

Introduction

The Christian Solidarity Party is dedicated to the causes of Life, the Family and the Community. The CSP promotes policies that safeguard the value of human life from conception to natural death, that support the position of the family as the fundamental unit group of society, and that allow human communities to flourish in a manner consistent with human dignity.

In recent years a radical shift has occurred in Ireland. Where once the family was seen as the basis of our society, the emphasis is now on the autonomous individual. Without public debate, a philosophy unfavourable to the family and to local communities has been incorporated into political and economic policy and reflected in our laws. This shift has serious implications which are addressed by the CSP in our full range of policies from agriculture to finance, from justice to education.

The aim of the CSP is to inspire and strengthen Irish society with Christian social thinking. The CSP policy outlined in this document is designed specifically to underpin the family as the basis of that society, to develop local communities, and to maintain always the common good, without which no society can survive, let alone flourish.

The CSP vision is of an Ireland that offers all its people a social and political environment conducive to health, wealth and happiness, an Ireland in which the fundamental conditions for true human flourishing are firmly established.

This document is the second of a three part set. The first document establishes the principles that animate CSP policy. This, the second document, contains specific policy proposals in summary form. These proposals are revisable in the light of our principles and the specific requirements of the political and social situation. The third document lays out some of the background to these proposals. These policy proposals are the fruits of the labour of many people. I take this opportunity to thank them most sincerely.

I have great pleasure in presenting these proposals to you, the people of Ireland, for your consideration. If you find that our policies accord with your convictions, I would ask you to give the CSP and its candidates your full support in the forthcoming and other future elections.

Dr Gerard Casey

Leader, Christian Solidarity Party.

Life

The CSP is a pro-life party. We support the basic right to life of all human beings and affirm the dignity of the person. We uphold each person's freedom to participate as fully as possible in the life of the community.

The CSP is committed to a positive attitude towards life from conception to natural death. We are firmly opposed to abortion and to all experimental manipulation or exploitation of the human embryo. We oppose the intimidation of the elderly and the infirm, and affirm that euthanasia, voluntary or involuntary, can never be a solution to their problems.

The CSP is committed to giving special protection and assistance to children before and after birth, and to their mothers during and following pregnancy.

In the wake of the confusion wrought by the Supreme Court judgement in the 'X' case, the CSP demands that a referendum be held in order to enable the people of Ireland to make a clear decision to prohibit the direct and intentional killing of the unborn child.

Family

The CSP views the family as the fundamental cell of any society. When the family flourishes, society flourishes; when the family fails, then society is threatened with collapse. For this reason, insofar as politics has control of the social and fiscal environments, CSP policies are aimed at underpinning the Family in as many practical ways as possible.

The CSP recognises the family based on marriage as the fundamental unit of society, marriage being a lifelong and permanent union of one man and one woman. The CSP endorses the view expressed in the Interim Report of the Commission on the Family that family policy should recognise that 'the family unit is a fundamental unit providing stability and well being in our society.'

The CSP rejects the UN definition of the family as inconsistent with the definition of the family in Bunreacht na hÉireann. The Commission on the Family notes that 'the majority of submissions expressing a view on the United Nations definition indicated that the United Nations definition was inappropriate for Irish society at this juncture.'

The CSP will ensure that all major policy proposals be subject to a Family Impact Statement which would, in the words of the Commission on the Family, 'set out clearly the consequences of policies, programmes and services for families in all the major areas of Government activity, central and local.'

The CSP is firmly opposed to divorce because of its socially destructive effects, and we will work for the repeal of the fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

Families in Ireland are getting smaller, fewer children are being born and many of our young people have left the country. In just thirteen years, from 1980 to 1993, the average family size dropped from 3.23 to 1.93. At the same time, the population is aging, 11% being over 65 years of age in 1991. The CSP will take steps to reverse this demographic implosion by creating a fiscal environment in which adequate incomes for family providers are made possible, for example by installing an equitable tax regime that takes the cost of child-rearing fully into account, and by initiating other family-supportive public policies.

The CSP will set up properly funded family mediation and conciliation services to deal with cases of marriage or family difficulties and to prevent, rather than promote, family break-up.

The CSP will change the tax code and social welfare provisions to encourage the commitment which marriage entails. The Commission on the Family states that 'Family Incentives, such as the incentive to marry or form a stable relationship, and to provide joint parenthood to children, should be accorded a greater prominence in evaluating the outcomes of social welfare and taxation policy, similar to that at present accorded to matters such as work incentives and the other economic effects of social welfare provision.'

The CSP believes that the role of a mother working full-time in the home is deserving of the highest esteem. While women should not be prevented from taking up employment outside the home, it is unacceptable that mothers who wish to work full-time in their homes should be forced by an inadequate family income to do so. The majority of submissions to the Commission on the Family took the view that 'most women, if given a real choice, would prefer to rear their own children at home.'

To give effect to the Constitutional provision that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their home life, the CSP will give a Homemaker's Allowance to any parent providing full-time care for dependent children in the home, provided that parent is not in receipt of unemployment benefit.

The CSP will reintroduce tax relief for all dependent children, based on the real cost of child-rearing.

The CSP encourages the broadest ownership by families of productive land, shelter and capital and will provide the framework in which family businesses are better able to compete against companies which have less interest in the long-term welfare of the community.

To counter the increasing trend towards the commercialisation of sexuality, which is degrading to women and dangerous to children, the CSP will introduce legislation to restore and safeguard a healthy social environment.

The CSP will create a Department of the Family.

Government

The role of central government must be confined largely to matters of national policy; control over local affairs must be restored to local communities in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. The principle of subsidiarity implies that all human activities should be carried out at the appropriate level, so that what we can do for ourselves should not be done for us by a larger social grouping. This has two consequences; first, it leads to the most efficient use of our resources, and second, it reserves to individuals and intermediary social groups the control of their own lives and circumstances to the greatest degree possible. It must be noted that the principle of subsidiarity is not anti-government. Governments have their own particular ways of helping to promote and preserve the conditions in which individuals and intermediate social groups can grow. It is largely the task of the government to promote the common good, where the common good is defined as the sum total of social conditions which allow people to flourish fully and easily, both as individuals and in community.

Local Government in Ireland is exceptionally weak by European standards. It is not only as a matter of right, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, that this must be rapidly and radically changed, but also as a matter of expediency, so that local communities in Ireland will be on an equal footing with their counterparts in Europe.

The CSP broadly welcomes the 1991 report of the Advisory Expert Committee on Local Government Reorganisation and Reform.

The CSP will give statutory recognition to local government in a partnership of government spread throughout the country.

The CSP will initiate a three-tier system of Local Government so that authority is exercised and responsibility taken at the appropriate level for all functions of government. In this arrangement we will endeavour to ensure that no citizen feels remote from the closest arm of government and that no community is impeded by the structure of government from pursuing its own good.

The CSP will ensure that the right of citizens to elect members to local assemblies at regular intervals is not interfered with by any arm of government.

The CSP will set up an Implementation Commission along the lines of that recommended by the Advisory Expert Committee to advise on and oversee devolution. Such devolution should take place in all areas of government where it is deemed practicable including Education, Health, Social Welfare, Tourism, Employment, Enterprise, Law and Order, Fishing, Agriculture and Industry.

The CSP will restructure the funding of local government. Together with the statutory recognition of local government, we will establish a statutory claim of local communities on monies generated by themselves. A substantial portion, commensurate with needs, of tax levied on the members of a community and on businesses operating within a community will remain in the community. Collection of taxes will still be the responsibility of a single Collector General, but monies will be apportioned to the authorities to whom they are due. We will ensure that this does not increase the burden of tax collection falling on the employer. This process must involve no overall increase in taxation.

The CSP will ensure that less well off communities do not become further impoverished by any plans for restructuring.

While it is not generally desirable that local authorities depend on grants from central government for their survival, the CSP acknowledges that, because of disparity in income, such grants must continue for the foreseeable future. It is hoped, however, that schemes outlined elsewhere in CSP policy will regenerate declining communities and render them, in the long term, less dependent on such grants.

The provision of adequate housing is a problem that needs to be addressed. The CSP proposes to create a programme to:

- Ensure that all housing areas are guaranteed the provision of proper amenities before planning permission is granted.
- Enable people who want to do so to stay in their own local communities.

- Restore real control of housing to local authorities.
- Oversee the provision of inexpensive sites, low cost loans and other means to enable young couples to buy their own homes without having to depend on two sources of personal income.
- Improve housing design to take account of the demands of human and natural ecology.
- The CSP endorses the principle of Rural Resettlement.
- The CSP will extend the Urban Renewal scheme in a manner which favours the homebuyer and will introduce a complementary Rural Renewal scheme

The CSP acknowledges the general principle that Ministers have overall responsibility for the conduct of their Departments. At the same time, since the efficient running of any complex entity requires delegation, guidelines must be established within which Department officials have discretionary powers, and matters which require explicit Ministerial attention should be specified.

The CSP holds that Dáil procedures and privileges should be urgently and completely reviewed.

The CSP believes that genuine debate and proper consideration of legislative matters affecting the well-being of our citizens must take place. No serious matter of public policy or public finance should be rushed through our legislature because of mechanically imposed time constraints. The CSP supports the increase of both the number and the powers of Dáil Committees, in the first place, to speed up legislation by taking care of the routine work of discussing draft proposals (but not in such a way as to prevent adequate discussion of the legislation on the floor of the Dáil or Seanad), and in the second place, to conduct inquiries, on behalf of the Dáil as a whole, into matters of public importance - this will have the effect of reducing the necessity and huge cost of major inquiries and tribunals.

The CSP supports the introduction of legislation to allow citizens to have access to the maximum amount of information regarding Government matters consistent with the effective functioning of Government.

The CSP demands that any change to Bunreacht na hÉireann be dealt with by amendment of individual articles and not by repeal of the whole constitution.

Justice

A just and fair environment is essential if society is to be peaceful and prosperous. The incidence of crime increases when people feel alienated from their society. Ireland must face the reality of a significant increase in serious crime consequent on the weakening of societal bonds and the deterioration of public and private morality. Serious crime must be tackled in a serious manner and its causes eliminated.

The CSP favours a selection system for judicial appointments that is fair and equitable and devoid, insofar as is humanly possible, of political patronage. The Government's role in appointments should be purely formal in accordance with articles 34 and 35 of Bunreacht na hÉireann.

The CSP is concerned at ideologically motivated aspects of recent legislation, particularly in relation to a selective view of discrimination, leading sometimes to a curtailment of the freedom of association and other times to preference where there is no objective justification for it.

While the CSP will take steps to encourage the increased participation of groups of people in our society who have hitherto not participated or not been able to do so, the CSP considers that quotas, however well-intentioned, are often unjust and demeaning to those alleged to benefit from them.

The CSP will amend the Public Order Act to reflect the right of citizens to make peaceful public protests and to disseminate information.

The CSP's long-term strategy for dealing with the underlying causes of crime involves underpinning the family as the basic unit of our society, strengthening communities by devolution of power and of resources, increasing the opportunities for greater participation by ordinary people in the development and enhancement of their own communities and supporting sport and a wide range of cultural pursuits.

The CSP believes that there is a need to examine the feasibility of penalties other than fines and imprisonment for non-violent offences.

The CSP is determined that young first offenders should be kept out of the courts whenever this is possible.

The CSP will try to ensure that young offenders are not placed in close contact with hardened criminals.

A most effective deterrent to crime is the certainty on the part of the criminal of conviction if caught and punishment if convicted. The CSP therefore acknowledges the need to streamline the penal code and to provide more prison places as medium term measures to assist in the enforcement of law.

Voluntary youth organisations, including sporting organisations, can play a very important part in the reduction of crime levels in the long term. For this reason the CSP supports an increase in financial assistance to such organisations, as well as the employment of well-motivated professional youth workers to work through schools in disadvantaged areas.

The CSP will ensure that a community garda be appointed in every part of the country to make regular visits to old people in the community. This will help to alleviate many of the fears experienced by old people and will keep the Gardaí themselves in closer touch with what is happening in the community.

The CSP will endeavour to ensure that victims of crime are awarded compensation and legal fees, and, if necessary, protection.

The CSP recognises both the relationship between drug dealing and organised crime and the many instances of crime to feed addiction. The CSP is therefore determined to fight for a drug-free society, without making any concessions to those who are already calling for the legalisation not only of soft drugs but also of heroin. The libertarian approach is not only wrong in principle, but has failed wherever it has been used.

The CSP will operate a consistently restrictive drug policy designed to reduce supply and demand for drugs. The CSP anti-drugs programme will be oriented towards prevention, therapy and abstinence as recommended by the United Nations.

The CSP believes that the supply of drugs must be tackled by a coherent and comprehensive plan of sustained action engaging state agencies, Gardai , the Department of Justice, the medical profession, the Media and, above all, local communities.

The CSP believes that it is important that the Gardai advise and Co-operate with local communities who take the initiative in the fight against drugs.

The CSP will embark on programmes of public education designed to reduce the demand for drugs. In particular, we will attempt to encourage the media to take an unambiguous line against drugs and their proliferation.

The CSP will attempt to develop and harness a general consensus in favour of a drug-free society. We will embark on widespread dissemination of information to combat many of the ideas now in circulation which have no basis in fact, but which favour those who are making fortunes out of drugs.

The CSP will operate a policy of zero-tolerance for drug-dealing.

The CSP recognises that methadone can be the basis of an effective treatment in the medically-supervised detoxification of heroin addicts. But methadone is a highly addictive drug the use of which must be very strictly controlled. It is also necessary to ensure that it does not find its way from treatment centres onto the streets. While the CSP encourages and endorses the efforts being made to rehabilitate heroin users by methadone treatment, we nonetheless regard it as foolish to pretend that methadone treatment can ever form a major plank in the war against drugs.

Drug addiction is curable even after years of dependency, provided the addict gets sustained help from social workers who are committed to the war against drugs. The CSP will initiate programmes the clear aim of which is to help addicts to become completely abstinent. Part of the withdrawal therapy must be the recovery of lost or undeveloped skills. Supervised living quarters, job training and work must be made available for addicts who have successfully completed treatment.

Finance

As an essential means to achieving our policy targets, the CSP is committed to the responsible use of the State's finances by carrying out feasibility studies on all new policy schemes and by ongoing implementation of stringent cost control regimes. In general we propose to support our new policies through increased efficiency and more even wealth distribution.

The CSP is committed to reducing the national debt. It follows that any proposal which calls for increased government spending must be financed by shifts in taxation, reduced spending elsewhere or revenue buoyancy.

The CSP will apply the principle of subsidiarity to taxation laws so that they reflect people's rights and obligations to provide for themselves and their dependants and to build up the local community.

The CSP acknowledges that community banking can play an important role in the regeneration of local communities. We therefore support the further development of Credit Unions as viable alternatives to commercial banking operations which have little to offer local communities by way of profit re-investment. The CSP will remove caps on loans in Credit Unions and so enable them to enter the mortgage market and to assist in local job creation. We will also ensure that Credit Unions are exempt from Corporation tax and DIRT.

The CSP supports extensions in the Loan Guarantee fund to allow Credit Unions to provide low interest loans.

The CSP will reduce corporation tax for companies involved in labour intensive operations.

The CSP will restore tax-free allowances for all dependent children at a level commensurate with the cost of their support. In the first instance, this should be at least =A31,000 per child. In the case of those not in receipt of taxable income, suitable adjustments can be made via direct grants.

The acquisition by families of suitable housing is a human necessity which must be recognised in our tax code. Those who wish to provide housing for themselves in the private sector and can do so will be facilitated by the CSP by having their interest costs deducted from taxable income. Those unable to provide housing for themselves must have housing of adequate physical and social quality provided.

The CSP proposes that a significant portion of revenue from taxation be kept in the local community where it arises, in accordance with CSP's proposed restructuring of local government.

The CSP will introduce a transferable tax allowance for spouses working in the home who subscribe to private pension schemes. The present system discriminates against such spouses.

The national debt now stands at over =A330 billion. Servicing this debt costs about =A32 billion per annum. This represents over half of all the revenue raised from income tax or one fifth of all current government expenditure. The CSP is committed to reducing this crippling burden.

The CSP will promote a selective programme of privatisation restricted to non-essential operations which can be demonstrated to be better undertaken by the private sector.

The CSP will impose strict limits on Oireachtas salaries, expenses and allowances in line with public service pay inflation rates.

The CSP will widen the band at which the low rate becomes payable so that families who live on an average industrial wage do not reach the highest tax rate.

The CSP will remove Capital Acquisitions Tax on the inheritance of family businesses, subject to restrictions which will ensure their continued operation.

The CSP will relax the means tests which assess pensioners' capital, so that they may then be encouraged to invest or deposit their savings in the safe keeping of financial institutions.

The CSP will direct surplus National Lottery funds towards the reduction of the national debt.

The CSP is opposed to State funding of political parties.

Social Welfare

Solidarity is a complementary principle to subsidiarity. The State can and should operate in accordance with both of these principles. The principle of solidarity demands that society express practical concern for those members who are disadvantaged for one reason or another. It is through a just social welfare system that this aspect of solidarity is best implemented.

The CSP seeks to redress the imbalance between allowances for unemployed single parents and those for married unemployed families.

The CSP supports 'family proofing' legislation in the area of social welfare.

The CSP will provide a Homemaker's Allowance, initially of EUR 100 per month, for a parent who provides full-time care for dependent children in the home and is not in receipt of unemployment benefit. This allowance will be administered through the Child Benefit Scheme.

In order to remove the discrimination against teenagers who live at home, the CSP proposes that unemployed teenage children living at home be entitled to social welfare payments.

The CSP encourages individuals to invest in their own private pension schemes wherever possible.

The CSP supports increases in the Technical Assistance Fund.

The CSP supports increases in back-to-work allowances.

The CSP supports increases in disability allowances and benefits.

The CSP will ensure that pensions for married people are the same as those for single people.

The CSP proposes that pay-related social welfare payments be reinstated for the initial period when a person goes out of work.

Old age pensions and widows' pensions have not followed the same rates of increase as other payments to individuals, therefore the CSP proposes that this situation be brought up to date without delay.

The CSP proposes that 'free schemes' for pensioners should not be means tested. Such schemes should be extended in as many thoughtful ways as possible.

The CSP will give isolated old age pensioners non-transferable and non-cashable taxi vouchers to encourage them to travel to local towns at least once per month, where they have no means of transport themselves.

The CSP supports Community Employment and 'Jobs Initiative' programmes.

The CSP supports the extension of Child Dependant Allowances to those taking up work from Community Employment and under 'Jobs Initiative'.

Enterprise

Enterprise, by its very nature, is closely linked to employment. Through successful enterprises we create rewarding and fulfilling employment which is essential both for a healthy and prosperous society and for the dignity that people receive through their work. CSP policies are geared specifically towards enterprise which produces the maximum amount of personally rewarding and gainful employment.

The CSP will see to it that burdens on newly launched small enterprises will be minimised, with special allowances being made for the employment of new staff.

Excellence of training is a key element both in redeployment of labour and in the reduction of unemployment. The CSP will ensure that FAS training schemes provide the level of excellence required.

The CSP will provide tax incentives to encourage research and development projects .

The CSP will make available further schemes providing advice, venture capital and general on-the-ground support for Irish entrepreneurs, particularly for new start-up ventures.

The CSP will reduce corporation tax for companies involved in labour intensive operations.

The CSP is committed to maintaining a Christian family-based culture which has been seen to deliver well-balanced and motivated young people who, with their sense of duty and responsibility, make excellent employees. This feature has already been promoted by the IDA and been recognised by various multi-national companies that have invested in the so-called 'Emerald Tiger'.

The CSP is in favour of schemes which promote the development of our natural resources.

The CSP encourages the furthering of Ireland's environmentally friendly and green image with particular emphasis on high quality food.

Enterprises which involve adding value to our native resources through employment-creating processing will be encouraged by the CSP.

The CSP will support a concerted effort to improve the international marketing of Irish products.

Employment

There is widespread agreement that the problem of unemployment is one of the gravest social problems facing us in Ireland today. While the economic effects of unemployment are obvious, not so obvious are its other many devastating social and psychological consequences. CSP employment policy is directed towards ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to work in rewarding employment. It is also part of our objective that people will not be compelled to leave their own communities to find work unless they desire to do so. Particular attention must be paid to the needs and difficulties of the long-term unemployed, that they may have the opportunity to develop their personal abilities and retain their dignity.

Through the IDA and Forbairt, the CSP will further develop the network of Local Employment Offices with responsibility for co-operating with and advising local businesses and seeking ways in which local employment opportunities can be increased.

The CSP recognises the huge fixed and working capital costs of starting viable new manufacturing and service businesses. The CSP will, therefore, introduce Initiatory Tax Exemptions to encourage and enable local people to set up new businesses locally. The Local Employment Office will be responsible for approving, granting, administering and overseeing these initiatives.

The CSP Initiatory Tax Exemptions will be granted only to genuinely innovative business projects which are not in direct competition with other businesses in the region. The exemptions will be wide-ranging, covering PAYE, PRSI, Corporation Tax, VAT, Stamp Duty and Planning Application costs.

Locally approved projects which benefit from the CSP Initiatory Tax Exemptions will be permitted to do so, at the discretion of the Local Employment Office, for a period of between five and ten years, provided they adhere to appropriate criteria. The exemptions may be phased out in such a way that, at the end of this period the businesses have a degree of stability and can begin to become net wealth producers and tax contributors to the community.

Businesses which benefit from the CSP Initiatory Tax Exemptions will not also be in receipt of government grants.

The CSP Initiatory Tax Exemptions will be granted only to people who are rooted in the local community and have a commitment to it.

While the CSP acknowledges the part which some multi-national companies have played in regenerating Irish communities in recent years, it also recognises the problem that those multi-nationals which do not develop local commitment may take decisions to close viable factories simply because they can make greater profits by relocating their operation in some other part of the world. This global problem is in general better recognised by the losers in such relocations than by the beneficiaries. In accordance with the principle of solidarity, therefore, the CSP will endeavour, in its dealings with multi-national companies, to consider not simply the local or national interest but that of people globally.

The CSP is committed to preserving the infrastructure of local communities. We therefore oppose the withdrawal of essential social services, in particular the downgrading of transport priorities and the closure of rural post offices.

The CSP abhors the damage caused to communities by the loss of contracts and jobs when EU law forces tenders to be sought abroad. Other countries find ways to protect their industries. The CSP seeks to discover and implement all legal means to keep Irish contracts in Ireland.

The CSP is committed to nurturing an economic environment in which Irish people produce as great a share as possible of the nation's needs.

The CSP acknowledges the work of Trades Unions in helping to develop proper employer-employee relationships. The partnership of employer organisations and trades unions must continue to ensure that employers fulfil all their legal and social obligations to their employees.

The CSP aims to discourage the use of continual and persistent overtime as an alternative to the employment of more staff. Towards this end, we would encourage Trades Unions and employers to seek ways in which both they and government can alleviate the economic pressures which favour persistent overtime.

The CSP encourages job-sharing wherever it is feasible. This could be done extensively, for example, in areas of the public service, provided that no drop in the standard of service would ensue.

Environment

The CSP recognises the basic principle that the proper development of each person is integrally connected to the person's environment. The primary environment which we are concerned with is the human environment. We have outlined our approach to this aspect of environment in the pro-life, pro-family and pro-community policies elsewhere in this document. In this section we concentrate on the physical environment, which also has a significant effect on our lives. The Christian attitude to the physical environment is based on the idea that we are stewards of the world that God has given us and we have an obligation to use this world and its resources wisely and unselfishly. We should aim to live simply, so that others might simply live.

The CSP is committed to the protection of our rivers and lakes by mandating stricter control over the disposal of sewage and other organic matter.

The CSP will enforce controls on the use of chemicals in industry.

The CSP will encourage job creation at local level to maintain and to enhance the environment.

The CSP will reclaim disused canals and their associated infrastructure.

The CSP will advance contingency plans to cope with natural disasters.

The CSP will maintain, restore and repair National and Historic sites.

The CSP will enforce the litter laws through on-the-spot fines.

The CSP will cooperate with all reasonable measures intended to alleviate environmental problems on an international scale.

The CSP will encourage afforestation and the spin-off industries, but never in such a way that might prove detrimental either to the human or to the natural environment, particularly not in any way which would lead to the depopulation of rural areas or to arboreal monoculture.

The CSP will encourage businesses to adopt and enforce conservation policies, for example in regard to the reduction wherever possible of energy, and in any other way in which they can contribute to the repair and maintenance of our environment. Businesses can assist by implementing conservation policies in regard to the proper use of paper products.

The CSP will implement schemes which support recycling of a complete range of consumer materials such as paper, glass, electronic parts, furniture and household goods.

Planning and development is an area where the CSP proposes radical changes by the introduction of a system of prescriptive planning. The purpose of this scheme would be to concentrate planning officials' attention on developments of significant planning concern and away from minor and routine applications, which could easily be dealt with through standard planning guidelines drawn up as part of a county development plan.

The CSP is opposed to the establishment of nuclear power plants in Ireland. We intend to pursue the limitation and, eventually, the closing of nuclear power plants on the British coasts adjacent to the Irish Sea.

Education

The family is the first and best school that a child can have. In the family children are initiated into language and culture, have their first encounters with love and affection and experience the demands of others to be treated as equals. This basic process of education needs to be supported and extended in the most practical way possible through the education system at all three levels. Particular emphasis must be placed on primary level since a good education here paves the way for future achievement.

The CSP will channel a greater proportion of the funds available for education to the primary sector.

The CSP advocates the teaching of at least one other language besides Irish and English in primary school.

The CSP supports measures to ensure that a calm and disciplined learning environment is maintained in schools so that all children have the opportunity to learn, undisturbed by the indiscipline of other pupils.

The CSP is opposed to central government control of curriculum at both primary and secondary level.

The CSP is opposed to the introduction of programmes of social engineering into the school curriculum.

The CSP will introduce regular assessment of primary school pupils to evaluate their reading, writing and basic mathematics. We will ensure, by way of additional remedial teaching as necessary, that all pupils acquire a basic competence in these subjects before progressing to secondary school.

The CSP encourages and will support apprenticeship schemes.

The CSP acknowledges the particular problems experienced by one-teacher schools (the number of which is currently growing) and we undertake to provide all such schools with a second teacher, where practicable, and with Teachers' Helps where not. This is important to ensure effective teaching, safety and efficient administration, which currently impose an almost intolerable burden on the single teacher.

The CSP opposes the closure of small primary and secondary schools in rural areas.

The CSP will work towards the reduction of the number of students in any one class to a maximum of twenty within the next five years. In rural areas, following the recommendation of the report 'Educational Disadvantage in Rural Ireland' we would aim to achieve a maximum of fifteen pupils per teacher.

The CSP advocates the restructuring of classes at first and second levels in such a way that the student's level of attainment in a given subject, and not the student's age, is the principal factor determining that student's class allocation for that subject.

The CSP will ensure that any form of school-based assessment that forms part of an official second-level examination will be carefully monitored by the Department of Education Inspectorate to ensure that standards of fairness and comparability are maintained.

The CSP advocates that primary and secondary schools with over three hundred pupils be divided into Junior and Senior sections, each with its own Principal, Vice-Principal and other posts of responsibility.

The CSP favours methods of financing the education system that would lead to greater choice. This could be done, for example, by means of vouchers which would have the effect of encouraging a genuine pluralism in education, as well as being a practical way of giving effect to the constitutionally acknowledged right and duty of parents to be the primary educators of their children.

The CSP favours the opening of all three levels of education to adults who can benefit from them.

The CSP accepts the principle of accountability for the disbursement of public funds. However, this principle must not be used to compromise the traditional academic freedoms of the Universities.

'Equality of outcome' cannot be the primary goal of the education system; rather 'equality of opportunity' will be a guiding principle of CSP policy.

The CSP will support all reasonable measures to protect and foster the religious ethos of church schools.

The CSP supports local control of schools.

The CSP is opposed to the introduction of mandatory mixed-sex secondary schooling without a fully balanced study having been done into its effects on the achievements of students.

The CSP welcomes active measures to promote the Irish Language, particularly by encouraging the establishment of Gaelscoileanna throughout the country.

The CSP favours the introduction of subject teachers into the primary school sector on a limited basis. Subjects in which the children and the school might benefit from this are Physical Education, Music, Languages and Mathematics.

The CSP will endeavour to ensure that every child in Ireland has the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. We acknowledge the work of the Cork School of Music in subsidising a programme of Suzuki music teaching in primary schools for many years. The CSP would like to see similar opportunities made available to children throughout the country.

The CSP will transfer responsibility for Sport from the department of Education to the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht.

The CSP encourages the facilitation of the educational requirements of students with special needs.

The CSP acknowledges the contribution that youth organisations, sporting clubs and voluntary groups have made to education. The CSP will ensure that the educational activities of such groups be adequately funded.

Parents bear a considerable portion of the cost of 'free education'. The CSP is committed to alleviating part of this burden by making funding available for books, examination fees, games and some educational trips.

Health

The percentage of our Gross National Product which we spend on Health has always been respectable in comparison to the rest of the EU. However we have the highest patient to doctor ratio in the EU, currently standing at 600:1. As with other areas we must make the best use of resources which we can afford. The CSP is committed to identifying the key areas of deficiency and devising intelligent and fresh measures for their resolution.

The CSP is committed to ensuring that all necessary optical, dental or medical treatment will be provided free for all dependent children.

The CSP advocates that people suffering from severe mental or physical handicap, and those who care for them, have access to suitable support, including home help and, when necessary, residential care.

The CSP will set up a more extensive nation-wide auditing system of health-care services to provide a better guide for resource distribution in this sector.

The CSP will provide funds to promote healthy lifestyles especially among youth. Special consideration will also be given to schemes to alleviate some of the unhealthy pressures of modern life.

More and more demands are being made on medical General Practitioners. This is driven by increased patient awareness from education, TV, radio and other media. There is a consequent need for GP resource centres and for information services. This in turn should lead to more patients getting home-based therapy. The CSP intends to grasp opportunities which exist here for a significant reduction in the demands on and costs associated with institutional medical establishments.

The CSP believes that this greater demand for GP services, if properly administered, would lead to more non-residential out-patient therapy with a resulting cut in costs and waiting lists.

The CSP will support GPs and other community workers who promote disease prevention projects in the community. We will introduce a National Surveillance System for disease identification and control with special emphasis on infectious disease and malignancy. We will also encourage further studies along the lines of The Report from the National Cancer Registry on Cork and Kerry, and provide the resources for follow-up on such studies.

The CSP will encourage improved access by GPs to hospital services.

The CSP believes that a national body representing hospitals, GPs and universities, and which would monitor and advise on the education of doctors, nurses and administrators, would be useful to all. In this time of rapid change, particularly in information technology, new approaches to disease diagnosis and therapy need to be developed. However the importance of putting the patient first must not be lost because of over-emphasis on technology.

The CSP will set up an independent body to bridge the gap between the Department of Health and the public. The need for such a body has been highlighted by the recent hepatitis and BSE issues.

Many medical laboratories in the country are performing tests without written Standard Operating Procedures and have no form of accreditation. The CSP will set up an Irish accreditation body on the level of the Royal College of Pathology (UK), which will assist in formulating procedures and will be responsible for the accreditation of laboratories.

The CSP will introduce positive legislation to decrease the risk of unreasonable medical litigation.

The CSP is firmly opposed to the provision of health insurance policies which cover abortion in this or any other state.

The CSP will discontinue funding for counselling services which advocate abortion.

In accordance with the principle of solidarity, the CSP will allocate 3% of our health budget to the provision of health personnel and services for Third World countries.

The CSP will ensure better ventilation of hospital buildings, including the provision of mechanical ventilation in areas where air quality and temperature control are most important.

The CSP believes that a proper professional assessment must be made of the extent of addiction in Ireland; this assessment should cover not only alcohol and other drugs but also other activities which can be addictive such as gambling and shop-lifting.

The CSP will establish an Alternative Medicines and Procedures Study Group to examine the possible benefits of such medicines and procedures and to provide protection against dangerous practices.

The CSP will ensure that more and better resources are made available to care for the elderly as our aged population increases.

The CSP will establish a working group to consider the feasibility of domiciliary midwifery, particularly in regard to costs.

The CSP will endeavour to ensure that staffing in maternity and paediatric units be confined, at the practice level, to female nurses.

Agriculture, Food and Forestry

The vibrancy of rural community life is critically dependent on agriculture. The essence of CSP agricultural policy is to assist families who wish to do so to continue to live in rural Ireland. We will foster co-operation at home in order to compete abroad. The success of Irish agriculture can be based only on our strengths, chief of which are our dedicated hard working farmers, our clean environment and our good world market image.

The CSP will encourage Farm Tourist facilities by promoting farm guest houses, leisure and activity centres, local home crafts, art, pottery and suchlike. The CSP is supportive of the agri-tourism scheme for the development of family-based tourism ventures.

The CSP will encourage and promote farming as a career amongst young rural people.

The CSP will remove Capital Acquisitions Tax on the inheritance of family farms, subject to restrictions which will ensure their continued operation.

The CSP will promote and support the food processing industry to increase the value added to agricultural raw materials. Currently the value we add to agricultural raw materials by processing is low by the standard of other European countries. With proper management of this area Ireland could become home to some of the major food companies in Europe.

In the 10 years from 1985 to 1995 the number of assisting relatives on farms fell from 23,000 to just 7,500. The CSP advocates that studies of why people are leaving the land be carried out to see what alternatives could be proposed to give them the freedom to stay.

The CSP supports the continual updating of the new 'Farmers Charter of Rights'.

The CSP supports policies which contribute to increased farm incomes and viability of the family farm.

The CSP supports schemes to keep the value of agricultural and food exports at least at a constant percentage of our (increasing) total annual exports.

The CSP supports schemes which encourage the increase in use of hired labour on farms, in preference to large capital grants which are not always put to best use.

The CSP advocates that a greater emphasis should be placed on the sharing of our experience and surplus materials, such as seed, with Third World countries. A target 3% budget of departmental funds should be allocated for this.

The CSP opposes in principle the internationalisation of the food trade between unequal trading partners.

The CSP is opposed to the principle of exporting food with the aid of export refunds to under-developed regions, unless this takes place by mutual agreement and in such a way that it does not undermine local farm and food development.

The CSP agrees with open competition within the EU provided all hidden subsidies to farmers are equalised.

The CSP affirms that all existing import controls agreed under the recent GATT must remain in place and should not be negotiable in the next GATT round. Safeguarding the food supply and food quality must come before trade liberalisation.

The CSP opposes the very tight protection given to intellectual and technological property rights by the World Trade Organisation(WTO). This monopolisation of information and knowledge is to the disadvantage of developing countries.

The CSP will insist on the inclusion of labour standards, social standards, animal welfare standards and environmental standards into the WTO rules in the interest of fair competition before any discussion of trade liberalisation takes place.

The CSP opposes in principle the practice of patenting seeds, bacteria and other naturally occurring substances.

The CSP opposes in principle the manipulation of animal or seed performance by using production-enhancing drugs or hormones.

The CSP believes that Article 39 of the Treaty of Rome must be fully honoured. In particular stable markets must be maintained to ensure a reasonable standard of living for primary producers.

The CSP encourages the development of realistic programmes to anticipate and minimise the effect of future reductions in European funding of Irish agriculture.

The CSP is opposed to the set-aside whereby perfectly good land is left idle for no other reason than the artificial control of European markets.

The CSP supports innovation in agriculture and horticulture by proposing that pioneering projects of a replicable nature be heavily grant supported in turn for permission to study the projects during and after their implementation.

The CSP will set up a Statutory Independent Food Authority with real powers to guarantee the safety and quality of food and to help build up confidence in the beef industry by fully documented scientific means.

The CSP will develop Quality Assurance systems to the highest international standards to ensure increased prices and wider markets for quality Irish food.

The CSP supports Teagasc in its education programmes for forestry establishment and maintenance.

The survival of the family farm is essential for the well-being of rural communities. It is CSP policy to support its survival by encouraging farm enterprises, especially those that are not subject to EU quotas, for example poultry farming, horticulture, mushroom growing and forestry.

The CSP encourages participation in the REPS schemes, paying particular attention to a 'clam up' of farms and out-offices and to the disposal of farm plastic waste.

The CSP encourages market intelligence to avoid over-supply and the consequent drop in prices.

The emphasis on food production should be on quality rather than on quantity. The CSP therefore supports measures to make organic and environmentally friendly farming financially viable. Voluntary groups, such as the Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association, must be supported in their efforts of education, inspection, and certification. The CSP, while promoting market-driven organically produced food, recognises the practical difficulties associated with pure organic methods of production. The CSP supports the extension of the REPS and ORGANIC REPS systems as steps in the right direction giving opportunities for Ireland to capitalise on its European reputation as a high quality food producer.

The CSP believes that the health of Irish livestock is more important than its free movement.

The CSP will continue research into Irish Timber with a view to upgrading its quality and increasing its share of the domestic market.

Special encouragement will be given by the CSP to local initiatives in forestry, especially if geared towards the establishment of small scale enterprises based on forest products. The current 8% of land under forestry should be increased to 12% over the next 20 years, with particular emphasis on broad-leafed varieties.

The CSP believes that no pattern of afforestation is acceptable which is damaging either to the human or to the natural environment.

Marine

Nowhere is the betrayal of the Irish people by the political establishment more dramatically displayed than in this sector. The stark facts are that although Ireland has 16% of EU waters, we take only 5% of the catch, with a mere 2.5% of the EU fleet. The value of fish caught in Irish waters alone is about equal to the value of subventions we have received from Europe. While the sea fisheries are the principal natural resource available to many remote and marginalised communities around Ireland, and while the huge technological developments in communication, transport and refrigeration of recent years should have brought about a massive improvement in their ability to exploit that resource, in most cases the very opposite has proven to be the case. The CSP is determined to rectify this situation.

The CSP advocates that the management of a given fishery should be primarily the responsibility of those who depend on it, both at sea and ashore; new representative authorities will be set up for each sea area.

The CSP will promote the use of smaller family-owned boats in preference to larger and more powerful boats, provided the former are able to do their job with safety and reasonable efficiency.

The CSP will introduce an emergency government programme to renew the white-fish and coastal fleets.

With regard to the 2002 Common Fisheries Policy Review, the CSP will insist that the establishment of a new policy, based on the rights and responsibilities of adjacent coastal communities, be accorded the status of a vital national interest.

The CSP recognises that commercial salmon fishing is of vital importance to remote coastal communities.

The CSP will set up a strategic review and renewal process for Irish seafood marketing both at home and abroad.

The CSP is determined to obtain a quota of fish from Irish waters based on our geographical position, rather than on past fishing quotas.

Northern Ireland

The CSP believes that there is no alternative to a peaceful solution to the Northern Question. But there can be no peace without justice, and no justice without the removal of structures that reinforce fear and hatred. In addition to structural provisions, the CSP recommends the promotion of new initiatives to facilitate both personal and community reconciliation.

The CSP favours the retention of Articles 2 and 3 of Bunreacht na hÉireann until such time as a solution is achieved which satisfies the people of Ireland as a whole.

The CSP believes that triumphalist marches and religious intimidation have no place in a modern democracy.

The CSP advocates strongly that marches be allowed to pass through residential areas only on conditions formally agreed beforehand between the marchers and the local community.

The CSP is willing to enter into discussions with all parties and interest groups without insisting that any preconditions be met.

The CSP encourages cross-border co-operation and links.

The CSP believes that firm pressure should be put on Britain regarding policing and human rights.

The CSP believes that contingency plans should be put in place in case of Britain's withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

The CSP has long since come to recognise the existence on our island of a third set of interests alongside Nationalists and Unionists and antagonistic to both. The CSP believes that the natural coincidence of interests between Christians of all kinds, both north and south of the border, on abortion, denominational schooling and many other issues touching the dignity of the person, could form the basis for discussion on how to counter the threat of secular humanism.

The drive to maximise subsidiarity, whereby people take and retain control over their own lives, is at the core of CSP policy. The built-in unstable equilibrium and unsustainable tensions of the kind obtaining in Northern Ireland must be faced and dealt with in an enlightened and courageous fashion. The CSP believes, therefore, that an integral part of the solution to the Northern Ireland situation is Britain's ultimate withdrawal and the creation of a strong local administration within the larger Irish and European context.

Foreign Affairs

Ireland has a rich Christian heritage, a strong family tradition and a history that has led us to have a well developed sense of identity. These factors enable us, as active responsible participants in the affairs of the world, to speak confidently on our own behalf and that of others in less fortunate circumstances.

Ireland's foreign affairs activities are mediated through its membership of the European Union and the United Nations. The CSP is committed to promoting and developing Christian politics within these two bodies.

The CSP will endeavour to ensure that representatives of the Irish people in international fora take account of the spirit and provisions of Bunreacht na hÉireann .

When joining the Common Market the public understanding was that we were joining a free trade area. However, this has now become the European Union, the development of which needs to be carefully monitored. It is important that the Union become an organisation both efficient and democratic, capable of making decisions and taking action while preserving the identity of its constituent states. The CSP is opposed to the development of a European Superstate.

The CSP believes that it is not sufficient that the identity of individual states simply be maintained. What is important is that maximum power over the decision making processes be retained at national and local level, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. Power should be transferred to the EU only in relation to matters which can not efficiently be dealt with on a local or national basis.

The opt-out from the Social Charter by the UK poses serious competitive problems for Ireland. This country should not impose costs on industry which place us at a disadvantage against any other member or members of the Union. It should be noted that in October 1996 the German Chancellor speaking about European Union during a visit to Manila said, 'We intend to make European integration irreversible'. The CSP believes that it is in Ireland's interest that we do not bind ourselves into inflexible structures, and that we keep our options open to the greatest extent possible so that we can adapt our economic and social structures to deal with any difficulties which may arise in the future.

The CSP believes that Ireland must oppose any erosion of the Common Agriculture Policy. It must be recalled that when we joined the Community we opened our borders to industrial competition believing that the disadvantage caused thereby would be offset by the benefits of the CAP. This balance must be maintained. The possible erosion of the CAP must be kept in mind when considering any further admittance of new member states.

Ireland should never have agreed to a system of determining 'Total Allowable Catches' based on the historic performance of member states in fishing the stocks concerned. The CSP believes that the Irish fishing industry share of the EU fish quota should be based on our geographical position and not on past fishing quotas.

The CSP supports continued international co-operation in the fight against crime and drugs. However, we believe that these problems are best tackled by improving social cohesion and strengthening family life. Current international social policies are weakening the traditional family ethos. Social policies must be developed to improve the status of family management and to assist in every way mothers who wish to spend their child-rearing years full time in this occupation. The Irish government has the power to achieve this objective within its own control through fiscal controls. Such a policy would be a beneficial international example.

Ireland should be aware that EU pressure will be mounted to establish 'a level playing field' in relation to national assistance given to our industry. Our peripheral position means that we can never have fair competition unless we offer favourable and attractive industrial incentives. Our rights in this regard must be vigorously maintained and extended. Of course our own development programmes must continue to be improved. Education and infrastructure must be a top priority. Without a highly educated workforce and excellent transport and communications, no industrial incentives will, of themselves, attract inward investment into Ireland.

The CSP fully supports Ireland's traditional policy of neutrality. At the same time CSP recognises the importance of Ireland's participation in international non-combative peace-keeping exercises. However, care must be taken to insure that no peace-keeping exercise will develop in a manner which, by involving our forces in combat, would effectively put an end to, or weaken, our national policy of neutrality.

The CSP is committed to guaranteeing that our neutrality is not weakened by diplomatic means. The government white paper on foreign policy states 'The provision of the Maastricht Treaty on security and defence represented a compromise which reflected the different emphasis given by the various member states to aspects of European and transatlantic security. It was the furthest that member states were prepared collectively to go at the time. As a result the question of 'the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence', to quote the words of the Treaty, was left to future negotiation.'

The people of Ireland are noted for their generosity when it comes to helping people in distress in other countries. The CSP believes that, in the interests of human solidarity, contributions from the State should be substantially increased to meet international targets. These contributions must be monitored to ensure that our foreign aid does not become a matter of the poor in rich countries helping the rich in poor countries, and to ensure that the aid is used for humanitarian relief or development, and not for anti-human, anti-life projects.

Wherever possible, this assistance should be given directly to those working immediately with the poor and the oppressed and not to intermediate political agencies, and care must be taken to ensure that no more than a specified minimum of financial assistance is used for administrative purposes.

Official development assistance now stands at 0.27% of GNP. The CSP proposes to increase this to 0.5% in the short to medium term, and to the UN goal of 0.7% in the long term.

The CSP supports international co-operation wherever and whenever possible. However, all international agreements or protocols are subject to the basic law of the State, and no Government can ratify any such agreement or protocol which is in conflict with Bunreacht na hÉireann.

Defence

In the present political climate, in which we appear to be subject to an erosion of our traditional neutrality, the CSP declares that Ireland shall be party to no military or quasi-military alliance except by the express will of the people.

The CSP regards the maintenance of a strong sense of national identity as being fundamental to any coherent defence policy.

The CSP will ensure that Ireland remain an actively neutral country which makes a maximum contribution to World Peace.

The CSP opposes the development of a European Army.

The CSP supports the use of the Army for international peace keeping duties.

The CSP will encourage schemes to improve the appeal and focus of the FCA, particularly in rural Ireland.

Tourism

The CSP acknowledges the tourist industry as one of the main resource areas that, if properly managed and developed, has the potential to produce a greater number of worthwhile long-term jobs. Presently the industry is unattractive to many young people seeking a career. This is mostly due to the fact that far too many positions are seasonal and cannot provide sufficient stability by way of permanent income. Minimum rates of pay and conditions governing hotel and catering work outside the Dublin area are inadequate to provide the incentive for young people to enter, or more particularly, remain in the industry. This movement of personnel creates at least two major problems - lack of stability and major costs in retraining. The seasonal nature of the industry needs to be tackled both in foreign and home business.

The Irish Tourist market needs a broader base to entice visitors from abroad for a wider range of holidays. We need visitors all year round to provide both full-time employment and greater financial income to the State. The CSP will support schemes aimed at smoothening and growing the market in this way.

The CSP is committed to protecting and promoting our angling, with particular emphasis on fresh water angling types which attract European visitors in the autumn, winter and spring periods.

The CSP supports family holidays through the development of caravan and camping sites to equivalent modern European standards.

The CSP will work for the provision of capital grants and tax relief schemes aimed at supporting new developments in the Irish Tourism markets such as outdoor leisure centres and motor-caravan hire.

The CSP will support schemes to develop holidays on our inland waterways through good foreign marketing and better pricing which would bring this type of holiday within the range of most people. Part of this work would involve the reclaiming of disused canals and their associated infrastructure via the Office of Public Works and local communities along the way.

The CSP supports the development of golfing holidays and, in particular, the building of golf courses in areas that are identified as not yet having good golfing amenities.

Our monastic, archaeological and other historical sites have much to offer the foreign and Irish tourist alike. The CSP will promote schemes which foster the development of this unique heritage.

The CSP is committed to dealing firmly with what we see as the two main prerequisites for a successful tourism campaign - care of our environment and control of tourist-related crime.

The CSP will provide funding for a vigorous European and North American marketing campaign for Irish Tourism. This would initially be run as a 'Five Year Blitz' concentrated on all major cities in these areas where mobile units staffed by new marketing graduates could be utilised throughout public areas in the cities.

With increasing trends in average Irish and European age levels, the CSP will initiate a 10 year development plan aimed at the active retirement market area which, by its nature, would tend to be a year-round industry.

In the interest of home holidays the CSP will work for partial funding of privately developed indoor leisure pools and similar facilities. This would help Irish families to overcome the vagaries posed by Irish summertime weather when they are choosing where to holiday.

Transport

Transport is an essential aspect of national life and its efficiency is very important to our economic success.

The CSP will encourage the use of public passenger transport; public transport services throughout the entire country must be considered as instruments of social cohesion. Decisions on the provision and operation of such services must not be made solely on economic grounds.

The CSP will encourage the use of rail movement of large volume goods.

The CSP will continue to develop and improve road and rail infrastructure.

The CSP will work for an underground passenger rail system in the centre of Dublin in lieu of the currently proposed on-street trams on our Capital's narrow streets.

The CSP will encourage the development of new privately operated local transport schemes based on competitive tenders.

The CSP will give isolated old age pensioners non-transferable and non-cashable taxi vouchers to encourage them to travel to local towns at least once per month, where they have no means of transport themselves.

The CSP will seek the provision of improved facilities for pedestrian movement in our cities and towns.

The CSP will work for a significant reduction of excise on diesel fuel used for business purposes.

The CSP promotes innovative transport schemes involving new technology and renewable energy sources, looking for sensible opportunities where we can lead the field rather than almost always following others.

Energy

Energy, in its many and varied forms, is a lifeline to our industrial and commercial world as well as to our expectations for modern human comfort and convenience. Since energy is a scarce commodity of such great importance and, indeed, fragility, as evidenced by the various oil crises, it is imperative that we as a nation take the most prudent measures to manage the supply and demand of our energy.

As a matter of urgency the CSP will work for the development and implementation of a National Energy Policy for Ireland.

The CSP supports further research into and development of self-sustaining renewable energy schemes.

In order to develop and sustain a National Energy Policy the CSP proposes that the government develop a close association with the professional, trade union, state and industrial bodies which have expertise in and control of the production and use of energy.

The CSP proposes the adoption of a national policy that would set as a target the supply of 15% of our energy needs from wind technology by the year 2015.

The CSP proposes the development of research into the viability of large-scale production of home-based photovoltaic units, and the inclusion of such as a standard element in building codes.

The CSP will promote the development of sea-based energy sources.

The CSP will promote research into methods of Biomass Technology that are environmentally non-damaging and economically sustainable.

The CSP will encourage the development of community-based hydro-electric schemes.

Communications

In the last twenty years the way and speed in which information is transferred from person to person has changed enormously. Involving a vast range of people, skills and electronic technology, the communications industry has great potential to improve people's lives. The CSP advocates responsible use and regulation of this powerful resource in a way which, at all times, must be clearly for the common good.

The CSP encourages the development of quality land and mobile telecommunications systems that are competitively-priced, with particular emphasis on services to local communities.

The CSP will eliminate telephone installation charges for first-time domestic connections.

The CSP will introduce a single national long-distance telephone charge for land-lines and will extend the present weekend concessions.

The CSP will provide grants to local communities for the provision of Community Web Sites through which world-wide advertising of local resources can take place.

In the interests of pluralism in the media, and in the interests of community development, the CSP advocates the allocation of licences for the operation of community-based non-commercial radio stations.

The CSP will establish an independent Media Council to monitor news and current affairs coverage, to set guidelines for ensuring fair and adequate dissemination of news, to ensure accurate reporting and, generally, to supervise and evaluate any aspect of the print or electronic media that can affect public opinion or public mores.

The CSP will empower the Media Council to hear and evaluate complaints, and to take such action (which might include legal action through the courts) as it deems necessary to prevent media misbehaviour, to redress wrongs or to compel media to publish items if such publishing is in the public interest.

The CSP is opposed to the financial and editorial monopolisation of the organs of the print and electronic media. In the interests of the common good, the CSP supports the greatest possible pluralism in the ownership and in the editorial control of the media.

The CSP will endeavour to ensure that control of digital terrestrial TV in Ireland does not fall into the hands of any one person or interest group.

Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht

It is a mark of every civilised society that Music, the Arts and other aspects of fine culture, including those associated with Sport, be promoted and adequately funded. In Irish society it is of vital importance that our own language and its central place in our native culture be fully recognised not simply at every level of government but throughout our society.

The CSP recognises the central role of the Gaeltacht in the advancement of the Irish language and will support schemes generated by Gaeltacht people to enhance their own communities.

Údarás na Gaeltachta will have a special place in the devolution of powers and resources which will be undertaken by the CSP.

The CSP acknowledges the tremendous impact which Raidió na Gaeltachta has had not only on communications within the Gaeltacht but on Irish speakers and on learners of Irish throughout the country. We will support the further development of Raidió na Gaeltachta and of the newly established and long overdue Teilifís na Gaeilge.

The CSP will give special consideration to cultural pursuits in the Irish language. We acknowledge in particular the current growth in literature and drama.

The CSP will give special support to efforts to advance and increase the use of the Irish language throughout the Gaeltacht.

The CSP acknowledges the wishes of parents in all parts of the country for Irish language schools. We are aware of the great effort and personal sacrifices which have been made by many parents to realise these wishes. We will endeavour to ensure that Irish language schools are established in every community where there is a demand for them.

The CSP will transfer responsibility for Sport from the Department of Education to the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht.

The CSP considers that money spent on promoting Sport is a long-term investment with high rewards, giving not only good health but also confidence and a sense of purpose to participants, promoting healthy rivalry and community bonds, and helping in the formation of social relationships.

The CSP will try to ensure that local authorities take an active role in the promotion of sport in their communities.

The CSP believes that all children should have the opportunity to engage in physical sports and will therefore ensure that Physical Education be a part of the primary school curriculum.

The CSP believes that sporting activities for the handicapped are particularly worthy of support.

Irish athletes competing at international level have only limited facilities at home for training and coaching. The CSP will negotiate with sporting bodies to determine the priorities in this area.

There are already schemes in place whereby private and public funding are used together to promote cultural pursuits, for example in the partnership between the ESB and the Arts Council in promoting music throughout the country. The CSP proposes that incentives be given to encourage such partnerships.

The CSP would like the range of cultural pursuits supported by government to be extended imaginatively. It would be possible, for example, to give every child in the country the opportunity to play chess competitively at very little cost.

The CSP will give support to individuals and teams who represent Ireland abroad in less well-established cultural activities, for example in the International Mathematical Olympiad.

The CSP considers it important that historic monuments and buildings be preserved and studied, that certain sites be excavated, and that public libraries and local history projects be encouraged so that we and our children are able to develop a better understanding of our heritage.