental health unit.

Men's health

This Government is committed to advancing men's health in tandem with the investment and progress seen in women's healthcare.

This Government will:
- Implement the Men's Health Action Plan 2024 – 2028 to increase health literacy and raise public awareness of boys' and men's physical, mental and emotional health through a range of promotional activities.
- Research, implement and evaluate cancer prevention and early detection initiatives including prostate cancer.
- Promote the uptake of the HPV vaccine for young men and boys.
- Fund research into the gender life expectancy gap and implement strategies to close this gap.
- Proactively support and expand mental health initiatives targeting men, and the implementation of strategies aimed at reducing suicide and self-harm among men.

Public Health

This Government has a steadfast commitment to improving public health.

This Government will:
- Introduce wide ranging restrictions on vaping, including packaging, flavours, point of sale advertising and a ban on disposable vapes.
- Explore restrictions on the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks, including a ban on their sale to children.
- Ensure that children are safe online and implement the recommendations of the new Online Health Taskforce.
- Increase Public Health Nurse numbers through a sponsorship scheme for nurses training in public health.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to combat the harms related to social media.
- Expand the RSV immunisation programme.
- Ensure the administration of dermal fillers is only undertaken by trained healthcare professionals.
- Create a new Obesity Policy and Action Plan.
- Publish the National Physical Activity Framework and Action Plan.
- Place a greater focus on exercise and wellbeing as a preventative and rehabilitation measure, and examine ways to support the provision of community based clinical exercise programmes nationwide.
- Continue to tackle harmful alcohol consumption through effective regulations.
- Continually review the number of conditions babies are screened for.

- Continue to implement the recommendations on the potential expansion of the national immunisation programme.
- Support the work of the Covid-19 Inquiry.
- Keep under review the model of care for Long Covid, taking account of input from patient representatives.
- Work to fully staff Long and Post-Covid clinics with appropriate healthcare professionals.

Sexual health

This Government is committed to enhancing sexual health services in Ireland.

This Government will:

- Publish a new National Sexual Health Strategy.
- Intensify our efforts by developing an action plan to eliminate new HIV transmissions by 2030 and provide support for people living with HIV.
- Increase the availability of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and reduce waiting times for access to it.

Healthcare strategies

This Government is committed to improving health outcomes based on strategies and policies that will have a positive and long-lasting impact on the well-being of Irish society.

This Government will:

- Develop a National Rehabilitation Strategy and consider the establishment an All-island Education Institute of Rehabilitation.
- Develop a new strategy for diabetes care.
- Publish and fund a new National Rare Disease Plan, improving access to orphan drugs.
- Building on the existing National Cardiovascular Policy, we will develop a new and more ambitious plan enhancing patient care and timely access across all regions.
- Resource the National Strategy for Accelerating Genetic and Genomic Medicine.
- Ensure a transgender healthcare service that is based on clinical evidence, respect, inclusiveness and compassion.
- Continue to engage with and support thalidomide survivors.

Dentists

This Government is committed to making dental services more accessible for everyone.

This Government will:

- Implement Smile agus Sláinte.
- Hire more public dentists.
- Agree a new Dental Treatment Service Scheme for medical card holders.
- Expand access to the orthodontic scheme for children and strengthen the School Dental Programme.
- Update the Dentists Act 1985.
- Recognise and regulate more dental specialities.

Eye care

This Government is committed to making eye care services more accessible for everyone.

This Government will:

- Review the National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology to ensure more eye services are provided in the community.
- Review the Community Ophthalmic Services Medical Treatment Scheme (COSMTS) to provide more medical and minor surgical care to medical

card patients outside of the acute care settings.

Palliative care

This Government is committed to enhancing palliative care services to provide the best end-of-life and bereavement support for patients, families and carers.

This Government will:

- Continue to invest in palliative care to achieve full national coverage of hospice and community services.
- Fund the National Adult Palliative Care Policy.
- Develop a new national policy on palliative care for children and increase funding to children's hospice care.

Access to new medicines and treatments

This Government is committed to ensuring that patients have access to new innovative new medicines and treatments as quickly as possible.

This Government will:

- Increase the number of clinical trials and examine how better to support clinicians, researchers, and support staff to focus on clinical trial activities.
- Commit to a review of the drugs reimbursement process.
- Implement the Mazars Review recommendations to ensure that the end-to-end approval process is effectively resourced to provide more timely access to drugs.
- Investigate new methods for earlier reimbursement of certain treatments, including early access schemes for rare diseases.
- Work towards a more coordinated approach at European level, akin to the Benelux agreement, to leverage benefits similar to those achieved during the Covid-19 vaccination programme.
- Invest and advocate for the development and accessibility of innovative and breakthrough treatments for cancer, and other major diseases to improve patient outcomes.

Patient safety

This Government will:

- Prioritise the introduction of a court supervised mediation-based process for managing neonatal brain injury medical negligence cases.
- Consider the establishment of a dedicated medical negligence court.
- Implement the recommendations of the Report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on the Rising Cost of Health-Related Claims and make it easier and less stressful for patients when things go wrong.
- Require an annual review of neonatal brain injuries between the State Claims Agency and maternity hospitals to determine and seek to reduce the incidence of neonatal brain injuries.
- Publish a national policy on adult safeguarding for the health and social care sector.
- Introduce hospital-based patient advocates to assist parents caring for a child with a disability or a new diagnosis to navigate the health service and provide information on accessing social protection income supports.
- Continue to support the Patient Advocacy Service and the work of the National Patient Safety Office (NPSO) in overseeing a programme of patient safety improvements and reforms.
- Examine extending the Patient Advocacy Service to support those accessing public mental health services.
- Continue to support the work of the

Patient Advocacy Service for residents in long-term residential care.
- Provide staff with training and support to foster an environment where patients are listened to and recognised as the best advocates for their own care, particularly in maternity hospitals.
- Implement the recommendations from the Clarke Report on Septicaemia, Safety and Escalation protocols in all hospitals.

A new era of innovation and digital transformation in health

This Government is committed to embracing the advancements in science and technology to improve patient access, experience and health outcomes.

This Government will:
- Continue to work towards the full digitisation of Irish healthcare records and information systems.
- Launch a National Patient App, giving patients easier access to their health information.
- Establish a national system for electronic prescribing.
- Develop an AI in Health strategy.
- Promote greater use of remote health monitoring and virtual care solutions.
- Government will progress the implementation of the collaboration agreement with the World Health Organisation. This includes the delivery of a Global Conference on Health Workforce Optimisation and Digital/ Assistive Technologies EXPO.

Productivity

This Government is committed to embedding productivity in patient care, to maximise the use of funding to ensure as many patients as possible get fast access to care.

The Government will:
- Ensure full transparency in published data on hospital productivity and use of public funds.
- Publish regular reports on the implementation of the public-only consultant contract, including the expansion of activity at evenings and the weekends.
- Ensure more routine healthcare services are available in the evenings and at weekends – continuing the transition to regular hospital care being available to patients 7 days a week.
- Continue to support the work of the Savings and Productivity Taskforce.
- Ensure greater use of diagnostic equipment and operating theatres at evenings and weekends.

Drug use

This Government is committed to a health-led approach to drug addiction.

The Government will:
- Assess the outcomes of the national drugs strategy, Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery 2017- 2025, and publish a successor strategy.
- Divert those found in possession of drugs for personal use to health services.
- Increase funding for drug addiction services including local drug and alcohol taskforces to improve their effectiveness.
- Launch a major awareness campaign of the impact of drugs on society.
- Re-establish the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Drugs Use.
- Explore the establishment of mobile medically supervised injecting facilities in areas of need.
- Increase the availability of naloxone and train relevant individuals on its use.

Disability

This Government is committed to advancing the rights and improving the lives of people with disabilities. We will prioritise the publication and fund a new National Disability Strategy, setting out a vision to 2030. We will adopt a whole-of-government approach and advance the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention of Persons with Disabilities. There will also be a National Implementation and Monitoring Committee with enhanced political oversight to ensure the delivery of the Strategy.

Delivering a step change in disability services

The Government will:

- Work in partnership with disabled people and their representative organisations in co-designing improvements to services and prioritising what measures are most important to them.
- Ensure children and their families who need early intervention and therapy input can access that support in a timely way by increasing staffing, training more therapists, and prioritising children's disability teams to deliver supports and services.
- Increase investment in disability and capital infrastructure for the sector.
- After reviewing the recent two-year healthcare funding agreement, we will consider the development of a multi-annual approach for disability services, which will be linked to productivity, staff levels and the delivery of services.
- Undertake a cross-departmental examination of where disability spending delivers best results, to inform future funding.
- Tackle waiting lists for specialist disability services by implemention of the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-6, and resourcing and delivering on its targets. Develop and implement a follow on plan that builds capacity for a growing population.
- Build capacity in primary care therapy services to support a broad range of children and adults with lower levels of complexity in line with the HSE's Access Policy.
- Retain the Cabinet Committee on Children, Disability and Education to break down silos and ensure delivery.

Helping children get the therapies they need

We recognise that waiting lists for assessment of need are far too long and have a significant impact on the needs of children and their families. This is driven by many issues which the Government is committed to addressing.

This Government will:

- Increase staffing, train more therapists and prioritise children's disability teams to deliver supports and services.
- Support families who are waiting too long for an Assessment of Needs to procure assessments privately.
- Reform the Disability Act 2005 in consultation with stakeholders.
- Create a dedicated National Therapy Service in Education, beginning with special schools.
- Complete the review of the EPSEN Act and make sure that it meets the needs of children with special educational needs.
- Increase the number of Regional Assessment Hubs.

- Establish an annual Children's Therapies Grant Fund to provide evidence-based therapies.

Protecting people with disabilities

This Government will:

- Support the Decision Support Service and review the operation of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015.
- Work with the Law Society to create a solicitor's portal to simplify enduring Power of Attorney applications.
- Explore the establishment of a National Safeguarding Body to ensure the health, safety and welfare of vulnerable adults.

Disability workforce

This Government will:

- Consider measures to attract and retain staff in the disability sector. We will also develop a new workforce plan to address immediate staffing shortages and longer-term needs.
- Work with the voluntary sector through industrial relations mechanisms and other processes to progress pay issues that affect the delivery of disability services and the long-term viability of organisations within the sector.
- Double the number of college places for speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dieticians, psychologists and social workers.
- Engage with third level institutions and the HSE/service providers to make assessed placements in special education and disability courses a key component in therapy and teacher training.
- Recruit more therapists, therapy assistants and allied health professionals.
- Examine the establishment of new expedited qualification routes for professionals with relevant skills and experience.
- Examine the provision of funding supports for those seeking to upskill into therapy programmes.
- Examine the establishment of new clinical support apprenticeship roles within the disability sector.

Education and employment

This Government will:

- Support students with a disability in transitioning through all educational settings and levels.
- Support third level colleges and further and higher education institutions to support students with a disability, and to provide specific courses for those with an intellectual disability.
- Expand and build on successful programmes like WorkAbility, Employability, and the new Work and Access Programme to support people with disabilities into employment.
- Promote training initiatives to raise awareness and understanding of disabilities amongst Intreo staff.
- Examine ways to make it easier to regain Disability Allowance if employment ceases.
- Strengthen supports in the deferred referral approach for school leavers from special schools.

Independent living

This Government will:

- Increase investment in adult day services.
- Increase personal assistance hours.
- Increase Disability Home Support hours, and work towards aligning Disability Home Support pay with rates for Older Persons Services.
- Continue to support the rollout of

personalised budgets nationally.
- Develop a multi-year capital plan for investment in residential and independent living options for both adults and children, while continuing to implement the Time to Move on from Congregated Settings Strategy.
- Promote shared services in independent living housing developments.
- Continue to work to end the practice of placing young people with disabilities in nursing homes.
- Provide a dedicated funding stream for assistive and digital technology, to maximise independence and harness efficiencies.
- Support the rollout of JAM cards to break down communication barriers.
- Work to deliver the European Disability Card, ensuring rights of individuals are recognised and upheld throughout Europe.

Transport and mobility

This Government will:
- Expand the Travel Assistance Scheme nationally and examine the criteria for inclusion in the Scheme.
- Develop a vehicle upgrade initiative for disability service providers.
- Support localised and community door-to-door services to connect people with disabilities with community services and employment.
- Extend the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Taxi Grant Scheme and ensure equality of access for providers.
- Progress the review of the Disabled Drivers Scheme.
- Work to reduce the 24-hour notice requirement for disabled users of rail services.
- Ensure all public transport operators provide safe and accessible access for all passengers.

Supporting people with Autism

This Government will:
- Implement the Autism Innovation Strategy and ensure the development of a successor strategy.
- Legislate to place an autism strategy on a statutory footing.
- Co-develop initiatives for people with autism to address service gaps at different stages of life cycles.
- Expand the network of Autism one-stop-shops.
- Create a pathway for assessment and interventions for adults with autism.
- Continue to support initiatives that foster inclusion of our neurodiverse community.
- Increase the Sensory Initiatives Grant for communities to develop sensory gardens, hubs and spaces.

Neurorehabilitation

This Government will:
- Complete the national rollout of HSE Community Neuro-rehabilitation Teams.
- Develop more regional inpatient rehabilitation beds.
- Implement community-based multidisciplinary rehabilitation services in every Regional Health Area (RHA).
- Increase the number of neurology nurse specialists.
- Increase the number of consultant neurologists.

Respite services

This Government will:
- Progressively increase funding for respite services, including the Home Support Emergency Respite Scheme.
- Continue to support and expand the network respite houses for children and adults.
- Continue to support and offer alternative respite.

Mental health

This Government is committed to promoting good mental health and ensuring access to appropriate supports when and where people need them. We will fully implement the national mental health policy, 'Sharing the Vision'.

A priority for this Government is the enactment of the Mental Health Bill 2024, the passage of which is essential to modernise our mental health services.

Mental health workforce and infrastructure

This Government will:

- Continue to recruit staff both nationally and internationally.
- Expand psychology assistant posts.
- Expand the number of funded places in Clinical Psychology Doctorate training.
- Develop and implement a ten-year mental health refurbishment and investment infrastructure plan.
- Consider measures to attract and retain staff in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), we will also develop a new workforce plan to address immediate staffing shortages and longer-term needs.
- Examine the establishment of new expedited qualification routes for professionals with relevant skills and experience.

Community based supports

This Government will:

- Support local groups like Men's Sheds, Women's Sheds and Active Retirement communities.
- Continue to support the voluntary and community sector working in mental health.
- Maximise telehealth and virtual health technologies.

Child and Youth mental health

This Government will:

- Legislate to regulate CAMHS.
- Continue to expand the central referral mechanism to simplify referrals to community paediatric services, including CAMHS, to ensure that no child is placed on the wrong waiting list.
- Continue to resource CAMHS teams to reduce waiting lists.
- Establish targeted supports for children with autism experiencing mental health challenges.
- Develop a new care model for HSE Primary Care Psychology to expedite services for young people with less complex issues.
- Enhance youth mental health services for those up to age 25, focusing on smoother transitions from CAMHS to adult mental health services.
- Increase staffing in under-18 dual diagnosis services to better treat young people with mental health and substance abuse issues.
- Continue to invest in waiting list initiatives.
- Launch the Youth Mental Health app to support the mental health needs of young people.

Eating disorders

This Government will:

- Continue to grow and support eating disorder teams in line with the National Clinical Programme.
- Complete the review of the Model of Care for Eating Disorders.

- Enhance provision for adult and youth in-patient beds for eating disorders geographically.
- Continue to expand the Clinical Programmes including ADHD, Dual Diagnosis, Early Intervention in Psychosis.

Strengthen suicide prevention

This Government will:

- Expand the Recovery Colleges initiative nationwide.
- Continue the recruitment of suicide crisis assessment nurses in our communities.
- Continue to develop and fund out of hours crisis services.
- Prioritise culturally appropriate mental health supports for Traveller and other minority communities.
- Continue to expand the National Clinical Programme for Self-Harm and Suicidal Ideation.

Perinatal mental healthcare

This Government will:

- Deliver the first in-patient Mother and Baby Mental Health Unit.
- Double the number of multidisciplinary teams for pregnant women.
- Increase the number of perinatal mental health midwife posts.
- Proactively provide mental health supports through maternity hospitals following trauma events connected to pregnancy and childbirth.

Older people's mental health

This Government will:

- Fund mental health supports across all Integrated Care Programme for Older People (ICPOP) teams.
- Invest in social programmes and befriending services to address isolation.

Older people

Ireland was the first country to be designated Age Friendly Status by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2019 and continuing this relationship, we will host the WHO Global Age Friendly International Conference. We are committed to advancing our social care model which supports older people to live full and independent lives, with the correct wraparound supports.

Taking account of the work of the Commission on Care, we will publish, resource, and implement a National Action Plan that will:

- Ensure long-term care is timely, comprehensive, and affordable.
- Examine and enhance the mix of professional care options, including homecare, community-based care, independent living options and long-term residential care facilities.

Supporting older people to live at home and in their own communities

This Government will:

- Design a Statutory Homecare Scheme to allow people to stay in their own home for as long as possible.
- Increase home care hours.
- Rollout the Care and Repair scheme nationally.
- Increase the Housing Adaptation Grant.
- Increase funding for the national Meals on Wheels network and develop a plan

to ensure there are supported providers in every town in the country.
- Expand the Enhanced Community Care Programme.
- Enhance our network of day centres.
- Continue to support Community Healthcare Networks.
- Increase support for carers – providing training, establishing clearer pathways to services, and improving access to respite.
- Fully fund the Carer's Guarantee.
- Continue to implement the local Age Friendly Strategies enabling the voice of older people through the Older People's Councils.
- Continue to work with The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) to support ageing well in Ireland.
- Continue to support and enhance the Go for Life national programme for sport and physical activity for older people in partnership with the HSE and the Local Sports Partnerships.

Dementia supports

This Government will:
- Work with the National Dementia Office and key stakeholders to develop a National Dementia Registry to map services, identity need and the delivery of equitable access to services.
- Establish 20 new dementia-specific day care centres.
- Include dementia specific provision across all new Community Nursing Hospitals.
- Increase ringfenced home care hours, and funding for Dementia Intensive Home Care Packages.
- Double funding for dementia day care at home.
- Double the number of dementia advisers.
- Rollout more Memory Assessment Support Services teams.
- Rollout more early age dementia supports.

Strengthen our nursing home sector

This Government will:
- Increase funding for the Fair Deal Scheme and ensure the waiting list does not exceed four weeks.
- Build more public nursing home beds.
- Publish the NTPF review of pricing systems in early 2025 and work towards an equitable funding model for the nursing home sector.
- Provide a career pathway for healthcare assistants.

Equality and Inclusion

Advancing equality and inclusion is a whole of Government issue. Progress has been made on several fronts, but challenges persist. The Government will continue to drive progress and reform, ensuring Ireland is an inclusive and accepting country.

Empowering Women

Despite significant achievements in recent years, there remains a gap between women and men in terms of pay, representation in sport, political and cultural life, participation at the senior levels of the corporate and state sectors and full participation in all economic sectors.

This Government will:

- Publish and implement an updated National Strategy for Women and Girls.
- Develop a way to advance gender budgeting.
- Encourage employers to publish statistics of the take up, by both genders, of parental leave and flexible working.
- Support the Women in Finance initiative, the Balance for Better Business and other mechanisms to enhance the number of women in executive and non-executive positions.
- Encourage mentorship opportunities in both public and private sectors, aimed at greater gender balance on company and state boards and enhanced women's leadership roles.
- Back the Action Plan for Women in Business.
- Examine potential barriers for women farmers within the taxation system to ensure greater inclusivity and fairness.
- Implement, fully fund and expand Enterprise Ireland's Action Plan for Women in Business and other venture capital funding and ensure a specific focus on women in rural areas across all regions.
- Conduct an assessment of access to finance and financial services for women from minority groups.
- Implement initiatives to promote the recruitment and retention of women in the Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána, including to senior positions.
- Increase funding and support towards female sports at both national and local levels, promoting the One Club Ethos.
- Advance education, training and maintenance of new digital skills and capacities, and particularly STEM subjects, with a special focus on girls (universal access to coding, maths and ICT classes), through training and life-long learning, and to prioritise diversity and inclusion in STEM.
- Implement the recommendations of the review of the Gender Equality Action Plan for Higher Education.
- Actively promote the inclusion of women and minorities in all political roles, fostering a more diverse political landscape.
- Establish maternity, paternity and adoptive leave policies for all elected representatives.

LGBTQI+

We are committed to improving the lives and protecting the rights of the LGBTQI+ community in Ireland and globally. Recognising the threat to LGBTQI+ people in other jurisdictions, this government will continue the progress made for the community in Ireland following the Marriage Equality referendum.

This Government will:

- Implement the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy which focuses on safety, health and well-being, participation and inclusion, equality and non-discrimination – including online.
- Continue to improve investment in and access to a range of health services for LGBTQI+ people and provide for a more inclusive health and social care environment.
- Ensure a gender healthcare service that is based on clinical evidence, respect, inclusiveness and compassion.
- Advance legislation to ban conversion practices.
- Implement legislation to disregard specific historical offences related to the criminalisation of homosexuality.
- Actively advocate for the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals both in Ireland and internationally.
- Engage in discussions at key international forums, including the EU and the UN, to uphold the universal

nature of human rights, ensuring that these rights apply equally to all individuals, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic.

Combat racism and discrimination

Through sustained and positive action aimed at eliminating racism and promoting inclusivity, we can better support those who have been affected by discrimination, racism and inequality.

This Government will:

- Examine the compensation limit for claims made under the Equal Status Act 2000.
- Support the local authorities Community Engagement Teams.
- Give effect to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance 'Working Definition of Antisemitism' and implement the EU declaration on 'Fostering Jewish Life in Europe'.
- Continue to implement training programmes within our education system to address racism and unconscious bias, fostering a more inclusive environment for all students and reducing susceptibility to extremist views.
- Promote and fund intercultural events and activities nationwide, celebrating diversity and encouraging understanding among different communities.
- Launch national and local community campaigns to highlight the positive impacts of migration and to challenge disinformation.

Support Traveller and Roma Communities

This Government will:

- Implement the Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.
- Implement the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy.
- Implement the National Traveller Health Action Plan.
- Take steps to advance financial literacy and financial services inclusion for Irish Traveller and Roma communities.

Social Protection

The Social Protection system is the State's safety net designed to help people when they need it most. The Government will protect core welfare rates while ensuring that available resources are targeted at vulnerable groups who are unable to work such as carers, people with disabilities and pensioners.

The Government will continue to implement progressive reforms to our social welfare system and our policies will be guided by the core principles of sustainability and fairness.

At a time of full employment when many sectors are experiencing labour shortages, there is an opportunity to help people who are long term unemployed into work. The Government will ensure there is intensive and appropriate activation measures and employment supports in place to help those most distant from the labour market into the workforce.

Supporting Pensioners

The State Pension is the bedrock of pension provision in Ireland. We want to strengthen the safety net for our older citizens, improving their quality of life and promoting dignity and independence in later years.

This Government will:

- Maintain the State Pension Age at 66.
- Safeguard the sustainability of the Social Insurance Fund by fully implementing the PRSI Roadmap 2024 – 2028.
- Progressively increase weekly pension payments.
- Retain the Benefit Payment for 65-year-olds.
- Examine improvements to key ancillary benefits such as the Fuel Allowance, Household Benefits Package and Living Alone Allowance to support vulnerable groups.
- Examine what modifications or changes may be made to support women who currently fall outside the existing schemes to qualify for a State Pension.

Valuing Carers

We recognise the enormous contribution that family carers make to Irish society and we are committed to enhancing the supports available to them. Significant progress has been made in recent years to support carers, including providing access to the State pension for long-term carers and increases in the rates of payment and income disregards. Notwithstanding the progress that has been made, we fully recognise that more needs to be done.

This Government will:

- Continue to significantly increase the income disregards for Carer's Allowance in each Budget with a view to phasing out the means test during the lifetime of the Government.
- Progressively increase weekly Carer's Payments.
- Continue to increase the annual Carer's Support Grant.
- Ensure Parents who are aged 66+ and caring for children with lifelong disabilities retain the rate at which they are paid their Carer's Allowance and concurrently receive the State Pension.
- Examine how we can better support carers who are providing full-time care and attention to more than one person.
- Examine the introduction of a Pay Related Carer's Benefit for individuals who have to give up work suddenly in order to provide full-time care to a loved one.

Addressing the Cost of Disability

We recognise that people with a disability face significant additional costs in their daily lives. We are committed to improving supports and ensuring that the social welfare system is progressive and empowers people with a disability to live full and independent lives.

This Government will:

- Introduce a permanent Annual Cost of Disability Support Payment with a view to incrementally increasing this payment.
- Reform the Disability Allowance Payment and remove anomalies in the current means test for the payment.
- Progressively increase weekly Disability Payments and the Domiciliary Care Allowance.
- Review the minimum hours requirement under the Wage Subsidy Scheme for people with disabilities and examine an increase to the payment rate.
- Expand and build on successful programmes like WorkAbility, Employability, and the new Work and Access Programme to support people with disabilities into employment.

- Examine the 'ability to work' criteria for certain payments and ensure that ongoing medical assessments are not carried out in respect of people with lifelong conditions that are not going to change.
- Protect the Free Travel Pass and examine extending it to children in receipt of Domiciliary Care Allowance.
- Promote training initiatives to raise awareness and understanding of disabilities amongst Intreo staff.

Supporting Children and Families

We are committed to supporting all families with the cost of living while also providing targeted supports to those most in need.

This Government will:

- Introduce Pay Related Parents Benefit and explore other payments where a similar model could be applied.
- Examine the extension of Parents Leave and Benefit and additional flexibilities.
- Continue to support families with the cost of raising their family through the child benefit payment.
- Examine the eligibility criteria for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance.
- Set a new child poverty target and examine ways to lift more children out of child poverty.
- Explore a targeted Child Benefit Payment and examine the interaction this would have with existing targeted supports to reduce Child Poverty such as the Working Family Payment and Child Support Payment.
- Expand the eligibility for the Fuel Allowance to families in receipt of the Working Family Payment.
- Increase core welfare payments, ensuring that resources are also targeted at people who are unable to work.
- Progressively increase the Child Support Payment.
- Develop a pension solution for foster carers in recognition of the enormous contribution they make to vulnerable children in our society.
- Examine how the social protection system can better support people fleeing domestic violence.
- Enhance supports for lone parents.
- Enact legislation to give entitlement to unmarried cohabitants to a Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory Pension.
- Extend the period of a social welfare payment following the death of a dependent from 6-12 weeks.

Hot School Meals

The Hot School Meals Programme ensures no child goes hungry. There is no stigma attached to the Programme with all children in a school treated equally and sitting down to have their meal together.

This Government will:

- Complete the roll-out of Hot School Meals to all Primary Schools in 2025.
- Ensure that suppliers adhere to robust guidelines on the nutritional value of meals, the dietary requirements of students, reduce food waste and utilise recyclable packaging.
- Commence the rollout of Hot School Meals to all secondary schools over the lifetime of the next government.
- Implement the Summer 2025 Holiday Meals pilot project and evaluate this initiative aimed at closing the nutritional gap during school closures.

Supporting Workers

We will ensure that key reforms to support workers are implemented. This Government will:

- Introduce Pay Related Benefit in March 2025 linking unemployment payments to previous earnings for those who have contributed to the Social Insurance Fund and who lose their jobs.
- Introduce the Auto Enrolment My Future Fund in September 2025 to provide workers with greater comfort and security regarding their retirement savings.
- Explore the option of giving self-employed workers access to Illness Benefit by means of making a higher PRSI contribution.

Working Age Payment

We must ensure the social protection system is work-friendly and that welfare traps which inhibit people from taking up work are removed. At present if a person on a Jobseeker's Allowance payment receives an offer of part-time work, they may end up worse off financially if their hours are spread over the whole of the working week, rather than concentrated on three days or less, a situation which must be addressed.

This Government will:

- Introduce a new Working Age Payment which will ensure that individuals always see an increase in income when they work or take on additional hours. The Working Age Payment will remove inconsistencies and anomalies in the current Jobseekers Allowance Scheme which discourage people from taking up employment. We will publish draft proposals for full consultation with stakeholders in advance of Government agreeing the final design of the Working Age Payment.

Intensive Activation Supports

This Government will:

- Publish a new Employment Strategy focused on intensive engagement and supports to help those most distant from the labour market into the workforce.
- Ensure every effort is made to support individuals transition from welfare into further education/training and work, by examining how to avoid a cliff edge when people take up work.
- Increase the number of recruitment fairs and job matching services connecting employers with jobseekers.
- Scale up control measures in order to tackle abuse of social welfare payments.

Comprehensive Means Test Review

This Government will:

- Carry out a comprehensive review of means tests across the social welfare system taking into account the recent Report on Means Testing by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection with a view to creating a fairer social welfare system.
- Enhance application processes within the Department of Social Protection and provide additional resources where necessary to ensure that individuals receive decisions on their applications in a timely manner.

Community Employment

This Government will:

- Provide increased flexibility to local Community Employment (CE), TÚS, and Rural Social Schemes to retain participants for longer when it benefits both the individual and the community.
- In particular, work to ensure there is some discretion at local level so that vulnerable individuals who have little prospect of entering paid employment are not forced off CE schemes when their three-year term expires.
- Increase the top-up payment for participants on CE, TÚS, and the Rural Social Scheme in recognition of the important work they do in local communities.

Thriving Communities

Thriving Communities

Driving Balanced Regional Development & Supporting Rural Communities

Ireland's population is growing rapidly. By 2040, there will be close to a million more people in the country. This creates challenges and opportunities. This Government is committed to balanced regional development and supporting rural communities. We believe that the needs and wants of the population can be better fulfilled through more dispersed growth right across Ireland. The roll-out of high-speed broadband nationwide and the increase in remote working means more people now have the opportunity to live in the community where they grew up. Recognition of the distinct needs and opportunities of rural Ireland must be at the heart of decision making. Through new initiatives and targeted investment, we will foster regional enterprise growth, support rural regeneration and ensure local communities are supported to make their town, village and parish thriving places to live, work and raise a family.

Rural and Regional Development

This Government will:

- Ensure Project Ireland 2040 and the updated National Planning Framework support 50:50 balanced population growth between the Eastern and Midland region, and the Southern and Northern and Western regions combined.
- Increase public sector investment to address infrastructural deficits with an early review of the National Development Plan which will be completed in July 2025.
- The review of the National Development Plan will underpin the delivery of balanced regional development as a key objective.
- Maintain a dedicated Department for Rural Affairs and strengthen its remit to become the Department of Rural, Community and Gaeltacht Affairs.
- Publish and implement Our Rural Future 2025 – 2030, ensuring a whole-of-Government approach to the next phase of Ireland's rural development policy.
- Establish a Rural Communities Initiative, similar in style to the previous RAPID

programme, where all state agencies work together to implement community development and town-centre rejuvenation. This work will be co-ordinated by a dedicated Development Office, with dedicated funding from the responsible Department.

Promoting and Supporting Remote Work

The roll-out of high-speed broadband and the increase in remote working following the pandemic has been hugely positive for rural Ireland enabling people to live and work in their own community. We recognise the immense opportunities that connectivity can generate for work, education, health, and rural development.

This Government will:

- Complete the roll-out of high-speed fibre broadband to 1.1 million people, including homes, farms, and businesses nationwide by 2026.
- Promote flexible working arrangements that benefit both workers and employers.
- Review the Civil Service Blended Working Policy Framework to consider how the public sector can adopt a coherent approach to blended working and remote work.

Strengthening Regional Connectivity

This Government will:

- Invest in all road projects in the current National Development Plan (NDP) and consider additional important road projects as part of the NDP review.
- Provide multi-annual funding clarity for roads budgets so agencies can plan accordingly.
- Increase funding for new roads as part of the NDP review and the maintenance of existing roads.
- Increase funding for the protection and renewal of the road network to address maintenance backlogs.
- Provide extra funding for the improvement of transport networks countrywide to promote increased business investment in the economy and the supply of new housing.
- Continue upgrading the bus fleet, improving service reliability and comfort.
- Work collaboratively to act on the recommendations from the All-Island Strategic Rail Review to improve connectivity across the island of Ireland.
- Continue the roll-out of Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan and investment in new town bus services.

Connected Hubs

The national network of almost 400 Connected Hubs across the country are having a positive impact in rural communities. We believe these hubs have huge additional potential.

This Government will:

- Expand the remit of Connected Hubs to unlock new opportunities in rural communities, enabling remote work, e-health, remote learning and digital engagement.
- Promote Connected Hubs as incubation spaces for local entrepreneurs and start-ups as well as a potential landing space to be used by workers in FDI companies.
- Encourage social enterprise to utilise the hubs as a solution for local community needs.
- Roll out a further round of the Connected Hubs Voucher Scheme.

Driving Job Creation in the Regions

This Government will:

- Work with IDA Ireland to spread

foreign direct investment across the country ensuring that at least half of IDA investments are located outside of Dublin.
- Prioritise locating new State agencies in cities and towns outside of Dublin.
- Continue to advance a balanced approach to regional development, cognisant that the European Commission has identified the North West as requiring additional support.
- Enhance the availability of advanced manufacturing facilities to attract more foreign direct investment to regional locations and ensure that IDA Ireland intensively markets these facilities.
- Establish five new cluster organisations to facilitate collaboration and collective action among related companies, as well as partnerships with higher education institutions and public sector bodies under a new National Clustering Programme.
- Consider an annual Social Enterprise Empowerment and Development Fund (SEED) to unlock the potential of the social enterprise sector for sustainable job creation, affordable childcare provision and community services.

Town Centre First – Tackling Vacancy and Regenerating our Towns & Villages

This Government will:

- Resource the Town Centre First model and establish a Town Regeneration Team in every local authority bringing together Town Regeneration Officers, Vacant Homes Officers and other key staff.
- Increase the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF).
- Review the criteria for the Town and Village scheme so that towns with larger populations of over 10,000 are eligible to apply.
- Expand the Building Acquisition Programme to enable local groups to repurpose vacant buildings for community use.
- Increase the number of people living in rural Ireland, increase the Vacant and Derelict Property Refurbishment Grants and introduce a new Town Centre Living 'Above the Shop' Grant specifically to convert above the shop type premises in rural town centres for residential use in recognition of the additional complexities involved in renovating these properties.
- Work to support the development and retention of community-run shops and cafes.

Unlocking Rural Ireland's Tourism Potential

One of rural Ireland's greatest strengths is its stunning natural amenities. Every county has its own unique natural assets whether it's our forest parks, mountain trails, rivers, greenways, bogs or beaches. We have seen the huge economic benefits that major Greenway projects have delivered for local towns and villages. There is huge untapped potential in other parts of the country to develop similar amenities and market these to domestic and international visitors.

This Government will:

- Work with Fáilte Ireland to develop a balanced regional spread of tourism throughout the country, further advancing the experience brands of Hidden Heartlands, Ireland's Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way.
- Develop a connected network of greenways and cycle routes across Ireland.
- Develop more blueway projects across the country enhancing water-based tourism and recreational opportunities.
- Continue to invest in key regional

tourism projects under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.
- Through the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme invest in the development of new walking trails, cycle ways, tidal pools and other unique amenities at local level.
- Work with Coillte to continue to invest and upgrade visitor amenities at our Forest Parks across the country.
- Working in partnership with landowners, continue to expand and increase investment in the National Walks Scheme creating flagship walking and hiking trails across the country.
- Ensure that the LEADER Programme continues to have a strong focus on Rural Tourism.

Islands

This Government will:

- Provide ringfenced funding for projects on the islands under all rural development funding programmes to support those living on our islands.
- Ensure the national policy for the islands, Our Living Islands, is fully implemented to support sustainable development for island residents.
- Examine the roll out of e-health facilities to more offshore islands.

Supporting Communities

This Government will:

- Carry out a comprehensive review of the eligibility criteria of CLÁR within 6 months with a view to expanding the programme to rural areas which are currently ineligible. As part of this review, examine the merits of utilising Pobal's Rural Deprivation Index or other measures deemed appropriate for determining CLÁR status.
- Ensure the Community Centre Investment Fund becomes a permanent rolling fund to upgrade, refurbish and build local community centres.
- Increase funding for the Local Improvement Scheme to support the upgrading of rural laneways.
- Expand Local Link Services in rural areas.
- Continue to fund Men's and Women's Sheds.
- Continue to fund our local agricultural shows in recognition of the unique contribution they make to rural communities.
- Triple the My Open Library facilities and enhance library sensory spaces for inclusive community use.
- Require the Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) to recruit Social Development Managers to prioritise very disadvantaged areas.
- Remove the necessity for co-funding for state funded projects in areas of high socio-economic deprivation.
- Progressively increase funding for the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP) which is critical to addressing social exclusion and disadvantage and encouraging involvement in communities.
- Open the Community Services Programme for new applications annually so that more organisations can join the programme.
- Continue to support and increase the places on successful local programmes such as CE, TÚS and the Rural Social Scheme which do vital work in local communities.
- Publish a new National Volunteering Strategy.
- Engage at EU level to increase funding for the next LEADER programme, examine how we can reduce bureaucracy, simplify the application process and continue to provide sufficient core funding from the State.
- Examine tax measures for donations to community development companies.

- Invest in the rollout of the Local Community Safety Partnerships and social and economic regeneration programmes to support communities experiencing high levels of crime, unemployment and social exclusion.

Fire Services

This Government will:

- Support the retained fire fighters service to ensure conditions are sufficient to attract, recruit and retain the required complement of fire fighters in the service.
- Continue to invest in the provision of new fire stations and the refurbishment of existing fire stations throughout the country.

Waterways Ireland

This Government will:

- Continue to fund and support Waterways Ireland in co-operation with the Northern Ireland Executive.

Supporting Ireland's Post Office Network

This Government will:

- Continue to provide the nationwide network of post offices with funding to ensure their sustainability and enhance the value they bring to local communities.
- Deliver social welfare payments, such as Jobseekers Allowance, through post offices, and examine what other services could be provided through the network.
- Partner with An Post and local communities to identify and preserve heritage post office buildings that are no longer in operation, respecting their historical value and exploring potential new uses.

Dog Control

This Government will:

- Address the disjointed approach to dog control issues by ensuring all legislation and policy in relation to the control of dogs, dog welfare and dog breeding establishments rests with the Department of Agriculture.
- Increase the number of Dog Wardens across the country.

Charities

This Government will:

- Strive to make it easier for charitable organisations to register formally as a charity and update the tax code to promote charitable donations.

Philanthropy

This Government will:

- Progress Ireland's first National Philanthropy Policy.

Social Innovation

This Government will:

- Continue to support the work of Rethink Ireland to make a difference in communities.

Gaeltacht

Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam.

Irish is a unique part of our heritage. This Government is committed to the protection and promotion of the Irish language. It is the first language of the State. We will put in place targeted measures to encourage the use of the language to flourish and to support our Gaeltacht communities.

Gaeltacht communities

This Government will:

- Work with Údarás na Gaeltachta and other stakeholders to ensure there is adequate provision of housing and community services in Gaeltacht communities.
- Restore the Scéim na mBóithre Áise to improve the non-county roads in Gaeltacht communities.
- Resource Údarás na Gaeltachta to offer Gaeltacht businesses effective levels of financial support and advice.
- Restore direct elections to Údarás na Gaeltachta.
- Resource the provision of services that support families and provide family supports through the medium of Irish.
- Continue to support the work of Foras na Gaeilge to enhance the use of Irish language and culture across the island.

Education

This Government will:

- Continue assistance through the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme.
- Increase the dedicated Irish-medium teacher training programmes.
- Support naionraí and creches to ensure early education access in Gaeltacht communities and beyond.
- Establish Gaelscoileanna and Gaelchloaistí where there is demand and support parents choosing Irish-medium education for their children.
- Expand the Seimeastar na Gaeltachta programme for third-level students to study in Gaeltacht areas.
- Consider ways to enhance supports to Gaelscoileanna and Gaelchloaistí, particularly in Gaeltacht areas, which have a high proportion of students whose first language is neither Irish nor English.
- Develop and expand connections with universities throughout the world that teach Irish.
- Continue to fund and enhance Gaeltacht scholarships, ensuring cost is not a barrier for students wishing to attend summer courses.
- Maintain and where possible enhance support for Mná Tí at Gaeltacht summer colleges.

Official Languages Act

This Government will:

- Continue to fully implement the Officials Languages Act including the provision of services through the medium of Irish.

Irish media

This Government will:

- Support the expansion of broadcasting licences for mainstream Irish language radio stations which focus on young listeners.
- Continue to support the growth of TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta.
- Support an increase in RTÉ's Irish language content.

Protect home building in rural and Gaeltacht communities

The Government will:

- Continue to support one-off, rural housing.
- Introduce special development plans

for Gaeltacht areas and specific housing targets.
- Introduce Gaeltacht planning guidelines.
- Continue to support one-off self-builds through the Help to Buy Scheme and the First Home Scheme.
- Expand and increase funding for the Ready to Build Scheme to support Local Authorities to make serviced sites for sale for individuals to build their own homes.
- Ensure Uisce Éireann expedites and expands the Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme in order to deliver wastewater services to rural towns and villages.

Rejuvenating our Capital City Centre

The Government is committed to transforming Dublin City Centre into a vibrant, safe, and attractive destination for living, working, business, and tourism. The Dublin City Centre Taskforce has provided a holistic plan for rejuvenating the city centre, focusing on coordinated efforts between national and local government, businesses, and civic and cultural organisations.

This Government will:

- Implement the Dublin City Centre Taskforce recommendations through the Department of the Taoiseach. We will also apply this taskforce model to other cities, towns and regions in need of revitalisation, starting with a taskforce for Cork City, which will launch shortly.
- Support additional Garda recruitment and measures to increase Garda visibility.
- Significantly boost Garda numbers in Dublin.
- Ensure the new Transport Security Force plays a central role on Dublin public transport.
- Introduce improved security measures in the city centre with increased CCTV coverage and a targeted response to reduce open drug use to ensure a safer environment for all.
- Support the designation of O'Connell Street as a Urban Development Zone to fast track planning and mixed use development
- Honour the historic significance of the GPO with a redevelopment plan, reinforcing its role as a central landmark in Dublin.
- Provide funding and resources to the National Concert Hall to enhance this vital cultural institution.
- Collaborate with cultural institutions to offer more late-night events and extended opening hours throughout the year, by enacting the Night-time Economy Bill.
- Launch an Urban Communities Initiative to revitalise disadvantaged city areas with focused community development and youth programmes delivered by all State agencies.
- Continue to support the North East Inner City Programme to strengthen community safety, boost educational and employment opportunities, improve wellbeing, and enhance the area's physical landscape.
- Revive the North Georgian Core and incentivise conservation-led investment in the area, from Parnell Square to Mountjoy Square, to address neglect, revitalise historic buildings, and improve public spaces.
- Review and expand the Living City Initiative.
- Utilise State schemes and supports such as adaptive reuse and vacancy

grants through our affordable and social housing funds to renovate old buildings to promote high density residential brownfield development and tackling dereliction and vacancy in Dublin.

- Continue and accelerate Social Housing regeneration schemes in Dublin.
- Consider the appropriate concentration of services in Dublin City Centre and other urban centres, including the appropriate distribution of temporary accommodation, drug treatment facilities, and other essential services.
- Ensure the that on-street charitable services are properly regulated.
- Support the Clean Streets, Safe Streets initiative for cleaning, bins, and anti-litter initiatives.
- Increase fines for littering and dog fouling.
- Ensure the new Towns and Cities Infrastructure Investment Fund, which will replace the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, helps to regenerate Dublin City Centre as well as our cities and towns.

Safe and Secure Communities

Safe and Secure Communities

Justice

Everyone has a right to be safe and to feel safe in their community and in their home.

We will prioritise investment across the justice system, including in An Garda Síochána, in the Courts, in the Director of Public Prosecutions, in the Prisons and in the Probation Service.

Across the country, communities are dealing with the scourge of anti-social behaviour. We will invest strongly in preventive measures, including in youth justice programmes, while strengthening our laws.

Tackling the epidemic of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence will remain a major priority for the Government. We will invest in new refuge spaces, update the school curriculum, roll-out training and make the criminal justice system more victim centred, in particular our Courts system.

We will establish a new Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

Stronger, Safer Communities: Protecting and Investing in An Garda Síochána

The Government is committed to building stronger, safer communities by strengthening An Garda Síochána, expanding resources, and modernising support to tackle crime.

This Government will:

- Provide funding to recruit at least 5,000 new Garda recruits and additional Garda Staff over the next five years.
- Continue to support and expand the Garda Training College in Templemore as the main and primary Garda Training college.Reform the Garda recruitment and training processes to increase capacity and to widen the talent pool which will include expanding capacity at Templemore Garda Training College. Consider the establishment of a second Garda training college.
- Consider allowing Garda trainees to undergo part of their training course in regionally based Universities or Technological Universities.
- Examine the introduction of an accelerated graduate entry programme to An Garda Síochána.
- Make the Gardaí more attractive to new recruits by increasing the Garda training allowance.
- Introduce deployment targets to improve Garda visibility on the frontline.
- Increase the Garda Reserve intake beyond the current target of 2,000 and

ensure new intakes annually.
- Implement a new Garda Capital Plan to deliver modern, well-equipped Garda stations across the country.
- Increase Garda visibility on public transport and introduce Garda Transport Hubs based at major bus and train stations to ensure Gardaí can rapidly respond to incidents on public transport.
- Expand the Garda Dog Unit nationwide and complete a new centre of excellence.
- Legislate to give Gardaí the authority to request passwords for electronic devices when executing a search warrant.
- Review and update the Public Order Acts, including in relation to sentencing, and ensure Gardaí have the power they need to manage public order situations effectively.
- Expand the powers of the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) and give CAB the power to publish a list of tax defaulters.
- Invest in Garda equipment and technology, including in body armour, additional vehicles, water cannons, and air capacity.
- Equip all frontline Garda with body-worn cameras to improve accountability and safety.
- Expand the number of cameras using Automatic number plate Recognition (ANPR) to fight serious and organised crime.
- Deploy facial recognition technology (FRT) for serious crimes and missing persons, with strict safeguards.
- Introduce live FRT in cases of terrorism, national security, and missing persons, with strict safeguards.
- Support the Gardaí to use Artificial Intelligence in criminal investigations subject to clear guidelines and oversight.
- Implement reforms on foot of the Report of the High Level Review Group on the role of An Garda Síochána in the public prosecution system.
- Increase investment in Forensic Science Ireland to support criminal investigations.
- Increase funding for the Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau to ensure that cyber forensics keep pace with modern technology.
- Examine further measures to penalise those who assault emergency workers in the course of their duties.
- Support the rollout of the current Youth Justice Strategy and develop a successor strategy.
- Continue to support National Missing Persons Day and work with An Garda Síochána, Forensic Science Ireland, the Coroners Service, the State Pathologist and impacted families.

Crime in the Community

The Government is dedicated to enhancing community safety by implementing comprehensive measures to address crime and support local policing efforts.

This Government will:

- Publish a new Rural Safety Strategy and support An Garda Síochána to expand successful approaches to tackling rural crime.
- Establish Community Safety Partnerships and increase the Community Safety Innovation Fund to support the national roll-out.
- Roll out 'see something, say something' nationally as a confidential text and messaging system and continue to support community alert groups.
- Ensure each community policing area has a dedicated community Garda, so everyone knows their local officer and how to contact them.
- Further build capacity to tackle white collar crime, through the implementation of the Hamilton Report and publish a new Action Plan to tackle economic crime and corruption.

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

The Government is committed to tackling the scourge of anti-social behaviour and drug use to ensure safer communities and public spaces.

This Government will:

- Enact legislation to combat anti-social behaviour, including enhancing the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Warnings (ASBWs) and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). We will also consider the introduction of Dispersal Orders and Public Space Protection Orders.
- Enact legislation to extend the use of community sanctions, in particular increasing the use of community service orders.
- Ban the wearing of face coverings at protests and ask the Joint Oireachtas Committee to consider a ban on protests outside private homes.
- Increase the CCTV fund to enable Local Authorities to install new CCTV schemes.
- Expand the 'Greentown' programme nationally to break the link between children and the gangs that seek to recruit them.
- Divert young people away from a life of crime through investment in youth justice initiatives.
- Fund the delivery of violence prevention and reduction programmes at local level.
- Ensure Gardaí have sufficient powers to tackle the misuse of E-scooters and scramblers.
- Expand the list of offences leading to permanent disqualification for transport drivers and enhance safety by supporting the provision of CCTV in taxis.
- Examine with An Garda Síochána the establishment of a Safe Public Places Unit that can advise Local Authorities and planning authorities, as well as Community Safety Partnerships, on best practice in public lighting, estate and street design.
- Support Gardaí to use drones to tackle crime in line with the Garda Síochána (Recording Devices) Act 2023.

Tackling Drug Use

This Government will:

- Support An Garda Síochána to dismantle criminal gangs and tackle the drugs epidemic.
- Work to intensify partnerships with Interpol, Europol, and other international agencies to tackle the illicit trafficking of drugs before they enter the Irish market.
- Fund innovative law enforcement technologies including unmanned drones to patrol our coast and ports and detect the trafficking of illegal drugs. This will supplement the work of our air and naval services in this sphere.
- Explore the possibility of requiring social media companies and online communication platforms to provide An Garda Síochána with information they have on their platforms relating to the supply of illegal drugs.
- Review the sentences for those involved in the supply of drugs to ensure that the punishment imposed reflects the destruction and devastation that those drugs impose on our communities.
- Commit to a health-led approach to drug addiction and divert those found in possession of drugs for personal use to health services.
- Re-establish the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Drugs Use and ensure that the Department of Health and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration work collaboratively on any recommendations issued by the Committee.

Prisons and Penal Policy

Providing adequate prison capacity is essential for ensuring public safety, facilitating rehabilitation, and addressing the needs of individuals within the justice system.

This Government will:

- Construct a new prison at Thornton Hall, expand existing prison capacity by 1,500 spaces and consider the need for a new Women's Open Prison.
- Recruit additional prison officers to support our expanding prison estate.
- Implement electronic tagging for appropriate categories of prisoner.
- Implement electronic warrants and fully digitalise the system of recording sentences and release dates.
- Enact legislation to establish minimum tariffs for any crime that carries a life sentence.
- Introduce advanced x-ray body scanners for visitors to our prisons.
- Reform the operation of Prison Visiting Committees.
- Implement an employment strategy for former offenders and support increased access to education and training workshops through the Prison Education Taskforce.
- Establish a high dependency unit in the Irish Prison Service to address severe mental health and addiction challenges and hire more therapeutic and medical staff, including psychiatric nurses.
- Implement recommendations on the Taskforce on Mental Health and Addiction and publish an annual progress report.
- Continue to roll out nationally the voluntary restorative justice programme
- Enact the Inspection of Places of Detention Bill to enable ratification of the UN Optional Protocol to UN Convention on Torture (OPCAT).

A Modern Courts, Legal and Coronial System

Establishing a modern courts and legal system is vital for ensuring fair access to justice, improving efficiency, and enhancing the overall experience for all users.

This Government will:

- Appoint 20 additional judges within 12 months and plan for further increases to meet growing demands and timely access to justice.
- Provide a new power to the Minister to ask the Judicial Council to draw up sentencing guidelines for a particular crime area within a certain timeframe.
- Establish a Judicial Training Institute under the Judicial Council to support ongoing training and continuous professional development for judges and prospective judges.
- Complete a review of the Courts Service and the Legal Services Regulatory Authority within 12 months and consider legislative amendments to ensure the Courts and Legal System are digital, modern, cost-effective, and focused on the needs of victims.
- Introduce independent oversight of professional legal education, support the development of a national apprenticeship programme for solicitor training, and remove barriers to becoming a solicitor or barrister.
- Complete a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system within 12 months and publish an action plan to improve efficiency, remove blockages and cut waiting times.
- Continue work to develop new guidelines to set clear rates and scales of fees for all forms of civil litigation, promoting transparency, competitiveness and fairness in legal costs.
- Prioritise implementation of the e-evidence package, including the establishment of a new agency, to make

it easier and faster for law enforcement and judicial authorities to obtain the electronic evidence they need to investigate and eventually prosecute criminals.
- Work to design and implement a modern courts infrastructure, including the move to digitalisation.
- Establish a regional office for the Director of Public Prosecutions and a permanent on-site build in Dublin.
- Sign up to the European Public Prosecutor's Office.
- Enact legislation to establish a modern, fit-for-purpose coronial system and ensure all coronial appointments are made following a public recruitment process. We will establish a Chief Coroner with nationwide jurisdiction. We will engage with the Press Council and Coimisiún na Meán to draft new guidelines for media on the reporting of inquests.
- Reform the operation of the criminal legal aid system and fully restore criminal legal aid fees.
- Enact a Legal Aid Bill to ensure financial assessment of means with powers to restrict legal aid or claw it back.
- Substantially increase the limit of the small claims court procedure.
- Ensure comprehensive support services for victims and place the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal on a statutory basis.
- Examine the need to legislate for increased court capacity at night and off-site temporary courts to provide emergency or acute capacity as needed.
- Continue to support and enhance the Courts Service Capital Programme for new builds and refurbishments.
- Improve access for people with disabilities, including participation in jury service.

Reform of our Family Law System

Prioritising children in our family law system is essential for ensuring their well-being and safeguarding their rights during legal proceedings.

This Government will:
- Implement the Family Justice Strategy 2022-2025 to enhance the family law system in the best interests of children and publish a successor plan.
- Publish an implementation plan for a new Family Court system within 12 months.
- Complete a purpose-built Family Law Court complex at Hammond Lane in Dublin.
- Enhance the enforcement mechanisms for Child Maintenance orders to ensure that children receive the financial support they need from both parents.
- Ensure proper regulation and funding for Voice of the Child and Welfare Reports, giving children a voice in legal proceedings that affect them.

Zero Tolerance of Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence

Establishing a zero tolerance approach to domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence is vital for safeguarding individuals and promoting a safer society.

This Government will:
- Fully implement the Zero Tolerance Plan 2022–2026 and develop a new plan for 2026–2030.
- Continue to support and fully resource Cuan, the new agency dedicated to reducing domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
- Deliver at least 280 refuge spaces by 2026. We will set new targets in the successor strategy and ensure that there is a refuge in every county along with additional safe homes for those in need.
- Enable individuals experiencing sexual

or domestic violence to remain safely in their own homes whenever possible
- Amend laws on counselling notes disclosure.
- Review the law regarding breaches of orders to ensure that bail can be limited in cases where there is a history of violence, enhancing victim protection.
- Complete a review on consent within 12 months and update the law in relation to consent.
- Introduce stronger laws to combat the spiking of drinks.
- Complete a review of the maximum sentences available for offences relating to child sexual abuse to ensure the punishment always matches the crime.
- Establish specialised judges to handle domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence cases and invest in training for Gardaí and the DPP to better support victims.
- Introduce an online facility for victims to obtain information on the status of their case.
- Undertake an audit of our courthouses and facilities to assess their suitability for victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
- Work with An Garda Síochána to ensure a person in an intimate relationship can be informed of a serious risk to them where a new partner has a history of domestic violence.
- Implement the Human Trafficking Action Plan to identify and safeguard victims of human trafficking effectively through the introduction of a new National Referral Mechanism.
- Criminalise those who seek sex in exchange for rent.
- Increase funding allocated to Sexual Assault Treatment Units across the country.
- Examine proposals to remove guardianship rights from those convicted of killing their partners or a parent of their child as part of the ongoing work to implement appropriate recommendations from the Study on Familicide and Domestic and Family Violence Death Reviews.

Strengthening National Security

Enhancing national security is essential for protecting citizens, maintaining public order, and ensuring the safety of our communities.

This Government will:

- Increase the co-ordination role of the Department of the Taoiseach in relation to national security and establish a new National Security Committee, which will meet regularly and be chaired by the Taoiseach and comprised of the Tánaiste, the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Defence.
- Examine the existing national security structures and consider how they can be further strengthened and complete this work within six months.
- Retain the Special Criminal Court and annually renew the provisions of the Offences Against the State Act 1998 and the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009.
- Consider the report on the Offences Against the State Act.
- Bring the National Centre for Cyber Security and the National Security Authority under the remit of the Department of Justice to ensure proper alignment of national security infrastructure.
- Establish a ring-fenced security budget within An Garda Síochána and expand specialist civilian recruitment into the Garda National Crime & Security Intelligence Service.
- Enact the Terrorism Offences Bill within 12 months and provide for new offences.
- Enact new Data Retention and Interception laws and include provision for over-the-top and encrypted services

to be included, following public consultation, to enhance our ability to combat security threats.
- Work with EU colleagues to enact an EU Wide Data Retention law.

Tackling Retail Crime

Addressing retail crime is crucial for protecting businesses, ensuring consumer safety, and maintaining the integrity of our communities.

This Government will:
- Publish a Retail Crime Strategy with targeted actions to reduce retail crime and support affected businesses.
- Update the Public Order Acts to allow a prolific offender of retail crime to be excluded from a premises for a certain period of time.
- Support Garda Operations to tackle retail crime including through the use of organised crime and proceeds of crime legislation.
- Examine the introduction of a specific offence of assaulting a retail worker.
- Introduce a new grant scheme for anti-theft and prevention measures.
- Improve data sharing between retailers and Gardaí.
- Expand the use of community sanctions for retail crime.
- Tackle the practice of 'retail defamation'.

Driving Reform Across the Justice Sector

This Government will:
- Enact legislation to update our licensing laws, promoting the development of a modern and diverse night-time economy in harmony with increased town centre living. We will publish a new Night-Time Economy Bill.
- Transfer responsibility for property services and estate agents to the Department of Housing and censorship to the Department of Media.
- Restore the Defamation Bill to the order paper and make passing the legislation a priority.
- Introduce amendments to modernise the Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 following engagement with the Joint Oireachtas Committee, in line with EU standards.
- Establish an offender specific database, bringing together data from the Courts, Prison and Probation Services, the Gardaí, the DPP and the CSO, and ensure key sentencing and justice indicators are published at regular intervals.
- Introduce a national identification number in the criminal justice system to provide for the compilation of statistics on an anonymised basis.
- Publish the Review of Garda Vetting and enact any necessary changes.
- Increase investment into the Office of Parliamentary Counsel to ensure that the Government's legislative agenda can be delivered, including the on-time transposition of EU measures.
- Prioritise actions to tackle money laundering and terrorist financing and bring those areas which are currently self-regulating within the remit of a regulatory body.
- Invest in the Data Protection Commission to ensure it can deliver on its mandate.
- Increase investment into the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Migration - A Fair but Firmer System

We are a small, open economy which relies on trade and investment to deliver economic and jobs growth, and raise living standards. Thousands of people come to Ireland to work, to study and to fill essential skills gaps, and they make a significant

contribution to our society.

We must remain agile and responsive to the needs of our economy, including our skills needs. We need workers in all sectors like agriculture, in our multinational sector, in our health service and in our construction sector. We will invest further resources to ensure that we can quickly process visa and immigration permissions.

However, we are also living in a new reality – a time of great global turmoil in many countries, resulting in more people on the move than at any point since the end of World War II. We have seen an enormous increase in the number of people seeking international protection across EU member states and the world.

It is important that a person who applies for international protection receives a fair decision as quickly as possible. We have ramped up processing of applications, introduced accelerated processing for certain countries, and strengthened immigration enforcement.

We will introduce a new International Protection Act to implement the EU Migration and Asylum Pact, which will strengthen and integrate key EU policies on migration, asylum, border management and integration. New domestic legislation will be enacted in 2026 to provide for faster processing of applications, stronger border security, and a more efficient returns system.

We are committed to delivering a fair, efficient, and sustainable model of accommodating applicants. We will move away from the emergency use of hotels for housing and put in place facilities for those seeking protection on state land.

We will publish a National Migration and Integration Strategy detailing how we intend to meet the demands and the opportunities facing our society and economy over the next decade.

A Firmer System

We are committed to implementing the new EU Migration and Asylum Pact through a new International Protection Act.

This Government will:

- Continue to implement a firmer migration system that enhances border security, streamlines processing, ensures faster removals, and protects the integrity of our immigration framework, while supporting those in need.
- Clear timelines to ensure that all applications are processed efficiently.
- Implement stronger border security, including increasing the collection of fingerprints and photographs from new arrivals, enhancing our ability to verify identities
- Ensure applicants are provided with accommodation with restrictions on their movement to ensure the integrity of the process.

In addition:

- Ensure that people who arrive here from safe countries, with false or no documents, or who have crossed borders illegally are subject to an accelerated processing system so that decisions are made quickly.
- Any applicant whose international protection application has been refused in another EU member state will be subject to an accelerated hearing under an inadmissibility procedure.
- Those who are processed under the border procedure will not be authorised to enter Ireland. Their applications, appeals and removal decisions must be processed within three months. This will include people who have arrived by

crossing the land border with Northern Ireland.
- New dedicated accommodation for those who are being processed in the border procedure and those who are due to be returned to another country.
- A greater focus on efficient returns for unsuccessful international protection applicants, including a new 'take back notification' to replace the 'take back request.
- Processing of applications in large accommodation centres to ensure people get faster decisions.

In advance of enacting and implementing the new legislation, this Government will:
- Continue to implement a firmer migration system that enhances border security, streamlines processing, and protects the integrity of our immigration framework, while supporting those in need.
- Develop our capacity to ensure the removal of unsuccessful International Protection applicants.
- Expand the staffing at every stage of the International Protection System.
- Expand accelerated processing further with the inclusion of additional categories in line with the new EU Migration and Asylum Pact.
- Increase resources in the appeals system to ensure appeals are dealt with quickly.
- Consider if there are certain limited circumstances in which the right of appeal or judicial review can be limited (e.g. a Judicial Review is heard after the applicant has left the jurisdiction).
- Establish a dedicated division of the High Court to handle all immigration cases.
- Ensure anyone convicted of a serious crime can be rapidly removed from the jurisdiction.
- Continue to work with the UK Government to introduce further measures to tackle abuses within the Common Travel Area (CTA) and strengthen the external border of the Common Travel Area, including greater exchange of information.
- Ensure An Garda Síochána have the appropriate powers, technology, and resources needed to dismantle the criminal gangs seeking to exploit the common travel area.
- Work with the EU to explore the possibility of accessing the new Visa Information System.
- Ensure the use of charter deportation flights when necessary.
- Support applicants or unsuccessful applicants to return to their own jurisdiction.
- Provide new dedicated accommodation for those who are being processed in the border procedure and those who are due to be returned to another country.
- Support Gardaí to step up immigration enforcement.
- Replace the International Protection Appeals Tribunal with a new, faster appeals system.

Stronger Border Security:

This Government will:
- Develop a border security strategy to deliver stronger border security, including through the Border Management Unit, An Garda Síochána, Revenue, other relevant agencies and relevant international partners, to counter threats from terrorism, organised crime and human trafficking.
- Carry out joint threat analysis with other jurisdictions and ensure technology supports stronger border screening.
- Place the Border Management Unit on a statutory footing.
- Review the potential introduction of an electronic travel authorisation for travel from designated third countries.
- Increase fines for airlines and ferry

companies that fail to comply with their obligations to ensure that each person they carry into the country has a valid passport or valid documentation.
- Expand the number of Garda Airline Liaison Officers posted at overseas airports to prevent irregular migration.
- Support and increase in the number of Gardaí trained as Immigration Officers.
- Continue 'doorstop' operations on flights that pose risks of irregular migration to prevent unlawful entry into the state.

International Co-Operation and Tackling People Smuggling and Human Trafficking

This Government will:
- Expand the Garda Liaison network to additional locations to continue to improve international law enforcement co-operation.
- Support action to disrupt and dismantle the people smuggling gangs that are facilitating illegal immigration into Ireland.
- Invest in state-of-the-art technology and enhanced intelligence capabilities.
- Consider a new offence to make forced labour a standalone criminal offence.
- Initiate a public education campaign highlighting the fact that it is a criminal offence in Ireland to pay for sex.

Accommodation

This Government will:
- Return responsibility for international protection accommodation and integration to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.
- Require International Protection applicants to contribute towards their accommodation costs.
- Withdraw supports where applicants have failed to comply with the IP process, committed a serious breach of house rules or where they have engaged in serious criminal behaviour.
- Ensure applicants who have received a final negative decision are no longer entitled to Material Reception Conditions.
- Further reduce the use of hotels for housing asylum seekers and utilise State lands to develop appropriate State-owned facilities.
- Give greater lead-in time to the opening of new facilities, allowing for enhanced and effective local communication, and development of integration.
- Ensure meaningful consultation with local communities and plan more effectively for delivery of increased public services.
- Expand the Community Engagement Team to provide for detailed discussions with communities.

Effective Integration and Social Cohesion

Ireland needs migration to thrive, and we are committed to ensuring successful integration so that newcomers feel welcomed and connected to our society.

This Government will:
- Publish a new national Migration and Integration Strategy.
- Invest in integration programmes that support language learning, as well as broader social, cultural and sporting exchange, and access to essential public services such as education and healthcare, facilitating smoother transitions for migrants.
- Continue to invest in English language classes for people seeking international protection.
- Enforce policies to protect migrants from exploitation and abuse, highlighting the social and economic benefits of

migration to counter anti-immigration sentiments.
- Develop community-led initiatives to foster connections between migrants and local populations, particularly in areas receiving a high number of new arrivals, to build strong community ties.
- Renew the focus and the purpose of the Community Recognition Fund to ensure it meets the needs of local communities which are supporting new arrivals. We will ensure every community benefits to guarantee supports for vital services.

In addition;
- Create research fellowships to strengthen Ireland's appeal to top-tier academic and research talent.
- Establish talent networks to connect highly-skilled individuals abroad with opportunities in Ireland, creating a pipeline for skilled Irish emigrants to return and for foreign talent to engage with our economy.
- Task the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF), with developing recommendations to enhance the diversity of our workforce, especially in the civil and public service sectors.

Employment Permits and Visas

We are committed to addressing skill shortages and supporting economic growth through a strategic migration approach.

This Government will:
- Prioritise a skills-based migration system to target sectors facing significant shortages, such as healthcare, ICT, engineering, and construction, to ensure that the workforce meets the needs of the economy.
- Explore the expansion of eligible roles for employment permits.
- Merge the visa and employment permit system into one user-friendly single application procedure supported by a new ICT system.
- Increase investment and resources to support faster processing of legal migration visas and permissions.
- Introduce expedited visa options for high-demand sectors to facilitate quicker entry for skilled professionals.
- Examine ways to facilitate people who are on work permits to move jobs more easily and legally, while protecting the integrity of the immigration system.
- Link migration policy with education to allow international students in key disciplines, especially in STEM fields, to transition smoothly from student visas to permanent residency. This approach will help retain the talent that has been trained within Ireland.

Enriching our Society and Culture

Enriching our Society and Culture

Arts and Culture

Supporting Culture, Creativity, and the Arts

The Government believes that culture and the arts are essential to a well-rounded society, providing opportunities for education, expression, and community engagement. Ireland is world renowned for our rich, diverse and vibrant arts sector.

This Government will:

- Assess the Basic Income for Artists pilot to maximise its impact.
- Examine the feasibility of a minor capital works grant scheme to support arts and cultural facilities that are not funded through The Arts Council.
- Continue to increase capital investment in national arts infrastructure through the review of the National Development Plan.
- Continue the section 481 film tax credit to support film and unscripted productions.
- Examine options to introduce sector specific measures for the visual effects sector.
- Examine the tax treatment of production costs for theatre productions.
- Ensure that every child has access to tuition in art, music, drama, or coding through an expanded Creative Schools Programme.
- Support the development and provision of affordable spaces for artists to work and collaborate, through the local authorities and the OPW.
- Streamline licensing, traffic management, and insurance processes to facilitate festival planning, promoting vibrant, accessible events for communities.
- Maintain and grow funding for the Arts Council, Culture Ireland, and other organisations that support both national and international artistic endeavours.
- Support artists to access international opportunities through increased funding for Culture Ireland and support for our embassies to promote more bilateral exchanges.
- Boost funding for the Touring of Work Scheme to facilitate regional presentations of professional productions and extend access to arts organisations and venues in Northern Ireland.
- Explore initiatives to promote our thriving design and fashion scene, including support for the Design and Crafts Council Ireland and the Irish Grown Wool Council.

Promoting Ireland's Cultural Landscape

This Government will:

- Examine the introduction of a Culture Card for 16 and 17-year-olds to access theatre, music and art events.
- Ensure all National Cultural Institutions develop a programme for Transition Year students.
- Develop initiatives that support traditional Irish music and dance.
- Work with National Cultural Institutions to improve public access to Ireland's collections through exhibitions, loans, and educational programmes.
- Continue grants for community-based cultural institutions and support large cultural centres, ensuring vibrant cultural opportunities across Ireland.
- Redevelop the GPO as a historic landmark to preserve its historic importance and enhance its role as a key cultural landmark in Dublin.
- Fund further development of the National Concert Hall as a premier cultural venue.
- Work towards the completion of the Cork Events Centre to enhance Cork's cultural landscape and boost the city's regeneration.
- Continue funding Creative Youth, ensuring inclusivity and access for young people of diverse backgrounds interested in the arts.
- Introduce and expand arts programming in early childhood education and care settings, nurturing creativity from a young age.
- Increase financial support for the Creative Schools and Music Generation projects.
- Establish and fund an Irish Town of Culture programme to support local creative projects.

Night-Time Economy

This Government will:

- Support the work of the Night-Time Economy Unit to deliver upon the recommendations of the Taskforce.
- Continue the Night-Time Economy Support Scheme.
- Promote later opening hours at museums, galleries, and other cultural venues to offer flexible access for visitors, and the expansion of supporting services.
- Enact legislation to update our licencing laws, promoting the development of a modern and diverse night-time economy, which is reflective of local needs.

Commemorations

During the period of this Government, we will remember and reflect on many significant historical events which have been important to the legacy of the State and left a lasting impact on Irish culture. We will ensure that local communities are supported to deliver meaningful and inclusive commemorations. Amongst the events which the Government could mark in an appropriate way are:

- 2025: Mark the 250th Anniversary of the birth of Daniel O'Connell, and the bicentenaries of some of the most pivotal moments in his career and develop an educational schools' pack for use across the island highlighting how Irish identity was, and remains a European identity, while showcasing O'Connell's contribution to intellectual and political thought on a global scale.
- 2026: 250th anniversary of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, highlighting Ireland's connection to that story, both north and south.
- 2027: Birth of Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and the death of Constance Markievicz.

- 1928: Anniversary of the Irish pound.
- 2029: 300th anniversary of Jonathan Swift's A Modest Proposal.
- 2029: 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Land League.
- 2029: The centenary of the opening of Ardnacrusha, the creation of the ESB, and rural electrification.

Sport

Sport holds a special place in Irish life and society promoting health and wellbeing, encouraging community participation and instilling a sense of pride in our people.

We are committed to supporting our sporting ecosystem so more people can participate, reap the benefits of sport, and fulfil their potential - from grassroots right up to high performance level.

Increase Participation

This Government will:

- Promote at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity for children of all abilities.
- Maintain sports funding to get more people participating in all levels of sport, particularly targeting cohorts in society where there are lower than average participation levels including people with disabilities and older people.
- Work with the GAA, the IRFU, the FAI and all sporting organisations to drive increased participation in sport.
- Continue to support participation in all sports from grassroots to elite level.
- Consider measures, in conjunction with the Department of Finance, to encourage gym membership and active participation in sport and exercise.
- Implement the New National Swimming Strategy by investing in pools and swimming facilities allowing everyone an opportunity to swim.
- Appoint a Sport Ireland Disability Lead.
- Promote volunteerism and improve the vetting process for people involved in sport.
- Expand support for para-sports and special needs programmes by providing grants to clubs that demonstrate inclusive policies and facilities.
- Work with all sporting organisations to promote a 'one club' ethos, encompassing male and female participants and promoting equality of access to sporting facilities.
- Expand cross-border sport opportunities.

Education

This Government will:

- Prioritise the development of physical education halls and sporting facilities (including yards and play areas) for schools in conjunction with the Sports Capital Fund to deliver for both schools and communities.
- Increase the number of schools offering PE as a Leaving Certificate exam subject.
- Expand the Active School Flag Initiative and equip schools with resources to better promote physical activity and health.
- Mandate the Local Sports Partnerships to collaborate with schools to promote inter-school competitions, sports festivals, and collaboration with parents, local sports clubs, and national sporting organisations to create a dynamic, inclusive approach to physical activity.

Increase Funding for Sport

This Government will:

- Continue to support the funding of sports capital projects, and assess the distribution of funding to maximise participation in all sports at community and national level.
- Examine the role of philanthropy in providing additional funds.
- Conduct a nationwide audit of sports facilities to address shortages in areas underserved including towns with populations over 1,500.
- Support local authorities in the acquisition of new lands for parks and playing pitches to help build liveable communities.
- Mandate local authorities to develop an amenity plan with the developers of all new major housing developments.
- Allow approved sports bodies to create long-term Strategic Development Funds for capital investment in facilities, removing the requirement that the proceeds of donations (and associated tax relief) be tied to a specific approved capital project.
- Extend charitable status to National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships on an opt-in/opt-out basis.

High Performance

This Government will:

- Complete the development of the National Sports Campus in Blanchardstown.
- Work to better connect the National Sports Campus with public transport.
- Proceed with the National Velodrome and Badminton Centre, as well as the new National Cricket Stadium.
- Explore new mechanisms for the creation of football academies with the FAI and the League of Ireland.
- Provide dedicated funding to support and train high-performance coaches and implement the Sport Ireland High Performance Strategy to support the Olympians and Paralympians of the future.
- Promote an all-island approach to hosting major international sporting events, building on the Major International Events policy, including supporting the hosting of the 2027 Ryder Cup, Euro 2028, the T20 Cricket World Cup 2030, the Open Championships and bidding for major competitions.
- Strengthen efforts to seek business and philanthropic funding for high performance sport to complement state funding.

Governance

This Government will:

- Mandate all national governing bodies and sports organisations to adhere to international best practices in governance, transparency, and anti-corruption measures.
- Develop a long-term strategy to close the gap on gender inequality when it comes to funding, representation, remuneration, media coverage, sponsorship and participation at grassroots and elite levels.
- Consult with athletes, referees and officials to devise the best way to protect against abuse and misconduct, ensuring all sporting environments are safe and respectful. This should lead to better governance and codes of conduct at club level.

Media

Supporting a Strong, Independent and Diverse Media

The Government is committed to a strong, independent media sector that provides essential public service broadcasting, supports local journalism, and upholds press freedom. We believe a well-resourced, transparent, and accountable media landscape is fundamental to an informed society and democracy.

This Government will:

- Ensure stable, sufficient funding for RTÉ and other public service broadcasters to maintain quality programming and public trust.
- Respect RTÉ's independence while ensuring that necessary reforms are carried out in tandem with funding, securing a sustainable future for public service media.
- Enact new legislation to ensure that the corporate governance model in RTE is open, transparent and appropriate to its public service mandate.
- Maintain and continue to grow the Global Ireland Media Challenge Fund to build capacity of Irish media outlets to undertake quality reporting on international geopolitical events.
- Through Coimisiún na Meán, allocate Shared Island Funding resources to schemes which encourage professional cross border reporting on an ongoing basis and not just at times of crisis.

A strong independent sector

Independent media, both nationally and locally, performs a vital public service and deserves to have this recognised.

This Government will:

- Review the Sound and Vision Scheme to support broadcasters making high quality programming around Irish culture and heritage and make it easier to access and ensure proportionate and accessible funding for independent radio.
- Provide funding for local media to report on local authority business, ensuring communities are informed about key decisions affecting their lives.
- Strengthen the Local Democracy and Court Reporting Schemes to ensure they are meeting their intended objectives in producing high-quality reports for regional audiences.
- Explore options to maintain access to local and commercial radio.
- Ensure accessible funding for local radio and print media to support the provision of objective news and current affairs content, taking into account Coimisiún na Meán recommendations.
- Enhance supports for increased use of the Irish language.

Supporting Media

This Government will:

- Pass the Defamation Bill to balance freedom of expression with protections for individuals' good name and reputation. This will include safeguards against SLAPP suits (strategic lawsuits against public participation) to prevent misuse of defamation laws to stifle public interest reporting.
- Support efforts to ensure that national and local media are paid properly for their news content when it is used by online platforms.
- Fund a National Counter Disinformation Strategy.

Ireland's place in the world

Ireland's place in the world

Strengthening Ireland's place in Europe and around the world

Ireland has a long and proud history of constructive and ambitious engagement in European and international affairs. We are active supporters and promoters of the international rules-based order and have established a strong reputation globally as good faith participants in all multilateral structures and organisations. Our membership of the United Nations remains a cornerstone of Ireland's foreign policy.

Recognising the rapidly changing geopolitical landscape across the world and the threats and challenges this entails, we will promote an ambitious agenda, driving forward reform and advocating for our values. We will also continue to focus on the impact of climate change on peace and security and advocate internationally for the education and safety of women and girls.

Trade

We will transfer responsibility for Trade Policy and Negotiation to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

This Government will:

- Support an open, multilateral, rules-based trade system, promoting free trade policies that support economic growth.
- Support an ambitious EU trade agenda, promoting new Free Trade Agreements, ensuring proper assurances regarding sustainability, human rights and the protection of our agricultural sector.

Strengthening our place in the European Union:

This Government will:

- Support the development of the Savings and Investment Union, seeking opportunities to improve competition in key financial sectors and to support the green and digital transitions.
- Adopt the Budapest Declaration which includes commitments to make Europe the first climate neutral continent in the world and safeguard Europe's sovereignty security, resilience and global influence.
- Support and implement the European Green Deal, unlocking more of Europe's

renewable energy potential through enhanced EU co-operation and improved European grid connectivity.
- Ensure there is an ambitious new European Budget settlement, protecting existing EU programmes and taking action on strategic priorities.
- Prioritise economic competitiveness in the EU and continue to promote international trade, as it is vital to the Irish economy.
- Work to strengthen the application and monitoring of the rule of law across the EU, ensuring the non-partisan application of the Rule of Law mechanism, and ensure that all citizens in all members states feel equally protected from those who threaten our values, including their own governments.
- Support sanctions against countries seeking to undermine European democracy.
- Reduce where possible the regulatory burden simplifying EU rules for the SME and Farming sectors.
- Deliver on plans to increase the number of Irish people applying for positions in the institutions of the European Union, including a communications campaign targeted at school leavers and graduates highlighting the opportunities available, and a partnership with third level providers to do the same.
- Uphold the Irish language's full status as an official language of the European Union.
- Develop and promote projects which build links and understanding with other EU capitals and regions in the fields of culture, education, research and innovation.
- Stand by the EU's accession promises, promoting a positive enlargement strategy for Ukraine, the Western Balkans, Moldova and Georgia.
- Promote closer co-operation with candidate countries, assisting these nations to align with EU standards.
- Introduce a new John Hume Fund in honour of one of Ireland's greatest ever patriots and only member of the European Parliament to win a Nobel Prize. This is to be awarded annually by that Parliament to a person or organisation who promotes reconciliation and shared prosperity in Europe.

Maximising the Impact of Ireland's EU Presidency:

We will resource and deliver a successful EU Presidency in 2026, as it is essential for Ireland's position, influence and reputation in the EU and for advancing the Union's agenda against a complex geopolitical background.

This Government will:
- Publish plans for our upcoming Presidency to deliver against strategic priorities for Europe and Ireland.
- Host an informal meeting of the European Council and a meeting of the European Political Community in Ireland during the Presidency, as well as a programme of between 16 and 20 informal Council meetings at Ministerial level.
- Seek to bring some of the high-level meetings of our Presidency to cities and counties across Ireland, ensuring the entire country benefits from the profile the Presidency brings.
- Provide for a sustainability policy for the Presidency.

The Middle East:

This Government will:
- Continue to work with partners in the region to advocate for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the return of all hostages and a surge of humanitarian

aid. We will also work with partners to help rebuild Gaza as soon as practicable.
- Seek to grow the international coalition of countries supporting a two-state solution through recognition of the State of Palestine and continue to advocate for internationally sponsored political negotiations on achieving a peaceful and secure Israel and Palestine.
- Continue to seek the application of International Law and justice to all sides in the current conflict through the international court system.
- Advocate for a meaningful interpretation of Israel's human rights obligations under the EU-Israel association agreement at European Commission level and continue to advocate a review of the EU Trade Agreement.
- Progress legislation prohibiting goods from Occupied Palestinian Territories. following the July 2024 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion.
- Continue to oppose and condemn Hamas and other groups which bring terror and destruction to their own people and others.
- Support UNRWA and advocate within Europe for increased support.
- Work with partners in the EU to introduce further sanctions against illegal settler activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Ukraine:

This Government will:

- Continue to unequivocally support Ukraine, affirming that Russia cannot win this war and supporting Ukrainian resistance through our contribution to the European Peace Facility and the Ukraine Facility.
- Work to enhance existing sanctions against Russia by identifying and closing loopholes to ensure maximum effectiveness.
- Strongly advocate for Ukrainian membership of the European Union, facilitating their integration into the European community.
- Continue to fund rebuilding infrastructure in Ukraine, including school rebuilding and water infrastructure programmes.

Defending and Promoting Irish Values:

This Government will:

- Continue to increase Official Development Assistance annually, working towards the UN target of 0.7% of Gross National Income.
- Deliver on Ireland's International Climate Finance Roadmap to address climate challenges and prioritise funding for adaptation efforts in countries most vulnerable to climate change, particularly Small Island Developing States.
- Recommit Ireland to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Support the new Fund for Loss and Damage, prioritising the world's most vulnerable countries.
- Work with international partners to keep attention on the plight of women and girls in Afghanistan.
- Significantly increase the proportion of ODA that is channelled into the education of young people in developing countries, particularly the education of girls.
- Advocate for greater attention on the conflict in Sudan.

Strengthening Ireland's Place in the World:

This Government will:

- Develop a new strategy Global Ireland 2040 outlining an overarching masterplan for further enhancing our

place and influence in international affairs, including ever deeper relationships with our European partners.
- Develop a strategy to map, support, and tell the story of Irish investment overseas.
- Continue to implement and enhance whole-of-government strategies covering Latin America, Asia-Pacific, including China, US & Canada and Africa.
- Continue to develop Ireland's presence around the world, with an expansion of the successful Ireland House concept; where all of our agencies are in one location, maximising impact in host countries and value for Irish taxpayers at home.
- Develop a new Diaspora Strategy to ensure that the new generation and profile of emigrants are aware of and can access support overseas and develop our international diaspora networks using online and data-based initiatives.
- Work to facilitate the easier return to Ireland for emigrants, including reciprocal driving licence arrangements with the USA, Australia and Canada and the creation of a one-stop-support to assist with obtaining PPS numbers and other administrative issues.
- Review the three-year residency requirement for younger citizens residing overseas who want to study full time in Ireland.
- Develop a programme for young adults from the Diaspora to develop a new generation of ties within the global Irish network.
- Deliver an ambitious digital strategy that works towards digital passports for those who want to avail of them in the future, as part of better digital public services.

Enhancing our engagement with the United States

This Government will:

- Strengthen our political, cultural, economic and trade relationship with the US at all levels, recognising the unique significance of the transatlantic relationship between us.
- Enhance our diplomatic presence across the US, particularly in a number of southern states to ensure we are best placed to influence, anticipate and respond to any planned changes by the new US Administration.
- Build on emerging and improving connections with state legislatures across the US.
- Boost our Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland staffing levels to complement our diplomatic presence in the USA, while ensuring a specific expertise in digital and life sciences to maximise opportunities in these areas.
- Create more pathways for companies to invest in the USA as Ireland is already amongst the highest inward investors in the USA.
- Work with our European partners to ensure a coordinated approach to the Transatlantic Relationship and boost intra-EU collaboration on competitiveness and productivity projects of common interest.
- Develop a specific strategy to grow the Irish Diaspora in the US.
- Advocate with the US Administration and Capitol Hill to advance the case of undocumented Irish citizens in the US.

Building our Shared Island and Rebuilding Ireland-UK Relations

The Government of Ireland is committed to the unity of the Irish people and believes that this can only be achieved through a sustained focus on and investment in reconciliation and we remain steadfast in implementing the Good Friday Agreement in full.

The Good Friday Agreement is the blueprint for unlocking the full potential of our island and sets out the three strands necessary to do so – the relationship between communities in Northern Ireland, the relationship between North and South, and the relationship between Ireland and Britain.

The Government reaffirms its commitment to the successful functioning of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement and to the full implementation of the Windsor Framework Agreement.

We will continue to prioritise the essential work of building understanding and reconciliation, so that the fundamental causes of conflict and division can be addressed.

This Government has an ambitious agenda to deliver tangible and meaningful progress on all three strands.

Building our Shared Island:

This Government will:

- Reaffirm its commitment to the Shared Island Fund and commit to increasing the resources available to the Fund by a further €1 billion up to 2035 to foster reconciliation, mutual respect and growth.
- Increase staffing levels in the Shared Island Unit within the Department of the Taoiseach and introduce specific targets for each government department to come forward with new and relevant projects.
- Continue to provide and broaden funding for research bodies or institutions which have an independent cross-border studies agenda.
- Fund Northern Ireland students to participate in the Erasmus programme in Ireland and across the EU.
- Advocate for proposals that facilitate the UK's re-entry into the Erasmus+ student exchange system.
- Commission a North-South statistical series and publication to provide comparable data on economic activity, public expenditure and wider social and economic measures, including education, housing and health outcomes.
- Work to foster further collaboration between startups and businesses.
- Complete construction of the Narrow Water Bridge and support the local authorities on both sides of the Bridge in developing the new tourism opportunities it will bring.
- Develop the vision set out in the All-Island Rail Review, including prioritising delivery of the FourNorth project into and out of Connolly Station.
- Improve connectivity with the Northwest by working with the Northern Ireland Executive to deliver the A5 road upgrade. Further enhance road connectivity to and from the North-West.
- Engage with all relevant stakeholders to

establish air connectivity between Dublin and Derry City airports.
- Deepen collaboration between the healthcare systems on the island, building on the model and success of the all-island paediatric cardiac service into other bespoke all-island services.
- Examine the establishment of an all-island skills taskforce with a focus on planning, construction and infrastructure development.
- Develop an all-island plan to improve water basin management, water quality and nature restoration.
- Support Tourism Ireland to further integrate tourism offerings on an all-island basis.
- Develop the full potential of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.
- Work with local authorities across the island to advance projects on an all-island basis.

Legacy and Promoting Reconciliation:

This Government will:
- Work with victims' groups, political parties and the British Government to develop a fit-for-purpose mechanism to seek truth and justice for victims and their families.
- Support the work of the Independent Reporting Commission.
- Play our full part in legacy processes and address the legacy of the conflict in this jurisdiction, including facilitating and supporting the Omagh Inquiry.
- Support the PEACEPLUS and Interreg programmes to assist communities across the island, and commence planning for successor programme.
- Increase Irish Government investment in community-level reconciliation through the Department of Foreign Affairs' Reconciliation Fund.
- Advocate for the re-establishment and full operation of a Northern Ireland Civic Forum as envisaged in the Good Friday Agreement.

Strengthening Relations:

This Government will:
- Enhance Irish-British relations, recognising that the peace process thrives when both governments act as full partners and co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement.
- Establish new arrangements to support and strengthen interaction between the two Governments, encouraging co-operation across all aspects of our partnership, including the North-South bodies.
- Hold annual summits between the two Heads of Government, providing a platform to review joint efforts and deepen co-operation.
- Continue to work with British counterparts to deliver the successful operation of the Common Travel Area.
- Co-operate on a North – South and East – West basis in the area of renewable energy with a view to establishing joint objectives and maximising collaboration.

Enhancing Ireland's Defence

The role and contribution of our Defence Forces at home and abroad is a source of enormous pride for the Irish people. They are central to the nation's security and a projection of Ireland's values overseas, with

an unbroken commitment to peacekeeping in often very challenging circumstances. Ireland's Defence Forces have the longest unbroken record of overseas service with the United Nations.

Building on the progress achieved by the previous government, this government is committed to the ongoing transformation and modernisation of Oglaigh na hÉireann across land, air, sea and cyber domains. We recognise the need to continuously strengthen our Defence capabilities in light of the changed geopolitical landscape since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Strong policy base:

The Government will preserve and protect Ireland's policy of active military neutrality. We also recognise that while we strongly value our military neutrality, we are not politically neutral. We will continue to engage with international partners and we will reform the Triple Lock legislation whilst also ensuring that amendments to the legislation are in keeping with our values and policy of active military neutrality.

We will also continue to co-operate with international partners in pursuit of our security interests and in line with our values, focussing on:

- International security and peacekeeping
- Protection of critical undersea infrastructure
- More efficient procurement of military equipment
- Cyber security and countering hybrid threats
- Training, upskilling and knowledge sharing

This Government will:

- Continue to increase investment in Defence, providing the funding and political support necessary to achieve Level of Ambition 2 Enhanced Capability, and move as quickly as possible to Level of Ambition 3 with commensurate investment as appropriate.
- Deliver continued reform of the military leadership structures, including the changes necessary to establish a new Chief of Defence (CHOD) role.
- Continue to support the High Level Action Plan on the implementation of the Commission on Defence Forces, including the identification of HQ locations.
- Ensure full delivery of the new Joint Cyber Defence Command strategy published by the last Government.
- Prioritise the regeneration and growth of Ireland's Naval Service, including the Naval Reserve, with a focus on protecting our significant and expanding sub-sea data cabling infrastructure and emerging offshore energy sector.
- Prepare a revised National Security Strategy which reflects the changed geo-political landscape that Europe and Ireland confronts. This will ensure a whole of Government approach to defence and deterrence.
- Review our military intelligence structures to ensure that our intelligence services are optimised to protect national security.
- Plan for the interoperability of specialist Defence Forces with specialist units of An Garda Siochana on national defence matters.
- Establish a Cyber Security Centre of Excellence around a Cluster of Third Level Education facilities and related industry.

Making the Military a Career of Choice:

This Government will:

- Continue to drive forward modernisation and cultural change, fully supporting

the External Oversight Board in its work, implementing outstanding IRG recommendations and making our military a modern, effective and attractive employer of choice.
- Cooperate fully with the Tribunal of Inquiry into Certain Matters relating to the complaints processes in the Defence Forces.
- Continue the process of improving pay and conditions for serving personnel, while also continuing to build on improvements in the recruitment process including a nationwide programme for Transition Year and Third Level students, with a view to achieving the target of 11,500 personnel and better representation of women at all levels of the Defence Forces.
- Continue to examine incentives and structural changes to make a military career accessible to a wider range of candidates, and to encourage existing personnel to extend their military careers, including Rewarding Long Service and broadening eligibility criteria.
- Establish a properly resourced Office of Veterans Affairs, based within the Department of Defence and working across Government to assist with the needs of our veterans.
- Enhance the Personnel Support Service (PSS), which provides essential support to the families and partners of Defence Force members, recognising the importance of their contribution.
- Ensure the further development of our Reserve Defence Force, ensuring that the newly established Office of Reserve Affairs and the Regeneration and Development Plan is fully resourced and equipped and take all steps to increase the number of reserves.
- Introduce financial supports for Irish SMEs who facilitate staff to be members of the RDF and explore the potential of our higher and further education institutions as centres for promoting a geographically dispersed reservist culture across the country.
- Implement the 'Civil Defence – Towards 2030' policy, including delivery of a new centralised volunteer and equipment management system.
- Ensure effective implementation of the Working Time Directive.

Investing in Equipment and the Military Estate:

This Government will:

- Deliver enhanced radar capability for the country, with an integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System across Maritime, Land and Air domains.
- Upgrade the military transport fleet, deliver additional Air Corps capacity, and deliver next generation radio communications and signal equipment.
- Progress the Naval Service Vessel Renewal and Replacement Programme, replacing secondary armament across the fleet and enhancing our subsea capabilities, and we will continue to develop our maritime support infrastructure, investing to future proof Haulbowline Naval Base, and establishing an additional East Coast Base for the Naval Service.
- We will continue the transformational investment in the military estate and the upgrading of barracks across the country, including major upgrade of Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell.
- We will audit the existing military estate and examine the feasibility of developing new accommodation on the estate for military personnel.

Political Reform



Political Reform

Protecting our democracy

Democracy is under threat globally from increasing extremism as well as the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Ireland has one of the longest democratic traditions of any country in the world, however we cannot take that freedom for granted.

We must protect Irish democracy to ensure it remains resilient, transparent and free from outside interference.

This Government will:

- Ensure that all Irish elections remain free and fair.
- Resource and support the independent Electoral Commission to play a central role in safeguarding the integrity of our democracy and promoting voter information and participation.
- Update and improve the electoral registration process, making it more efficient and accessible for citizens.
- Finalise engagement with the EU to implement Part 5 of the Electoral Reform Act 2022 and empower the Electoral Commission to tackle the scourge of online disinformation and misinformation.
- Implement the Electoral Reform Act to ensure all online political advertising is fully transparent.
- Sustain independent, unbiased and pluralistic journalism through supporting the work of Coimisiún na Meán, the media regulator.
- Counter disinformation through regulation and support for trusted public information sources.
- Support the development and rollout of the EU's Democracy Shield to combat the disinformation and malign online manipulation waged by foreign powers in Europe.

Political Reform

The Oireachtas is the central pillar of our democracy and has been at the heart of the Irish State since its inception. We must ensure that our Oireachtas and its structures evolve to protect democracy and meet the changing needs of society. It is important that the members of the Oireachtas reflect modern Ireland and that people from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to participate in public life.

To protect our citizens' trust in their elected representatives, the Oireachtas must operate with transparency and integrity at all times.

This Government will:

- Update the Ethics in Public Office legislation.
- Implement the digital transformation of parliament, in line with the digital-first principles as contained in 'Connecting Government 2030'.
- Support the role of the Parliamentary Budget Office and the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Advisers in assisting Oireachtas members to scrutinise policy and produce feasible policy and legislative proposals.
- Continue to reform political party funding to ensure improved transparency and fairness for all parties and to protect against malign influences on our political system.
- Implement recommendations of the Task Force on Safe Participation in Political Life.
- Support greater diversity and inclusion in our political representation.
- Fully implement the Seanad University Act 2024.
- Support the Seanad's role in scrutinising the transposition of EU Directives and Regulations into Irish law and North-South issues.
- Introduce ways to increase the level of spoken Irish used in the Oireachtas.

Strengthening Local Democracy

Local Government is the beating heart of our democracy. It is responsible for many of the essential services on which we depend – housing, local roads, planning, the environment, fire safety, climate action, parks and playgrounds, libraries and amenities.

When it comes to local services, decisions are better made when they are made by representatives of communities that use them.

We will reform and strengthen local government.

This Government will:

- Convene a 'Local Democracy Taskforce' with the Local Government sector to finalise a programme for the reform and strengthening of local government.
- This Taskforce will bring forward proposals which the Government will consider, with a particular focus on:
  - The principle of subsidiarity.
  - Increasing the range of reserved functions and consideration of devolving more powers to local authorities for local services.
  - Granting councillors greater input and control over the development and implementation of the local authority budget.
  - Rebalancing power between elected councillors and executive officers, to ensure that elected officials have a right to be consulted on a greater range of decisions and the right to know of all other decisions in a timely manner.
  - Increasing the accountability of the Chief Executive and Directors of Services to councillors for executive decisions.
  - Enhancing fiscal autonomy.
  - The timely reporting of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) and engagement with public representatives.
  - The proportion of local authority members to population.
  - Strengthening the framework and

powers of Municipal Districts and Area Committees.
    * Support frameworks for Councillors to carry out their duties drawing from the Moorhead report.
    * On a regional, phased basis, establish town councils in large towns to provide a focal-point for raising concerns of towns and coordinating town-focused activities.
- Explore the feasibility of providing public funding to support local government representatives in their work.
- Increase the number of mandatory meetings between local authority officials and Oireachtas members to twice yearly. Put in place timeframes within which queries from Oireachtas members and members of the public should be responded to. NOAC will be requested to oversee and report on performance of local authorities in this area.
- Enhance the mechanisms in place to allow local authority members to hold management to account. In addition, explore ways to provide more comprehensive access to financial information, including a full account from the local government auditor to elected members.
- Launch a new political participation campaign to support and promote greater numbers and diversity amongst those competing for elected member roles in local authorities.
- Ensure fairness and stability in Local Property Tax payments and continue to retain revenue collected locally in the same local authority.
- Support the office of the Directly Elected Mayor of Limerick and consider further plebiscites in Dublin and other cities.
- Support the rollout of the Regional Women's Caucus Network across all local authorities.
- Ensure that local authorities fulfil their responsibilities to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities in communities.
- Ensure additional family-friendly measures to enable a greater diversity and gender participation at local government level.
- Expand the Gaeilge365 local authority language innovation programme, as pioneered by Dublin City Council, to all local authorities nationwide, ensuring local authorities significantly increase opportunities for people to use the Irish language and function as a growth engine for the bilingual society we aspire to build.
- Continue to support the Age Friendly Ireland national office to roll out the Age Friendly strategy.

Functioning of Government

Functioning of Government

Functioning of Government

In order to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the new Government, it is essential to set out at the very beginning our commitments concerning the spirit in which we will work and the specific structures and timings which will ensure that there is clarity on both the day-to-day and long-term operation of the government.

Building on learnings from the operation of previous governments, we will restructure elements of shared government work and set out our commitment to ensure that a constructive and cooperative approach defines the work of all members of the Government.

We understand the critical need to ensure that Government has the space to consider and develop policy in a way which respects the need for confidence and free discussion and commit ourselves to the basic principle of avoiding the use of external pressure to seek advantage over Government colleagues or to influence ongoing discussions.

Formation of Government

Party leaders will agree a revised set of government departments and ministerial responsibilities before the formation of the Government, which will take place on 22 January 2025, if all relevant ratification procedures have been completed by the parties by that date.

Following agreement on the division of ministerial roles between parties, each party leader will be solely responsible for nominating his party's representatives.

Rotation of Taoiseach and Nomination of Government

The nomination of the Leader of Fianna Fáil and the ministers proposed by him will be supported by all parties and TDs supporting the government.

The Leader of Fianna Fáil will hold the office of Taoiseach from that point until 16 November 2027. On that date, he will offer his resignation to the President and all parties and TDs supporting the Government will support the nomination of the Leader of the Fine Gael party. Nominations for membership of Government by the new Taoiseach will, again, be the responsibility of the relevant leaders. Any alteration to

ministerial responsibilities will be subject to agreement.

Election Date

All parties and groupings party to the Government understand the need to ensure stable and effective government during the full term of this Dáil. This Government will deliver five Budgets. It is agreed that the General Election will be called no sooner than after the enactment of the principal measures to be announced in the Budget in late 2029. While respecting the constitutional role of the Taoiseach in this mater, a decision to call an election on a date will be agreed between party leaders.

Office of the Tánaiste

In order to ensure coordination and openness within government the Office of the Tánaiste will be retained within the Department of the Taoiseach and based in Government Buildings.

We are conscious of the distinct roles performed by the Taoiseach in representational, parliamentary, constitutional, European Union and international matters and will respect these in day-to-day matters.

The Office of the Tánaiste will be independent of the ministry that the Tánaiste holds. It shall consist of established and non-established civil servants in line with the Public Service Management Act 1997, who may be appointed from outside of the Department of the Taoiseach and shall be in addition to the current staffing of the Department.

The Tánaiste shall attend meetings of the North South Ministerial Council, the British Irish Council and the British Irish Intergovernmental Conference with or in lieu of the Taoiseach and shall be the Taoiseach's replacement at summits where the Taoiseach is unable to attend. The Tánaiste will take Leaders' Questions in the Dáil on a Thursday.

The Office of the Tánaiste will consist of:

a. A private office; and
b. A policy and programme implementation unit which shall assist the Tánaiste in work relating to cabinet, cabinet committees and oversight of the implementation of the Programme for Government.

The Tánaiste shall nominate the Deputy Government Press Secretary and the Department of the Taoiseach will provide protocol services to the Tánaiste where these do not relate to his Departmental role.

Oher Supports

Policy coordination and support resources will be made available to others who support the Government.

Cabinet Committees and Government Co-Ordination Committee

A refocused system of cabinet committees will be a central to the policy development and oversight work of the new Government.

All parties to the new Government understand that cabinet committees are a key part of providing a forum for reflective and open discussion. They are subject to the full provisions of the Cabinet Handbook and relevant constitutional and statutory provisions.

In order to focus discussions more effectively, officials will be requested to concentrate more of their contributions in the preparatory groups and attendance shall be subject to the agreement of the party leaders.

Government Co-Ordination Committee

A Cabinet Committee comprising the Taoiseach and Tánaiste and, where required, ministers relevant to matters being discussed, shall meet regularly.

In addition to the party or group leaders, the Secretary General to the Government shall attend save for political discussions, as shall nominated advisers to the party leaders.

This meeting will have three standing items.

1. To review the activity of cabinet committees.

2. To review the agenda for that week's cabinet meeting.

3. To discuss political priorities; and

If there is an issue of concern to any party or grouping, the Government Co-Ordination Committee is the forum for its resolution.

Other Cabinet Committees

A reformed structure of cabinet committees will be established within 30 days of the coming to office of the new government.

Cabinet Agenda

No item shall appear on the Cabinet Agenda without the prior knowledge of each party leader. This shall include memorandums introduced by the Minister for Finance and Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation.

Programme for Government delivery

A Programme for Government Office will be established in the Department of the Taoiseach to monitor the implementation and delivery of the Programme for Government.

Ongoing Cooperation

We agree that it is important to find a reasonable balance between the different priorities of our parties and the need to work effectively and with confidence within government. This requires good faith and there should be no public discussion of Government policy until there is agreement.

Government Departments

Government departments will be reconfigured, as agreed by the party leaders, to ensure greater policy coherence, programme implementation and a fair division of labour and responsibilities.

Ratification of Programme for Government

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael agree to put this draft Programme for Government to their respective parties for ratification in accordance with their own rules.