



local election manifesto 2009

building
better
communities



The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas was founded 27 years ago based on the following seven principles:

- *The impact of society on the environment should not be ecologically disruptive*
- *Conservation of resources is vital to a sustainable society*
- *All political, social and economic decisions should be taken at the lowest effective level*
- *Society should be guided by self-reliance and co-operation at all levels*
- *As caretakers of the earth, we have the responsibility to pass it on in a fit and healthy state*
- *The need for world peace overrides national and commercial interests*
- *The poverty of two-thirds of the world's family demands a redistribution of the world's resources*

These principles reflect the Green Party's vision for politics – one which understands the connection between political action and the social, environmental and economic consequences of that action. In keeping with these principles, the Green Party has a long-standing commitment to **environmental and social justice** at all levels from local to international. We believe that the best way to achieve a sustainable, equitable society is to think globally and act locally in every aspect of our lives; this begins with the community in which we live.

This manifesto outlines the policies pursued by the Green Party in order to achieve these aims along with the actions that we consider necessary at a local level to lead to a better quality of life for all. We believe this will be achieved by creating better communities that are socially inclusive, economically vibrant and therefore strong enough to adapt effectively to economic and

social change.

This is the Green Party's first time approaching an election in government. The current economic downturn means that we have had to accept not only lower investment than we had hoped for in certain areas but indeed budgetary cuts which, during a healthier financial period, we could not have imagined, much less accepted.

Nonetheless, despite financial constraints, our policies remain guided by our fundamental principles and a belief that there will come a period of economic renewal driven by green economics. The Green Party does not make promises – we make policy, which we then aim to follow through on in government.

This manifesto outlines our policies and how they translate at a local level through Green councillors who work extremely hard to put these policies into action so as to create the kind of society in which we can all be proud to participate.

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Executive summary

The Green Party's vision for politics is one which understands the connection between political action and the social, environmental and economic consequences of that action. Our vision begins with the communities in which we live and we believe that the best way to secure our future is to **create better communities** that are socially inclusive, economically vibrant and therefore strong enough to adapt effectively to economic and social change. This manifesto outlines our policies and how they translate at a local level through Green councillors who work very hard to put these policies into action to create the kind of society in which we can all be proud to participate.

Local government

Democracy and accountability are key issues for the Green Party. We believe that decision-making should be taken at the lowest effective level, as close as possible to the people affected by those decisions. For this reason, Green Minister John Gormley continues to drive local government reform. This is about **changing the rules so that ordinary people can participate and have their voices heard**.

Stronger local economies

The Green Party advocates a transition from a fossil-fuel dependent economy to a low-carbon, green economy, with all of the economic, social and environmental benefits that entails. This transition begins at a local level. The Green Party wants to develop a thriving local enterprise culture in an appropriate and transparent manner taking account of the need for sustainability and for accountability to all members of society. **Our objective is to strengthen local economies in order to reduce their exposure to global market fluctuations.** Green ministers Eamon Ryan, John Gormley and Trevor Sargent have taken action at national level to lay the groundwork for transition to a new green economy and our councillors are ready to follow through on their progress at local level.

Planning better communities

The Green Party has for many years called for more efficient use of public resources and a **more transparent planning system to create sustainable communities through qualitative development rather than quantitative expansion.** Although the past cannot be changed, our challenge now is to redesign communities to better serve their purpose – to deliver a better quality of life. Minister John Gormley has ensured the strengthening of planning laws through legislative instruments. Green councillors ensure the adoption of these strategies into development plans and local area plans to optimise development of new and existing communities.

Creating closer communities

Community development is fundamental to the creation of better communities which offer a good quality of life. Local authorities have a significant role to play in building communities through good planning and the provision of housing, community spaces and inclusive services. Green Party councillors are committed to social and environmental justice, which can be achieved only through the endeavours of strong, cooperating communities.

Growing greener communities

Green communities are strong communities. We believe that a 'green lifestyle', with the least impact on natural resources, is the only way to sustain not only our environment but also our economy and ultimately, our society. The impact of climate change on many aspects of our lives is now vividly apparent. There is no longer a choice; we must change direction and choose a greener path or face dire consequences economically, socially and environmentally. **Transition to a low-carbon, green society begins with individuals and the communities in which they live.** Local authorities are well-placed to facilitate this change and Green Party councillors have a deep understanding of the issues involved.

This is an abridged edition of the Green Party's local election manifesto. For the full version, which includes the specific steps that green councillors will take once they are elected as well as links to sources of further information, go to vote.greenparty.ie/manifesto

Local government

Participation in the democratic process

Ireland is one of the most centralised democratic states in Europe, which means that local authorities in Ireland do not have the same decision-making power on local issues as their counterparts throughout Europe.

The Green Party believes that decisions should be taken at the

lowest effective level, as close as possible to the people affected.

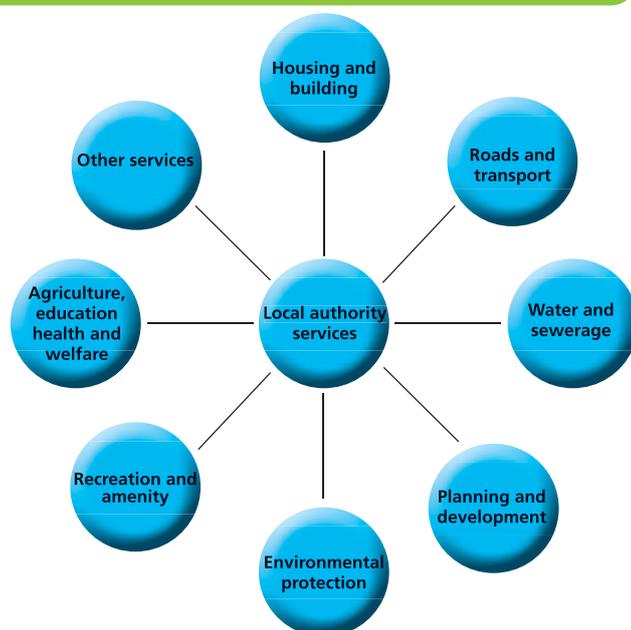
Local authorities must therefore be given more powers, with true decentralisation of decision-making out of Dublin, not a mere moving of offices around the state.

It is not only local authorities that require greater power, so do the people, via better accountability and more involvement. **Democracy and accountability are key issues for the Green Party.** We believe that in tandem with greater powers for local authorities, there must be greater accountability to the communities they serve through more robust regulation and greater transparency in their day-to-day business. Only by these means can local communities ensure that their interests are at the heart of local government.

In keeping with Green Party policy to strengthen and democratise local government, Green Party Minister John Gormley and his department are currently finalising a **white paper on local government reform** to consolidate local authority powers not only in the area of 'hard' services such as housing, roads and water but also in terms of the 'softer' tasks related to community-building. In practice, the proposals in the white paper will ensure:

- Greater decision-making power at local level balanced by rigorous national standards
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Value for money
- Greater powers in the area of raising and spending finance locally
- Greater community involvement in local government

We believe that local government reform is about **changing the rules so that ordinary people can participate and have their voices heard.**



We want people to be involved in running their own communities.

Green councillors work hard to ensure access to and participation in the democratic system for all citizens so that they are actively informed of and involved in decisions that affect their lives. Our councillors also support the process of **participatory budgeting** at local government level, which allows citizens who are impacted by the local authority budget to have a say in how that some funds are allocated.

At work in your community...

Minister John Gormley recently introduced limits on election spending to ensure a level playing field for all election candidates. This means that standing for election is accessible to everyone and not just those with financial backing

How can you participate in local government?

1. First and foremost, you can participate in local government by using your vote at election time. By voting for those who you believe will best represent you, you are participating in the democratic system.

2. **Make yourself aware** of what is going on at local level by:

- Reading local newspapers where council proceedings are reported.
- Attending council meetings as an observer in the public area or via webcasts where these are available. If webcasts are not available, ask your elected representatives to make such a facility available and to allow council meetings to be more accessible to the public by whatever means possible. In addition, ask that all discussions and decisions taken be made available on the internet.
- Sign up to your council's database to receive e-alerts (via SMS or email), in which the council informs you of important issues such as water shortages, road closures, and planning consultations/decisions. Again, if e-alerts are not available, ask your local representatives to ensure that a council database is set up. Green councillors are already doing this but many local authorities do not yet have Green Party members to make this request for you.
- Check the attendance lists for council meetings to ensure you are being represented as fully as possible.

At work in your community...

Councillors David Healy, Joe Corr and Robert Kelly in Fingal County Council ensured the online broadcasting of council meetings

3. On local issues that are important to you, such as development plans, local authority spending, traffic management, water quality, make your views known to your local authority so that they become aware of local opinion. You can do this in the following ways:

- Contact your elected representatives by phone, email, in writing or in person.
- Make a submission on local development plans.

- Ask your elected representatives to allow for a local plebiscite on vital local issues that will affect the whole community so that citizens can express their views through a direct vote.

At work in your community...

Councillors Caroline Burrell, Ciarán O'Brien and Steven Matthews in Bray, Co Wicklow proposed a motion, which was accepted by Bray Town Council, to set up a citizens' contact database in order to engage better with local residents on important local issue

- Ask your elected representatives to facilitate the use of citizens' petitions so that if enough signatures are gathered, a motion is tabled on which councillors must vote.
- Ask your elected representatives for the facility of e-surveys in which members of the public respond to texts or emails from their local authority seeking their opinion on specific issues.
- Ask your elected representatives to consider introducing a participatory budgeting process for part of the local authority budget.

In brief...

- **The Green Party believes that decision-making should be taken at the lowest effective level, as close as possible to the people affected by those decisions.**
- **Democracy and accountability are key issues for the Green Party.**
- **The white paper on local government reform being introduced by Minister John Gormley proposes changing the rules so that local citizens can participate and have their voices heard.**
- **You can participate more in local government by doing the following:**
 - **Use your vote.**
 - **Make yourself aware.**
 - **Make your views known.**

Stronger local economies

The Green Party has long recognised that **the global economy is intimately connected with the Earth's environment** and that climate change along with the impending arrival of 'peak oil', has a dramatic impact on the functioning of the world's economy. This is why the Green Party encourages a global transition from a growth-economy to a steady-state, low-carbon, green economy, with the lowest possible dependence on fossil fuels and on

practices that contribute to climate change.

At European level, a **'Green New Deal'** aims to create an economy driven by long-term prosperity, not short-term profiteering. It discourages the risky speculation and over-exploitation that traps us in a boom-to-bust cycle and promotes sustainable and ethical development under which prosperity is defined by the well-being of all people.

Transition to a low-carbon green economy begins with each individual and the community in which they live. It is about real active citizenship and involves making choices that are both environmentally and economically sustainable so that communities can increase their resilience to the impact of adverse external events.

The Green Party also recognises that Ireland's future economic success lies in the ability of our small to medium-sized businesses to compete both nationally and internationally. **We need to move away from an over-reliance on foreign direct investment and to develop home-grown enterprises** - in particular, green (low-carbon) enterprise - in an open and transparent manner that restores confidence in the Irish economy.

This transition to an indigenous green economy involves **a strong commitment from government on energy and communication costs in order to stimulate business**, as well as a commitment to funding research and development in the energy sector, which brings a large return and is key to stimulating the economy.

Minister Eamon Ryan has shown this commitment through a number of measures in the areas of energy efficiency, energy security, renewable energy production and an efficient communications structure including broadband. These measures are creating indigenous jobs.

In addition, Minister John Gormley has overseen the setting up of a **high level action group to advise on the development of Ireland's green economy** which will examine all

opportunities for economic stimulation and job creation in the new green economy, which is gaining momentum in both Europe and the USA.

There are other issues which must be addressed in order to stimulate the green economy, such as the provision of a sustainable, cohesive transport system, wages and exchange rates. These issues must be tackled in a creative manner in order to reverse the negative impact they have had on our economy to date.

At local level, the Green Party wants to help develop a thriving local enterprise culture in an appropriate and transparent manner, taking account of the need for sustainability and for accountability to all members of society. **Our objective is to strengthen local economies in order to reduce their exposure to global market fluctuations.** Green councillors support and facilitate community-based economies, where local and moral purchasing is paramount to the functioning of an efficient and vibrant local economy. This embodies the green philosophy 'think globally, act locally'.

Local authorities are well-placed to support and facilitate the transition to a low-carbon economy as quickly, smoothly and successfully as possible because **this transition is essentially local in nature.** For example, through good planning policy, local authorities can approve micro-generation projects for renewable energy. **Green councillors are best placed to drive the necessary actions for transition to a low-carbon economy at a local level** because of their in-depth understanding of the issues in question.

Supporting local business

Although local authorities do not traditionally have specific powers in the economic arena, the day-to-day operation of local authorities can have a significant impact on the local economy which in turn contributes to the national economy. In addition, there is a range of actions that local authorities can take to support and develop the business community. Research shows that where people feel invested in their community, they will know local businesses, buy from one another and feel connected to one another. Enterprise development is a core function of local authorities in Northern Ireland, and through local government reform the Green Party would like to see similar powers for all local authorities in the rest of the island.

Green jobs

The economic growth and jobs of the future will come from the new clean technologies, which will also mitigate some of our environmental problems. The Green Party nationally has demonstrated its capacity to safeguard vital investment in key areas such as energy, which will lead to huge growth in the green jobs sector.

Communications

The Green Party is strongly committed to improving communications that will drive business development. Eamon Ryan as Minister for Energy and Communications has worked hard to deliver the next generation broadband.

The rollout of the national broadband scheme began in January 2009 and the aim is to achieve 100% broadband coverage throughout Ireland by September 2010. In addition, all second-level schools will be provided with 100Mbit connectivity commencing in January 2009.

Tourism

The Green Party recognises the large contribution of tourism to the local economy. We want to develop a tourism industry that places greater emphasis on activity holidays such as cycling, walking, angling, sailing, horse-riding; a policy that promotes the very essence of Irish country living and its landscape.

At work in your community...

Councillor Mark Dearey in Louth has revived the Dundalk St Patrick's Day parade. An estimated 30,000 people attended this year's event



Agriculture

Current agricultural policies have let the farming community down. The Green Party wants to see Ireland's farmers and producers establishing world-class products and becoming market leaders by excelling in green production techniques, reducing chemical and energy inputs – which will cut costs – and rejecting genetically-modified (GM) crops throughout the island. The Green Party's programme plans for the development of appropriately-scaled enterprises in close proximity to areas of agricultural production or in new rural enterprise zones located in towns. Trevor Sargent, Minister of State for Food and Horticulture, is strongly pursuing these aims at national and international level.

Forestry

Woodlands and forests play an essential role in providing us with fresh air, clean water, fertile soil and a stable climate. Trees help prevent soil erosion, drought and flooding, yet only 4% of our land area is tree covered. From a functional

and economic point of view, trees are one of the most important renewable and sustainable resources available to this country. Trees are also of great aesthetic value and contribute to the lives of all.

At work in your community...

Councillors Caroline Burrell and Ciarán O'Brien tabled a successful motion at Bray Town Council to have the town declared a 'GMO-free zone' banning the growth of genetically modified organisms within the boundaries of the town



Stronger local economies

In brief...

- The Green Party advocates a transition to a low-carbon (green) economy, with all of the economic, social and environmental benefits that entails.
- The Green Party believes that this transition begins at a local level.
- The Green Party wants to develop a thriving local enterprise culture in an appropriate and transparent manner taking account of the need for sustainability and accountability to all members of society.
- Our objective is to strengthen local economies in order to reduce their exposure to global market fluctuations.
- Ministers Eamon Ryan, John Gormley and Trevor Sargent have taken action at national level to lay the groundwork for transition to a new green economy, which Green councillors are ready to follow through on at local level.



The planning process

At a local level the Green Part insists on the rigorous application of new legislation and a transparent and professional decision, planning and enforcement process. At local level Green councillors work to ensure:

Urban planning

That the focus of residential planning is on the creation of long-term sustainable communities with priority given to appropriate community facilities prior to the building of houses and that climate change proofing is incorporated into all local authority decision-making procedures. Also that all local development plans lay down standards on energy efficiency and the use of renewables, based on improved building standards introduced by Minister John Gormley in 2008.

At work in your community...

Councillors Caroline Burrell, Ciarán O'Brien and Steven Matthews on Bray Town Council were instrumental in having an urban habitat map produced for Bray, Co Wicklow. This can now be used in making future planning decisions.

Landscape planning

That local landscape managers and landscape plans fully include the terms of the European landscape convention and that new regional and national parks are established in areas of high amenity.

Rural planning

That local authorities buy or compulsorily purchase land banks around villages and provide serviced sites at cost to residents so that shops, schools and other facilities and amenities are located within walking distance. Also that rural planning policies give preference to those who make an economic contribution to the rural community in which they wish to live.

Land use

That in keeping with the recommendations of the Kenny Report (1973) local authorities establish a development levy mechanism to

ensure maximum benefit from land rezoning; and that revenue generated in this manner is used for the benefit of the community, including through the provision of community facilities.

At work in your community...

Councillors Ciarán O'Brien, Caroline Burrell and Steven Matthews in Bray, Co Wicklow helped protect local residents from flooding by contributing to the prevention of a major new housing development at the mouth of the river Dargle. They also succeeded in having Bray Head designated as a special amenity area.

Housing

The numbers waiting on housing lists show that the property boom failed to meet the needs of ordinary people. Practices such as land speculation and the hoarding of zoned land distorted the housing market and impeded the provision of affordable housing. Again, Minister John Gormley followed through on Green Party policy with the **housing (miscellaneous provisions) bill 2008**. At local level our councillors ensure the full implementation of this legislation so that:

New housing developments

All housing action plans incorporate a sustainable communities ethos and all new housing developments include a mix of social, affordable and owner-occupied housing. Also that greater options for sheltered housing for the elderly are provided in the private, social and affordable housing sectors.

Established developments

Outside bodies (management companies) cannot be allowed by local authorities to take over the management of an estate without the support of the majority of residents and management agents are strictly policed by the national property services regulatory authority. Also that local authorities work to ensure a high uptake among householders of newly available grants for insulation and energy efficiency under the home energy savings scheme, the warmer homes scheme and the greener homes scheme, which the Green Party has initiated in government.

Social and affordable housing

Social housing is placed at the centre of local authority housing service plans and the availability of a sufficient number of social and affordable housing units is ensured to clear the waiting lists. Also that developers are prohibited from using land or financial transfer to opt out of building social housing units within new residential schemes so that 20% of new developments consist of social and affordable units.

At work in your community...

Councillors Ciarán O'Brien, Caroline Burrell and Steven Matthews ensured that the Luas line will be extended to Bray, Co Wicklow

Infrastructure

Green councillors seek to ensure that all development plans include relevant infrastructure such as schools, light rail, health centres, shops, sport and recreational facilities, libraries, parks, open spaces, community spaces, galleries and museums with the help of the [sustainable urban development guidelines \(2009\)](#) and the planning and development legislation being introduced by Green Minister John Gormley.

At work in your community...

Councillor Malcolm Noonan, Kilkenny County Council, secured record funding for the rollout of cycle lanes in Kilkenny

Transport

Ireland is one of the most car dependent countries in the world. The Green Party's policy on transport contains a comprehensive package of measures aimed at shifting Ireland's transport focus from unsustainable road building to the provision of quality public transport operating at maximum efficiency along with well-designed walking and cycling routes (for details on the Government's Cycle to Work scheme, which was introduced in January, see: www.bikescheme.ie.)

Our policy aims to improve the quality of life in our streets, towns, and rural areas, reduce traffic deaths and injuries, improve accessibility, reduce our national fuel bill and reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

At work in your community...

Councillor Brian Meaney, who sits on Clare County Council, campaigned for a commuter rail service between Ennis and Limerick, which is now up and running and has exceeded all expectations. Brian has also been a main driving force behind the campaign for the western rail corridor

At present, local authorities do not have direct control over many aspects of transport policy and the Green Party would like to see this change so that local transport needs are met efficiently within the context of national transport policy.

At work in your community...

Councillors Gene Feighery, Ruairí Holohan, Terence Corish and Tom Kivlehan ensured that Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council are leading the way in the introduction of recharging points for electric vehicles

Planning better communities

In brief...

- The Green Party advocates more efficient use of public resources and a more transparent planning system to create sustainable communities through qualitative development rather than quantitative expansion.
- Our challenge now is to redesign communities to better serve their purpose – to deliver a better quality of life.
- Minister John Gormley has ensured the strengthening of planning legislation through various legislative instruments.
- Green councillors ensure the adoption of these strategies into development plans and local area plans to optimise development of new and existing communities.



Creating closer communities

The Green Party recognises that community development is fundamental to the creation of better communities that offer a good quality of life. We believe that the sound development of a community depends on the active participation of as many members of that community as possible. The extent to which individuals can participate in their community is dependent on the services and facilities available to them.

Local authorities, therefore, have a significant role to play in building communities through good planning and the provision of housing, community spaces and inclusive services.

Green Party councillors are committed to social and environmental justice, which can be achieved only through the endeavours of strong communities.

Community spaces

Community spaces are a key issue in the development of community. Community groups require low-cost facilities in which to meet and carry out their activities and young people, in particular, require places to go where they can gather together in an unstructured way without being accused of anti-social behaviour. All members of the community require sport and recreation facilities to improve their quality of life.

In the consultation leading to the development of a national play strategy for Ireland, more than 2,000 children wrote to the Minister for Children, identifying play and recreation as a major quality of life issue for them. Article 31 of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** recognises "the right of the child to engage in play and recreational activities". Yet, many children live in communities with minimum or no play and recreational facilities.

At work in your community...

Councillor Tony McDermott was central in persuading South Dublin County Council to participate in the Dublin mountains partnership. The partnership aims to develop and promote sustainable outdoor recreational activities and has commenced construction of a mountain walking trail from Tallaght to Dún Laoghaire



At work in your community...

Councillor David Healy successfully campaigned to have three new playgrounds installed in his local area Howth, Baldoye and Bayside

Safer communities

Our educational system, the planning of our housing estates, support for community and family structures and reduction of social disadvantage, must be addressed as part of any considered response to the deterioration in our communities.

Anti-social behaviour results in the destruction of community facilities, the undermining of law and order and the generation of fear in householders, especially the elderly. However, the Green Party does not believe that anti-social behaviour orders (Asbos) address the real issues behind such behaviour and supports alternative responses to Asbos.

Education

The Green Party is strongly committed to investment in our education system on a lifelong basis from early development through to adult education. We believe that failure to invest in education leads to serious inequalities in society which, in the long-term, lead to suffering for all, whether through increased taxes, an increased crime rate or a reduction in our economic potential.

Budgetary constraints due to the current economic downturn mean that in this area, in particular, we have had to accept cuts which are highly unpalatable. The Green Party has worked hard in government to mitigate the effects of these cuts as much as possible.

Although local authorities do not have overall authority in the area of education, they nonetheless contribute in many ways to the educational environment in their local area.

At work in your community...

Councillor Mark Dearey set up a drugs advisory group in Dundalk. This has brought service providers together and has made a real impact in dealing with the drug problem in Dundalk.



Health

The Green Party recognises that what is most important in keeping us healthy for most of our life is not the health service but how we live. Our community and environment can help us or hinder us in choosing a healthy lifestyle. Although health does not fall under the remit of local authorities per se, they play a major role in shaping the environment in which we live through planning decisions, housing, transport, water and sanitation and as such have a vital role to play in helping people to live healthy lives and in working with the health services to help people recover from illness.

At work in your community...

Councillor Niall O Brolchain when he served as mayor of Galway city was instrumental in having Galway designated a World Health Organisation (WHO) healthy city

Arts and culture

The Green Party believes that the arts and culture are key facets in building a strong sense of community and identity.

Built heritage

The Green Party believes that the scale of development in Ireland in the recent past has created a need for action to protect Ireland's valuable stock of built heritage.

Irish language

Tagann cosaint na Gaeilge le bunphrionsabail an Chomhaontais Ghlais. Creidimid go bhfuil sé den riachtanas acmhainní a chaomhnú ionas go mbeidh an tsochaí ina mairimid inmharthanach amach anseo. Is acmhainn thábhachtach chultúrtha do phobal na hÉireann í an Ghaeilge, ach is acmhainn leochaileach, leonta í ar ghá í a chosaint. Tá ról lárnach ag údaráis áitiúla i gcur chun cinn na Gaeilge trí na seirbhísí poiblí a chuireann siad ar fáil. Is féidir leis na húdaráis áitiúla a chinntiú gur féidir le gach duine seirbhísí poiblí a fháil i nGaeilge más mian leis/ léi.

Equality

One of the key aims of the Green Party is to provide for the inclusion of all members of society, both socially and economically, thereby enhancing everybody's quality of life. We are therefore committed to working towards equality in all aspects of our business both internally and externally. We do so by actively discouraging all forms of discrimination and social injustice as they occur and by ensuring that all barriers to participation in our endeavours are removed as appropriate. We actively seek to accommodate diversity and we work towards achieving equal outcomes across the nine grounds covered under equality legislation; gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of the Travelling community.

Housing is one of the main areas in which local authorities can promote equality. However, there is a wide range of actions in other areas, which local authorities can take in conjunction with other agencies through city and county development boards.



Creating closer communities

In brief...

- Community development is fundamental to the creation of better communities that offer a good quality of life.
- Local authorities have a significant role to play in creating better communities through good planning and the provision of housing, community spaces and inclusive services.



Growing greener communities

The Green Party has long supported a **'green lifestyle' with the least impact on natural resources**, in recognition of the fact that this is the only way to sustain our environment, our economy and ultimately, our society.

We have seen the impact of climate change in terms of environmental and humanitarian disasters as well as its effects on the global economy. There is no longer an alternative option; **we must change direction and choose**

a greener path or face dire consequences.

Transition to a low-carbon, green economy and society begins at local level; in fact, it begins with each one of us.

Local authorities are well-placed to facilitate this change through planning policy and the operation of their services, which largely dictate the extent to which individuals can switch to a greener lifestyle.

Climate change

Ireland's obligations with regard to climate change are guided by international, European and national commitments, including the Kyoto protocol, the EU's Emission Trading Scheme (ETS), and our own national climate change strategy.

Local authorities can have a significant influence over climate change in their local areas, both directly through reduction of their own energy-use emissions and procurement activities; awareness-raising and stimulation of action in local communities; and indirectly through the exercise of their housing, planning and other statutory functions.

CO2 emissions could be drastically reduced with existing technologies through a combination of energy efficiency in housing, locally-based renewable energy generation, waste recovery, food production and a reduced need to travel, all of which can be facilitated to a large extent by local authorities.

Because of the influence that local authorities have on this highly important area, they are encouraged through the above instruments to develop climate change strategies and to adopt climate change proofing across all of their operations.

The environment

Irish implementation of EU environmental legislation to date is one of the worst in Europe. A significant proportion of environment-related complaints to the European Commission come from Irish citizens. The complaints against Ireland cover many issues including failure to control illegal waste activities, decline in water quality, heritage sites under attack from development and lack of or poor environmental and social impact assessments. While the Environmental Protection Agency acts as the ultimate environmental management body in Ireland, the implementation and enforcement of most environmental legislation rests with local authorities.

At work in your community...

Green members of Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council successfully campaigned for the introduction of local climate change strategies

Waste

The Green Party believes that waste should be minimised first and foremost through reduction followed by reuse and then recycling. Local authorities can become leaders in this area and set an example to local business by ensuring that the amount of waste they themselves produce is reduced to an absolute minimum.

The reuse of materials by local authorities in house-building and infrastructural projects could also make a significant local impact on the amount of waste for disposal. Finally, a strict recycling system within all local authorities would not only reduce the amount of waste for landfill but also encourage local business growth in the recycling sector.

Water

The Green Party recognises the paramount importance of water as a vital natural resource which needs strong protection to ensure its continued supply. For this reason, Minister John Gormley has invested heavily in the national water infrastructure and funding in this area has now reached record levels. The Green Party believes this area has been under-resourced for years but proper funding at central level will now produce an impact at local level. Although water supply is controlled at national level, local authorities have a significant input into the delivery of water services locally with regard to fresh drinking water and sewage treatment.

At work in your community...

Councillor Niall O Brolchain campaigned for and succeeded in getting Ireland's first three-bin domestic waste collection system up and running in Galway city. The introduction of a brown bin for food waste was a first for Ireland. Galway has consistently led the way in recycling rates achieving

a domestic recycling rate of more than 50%. All domestic food waste is composted in a purpose-built municipal composting facility in Carrowbrowne and the compost is then spread on the city's parks. This work led to changed public perception about the need for an incinerator in Galway.



Energy

The Green Party believes that this country's energy supply must move away from carbon to new and clean sources, not only to tackle climate change both nationally and globally but also to reduce our high dependence on imported fossil fuels, a dependence which drains our economy and leaves us in a weakened position with regard to fuel and food security. For this reason, Minister Eamon Ryan has invested substantially in renewable energy research and development. In the long-term, this investment will decrease our dependence on expensive imported fossil fuels thereby improving our economy through lowered production costs and the creation of indigenous jobs.

In local government, Green Party councillors have succeeded in encouraging some local authorities to conduct energy audits and switch to green electricity; and have also lobbied for greater energy conservation in new buildings.

At work in your community...

Councillors David Healy, Joe Corr and Robert Kelly successfully campaigned to put high energy standards into local area plans in Fingal County Council. The standards achieved were for 60% less energy usage in new houses. The local area plans also contained a requirement for a certain amount of green energy to be used. This has since led to a major change in national legislation with the introduction of the building energy rating (BER) scheme

At work in your community...

Councillors Gene Feighery, Ruairi Holohan, Terence Corish and Tom Kivlehan ensured that all electricity used in Council buildings in DunLaoghaire-Rathdown is now from 100 per cent renewable sources.

Grow your own food

The Green Party believes that local food growth forms an important component of a healthy community. For this reason, we recently launched a campaign to 'get Ireland growing' (for more details see www.getgrowing.ie.)

We support more organic and local food production in an effort to reduce wasteful transportation, provide local employment, and strengthen links between producers and consumers – an integral part of reducing our climate change emissions and increasing food security. We therefore encourage local authorities to support local food growing initiatives.

Local authorities can play a significant role in increasing food security by encouraging more locally grown food with provisions for allotments, community gardens and urban vegetable growing.

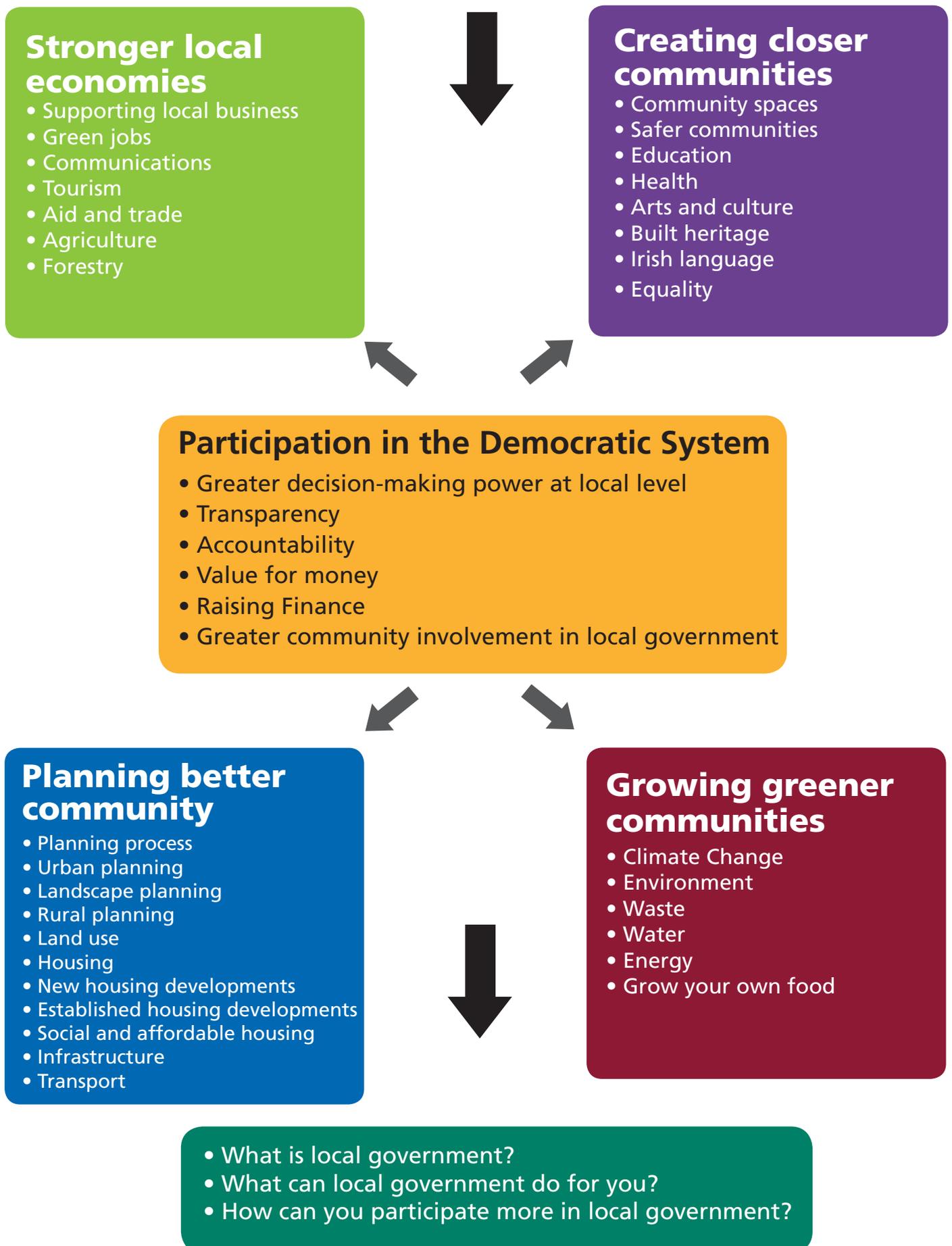


In brief...

- Green communities are strong communities.
- The Green Party believes that a 'green lifestyle' with the least impact on natural resources is the only way to sustain not only our environment but also our economy and ultimately our society.
- The impact of climate change on our economy, society and environment is now vividly apparent. There is no longer an alternative option; we must change direction and choose a greener path or face dire consequences economically, socially and environmentally.
- Transition to a low-carbon, green society begins with individuals and the communities in which they live.
- Local authorities are well-placed to facilitate this change and Green councillors have a deep understanding of the issues involved.



Building Better Communities





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