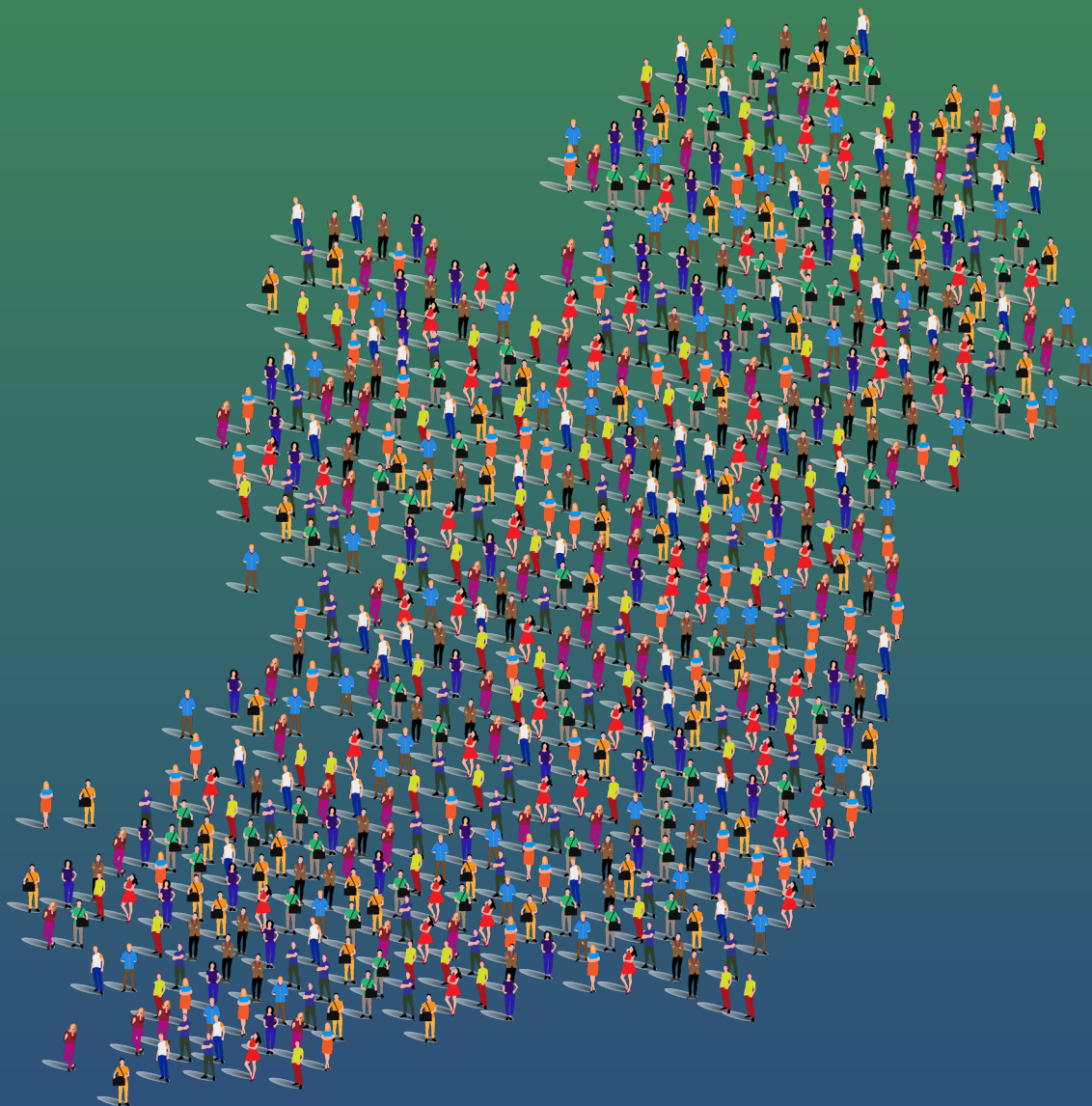


# LOCAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2024

Communities First: Creating vibrant,  
safe places to live, work, play, age and thrive



 **FIANNA FÁIL**  
AN PÁIRTÍ POBLACHTÁNACH

**Delivering for Ireland  
Delivering for You**



**FIANNA FÁIL**  
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY





## Foreword

The biggest divide in Irish politics today is between those who want to exploit problems and those who are determined to tackle them. This is true at every level.

Over the next five years our local authorities can play a vital role in some of the most important issues facing our country – and especially in helping build more homes and securing safe and active communities. But to do this we need councillors who are committed to working constructively every day of their mandate.

In this election Fianna Fáil is proposing an ambitious, practical and positive programme of action for implementation in every local authority.

This action includes playing a part in helping to go much further in building on the major increase in home building we have delivered. This includes action on local dereliction and support for the full range of housing needs including affordable home ownership, social housing and secure, affordable rental homes.

**Our proposals for action also include a range of specific measures which will help to:**

- Ensure local representatives take a more active role in tackling crime and supporting safer communities.
- Implement a range of schemes to improve the physical condition of our villages, towns and city communities.
- Promote actions to ensure a vibrant and affordable childcare sector.
- Support for local small businesses as a core social and economic resource.

Having strong and vocal local councillors does matter as they can improve access to local services and enhance standards of living. They help families secure a home, work on the local development plan, ensure roads are invested in, and set the agenda for the future prosperity of their areas. Their decisions play a significant part in sustaining local economic success, promoting local culture and protecting the environment for the benefit of all.

On Friday 7th June Fianna Fáil is putting forward candidates in every electoral area in the country. They represent a broad range of backgrounds and experience. What unites them is their commitment to a positive agenda of working for local communities and delivering action on important issues throughout their mandate.

Delivering for Ireland, Delivering for You.



**Micheál Martin T.D.**  
Uachtarán Fhianna Fáil

## Réamhrá

Is í an scoilt is mó i bpolaitíocht na hÉireann inniu ná an scoilt idir siúd iad ar mhaith leo leas a bhaint as fadhbanna nó iad siúd a bhfuil aidhm acu dul i ngleic leo agus iad a réiteach. Is fíor sin ag gach leibhéal.

As seo go ceann cúig bliana, is féidir leis na húdaráis áitiúla in Éirinn ról riachtanach a ghlacadh i roinnt de na ceisteanna móra a chuireann isteach ar ár dtír - agus go háirithe ag cabhrú le níos mó tithe a thógáil agus pobail bhríomhara shábháilte a chothú agus a thacú fud fad na tíre. Chuige sin, beidh Comhairleoirí ag teastáil uainn tiomanta don obair chuile lá, don mhandáid a bheidh acu.

Sa toghchán seo, molann Fianna Fail clár uailmhianach, praiticiúil, dearfach chun dul i mbun oibre i ngach údarás áitiúil sa tír.

Mar chuid den chlár oibre seo, cabhróimid le níos mó forbairtí tithíochta le cur leis an méadú mór tithíochta atá curtha i gcrích againn go dtí seo. Beidh gníomh agus forbairt ar siúl againn ar fhoirgnimh thréigthe a fheabhsú agus réimse tacaíochtaí a chur ar fáil, tithíocht shóisialta, tithíocht inacmhainne agus tithíocht inacmhainne ar cíós.

**Is iad na moltaí chun gnímh atá againn ná gníomhartha cinnte a chabhróidh leis na nithe seo a leanas:**

- Go ndéanfar deimhin de go mbeidh ról níos gníomhaí ag ionadaithe áitiúla chun dul i ngleic le coiriúlacht agus tacaíocht a thabhairt chun pobail níos sábháilte a chothú.
- Scéimeanna éagsúla a chur i bhfeidhm chun cuma fhisiciúil ár sráidbhailte, ár mbailte agus ár gcathracha a fheabhsú.
- Cúram leanaí a dhéanamh inacmhainne do theaghlaigh agus gníomhaíochtaí chun réimse bríomhar cúram leanaí a fhorbairt.
- Tacaíocht do ghnóthaí beaga mar chroílár acmhainní sóisialta agus geilleagrach.

Má bhíonn Comhairleoirí láidre againn a bheidh sásta labhairt amach, déanfaidh siad difríocht mhór, mar is féidir leo rochtain ar sheirbhísí áitiúla a fheabhsú agus cur le caighdeán mhaireachtála na ndaoine áitiúla. Cabhraíonn siad le teaghlaigh teacht ar áit chónaithe, obair a dhéanamh ar an bplean forbartha áitiúil, deimhin a dhéanamh de go ndéanfar infheistíocht ar bhóithre áitiúla, agus clár oibre ar shaibhreas agus rath geilleagrach a gceantair féin a dheimhniú don todhchaí. Tá páirt riachtanach ag a gcinntí rath geilleagrach áitiúil a chruthú, an cultúr áitiúil a chaomhnú agus an timpeallacht a chosaint ar mhaithe le cách.

Ar an Aoine an 7 Meitheamh, beidh iarrthóirí Fhianna Fáil ag seasamh i ngach toghcheantar sa tír. Seasann siad ar son chúlraí agus taithí éagsúla. An rud a aontaíonn iad go léir ná an tiomantas agus an díograis atá acu obair a dhéanamh ar son na bpobal áitiúil agus deimhin a dhéanamh de go socróidh siad ceisteanna móra an lae inniu tríd an mandáid atá acu.

Ag freastal ar agus ag soláthar ar son na hÉireann.  
Ag freastal agus ag soláthar ar do shon.



**Michéal Martin T.D.**  
Uachtarán Fhianna Fáil

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## Executive summary

Fianna Fáil is committed to providing local government that puts communities first; creating vibrant, safe places to live, work, play, age and thrive. Our objectives to deliver this are to:

1. **Create liveable communities**
2. **Build safer communities**
3. **Foster responsible communities**
4. **Encourage inclusive communities**
5. **Connect communities**
6. **Promote thriving active communities**

In each local authority area, the Fianna Fáil team will also have their own set of priorities that reflect distinct local needs and challenges. This manifesto outlines a comprehensive yet flexible number of policies at local government level that will:

### Create liveable communities

- Protect and extend the Help to Buy scheme, the First Home 'Bridge the Gap' Scheme, and the Vacancy Refurbishment Grants.
- Commit to not oppose social and affordable housing projects.
- Strengthen the powers of the local authority to evict tenants for extreme anti-social behaviour and set basic standards for the upkeep of properties.
- Develop a Gaeltacht housing policy in every local authority with a Gaeltacht under their remit.

### Build safer communities

- Prioritise public safety in towns and cities by boosting funding for Crime Prevention Officers to support neighbourhood watch groups.
- Set up Community Policing Teams, incorporating community Gardaí so that they are known and available to neighbourhoods.
- Introduce a dedicated police force for public transport.
- Fund a 'Brighter Streets' campaign to improve sustainable public lighting in each local authority, ensuring communities are safe and welcoming environments for all who live and visit them.

### Foster responsible communities

- Create an Ash Removal Fund for local authorities to work with landowner to remove dangerous trees on roadside land.
- Enact local bylaws to align local farm inspections with national pauses during adverse weather events.
- Establish a Coastal Erosion Fund in local authorities that have areas affected by this.
- Support ports in enhancing infrastructure to meet offshore renewable energy goals, support the economy, and strengthen trading relationships.
- Create a 'Clean Streets, Safe Streets' fund to enhance street cleaning, increase bins and combat litter.

### **Encourage inclusive communities**

- Introduce a local authority Disability Awareness Card.
- Expand the Autism Friendly and Dementia Friendly towns and cities initiatives nationwide.
- Make Culture Night a quarterly event.
- Appoint a full-time Irish language officer and establish an Irish Language Committee in each local authority.
- Reinstate Town Councils for towns with a population of 7,500 or more.

### **Connect communities**

- Support businesses in obtaining Protected Geographical Indication and Protected Designation of Origin status, as a tool for wider economic development.
- Boost infrastructure and economic development by hosting major events such as the Ryder Cup.
- Prioritise active travel projects promoting walking and cycling in all areas.
- Expand the Local Hackney Pilot Programme to improve rural transport options.
- Collaborate with residents to manage all existing roads to homes, enhancing road surfaces nationwide.

### **Promote thriving active communities**

- Support active retirement to combat loneliness and enhance community connectivity.
- Establish a new URDF style fund for solely for acquiring new lands for parks and playing pitches for growing areas to build liveable communities.
- Develop more municipal all-weather community pitches in urban areas with limited development space.
- Collaborate with Swim Ireland to expand coverage of 'Pop-Up Pools' in each local authority.
- Utilise school buildings after hours to minimise the demand for additional community facilities, including school halls, sports fields, and gymnasiums.

## Create liveable communities

Fianna Fáil has got Ireland back building. Since entering government in 2020 we have turned the tide on housing with the largest numbers of homes being built and bought in a generation under our Housing for All plan. Fianna Fáil has been the driving force behind that transformation, and we will continue to support home building and first-time buyers. We are fully committed to building far more homes over the next five years.

We know that times are still hard for those struggling to buy a home or pay rent. Far too many people are homeless. We will always prioritise Housing. Our focus is on providing safe and secure homes to rent or buy, for all our people. More homes and more home owners, that's our core policy. We will continue this in local government because Fianna Fáil is the party that builds homes.

### Support home ownership

We recognise the dignity and security that flows from holding the key to your own front door and the benefits of well-planned communities. We have doubled home building and will build 250,000 new homes over the next five years, with the aim to support a further 150,000 first-time buyers over the next five years.

#### *In continuing to support home ownership, we will:*

- Protect and extend the Help to Buy scheme, the First Home 'Bridge the Gap' Scheme, and the Vacancy Refurbishment Grants.
- Continue to roll out the biggest affordable housing scheme ever done with increased targets and supports for every local authority.
- Re-zone more land to meet a new ambitious target of 250,000 homes by 2030.
- Support all appropriate housing projects and proposals.
- Commit to not oppose social and affordable housing projects.
- Implement the new historic Planning and Development Bill to de-risk and accelerate home building.
- Maintain the development levy exemptions and water charge rebate to reduce constructions costs until December 2024 and review annually.
- Roll out Land Value Sharing and vacancy taxes.
- Encourage independent living by employing Disability Friendly Housing Technical Advisers in each local authority.

### Deliver a new deal for renters and landlords

Everyone should have access to a home to purchase or rent at an affordable price, built to a high standard and in the right place, offering a high quality of life. We will increase the supply of affordable accommodation for those seeking to rent while also enhancing tenant certainty and security. A healthy rental market needs affordable prices for renters and a fair return for landlords.



***To deliver a new deal for renters and landlords, we will:***

- Extend the rent tax credit.
- Reform Rent Pressure Zones.
- Introduce new powers to tackle anti-social behaviour in rogue tenancies through a text messaging-based system to allow residents to report to new dedicated Resident Support Units.
- Strengthen the powers of the local authority to evict tenants for extreme anti-social behaviour
- Set better standards for the upkeep of properties.

**Reduce homelessness and protect vulnerable households**

Our dedication to increasing housing availability and supply remains steadfast. Today, more people are becoming homeowners than in a generation, but we must also ensure that homelessness is mitigated and that we continue to protect vulnerable households.

***To reduce homelessness and protect vulnerable households, we will:***

- Continue to build the largest social housing programme in the history of the state.
- Increase staff in local authorities to help reach our ambitious targets.
- Expand modern methods of construction to drive down construction costs and time.
- Expand the Tenant in Situ scheme and mainstream it throughout all local authorities.
- Rollout the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme for independent living across all local authorities.
- Continue to fund the Land Development Agency to work with each local authority to build homes on state owned land.

**Tackle vacancy and dereliction**

The total available housing stock has been eroded by the large number of vacant homes across the country. Fianna Fáil is determined to address this to allow communities to continue to thrive.

***To tackle vacancy and dereliction, we will:***

- Extend and expand the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant.
- Ensure every local authority has an expanded vacant property team.
- Introduce a special Local Authority Mortgage for Vacant Properties.
- Streamline compulsory purchase orders (CPO) powers for local authorities.
- Set CPO targets for each local authority.
- Implement new Part B Fire regulations that facilitate 'over the shop' living.

**Planning and housing in the Gaeltacht**

Rural Ireland cannot be left behind in the future of home building. Local people have the right to own a home in their community and raise their family there, especially in the Gaeltacht. Historically, the Gaeltacht was made up of densely populated communities based on townlands and neighbourhood living. We want to ensure that this becomes a reality once again.

## *To ensure more planning and housing in the Gaeltacht, we will:*

- Develop a Gaeltacht housing policy in every local authority with a Gaeltacht under their remit.
- Provide for Gaeltacht Language Planning designated areas in County Development Plans.
- Provide a 'polasaí neartú Gaeltachta' in all Gaeltacht plans to attract to and retain Irish speaking families.

## **Build safer communities**

Too many homes and communities live in the shadow of intimidation. Anti-social behaviour by a minority damages the entire community. Building strong links between An Garda Síochána and the community in every part of the country is vital to building a safe society. Fianna Fáil in local government will ensure active links and communication between Councillors, Gardaí and local communities, helping to target Garda resources more effectively and fully respond to the individual needs of each area.

### **Tackle crime**

Tackling and mitigating crime and the threat of menace is at the forefront of the work of Fianna Fáil's Councillors. On the ground policing is the most effective way of preventing crime. Building strong, enduring connections with local areas is an integral part of the strength of An Garda Síochána and is vital to building safer communities.

The scourge of drug abuse is a problem throughout the country and this needs to be constantly tackled on many levels. Local Drug Taskforces need to be adequately resourced in order to rise to the growing challenge. Fianna Fáil will ensure these bodies are equipped to address serious drug issues in their areas with an increased Garda role.

## *To tackle crime in our communities, we will:*

- Foster effective partnerships between Gardaí, local authorities and communities to create safer environments.
- Prioritise public safety in towns and cities by boosting funding for Crime Prevention Officers to support neighbourhood watch groups.
- Set up Community Policing Teams, incorporating community Gardaí so that they are known and available to neighbourhoods.
- Implement nationwide rollout of the confidential 'See Something, Say Something' text alert service.
- Increase funding for CCTV surveillance.
- Allocate resources for Local Community Safety Partnerships, with clear roles for Councillors.
- Ensure that Community Safety Partnerships sit in a plenary on a half-yearly basis, with questioning from Councillors and TDs.
- Introduce a dedicated police force for public transport.
- Expand existing and create new Local Drug Taskforces where they are not yet available, ensuring sufficient resourcing and collaboration with An Garda Síochána.

### Enhance the public realm

The public realm broadly refers to those areas of a town or city which the public has access to including streets, footpaths, parks, squares, bridges and public buildings and facilities. These spaces give a town its character and also determine how residents and visitors circulate, travel and interact within the town's environs.

We have seen the positive impact that investment and innovative thinking can have on our public realm during and since the pandemic, with many communities embracing the outdoors. This must continue. Fianna Fáil in local government will continue to ensure that towns and villages are the focus of local life and receive the supports they need to meet their full potential.

#### ***To improve the look and feel of communities, we will:***

- Fund a 'Brighter Streets' campaign to improve public lighting in each local authority, ensuring communities are safe and welcoming environments for all who live and visit them.
- Provide for a new round of URDF projects to continue to transform the public realm and address dereliction.
- Expand the Town Centre First Policy nationwide to revive declining towns.
- Declutter public spaces for universal usability by removing unnecessary obstacles.
- Widen footpaths for pedestrians, wheelchair users and parents with prams/buggies.
- Continue to beautify towns and villages by promoting biodiversity, planting more trees, flowers, and shrubs, and maintaining existing ones.
- Expand the creation of Tobacco-Free Spaces in community settings, including vaping.

## Foster responsible communities

Farmers and fishers require continued support and practical agricultural and environmental policies to sustain these standards and ensure food security for Ireland. Fianna Fáil is committed to upholding these standards and continuing to work hard for our rural farming and fishing communities. Farmers and fishers deserve acknowledgement for their positive environmental, biodiversity, and societal contributions and we will continue to work with them.

Notwithstanding this, climate change is the foremost challenge for our generation and those to come. We are equally committed to putting sustainability and respect for our natural environment and built heritage at the core of all local government policy, while also enabling a just transformation to a carbon neutral society and economy ensuring that nobody is left behind. The actions we take now to address this will define our legacy for future generations.

We have led nationally on these issues and will continue to do so at the local level. We will continue to lead with decisive, committed and innovative policies to support our rural communities and simultaneously reduce our carbon dependence. Local authorities through their climate action plans have an important part to play.

## Protect agriculture, the marine and rural development

We support and value farms and farm production. Farmers and fishers are custodians of the rural and coastline environment, and we will continue to support them in their role to make these industries more sustainable. This stems from our deep understanding of the urgency of food security and promoting viable agriculture.

We want to see farmers confident in what they do, proud in what they deliver and assured about the future of their industry. We will continue our work to ensure that Irish farming has a strong future at the forefront of the Irish economy and that Fianna Fáil continues as the farmers party in local government.

### *To protect agriculture and the marine and encourage rural development, in local government we will:*

- Maintain and protect funding under the CAP.
- Establish Agricultural Committees in local authorities to shape agricultural policies, involve stakeholders from farmers to food producers and rural agri-business, and encourage generational renewal.
- Ensure that farmers voices are included as community groups and represented in their own right as part of the Public Participation Network.
- Encourage the promotion of agriculture and rural Ireland through land management and short supply chains in future agricultural policies, especially at the local level.
- Enact local bylaws to align local farm inspections with national pauses during adverse weather events.
- Invest in green energy and enterprise training in rural and regional areas to diversify income across the sector.
- Ensure that the funding allocated to local authorities to maintain rivers and streams is fully spent each year.
- Create an Ash Removal Fund for local authorities to work with landowners to remove dangerous trees on roadside land.
- Collaborate with farmers and industry to further improve water quality.
- Establish a Just Transformation Committee within each local authority.
- Support fishing communities with pier and harbour development and fleet modernisation.
- Prioritise the development of coastal infrastructure such as piers, harbours, roads, social services and community buildings, schools and healthcare facilities to enable communities living on the Islands to be sustainable and to continue to grow.
- Unlock the potential of local authority run ports as tourism and economic assets within communities.
- Support the work at EU level to increase our fish quotas to sustain coastal communities for generations to come.
- Establish a Coastal Erosion Fund in local authorities that have areas affected by this.

## Improve animal welfare

Pets provide great comfort and companionship to people of all ages and abilities in our communities and we must ensure that our public spaces are welcoming for them and their owners. Nonetheless, this must be balanced with responsible ownership and welfare. The local authority has an important role to play in this, ensuring that there are adequate



spaces for pets to roam, while also keeping our streets, parks and beaches clean through enforcement of local bylaws and restrictions.

***In encouraging positive pet behaviour and improving animal welfare, we will:***

- Provide more dog and pet parks.
- Strengthen enforcement of animal control laws to prevent endangerment to people, animals, and property.
- Promote campaigns for more responsible ownership and improved welfare.
- Increase the number and remit of Animal Welfare Officers to tackle offences such as illegal unregulated sulky racing along our roadways with An Garda Síochána.
- Increase compliance checks for microchipping of horses.

**Clean, green communities**

We have a huge opportunity to make Ireland a renewable energy hub thanks to our geographic location on the west coast of Europe. We need to tap into this without further delay. Fianna Fáil will maximise this potential to generate regional jobs and prosperity while also driving our emissions down to zero.

The skies and seas offer our twenty-first-century natural resources. We will continue to advocate for harnessing renewable energy to rejuvenate coastal and rural communities. In conjunction with this, we will continue to reduce emissions in our inland communities, ensuring that we bring people along with us on this just transformation journey and to safeguard our health and wellbeing well into the future.

***To create clean, green communities, we will:***

- Implement the new Planning and Development Bill to make Ireland a major provider of offshore wind energy for Europe.
- Support ports in enhancing infrastructure to meet offshore renewable energy goals, support the economy, and strengthen trading relationships.
- Ensure equitable investment and job opportunities for rural, coastal, and island communities in wind power and renewable energy development.
- Create Local Renewable Energy Trusts to directly benefit communities from clean energy projects.
- Launch a 'Trees in Towns' campaign to increase urban tree coverage.
- Establish Circular Economy Taskforces in each local authority to collaborate with businesses, schools, and community groups.
- Reduce energy usage in local authority buildings through measures like rainwater collection, electricity reduction and food waste reduction initiatives in canteens.
- Identify gaps and establish one-stop shops for retrofitting in local authorities where none exists.
- Continue and expand the retrofitting of local authority homes.
- Support the Public Transport Accessibility Retrofit Programme for older fleets and facilities.

## Improve water, sewerage and services

Ireland has a beautiful countryside and urban landscape that we have a duty to maintain and protect. Keeping clean streets and a pristine countryside is an important duty of local authorities. Ramped up fines, litter wardens and a new fund to support innovative ways to reduce littering will be crucial to ensuring we protect our communities from being spoiled.

### *To improve services provided by local authorities, we will:*

- Refocus local authority priorities on core services such as road maintenance, footpaths, drainage, tree pruning and planting, and public lighting.
- Create a 'Clean Streets, Safe Streets' fund to enhance street cleaning, increase bins and combat litter.
- Expand wastewater treatment to areas lacking functional systems, ensuring compliance with EU environmental standards.
- Upgrade sewerage systems in towns with populations of less than 5,000.

## Encourage inclusive communities

The importance of fostering a sense of community derives from the pride Irish people have in their culture and heritage. Preserving the integrity of place names, employing Irish language Officers, and exploring innovative avenues for the use and appreciation of the language are crucial responsibilities that local authorities must uphold. Our national language deserves to be cherished and promoted with vigour, ensuring its enduring vitality and significance in our society.

## Advance accessibility and inclusion

A key goal for Fianna Fáil locally is to ensure that people with a disability are empowered to take their place at the heart of the community. From implementing a comprehensive change to physical infrastructure to changes of societal norms, it is vital that independent living is placed at the heart of overall policy. People with a disability will also be equipped to play a greater role in local decision-making drawing on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (UNCPRD). This, along with actions to ensure that people with dementia, autism and other neurological conditions, will form the basis for our accessibility and inclusion work in local authorities.

### *To advance accessibility and inclusion in our communities, we will:*

- Establish Local Government Disability Forums and Inclusion Strategies.
- Establish Implementation Committees on the UNCPRD in each local authority.
- Introduce a local authority Disability Awareness Card.
- Require all public-facing local authority staff to undergo disability, equality, and dementia training.
- Ensure all district engineers are trained in universal design accessibility in public works projects such as accessible buildings, paths, walkways, restoration and refurbishment projects.
- Mandate that funding from the local authority will only be granted for public works if those works have been fully disability proofed.
- Expand the Autism Friendly and Dementia Friendly towns and cities initiatives nationwide.

- Promote the role of Dementia Advisers in the community.
- Increase neurodiverse-friendly communities across the country.
- Implement inclusive community engagement initiatives for people living with dementia and their families such as reminiscence walking trails, business friendly environments, and increased signage at healthcare services in towns and villages.
- Enforce stricter penalties for unauthorised parking in disability parking bays.
- Rollout a map of all state-owned disability parking spaces and enable private operators to report places in private ownership.
- Appoint and support Disability Access Officers in every local authority as per the Disability Act 2005.
- Prioritise accessibility (including accessible buses, waiting areas and embarking/d disembarking platforms) in the rollout of all Local Link and public transport routes.
- Install 'Changing Places Toilet Facilities' in public buildings, where possible, making these spaces fully accessible.
- Enhance public rest areas and create sensory-friendly spaces, like breastfeeding rooms in libraries and seating along pathways and transport stops.

### **Cultivate community building**

The power of a strong sense of community cannot be overstated, and it is often that spirit of volunteerism that is the glue that keeps our communities together. This is something that we must continuously build on, ensuring that we have a resilient foundation for a successful society.

#### ***To cultivate community building, we will:***

- Establish a Community Development Committee in each local authority where none exists.
- Support the Tidy Towns through increased frequency of general council services such as litter picking and street cleaning.
- Create a dedicated Community Centre Fund to support smaller projects, ideas and initiatives that come through, or inspire, voluntary social action.
- Sustain funding for voluntary groups providing essential community services.

### **Protect people's rights**

Inclusive communities promote solidarity and understanding among people from diverse backgrounds. By bridging divides and fostering empathy, they build stronger social bonds and reduce discrimination and prejudice. Local authorities can act as important actors of change in this regard by celebrating different cultures, perspectives and identities. We will work to ensure that this prevails, leaving no space for hatred in our country.

#### ***In protecting the rights of all, we will:***

- Establish a Community Integration Fund, guided by an equality framework, to encourage positive connections among communities and groups such as those from the LGBTQI+ and Traveller communities.
- Create Integration Forums within Public Participation Networks to facilitate idea exchanges and provide feedback to local authorities.
- Support the cultures and identities of others through funding for community engagement and celebrations.

## Advance the arts and culture

Ireland has a proud artistic and cultural heritage that we need to cherish and foster. However, for too many communities, the arts are a peripheral affair rather than a core part of a good life. We need to open our cultural life to all communities. Creating a space for groups to express themselves and for talented artists to thrive and flourish is an important responsibility of local government. We will foster this and the role that the arts and culture play in bringing communities and people together.

### *To promote the arts, treasuring our rich, diverse and evolving heritage, we will:*

- Make Culture Night a quarterly event.
- Develop clear local action plans with the sector to promote culture, music, and arts.
- Prioritise arts organisations for civic and community use of available buildings for temporary and long-term opportunities.
- Incorporate art space in all regeneration projects and engage with the local arts sector throughout the process.
- Work with businesses to extend cultural venue hours, building on the success of initiatives such as the ‘Thursday Lates at the National Gallery’.
- Assist community groups with insurance costs for festivals and events.
- Expand the artist-in-residence programme for schools.

## Support the Irish language

Our national language is an invaluable cultural asset that must be actively cherished and promoted. Local authorities have an important role to play in maintaining the integrity of place names, utilising Irish Language Officers and putting forward new ways to use and enjoy the language, ensuring its enduring vitality and significance in our society. Fianna Fáil Councillors will continue to actively support Irish as a vibrant, living language of the people and an integral part of our daily life.

### *In continuing to support the Irish language, we will:*

- Appoint a full-time Irish Language Officer and establish an Irish Language Committee in each local authority.
- Ensure new developments and community spaces receive appropriate local Irish names.
- Enhance community support for the Irish language through initiatives such as ciorcal comhrá in libraries nationwide and through increased community signage as Gaeilge.

## Ag tacú leis an nGaeilge

Tá ról fíorthábhachtach ag údaráis áitiúla fud fad na tíre seo ionracas agus tábhacht na logainmneacha a choimeád, úsáid a bhaint as an saineolas atá ag Oifigigh Gaeilge chomh maith le slite nua a chur chun tosaigh chun taitneamh a bhaint as úsáid na teanga. Déanfar deimhin de sa tslí sin go leanfaidh beocht agus tábhacht na Gaeilge inár sochaí.

Leanfaidh Comhairleoirí Fhianna Fáil ar aghaidh ag tacú leis an nGaeilge mar theanga bhríomhar bheomhar na ndaoine agus an teanga ina cuid lárnach den saol laethúil in Éirinn.



**Ag leanúint orainn ag tacú leis an nGaeilge, déanfaimid na céimeanna seo a leanas:**

- Oifigeach Gaeilge lán aimseartha a cheapadh agus Coiste Gaeilge a chruthú i ngach údarás áitiúil.
- Deimhin a dhéanamh de go mbeidh ainmneacha Gaeilge oiriúnacha ar fhorbairtí nua agus ar spásanna poiblí.
- Tacaíocht a chur ar fáil do phobail timpeall na tíre trí chiorcal comhrá i leabharlanna agus comharthaí a chur ar fáil as Gaeilge.

Mar an gcéanna, tagann luach an phobail ag cabhrú agus ag obair le chéile as an mbród atá ag Éireannaigh as a gcultúr agus a n-oidhreacht. Is den bhfíorthábhacht é go mbeidh aidhmeanna ag údaráis áitiúla ionracas na logainmneacha a choimeád, Oifigigh Gaeilge a cheapadh agus smaoineamh ar shlite nuálacha chun úsáid na Gaeilge a chur chun cinn.

Caithfear an teanga náisiúnta a chothú agus a chur chun tosaigh le fuinneamh chun deimhin a dhéanamh de go leanfaidh beocht agus stádas na Gaeilge inár sochaí.

### **Lifelong learning**

Our library network forms a vibrant base for learning and cultural enrichment across Ireland. We should draw on those strengths and ensure that libraries continue to play a central role in Irish life into the future with a few simple but effective measures.

***To encourage a love of lifelong reading and engagement with library services, we will:***

- Increase library funding to promote early library use and foster a lifelong love of reading and regular library use among primary-aged children.
- Boost funding for children and young adult collections in libraries.
- Extend library hours for multifunctional community including study hubs, working spaces, and community events for those returning to the workplace or newly retired.
- Expand outreach library services, particularly in rural areas and invest in mobile libraries.
- Increase remuneration for Irish-based authors through the Public Lending Remuneration scheme to support new and emerging writers.
- Improve Irish language services and materials in all libraries.
- Establish a new scholarship and mentorship programme for student writers.
- Introduce 'take one leave one' libraries at all train stations and bus stops.

### **Enhance public participation**

Directly elected mayors and re-established Town Councils will be at the core of a local government system that delivers for communities. This must be coupled with greater transparency and accountability. Fianna Fáil will achieve this. We also recognise the importance of wide participation in local democracy and cultivating an appreciation for local history and civic awareness and we plan to foster these objectives for all ages in the community.

## *To encourage greater civic awareness and public participation, we will:*

- Encourage school participation in Comhairle na nÓg through outreach and open council meetings.
- Introduce a Mayoral/Cathaoirleach's Local History Award to foster an interest in local history.
- Establish representative groups through Public Participation Networks to enhance diversity in local government.
- Mandate gender targets for board appointments in local authorities, such as the County Development Board and the Safeguarding Adult Board.
- Reform local authority public consultation methods for easier public feedback by providing online feedback forms, survey style response forms, and easy-to-read versions.
- Introduce a Directly Elected Mayor of Dublin.
- Reinstate Town Councils for towns with a population of 7,500 or more.
- Support legislation against protesting at private residences.
- Increase Councillors' powers as the primary link between communities and central government, as opposed to the current structure that gives Town Teams more powers as unelected officials.
- Implement a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system in every local authority to ensure timely responses from directors of services to Councillors, enhancing transparency and accountability.
- Require Directors of Services to attend Municipal District meetings.
- Extend the review period for county and city plans to allow for a comprehensive democratic examination by Councillors.

## **Connect communities**

The cohesive social fabric that binds communities together is intrinsically linked to the quality of their physical infrastructure. Fianna Fáil remains steadfast in its dedication to enhancing public services. Good connectivity between communities cultivates a sense of belonging and unity among residents, encouraging active participation in local initiatives.

This connection is reinforced by robust infrastructure, including roads, public transportation, and broadband, which are essential for economic prosperity. By facilitating access to larger markets, promoting tourism, and attracting investment, such infrastructure development contributes to the growth of communities nationwide – an endeavour Fianna Fáil pledges to continue over the next five years.

### **Support enterprise and economic development**

Fianna Fáil is committed delivering balanced regional development and the overall objective of this is to drive job creation and enterprise in each region throughout Ireland. Balanced regional development is critical to ensuring all parts of the country share in the benefits of growth. Fianna Fáil in local government will continue to achieve this.

Central to this success is the continued support for small and medium sized (SME) businesses. SMEs are vital to Ireland's success and are central to our ability to build a broad-based economy and wider society. The vast majority of businesses in Ireland

are small (99%). This group of firms have faced a number of significant challenges in recent years as a result of a series of economic shocks resulting in cost increases. We will continue to help SMEs to focus on long-term financial sustainability, to increase productivity and to grow and thrive so as to sustain good jobs into the future at a local level.

***In supporting enterprise and economic development, we will:***

- Partner with Fáilte Ireland and other bodies to make places destinations of choice.
- Implement ambitious tourism plans in every local authority.
- Enhance international marketing of Ireland through increased town twinning.
- Support businesses in obtaining Protected Geographical Indication and Protected Designation of Origin status, as a tool for wider economic development.
- Provide serviced office space and hot desks in broadband-challenged areas to support remote work and community connections.
- Align local economic and community plans with EU policies to access funding such as URBACT and the European Regional Development Fund.
- Boost infrastructure and economic development by hosting major events such as the Ryder Cup.
- Enhance funding for rural infrastructure projects through the CLÁR programme.
- Establish Digital Development Offices to expand Broadband Officers' roles, improving digital infrastructure and managing public information projects like weather updates and traffic incidents.
- Create a Coastal Community Development Fund to support regional ports and maritime communities, boosting tourism.
- Forge strong partnerships with the education sector via County and City Development Plans.

**Advance active travel for community wellbeing**

The impact of active travel schemes is often more positive than people expect, with positive knock-on effects for local food and retail businesses and of course, traffic congestion and emissions reductions. We will continue to make active travel a viable, safe and attractive alternative transport mode with policies that incorporate health and equity into transport planning. We will ensure that local authorities take the lead in creating a safe environment for cycling and walking to build up liveable streets for all the community.

***In supporting community wellbeing and active travel, we will:***

- Support community integration and development by continuing to fund active travel initiatives like rural walks, blueways and greenways.
- Prioritise active travel projects promoting walking and cycling in all areas.
- Reopen the successful Safe Routes to School Programme to improve road safety and encourage active travel among school communities.
- Develop e-bike and e-scooter schemes in towns and cities.
- Provide secure bicycle storage in coordination with active travel infrastructure.

## Revitalise transport offerings

Many bus stops, train stations and streets have inadequate lighting and surfacing that discourages people from using them at night. Fianna Fáil will ensure streets and key public transport points are brightly lit and serviced to encourage the nighttime economy, active travel and safety in our communities.

### ***To support the continued rollout of transport options and availability, we will:***

- Extend the 'kids go free' initiative for public transport.
- Improve local transport links to essential infrastructure, including airports, ports, and main hubs.
- Increase electric vehicle charging points.
- Invest in public transport to meet climate goals.
- Continued unprecedented investment in walking and cycling infrastructure for commuting and tourism.
- Support the nighttime economy with extended public transport hours and secure bicycle parking and cycling routes.
- Integrate school and public transport services for enhanced community access, working with the Department of Education, Bus Éireann and local transport providers.
- Expand the Local Hackney Pilot Programme to improve rural transport options.
- Enhance safety at transport hubs with improved lighting, visibility, and incident reporting.
- Expand the Public Piano scheme to all major transport stations.
- Improve segregated cycle paths with safety-focused designs, avoiding hazardous obstacles.

## Strengthen road safety

A culture of recklessness has developed on Ireland's roads, with significant cohorts of people ignoring the law and the need to slow down. Local authorities have an important role to play in combatting the increase in road fatalities and accidents and our Councillors take this responsibility very seriously. We will ensure that a thorough review of speed limits is conducted across the country, making a more consistent approach to these limits on local and rural roads.

### ***To strengthen the road network and, most importantly, road safety, we will:***

- Introduce a 'Safer Town Vision Zero' fund to address hazardous bends, junctions and roads, improving safety in towns, villages, and communities.
- Expand traffic calming measures alongside Councillors' involvement in the Speed Limit Review.
- Enhance the Community Improvement Scheme (CIS) and Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) to improve connectivity to homes, farmland, and amenities, resolving existing backlogs.
- Review LIS criteria and maximise uptake.
- Collaborate with residents to manage all existing roads to homes, enhancing road surfaces nationwide.
- Implement a comprehensive road repair strategy with dedicated funding.
- Conduct surveys of roadside trees to remove those affected by ash dieback
- Progress key projects to address gaps in regional connectivity, to support regional development and to improve road safety.



## Promote thriving active communities

Communities that prioritise active retirement, sports, inclusivity, and addressing loneliness play a multifaceted role in society. They promote healthy aging and social cohesion but also foster lifelong learning, diversity, and mental wellbeing. By challenging ageist stereotypes and providing inclusive environments, these communities empower individuals to lead fulfilling lives and remain integral parts of Irish society. We are steadfast in our commitment to create these communities, supporting people of all ages to thrive and continue to play a central role in Irish life into the future.

### Tackle loneliness and social isolation

Social isolation and loneliness are well known as causes of mental health problems and physical illness for people of all ages from all backgrounds. In local government, we can and will reshape how we tackle this issue.

#### *To tackle loneliness and social isolation, we will:*

- Support active retirement to combat loneliness and enhance community connectivity.
- Utilise school buildings after hours to minimise the demand for additional community facilities, including school halls, sports fields, and gymnasiums.
- Allow for libraries and public buildings to provide initiatives such as singing groups and reading projects for people who may be housebound or disconnected from local public services.
- Support the 'triangle of supports' of day care, home care and the meals on wheels services to foster positive ageing.
- Collaborate with schools and youth organisations to support young people to reduce smartphone and social media usage which is a growing public health concern.
- Improve signposting for mental health awareness and support services across communities.
- Encourage volunteering as a way to connect with others and make a positive impact in the community.

### Increase access to sport

Sports clubs and community groups are the lifeblood of communities across the country. The spirit of volunteerism that inspires so many people to spend time as coaches, fundraisers and a wide host of other roles is the glue that keeps our communities together. We will ensure that local authorities assist people to ensure clubs reach their full potential and positively impact as many people as possible. We will work hard with national and local sporting bodies to increase this, ensuring that barriers to access are removed.

#### *To increase access to sports across the country we will:*

- Establish a new URDF style fund for solely for acquiring new lands for parks and playing pitches for growing areas to build liveable communities.
- Increase accessibility to sports equipment in public areas.
- Develop more municipal all-weather community pitches in urban areas with limited development space.
- Enhance funding for municipal facilities and minority sports through the Sports Capital Funding.

- Create Sports Committees within all local authorities to manage funds from a dedicated Sports Development Fund.
- Collaborate with Swim Ireland to expand coverage of 'Pop-Up Pools' in each local authority.
- Increase the number of community playgrounds and Playground Communication Boards.
- Invest in community childcare infrastructure, including facilities and outdoor spaces, to foster safe and welcoming environments for children.
- Work with landowners to encourage rights of ways for walking and hiking groups.
- Maintain and improve hiking trails and hill walking routes.
- Improve water quality monitoring and communication, particularly during summer months, to ensure recreational swimming areas meet safety standards.
- Implement increased safety measures at sea and river swimming spots, including extended lifeguard services.

### Encourage inclusivity

Communities play a crucial role in making those living within them feel welcome and at home. We have witnessed this throughout the country, where communities have embraced and adapted positively to the challenges of increased migration. We will ensure that this welcome and inclusive spirit continues through better and increased communication and support for integration efforts locally.

#### ***To encourage greater inclusivity in our communities we will:***

- Recognise the positive contribution that immigration has on providing good public services and being the backbone of many sectors across Ireland.
- Establish Local Integration Forums which will include all local stakeholders and civic society groups to help with integration and allow people to safely discuss and have their concerns about immigration addressed. These Forums will also act as a catalyst for ideas and feedback to the local authority directly from communities.
- Ensure that the Community Recognition Fund is utilised in full for integration purposes and work with all community groups to identify new projects and proposals that will build on these integration efforts.
- Work to ensure that accommodation for international protection applicants can continue to be used to provide essential services to communities such as hotel bars, restaurants, banquet facilities and meeting rooms.
- Work to decrease the number of hotels that are being utilised for temporary accommodation overall.



