



Environmental Pillar of Social Partnership



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Environmental Pillar Proposals for the Programme for Government

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Introduction

The continuing success of human society and social systems depends fundamentally on the preservation of the overall productivity, health and long term sustainability of the ecosystems and environmental services that underpin and supply many of the most basic components of human welfare such as healthy soils, clean water and clean air. These are the real assets that we have inherited and that we should hand on in good order to future generations. This is our real wealth and we are destroying so much of it often without giving it a thought.

As agreed in 1992 in Rio, the most appropriate way for human society to proceed towards sustainability is through the guidelines laid down in Agenda 21. Ireland was a signatory and yet has done very little since to implement it. The new programme for government must adopt Agenda 21 as an underlying principle for all aspects of its decision-making. Implicit in this is the need to take an 'ecosystems approach' when designing, planning and reviewing all plans and programmes.

To encapsulate these needs the Government must publish a National Sustainable Development Strategy by January 2010, and then ensure its application at all levels of governance.

What follows is a breakdown of the headline key areas for action by the Government. This document has been kept short for ease of digestion, but details on any of these action areas can be provided on request.

The document has been developed through the Environmental Pillar but does not necessarily represent the views of all its Members.

1. Action Against Climate Change

- 1.1.** Scientific evidence published since the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report confirm that climate change is proceeding at a rate at or above the fastest rate previously forecast. Events, particularly those impacting poorer desert regions and high latitude glacial systems are arriving sooner, and penetrating deeper, than previously expected. At the same, time equity provisions embodied in the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change require that Ireland's exceptionally high levels of per capita emissions, per capita wealth and per capita renewable energy resources demand a high degree of Irish response. The new programme for government should therefore include the following main action:
- 1.2.** Government to produce a coherent, legally-based and fully integrated institutional framework capable of positioning Ireland as a leader in the international fight against climate change before 2012. Such a framework should include as a minimum the following ambitions:

- 1.2.1. 2020 domestic mitigation target = -30% of 2005 emissions (88% of 1990 emissions);
- 1.2.2. 2020 overall target (inc. Gold Standard certified offsets) = -30% of 1990 emissions (56% of 2007 emissions);
- 1.2.3. 2050 mitigation target = - 90% of 1990 emissions (8% of 2007 emissions);
- 1.2.4. € 420 million annually as fair share of international UN financing for mitigation, adaptation, and forest protection in developing countries;
- 1.2.5. 1% of GDP set aside annually for national and international decarbonisation and adaptation (additional to achievement of 0.7% ODA objective, with full 0.7% ODA objective to be immediately fully climate proofed);
- 1.2.6. Immediate introduction of carbon tax of € 30/tonne, escalating by € 5/tonne annually for non-traded sector;
- 1.3.** National Decarbonisation Fund to manage carbon tax revenue (as part of 1% GDP set-aside) for decarbonisation, adaptation, and developing country development objectives;
- 1.4.** Strong domestic compliance regime to include short term, medium term, and longer term mitigation, renewable energy and energy efficiency targets embedded in national legislation;
- 1.5.** National Climate Change Commission to supervise and monitor a fully coherent and integrated national institutional framework capable of delivering international leadership against climate change by 2012.

2. Natural Environment

Ireland must adopt an overarching public policy which ensures an eco-system based approach to protecting and managing all natural resources, defending our soil, air and water quality and the life that depends on it.

2.1. Agriculture

- 2.1.1. An environmentally sustainable Agriculture sector that ensures delivery of an effective agri-environmental scheme including impact assessments and monitoring of outcomes
- 2.1.2. The encouragement of on-farm waste to energy and fertiliser management including the full implementation of the Nitrates Directive

2.2. Tree Cover

- 2.2.1. A full Public Forestry Review, including the status and operations of Coillte, to be completed in 2010,
- 2.2.2. Support for diversity of tree cover types

- 2.2.3. Develop tree cover as a fuel resource to replace turf harvesting and protect bogs

2.3. The Marine

- 2.3.1. Implementation and monitoring of legislation under the Fisheries and Foreshores Acts
- 2.3.2. Focus on sustainability of fisheries including Irish Sea management and discards programme
- 2.3.3. Transparency of process in all marine activities including inshore and deep water fisheries and the licensing of off shore wind farms
- 2.3.4. Construction of proposed Marine Conservation and Education Centre for which feasibility, business plan and planning application stages have been completed

2.4. Biodiversity

- 2.4.1. Development and adoption of new and improved domestic wildlife legislation with associated enforcement
- 2.4.2. Development and implementation of a second National Biodiversity Action Plan. Public consultation of the draft prior to final adoption.
- 2.4.3. Passage of the Environmental Liability Bill and full implementation of the Environmental Liability Directive
- 2.4.4. Adoption of overarching public policy which ensures an ecosystem-based approach to protecting and managing our natural resources

3. Built Environment

All plans must be subject to proper SEA including a proper assessment of future carbon emissions and their impact on energy, water and food security. Plans must include effects of Peak Oil

3.1. Planning

- 3.1.1. The life of planning permissions must not be extended
- 3.1.2. Population figures for planning be updated and scrutinised
- 3.1.3. Continuing review of the Planning Acts in-case they prevent sustainable development.
- 3.1.4. Plans must be consistent with each other at all levels
- 3.1.5. Existing excessive land zoning to be curtailed
- 3.1.6. Remove planning function from Port companies

3.2. Transport

- 3.2.1. A Bus Rapid Transport spoke and orbital instead of Metro North should be given serious consideration
- 3.2.2. Stop using PPP's for borrowings to fund road programme off national balance sheet
- 3.2.3. Current contracted Dublin to Regional City motorways to be completed
- 3.2.4. No new 'Motorway' standard roads to be started/contracted – 2+ 1 and bypasses where needed
- 3.2.5. Continued investment in Bus & Rail – routes to be maintained/increased – Bus Rapid Transport
- 3.2.6. End Public Service Obligation subsidies to regional airports
- 3.2.7. Implement Smart Travel Policy
- 3.2.8. Ports & Airports
- 3.2.9. No second runway Dublin Airport
- 3.2.10. No need for new ports – focus capacity on existing ports with Rail links

3.3. Energy

- 3.3.1. Plan the grid to maximise Renewable Energy
- 3.3.2. Plan properly the required base load generating stations.
- 3.3.3. Ramp up to an annual programme of 40,000 home insulation retrofits with all the consequent benefits.

3.4. Waste Management

- 3.4.1. Put in place and enact a National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention
- 3.4.2. Adopt a Zero Waste approach to waste management.

4. The Economy

4.1. Encourage investment in productive import-substituting activities such as renewable energy and to develop knowledge and expertise in environmental services for export.

- 4.1.1. Undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of options to resolve the banking crisis as required by EU Directives and under UN Conventions
- 4.1.2. Only the normal profits and added-value created by clever and efficient design and construction of buildings and services should accrue to developers.

- 4.1.3. Announce the phased introduction of an annual land value tax (LVT)
 - 4.1.4. Legislation for the abolition of upwards-only clauses in new lease agreements.
 - 4.1.5. Amend the privacy regulations to allow for the mandatory publication of all property price data.
 - 4.1.6. Create a map-based, searchable register of all property interests in the State.
 - 4.1.7. Provide the necessary resources and directions to value all land and publish in a publicly searchable format.
 - 4.1.8. Publish all data of properties benefiting from taxpayers bail-outs in map format immediately.
- 4.2. Taxes should be shifted from income** and transactions to the use of the natural and social commons. The resultant receipts, less necessary investment to protect or build commons capital, should be broadly distributed to citizens on an equal per capita basis.
- 4.2.1. Introduce a combined carbon tax and Cap and Share system
 - 4.2.2. Introduce water charges over a free per capita quota
 - 4.2.3. Introduce a targeted grant aid scheme that rewards practices which reduce Green House Gas emissions on farms.
- 4.3. New non-debt based money and financing systems** should be explored and developed to augment bank lending to business; to provide funds for existing and new residential development and, to finance infrastructural projects.
- 4.4. Government debt levels** should be judged relative to economic conditions and how the borrowing is used rather than simplistic percentages.
- 4.4.1. The stability of the current monetary system requires that government spending/borrowing replaces the precipitous drop in private sector investment/borrowings. This spending should maintain basic levels of social services and economic activities across as wide a sector of the population as possible and maximize investment in building future resilience – in renewable energy, productive environmental services and necessary infrastructure.
 - 4.4.2. Net taxation levels can be increased without affecting economic recovery as long as higher taxes are not imposed on work, enterprise and transactions but are imposed instead on land values and taxation on environmental 'bads'.

- 4.4.3. Reform the public sector to allow freer movement between local authorities, departments and agencies to allow rapid deployment to high pressure areas and provide new services in more decentralized governance.

5. Governance

In order for society to accept the changes that are necessary in order to develop a truly sustainable Ireland, there is a need to develop the educational and governance aspects of Agenda 21 in a way that is genuinely participatory, effective and synergistic with the processes of representative democracy. To start this process the following are essential:

- 5.1.** Ratification of the Aarhus Convention before 30th December 2009, followed by full implementation of both the spirit and the letter of the Convention.
- 5.2.** Amendment to the Constitution providing for the Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment. This to be the subject of a referendum at the same time as the Referendum on Children's Rights.
- 5.3.** A National Whistle-Blowers Charter, supported by an appropriate legislative framework.
- 5.4.** The creation of an 'Ombudsman for the Future'. Sustainable decision-making requires an advocate for the generations to come and not just for the human species.
- 5.5.** The conversion of all third level campuses into best practice examples of sustainable living, whilst allowing their host communities to engage with them as a problem-solving resource in the form of extended 'science shops'.
- 5.6.** Open and free access to Ordnance Survey information
- 5.7.** An explicit environmental remit for County/City Development Boards

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