



**“When you have cut down the last tree and polluted the last river,
you will know that you cannot eat money”**

Green Party Manifesto

Election 2002

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An Comhaontas Glas, The Green Party in Ireland, is working towards a society which values self-sufficiency, where the diversity of all human and natural life is respected and where decisions are made compassionately, with integrity, and at the most effective, community-based level of democracy.

The seeming prosperity of the so-called Celtic Tiger can still be turned to the advantage of all people and the space in which we share. We must create, not just meaningful jobs, but the means to get to those jobs; not just new high tech industries, but more hospital beds, more housing and an end to hospital and housing waiting lists. The basics of life: clean air, water and food are in limited supply. A new respect must be found for human rights and diversity, for life-long education, and for the democratic process itself. Violence and militarism must be opposed and the United Nations must be supported as the primary forum for the protection and promotion of the Earth and its inhabitants.

If ever Ireland needed a change in political thinking, it is now. Progress has been measured by the quantity rather than the quality of economic activity, which ignores the growing gap between rich and poor and remains apathetic to the long-term side effects of dumps, pollution and habitat destruction.

Industrial Age alley cat

The Celtic Tiger has been behaving like an Industrial Age alley cat. The current Tribunals are slowly revealing that not only were the established parties pursuing corrupt policies, but that many of the politicians who supported them were and are corrupt and dishonest.

Green Party/Comhaontas Glas elected representatives have been to the fore in insisting that corrupt practices in land rezoning and cronyism are investigated.

The Cost of Economic Growth

It is cold comfort for the government to declare that the economy is growing. For most people this means longer travelling distances, more cars on the road, rising house prices and higher childcare costs as both parents are forced into the labour market to finance huge mortgages. Even more unforgivable is the fact that over 5000 people are homeless in Ireland today [Focus Ireland, 2002] and that Ireland has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the OECD (Unicef, June 2000).

A Need for Green Politics

Low voter turnout and young peoples apathy towards politics is a very worrying trend. It reflects a basic cynicism and mistrust created not just by corrupt politicians and corrupt politics, but by arrogant politicians who ignore public opinion (e.g. Hugh O'Flaherty case) and who renege on Manifesto promises to the electorate (e.g. Fianna Fáils promised referendum on Partnership for Peace).

There is a need for a new politics, which seeks to inspire and put credibility back into the political process while also setting out how humans can live well without destroying the natural world. There is an urgent need for Green Politics.

Economics as if People Mattered

Quality of Life is suffering. Despite rapid economic growth, we still have great poverty, inequalities in access to education and healthcare, illiteracy, homelessness and a sharp deterioration in our living space.

Finance

Tracking Quality of Life

Measuring the amounts of money being spent in the form of gross national product and gross domestic product fails to differentiate between money spent on improving life and money spent repairing damage. New tracking measurements to monitor changes in quality of life, community development and environmental well-being are essential.

Financial incentives and sanctions are needed to direct investment into creating an equitable, stable and sustainable society, particularly in the areas of healthcare, childcare, housing, education, and environmental well-being.

The fraudulent behaviour of some financial institutions demands radical reform of the financial sector. Legislation promoting comprehensive financial responsibility will be a priority for the Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas in Government.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will introduce a range of financial measures to ensure eco-friendly economic policies, more social banking and investment, greater investment in local government and true equality in earning power.

In Government, the Green Party will

- Transfer the bias in the collection of taxes from taxes on income to eco- taxes. This will mean different - not more - taxation;
- Increase the proportion of tax take by 0.5% of GDP per annum through additional taxes other than personal taxation (e.g. corporation tax, tax on industrial fuel etc.)
- Weight expenditure on transport in favour of public transport, non-private motor car use, pedestrianisation, and cycleways;
- Legislate to confer favoured status on a non-profit directed financial sector, e.g. the Credit Union Movement;
- Introduce a 5% Social Solidarity Levy on the profits of banks and financial institutions;
- Ensure that ethical investment is adhered to in all areas of government activity;
- Increase expenditure on Community Development;
- Establish fiscal measures to assist parents who wish to care for their own children;
- Reverse the damage done by Individualisation with a phased introduction of Refundable Tax Credits for all.

Social, Community and Family Affairs

PRSI and Levies

The myth of Pay Related Social Insurance as an insurance fund has now all but faded. It is a flat rate tax both on workers and on the privilege of employers employing workers. We believe that existing levies should be incorporated into general PRSI payments and that employers PRSI should be reduced. The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will diminish use of taxes on labour in favour of other more environmentally sustainable sources of taxation.

Social Welfare Reform Incorporating a Refundable Tax Credit (RTC)

There is a real danger that the plight of large numbers of people excluded from the benefits of the Celtic Tiger economy are being ignored. Irish society needs a radical approach to ensure the inclusion of all Irish people in the benefits of the present economy.

The Green Party will continue to work towards a Refundable Tax Credit system. This will provide adequate income guarantee for all and will help avoid many of the negative side effects inherent in social welfare payments.

Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Ensuring Responsible Trading

Lessening reliance on multinational investment and building sustainable small and medium sized enterprises is a major plank of Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas policy. We will initiate tax-free dividends for entrepreneurs to lessen over-dependence on multinational investment and to encourage local enterprise and productivity.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will introduce a capped tax-free dividend relief for owners of newly incorporated businesses subject to the introduction of an appropriate profit-sharing scheme for employees within individual companies.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas believes that international trade and investment should be carried on within a shared global responsibility to ensure prudent consumption of resources.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas wants Ireland to develop an ethically-based trade policy that respects the environment and human rights. The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas supports reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to ensure transparency and participation by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other representatives of civil society. Reforms must also ensure the removal of WTOs negative attitude to national environmental and human rights standards as barriers to trade.

Transnational Corporations (TNCs) now control over two-thirds of all international trade and most international investment. The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas supports the concept of a UN Convention on Corporate Accountability, that would be legally binding and enforced in the global market place.

Strengthening Employment and Training

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will continue to support the social economy through continued support for Community Employment as well as the more recently introduced Social Economy Programme.

Research shows that small firms do not invest sufficiently in training to meet their needs. The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will target the National Training Fund at the under-resourced SME sector. In addition, The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will promote a comprehensive and fully resourced national Business Environmental Training programme.

Targeting young people specifically, the party will ensure that school leavers who do not go on to third level education are provided with the opportunity to acquire a national skills qualification. In addition, we will promote and properly resource policies by FcS and other organisations to ensure that the numbers of long-term unemployed do not increase with any downturn in the Irish economy.

Finally, the Green Party will allocate d1.27 million per annum for three years, to an Information Society Fund to provide training and awareness activities for electronic technologies in all sectors including the home.

Protecting Workers

To protect the rights of workers, the Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Strengthen the provisions in the Protection of Young People in Employment Act, to end the abuse of young people in employment and encourage longer participation in full-time education;
- Introduce legislation to encourage tele-working and home working;
- Examine legislation allowing Sunday and late-night trading;
- Introduce paid paternity leave.

Making Industry Responsible

Industry must bear the costs of protecting the environment against its activities. A rigorous implementation of the polluter pays principle would minimise waste and pollution as well as ensuring that prices more fully reflect their true industrial costs.

The Green Party proposes the establishment of a Commission on Sustainable Business to identify business-friendly ways of promoting sustainability.

Serious consideration will be given to requiring all legally incorporated bodies with a turnover above a set limit to conduct an annual environmental audit as a matter of course.

Environmentally negligent companies that are prosecuted by the EPA for breaches of legislation or licenses will be required to complete an annual and publicly available environmental audit on all of their activities.

Protecting the Consumer - a New Department of Consumer Affairs

The spectre of smoke rising from burning pyres piled high with dead farm animals and BSE-infected cattle being fed to incinerators are shocking images we've been forced to face in the past two years.

The beef tribunals, the salmonella scares, the dioxin scandals in Belgium, BSE and Foot and Mouth have highlighted an agricultural industry stumbling from crisis to crisis.

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas will:

- Create a new Department of Consumer Affairs dedicated to consumer protection taking the responsibility for safe food production away from the Department of Agriculture and giving the consumer an equal voice at Cabinet level;
- Introduce consumer legislation to tighten regulations on the labelling of goods, particularly in the food industry;
- Halt the fluoridation of Irish water;
- Establish a public information programme to ensure that consumers are made aware, not only of their rights, but also of the need to take on ethical and environmental considerations when making consumer decisions;
- Introduce a ban on toy advertisements.

Science and Technology

The Green Party wants to see an innovative economy that develops and promotes appropriate technologies that serve people, promote self-reliance, and protect nature. However, the destructive potential of science and technology cannot be ignored.

Sustainable Technology

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will :

- Initiate research and development which contributes to sustainability, such as organic farming, recycling technology and alternative energy sources (eg. wind);
- Ensure that the Precautionary Principle applies to any technologies, such as the growing of genetically modified crops, shown to have the potential to cause damage to people or the environment;
- Promote and resource information technology with necessary infrastructure as a means of democratising society, improving access to information, and providing a mass tool of education;
- Allocate more grant aid for post-graduate scientific research and establish a teaching qualification scheme to enable post-graduate and experienced scientists and engineers to gain teaching qualifications.

Genetic Research

The artificial alteration of the genetic make-up of organisms, including ourselves, presents many

challenges and opportunities .

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas welcomes the opportunities that genetic modification technology, properly applied, could offer for the alleviation or cure of disease; for the study of genomes of all organisms for the benefit of humans, animals and the biosphere; and for the development of an agriculture which is sustainable, low in chemical, energy and pesticide input, and which is applicable to small farmers world-wide.

However, the Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas calls for:

- The establishment of a GM Regulator;
- A moratorium on further releases of GMOs into the environment;
- Independent testing, to pharmaceutical standards, of products derived from GMOs.

Ensuring Social Justice

The Green Party believes that the most efficient way of providing quality of life for all is to minimise the gap between rich and poor and to improve accessibility to community services.

Health and Children

New Structures

The Health Service must be restructured as a matter of urgency. A Green health service will focus on community care provided for by local community health services. These services will be adequately funded and represented on the relevant health boards. The Green Party will work towards the provision of significant resources to local clinics and district hospitals through a policy of decentralisation of health care facilities, based on three interrelated levels of care.

Level One will consist of general practitioners, nurses and polyclinics with multidisciplinary teams for every appropriate field, as well as community hospitals for minor procedures;

Level Two will consist of Regional Hospitals with higher technology capabilities, e.g. hip replacements.

Level Three will consist of high technology, specialist hospitals, e.g. kidney transplants.

Greater Transparency

There must be greater transparency and accountability in the health area. The Green Party will create a Health Ombudsman Office with remit to investigate environmental health risks as well as disputes concerning the provision of health care. In addition, accountable health service managers will be employed to make best use of available resources.

Health impact assessments will be mandatory and will be independently conducted whenever a new potentially hazardous industry is planned. In addition, research will be conducted into baseline levels of dioxins, PCBs, Fluorides, etc.

Choices for the people will not be made by the State. Enforced mass medication such as the fluoridation of the water supply will be stopped. In addition, immunisation programmes need to be constantly monitored, not just for effectiveness in reducing a particular disease but also for adverse health effects, so that parents can make informed decisions about their childrens health.

The Irish Medicines Board should not be responsible for alternative medicine. An alternative regulatory system is needed. At the same time, alternative medical practitioners must conform to recognised standards of qualification.

Finally, the lessons learned from health related scandals such as the Blood Transfusion Scandal and the Organ Retention Scandal will be subjected to ongoing structural reviews and appropriate structural changes will be implemented.

Catering for Special Needs

Catering for the needs of certain groups within society requires changes in attitudes and in the provision of services.

We support:

- New Disability legislation that incorporates the principle of needs and rights - based assessment in consultation with disability groups. We will pursue a constitutional amendment on the Disability Rights issue, if necessary;
- The phasing in of medical card eligibility to people living with a registered disability;
- The removal of mental illness as a taboo subject in Irish society and a recognition of the role that alternative health practices can play in the treatment of mental illness;
- The expansion of domiciliary services and community healthcare to assist the elderly, chronically sick, and physically or mentally disabled to be cared for in the home rather than in institutions, and to provide support structures for those who are carers in the home;
- The promotion and extension of the hospice movement;
- Womens choice of home or hospital/nursing home birth and extended paternity leave to complement maternity leave;
- A focus on childrens health needs, with particular reference to the link between poverty and ill-health;
- The introduction of the Medical Card for all children on a phased basis;
- Particular attention to the health needs of the Travelling community;
- The belief that drug abuse must be treated as a health as well as a justice issue.
- The location of heroin treatment facilities in the community where addicts are from.
- The investment of more money and resources into getting addicts completely of drugs.
- The targeting of alcohol abuse

Ensuring Childrens Rights

Government policy must be more child-centred and there are needs for radical reforms in childcare and in residential care, areas depended upon by some of our most vulnerable children.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Establish an Ombudsman for Children;
- Initiate a Charter of Rights for Children based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and greatly strengthen the National Childrens Strategy;
- Base childcare initiatives on the needs of the child and parents rather than on the needs of the workplace
- Increase support to home-based childcare;

- Re-direct the childcare provisions of £290m in the National Development towards more creative policies such as substantial long-term maternity/paternity leave;
- Ensure that a range of childcare facilities are put in place prioritising access and affordability for those living on low incomes;
- Ensure that all pre-school children from the age of three will have access to free pre-school education;
- Increase funding and support to enable reforms in our residential childcare service broadening the remit of the Irish Social Services Inspectorate to include the voluntary sector and foster care;
- Include the provision of play areas and sports facilities as integral criteria in planning.

Education

From the Cradle to the Grave

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas believes in education for the whole community for the whole of life. Education should not be market-led but should fulfil our individual needs - practical, creative, spiritual, intellectual, physical - as well as the needs of the broader community.

Equal Opportunities for all

If inequalities in our society have any chance of being redressed, funding at both pre-primary and primary level will have to be greatly increased with the present direction of funding towards third level re-balanced in favour of early education.

There is a need for more remedial teachers and increased resources as well as the expansion of the Early Start, Breaking the Cycle, and Life-Long Learning Programmes.

The education of those with disabilities will, wherever possible and with adequate resources, be mainstreamed in the regular education system and relevant teacher training skills will be provided. The Green Party will give legislative effect to overturning the Jamie Sinnott Supreme Court decision in order to ensure that all citizens receive education that is needs-based rather than aged-based. Schools which include children with special needs will be given special rates of capitation and class sizes reduced accordingly.

We will establish a Traveller Education Service within the Department of Education and Science and create an intercultural curriculum in primary and secondary schools.

Finally, we will give more state support and encouragement to the movement to educate children in the home.

Pre-School Structures

Pre-school education urgently requires the provision of comprehensive childcare structures with

the needs of the child and the parent, not of business, being the primary focus. Fiscal policy will be directed towards assisting one parent to remain at home with children, if they so wish.

Focus on Post-Primary

We will work towards replacing the Points System with a combination of exams, continuous assessment and interview.

League Tables will be opposed, not just because of their obsession with exam results but because of the negative effect such tables would have on attempts to create equal access and equality of education.

A target will be set to eliminate all Early School Leaving within four years.

Third Level Maintenance

All tuition fees will be abolished in third level colleges.

In the absence of a Refundable Tax Credit System, third level maintenance grants will be brought up to social welfare levels, a Central Grants Authority established, and material grants given to cover additional costs.

More investment will be made in purpose-built and on-campus student housing.

Every student parent will be provided with adequate childcare facilities and subsidies.

An entitlement based scheme for students with disabilities will be established to replace the Ministers Special Fund.

Adult Education

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Work to implement all the recommendations in the White Paper Learning for Life;
- Encourage paid education/training leave, and expand the Womens Education Initiative;
- Encourage more women to take up apprenticeships,
- Provide proper childcare facilities as a necessary pre-requisite for participation in life-long learning programmes;
- Ensure that self-learning cooperatives such as the University of the Third Age and Active
- Retirement Groups will be accommodated and given financial assistance.

An Teanga/Irish Language

Is cúis áthais dúinn í borradh na Gaelscolaíochta agus déanfaimid cinnte de go mbeidh na hacmhainní cearta ar fáil do naíonraí, do bhunscoileanna, do mheanscoileanna, do choláistí agus doideachas i gcomhair daoine fásta trí Gaeilge. Is mian linn go leanfaidh an seasamh fábharch i leith na Gaeilge.

We strongly welcome the growth of the Gaelscoileanna movement and will ensure that it is better resourced so that the movement can develop at second and third level as well as through

adult education. The present positive discrimination in favour of Irish will be maintained and kept under review.

Housing

Successive governments have failed in their basic duty to provide adequate accommodation for Ireland's people. It's nearly impossible for a young couple to buy their own home now. New house prices have risen by over 80% during the present Government's term of office. Local authority housing lists have expanded to nearly 60,000 as the building output for Council and other social housing falls further behind. The number of homeless has nearly doubled to 5,000. Crowning this abysmal state in the housing sector are the revelations of the current tribunals, highlighting the scandalous subversion of the planning process in favour of property speculators and corrupt politicians.

The Rental Sector

The housing crisis requires rent control and price control. If such is seen as unconstitutional, the Green Party will call for a constitutional referendum to ensure that the common good takes precedence over the rights associated with private property ownership.

Long-delayed legislation reforming the private rental sector will be immediately introduced and both tenants and landlords' rights will be more clearly and equitably defined.

Lack of security of tenure and low standards of some accommodation will be assisted by a phased increase in statutory minimum notice to quit and an introduction of incremental increases based on length of tenure.

Effective Land Use

We will ensure the siting of developments and the use of high plot ratios near transport links and the development of mixed estates, in terms of both private and social housing and in house size.

We will vigorously use the Derelict Sites Act to counteract land speculation and speed up the provision of affordable housing.

We will introduce a Windfall Tax on increases in value on development land caused through rezoning to benefit local communities.

Sustainable Housing Development

Planning permissions will require all new housing developments to have adequate facilities, including play areas. Housing schemes will have to provide a mixture of housing sizes and tenures. We will encourage more mixed residential/commercial developments in inner city areas.

Increased subsidies will be provided to promote energy-efficiency and energy rating will be introduced to all homes. The eco-villages movement and cooperative housing projects will receive strong support.

Much greater subsidies will be provided towards non-profit housing organisations, local authority shared ownership schemes, schemes which promote housing renovation and refurbishment, and self-build schemes.

Programmes for rural resettlement will be encouraged through partnership with voluntary bodies. We will also promote such methods as shared ownership and ecological self-build housing.

Local Authority Housing

Existing local authority accommodation, with energy conservation as a major ingredient, will be upgraded in order to achieve suitable accommodation with less new construction.

Improvements in low demand estates will be prioritised. Local authority estate management systems, which deal with problem tenants, will be improved. The current system of local authority loans will be extended to low income people.

Housing for our most vulnerable citizens

Local authority housing for people with disabilities will be integrated into as many housing schemes as possible. The prospective buyers of such housing will be actively involved in its design and planning.

For people in other tenures, the Disabled Persons Grant, which is available to pay towards the cost of adaptations, will be index-linked and paid uniformly throughout the country.

A national plan for a network of halting sites will be drawn up in consultation with Travellers. This will be backed by legislation to oblige local authorities to provide those sites.

There is an urgent need for an increase in emergency accommodation for our growing number of homeless. The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will establish an emergency response service for homeless people similar to the freephone associated with Childline. In addition, we will increase funding and support for groups working with the homeless.

Balancing Nature with Human Activity

Environmental Protection

Protecting our environment will form an integral part of everything the Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will do in Government. The policies we advocate for each Government Department are fully connected with environmental concerns and are integral to any attempts to improve Quality of Life.

Environment and Local Government

National Spatial Planning Strategy and Guidelines

It is essential that there is a comprehensive framework for planning and sustainable development in Ireland. The Green Party will produce a national spatial plan, to include within a single framework, policies for the development of regional centres and transportation, as well as the location of industry and educational institutions across the country to counteract the pressure being placed on Dublin.

Environmental Action Plan

In Government, the Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will :

- Seek a cabinet portfolio for a Department for Sustainable Development which will work closely with all other government departments to ensure that all policies adhere to strict principles of sustainable development;
- Restructure and properly resource the Environmental Protection Agency, making it stronger and more effective;
- Ensure that local authorities, in co-operation with NGOs, draw up plans for sustainable development;
- Put in place a national Zero Waste Management Plan with specific targets for comprehensive recycling and waste reduction programmes on a local ward basis;
- Mainstream Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) , i.e. extend the responsibility of producers for the environmental impacts of their products through the entire product life cycle, especially for their take-back, recycling, and disposal;
- Oppose all plans for incinerators and superdumps;
- Introduce regulations limiting the size and duration of waste disposal facilities and insist on the pre-treatment of any disposed waste;
- Examine the role and functions of the Radiological Protection Institute;
- Establish a national regulatory body responsible for monitoring and controlling the risks posed by electro-magnetic radiation, fulfilling international obligations;
- Require local authorities to draft and implement Water Quality Management Plans for their rivers, lakes, harbours and bays and insist that EU drinking water and bathing water standards are rigorously met;
- Increase funding for the National Development Plan towards the Cleaner Production Programmes to ensure that clean production is at the heart of all water plans, catchment-

based initiatives and river basin plans;

- Introduce greater fines and other penalties under the Water Pollution Act, and increase the powers for bodies licensed under that Act to prosecute;
- End the fluoridation of local authority drinking water supplies;
- Insist on strict implementation of the Polluter Pays principle in all aspects of environmental legislation;
- Rationalise the status of areas of ecological importance, through the immediate introduction by legislation of National Heritage Areas.
- Oppose another runway at Dublin Airport in the interests of decentralisation and to avoid noise pollution.

Nuclear Power

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Use all international agreements and diplomatic opportunities to close MOX, the THORP and Sellafield reprocessing plants and to halt the transport of spent nuclear fuel through the Irish Sea.
- Insist that decommissioning of Sellafield and all British nuclear plants must commence immediately;
- Make full use of the Anglo-Irish conference to have the Sellafield issue raised as a primary issue of concern;
- Work for a sustainable, non-nuclear EU energy policy to replace the present pro-nuclear focus of the Euratom Treaty, and seek to amend the Treaty to oversee the safe decommissioning of nuclear plants and safe disposal/storage of nuclear waste.

Climate Change and Ireland

It is now clear that the Earth is in the grips of dramatic weather changes and that global warming is occurring at levels far greater than predicted. It is also clear that the Irish Government is in the grips of inertia in its response. The Government has produced a National Climate Change Strategy document, which is full of generalisations and aspirations with a hollow commitment to introduce energy taxes.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas is very definite in its commitments and will:

- Introduce a carbon tax on the industrial uses of energy;
- Ensure fuel tax is spent on public transport and other energy conservation measures;
- Ensure that some of the monies from eco-taxes are directed to measures to counteract the effects of climate change:
- Promote wind, wave, biomass and solar energy;
- Expand R & D into all renewable sources of energy;
- Set a target of 20% of electricity production through renewable resources by 2010;
- Ensure that building regulations and building construction are ecologically based;
- Support increased afforestation, favouring the planting of deciduous, hardwood forests.

Maintaining Our Communities

Green policies will ensure that Ireland can be a modern, vibrant and progressive society. It is possible to feed nations, transport large numbers of people and goods, build communities or harness vital energy supplies without destroying or squandering resources for future generations.
Public Enterprise

Transport - Getting Around without Costing the Earth

We propose a National Transport Authority to replace the National Roads Authority. The National Transport Authority's duties will include the implementation of transport development within the National Spatial Strategy. We will give Local Authorities the responsibility for preparing Mobility Management Plans for their area. This will include setting targets for public transport, and ensuring proper levels of service provision.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Provide €6 billion for public transport over the course of the National Development Plan;
- Bring in provisions to ensure safer driving and fewer road deaths;
- Ensure proper maintenance and upgrading of existing roads with bypasses as required;
- Implement a safe routes to school policy;
- Work towards the provision of light rail for all urban centres;
- Put in place a 30 kph [20 mph] speed limit on residential roads;
- Promote taxi schemes in rural areas.

Energy

There is an immediate need for alternative, renewable energy sources, here in Ireland and globally.

We will promote a renewable/ indigenous energy plan, with targets and timetables for implementation. The aim will be to achieve 20% of electricity production through renewable sources by 2010.

We will ensure that the national grid is modernised to use underground cabling in isolated areas in order to allow more wind power to be harnessed offshore as well as on land. In addition, local Rural Energy Partnerships will be developed to facilitate community - owned wind turbines.
Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development

The Green Party believes that the future of Irish agriculture must move in the direction of clean, safe food. The food we eat should be seen as the primary source of health care. If we produce and eat healthy food we will reduce ill health and so decrease the cost to our health service.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Introduce a Rural Development Bill promoting sustainability and quality of life in rural

communities;

- Assist the registered organic certification bodies and farming organisations with research and funding;
- Set targets for national acreage to be organically converted;
- Develop local food economies to support local farmers;
- Use set aside land, depending on soil suitability, for growing sustainable forestry or a short rotation biomass crop such as rape seed for biofuel;
- Ensure Ireland becomes a GM-free zone;
- Ensure there is no patenting of seeds;
- Improve the effectiveness of the REPS schemes;
- Initiate an integrated strategy to combat agricultural pollution;
- Remove the upper age limit from the Early Farm Retirement Scheme to encourage more young people in farming.

Farm animals

The intensification of agriculture has led to animals being transported over long distances, compromising their health and welfare. The answer lies in less intensification of agriculture, tiered payments for farmers and a policy of producing safe food in a quality environment.

In terms of the treatment of farm animals, the Green Party will:

- Reform the Common Agricultural Policy to favour humane, healthy farming;
- Phase out all long distance transportation of animals;
- Promote local abattoirs and value added meat processing to minimise live animal transportation;
- Phase out the sow stall system and the use of battery cages for hens;
- Ban fur farming in Ireland.

For all animals, the Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Introduce legislation outlawing any activities where animals are set against other animals, such as hare coursing, fox hunting and stag hunting;
- Provide funding for research into alternatives to animal testing;
- Oppose any attempt to patent animal life forms;
- Provide additional support to agencies promoting animal welfare, such as the Irish Seal Sanctuary.

Marine and Natural Resources

The fact that Ireland is an island nation presents us with immense economic opportunities, not just in terms of fisheries, but also in the development of renewable energy, mercantile shipping and tourism.

In order to promote Irelands living marine resources in an environmentally sustainable way, the Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Promote sustainable fishing by favouring small-scale, less environmentally damaging vessels

and fishing methods, and by applying more stringent penalties to illegal fishing;

- Designate Marine Protected Areas around the coast, with the involvement of all user groups, to allow regeneration of stocks and conservation of wildlife;
- Renegotiate the EU Common Fisheries Policy;
- Press for a moratorium on all whaling internationally and promote ecotourism instead;
- Ensure that the development of offshore gas and oil resources is under tight State control.

Forestry

The Green Party seeks environmentally balanced forestry policies that support local communities while enhancing our environment.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Undertake a Five Year Review of the 1996 Forest Strategy, and raise the broadleaf target from 20% to 51%;
- Ensure that all Irish forests are internationally accredited for sustainability;
- Halt the privatisation of Coillte.

Tourism, Sport and Recreation

Eco-tourism is a growing area that must be encouraged.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Place increased emphasis on activity holidays such as walking and cycling, cruising and sailing, educational/study tours and special interest holidays;
- Promote carefully planned development of the walking Ways of Ireland;
- Promote the restoration of ancient castles/historic houses throughout the country;
- Shift the emphasis away from interpretive centres in wilderness areas to more appropriate urban locations.
- Sport – Everyone's a Winner

The twin aims of our sports policy are to increase community participation in sport, while at the same time ensuring that our top sports people can compete to their potential at the highest level.

The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas will:

- Scrap the National Stadium and provide grant support for the construction of a 40,000-50,000 all-seater stadium with an anchor tenant or tenants (e.g. FAI, IRFU, GAA);
- Carry out a nationwide audit of all sporting/active recreation facilities and their usage by 2003;
- Greatly increase funding in sport, with a particular provision of facilities for young people;
- Ban sponsorship by alcoholic drinks companies.
- Propose the construction of a third 50-metre pool in Cork to provide regional balance.

Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands

Arts

We consider cultural expression and engagement as basic human rights and will prioritise funding for arts, culture and heritage for both the high and popular arts levels.

Funding must enable the arts to flourish at all levels. In order to ensure this, funding will be channelled through local authorities so that arts can be planned for on a regional and local basis.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas will:

- Encourage the widening of tax incentives such as Section 484 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1998 to encourage a partnership between industry and the arts;
- Establish Regional Arts Boards to complement local and national strategies;
- Support the promotion of a vibrant living European and Irish film industry and endeavour to ensure positive discrimination so that not just imported blockbusters get distribution.

Gaeltacht

Is mian linn go leanfaidh an seasamh fábharch i leith na Gaeilge. Cuirfimid fáilte roimh fhoilsiú Bhille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Comhionanna), 2002, agus cuirfimid i bhfeidhm é leis na hacmhainní a bheidh de dhith air. Is cuspóirí dúinn iad, fás na nGaeltachtaí, foirmeacha a bheith dhátheangach and pacáistíocht, lipéidí and foilseacháin stáit a bheith as Gaeilge and as Béarla taobh le taobh.

Tugaimid lán-tacaíocht do bhorradh na Gaelscolaíochta ag gach leibhéal, daoine fásta san áireamh. Spreagfaimid forbairt TG4, RNG and na mean Gaeilge mar áiseanna riachtanacha do lucht na Gaeilge.

The present positive discrimination in favour of Irish will be maintained. A Bill of Rights for Irish speakers will be enacted and the growth of the Gaeltachta' encouraged. All official forms and public notices will be fully bi-lingual in English and Irish. We will enable and encourage packaging, labellings and publications to be fully bilingual in English and Irish. We support the Gaelscoileanna movement and will ensure that it is better resourced so that the movement can develop at second and third level. We will encourage the growth of TG4, RNG as an important means of fostering the Irish language.

Archaeology

Archaeology is a significant part of Irelands cultural heritage and environment and requires a much more pro-active, better resourced policy.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will streamline and consolidate the National Monuments Acts, planning regulations and related laws and ensure that management plans are drawn up and published for all State monuments and archaeological complexes.

Protection of Wildlife and Habitat

Irelands record in protecting our wildlife and habitats is abysmal. According to a report issued by the World Wildlife Fund in mid 2001, Ireland is the last member state to implement the EU

Habitats Directive.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Establish a Biological Records Centre where important data from NGO wildlife groups and from Environmental Impact Assessments can be pooled and properly resourced;
- Support a large extension of SACs, in line with the joint proposals of groups such as An Taisce;
- Apply environmental assessment procedures to plans or projects that are likely to affect the integrity of sites;
- Increase resources to Duchas and provide adequate numbers of Wildlife Rangers.

Justice, Equality and Law Reform

A Considered Response

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will focus on the reasons for crime instead of dealing simply with the consequences. We will place a greater emphasis on social and economic measures as a means of fully restoring public security. Those who advocate a war on crime only help institutionalise the crime culture by continually ignoring underlying causes.

Helping the Crime Fighters

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will establish a Department of Community to identify and support local initiatives to reform and renew communities, thus helping to address social exclusion and community breakdown.

We will restructure the Garda', establishing a separate traffic police, thus freeing valuable Garda time to deal with crimes of a more violent and serious nature. We will provide added resources to the successful Juvenile Liaison Scheme and the Community Garda Programme as well as greater resources to the Probation Service.

At a local level, we will re-open rural Garda stations. We will provide additional resources for local authorities and tenant run projects for better estate management to avoid the development of crime.

Finally, the Green Party will support the establishment of an independent body to compile and monitor crime statistics.

Improving our Prison and Court Systems

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will push for thorough improvements in the States prisons so that the dignity and human rights of detainees are respected. We feel confident that this will help reduce the number of prisoners re-offending.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Push for an examination of the legal statutes so that imprisonment is not imposed for petty crimes;
- Place greater emphasis on the restitution of victims of crime;

- Focus on alternatives to prison for convicted offenders;
- Give greater funding to the Probation and Welfare Service
- Allocate resources to the most deprived areas of major towns and cities to break the cycle of poverty-drugs-crime;
- Ensure a greater focus on domestic violence and the victims of domestic violence;
- Reform Garda Complaints Procedures to make the Garda' a truly accountable force;
- Reform the Incitement to Hatred Act, including the recognition of the offence of hate crimes.

Equality

Gender Rights

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas believes that Ireland can only benefit from a true gender balance in all aspects of life. We also believe that equality must encompass increasing life choices for all, enabling all individuals to pursue fulfilling careers and lifestyles.

In the present economic climate, women are now being actively encouraged into the workforce. However, womens participation rates (47%) are still far below mens (71%). The wage gap between men and women remains, and women are disproportionately employed in part-time occupations. Women are also under-represented on training and employment programmes, particularly on apprenticeships. Lack of childcare choices, including the choice to stay at home, are creating more barriers to equality.

Women must be represented fairly in political life, at the levels where real decision-making is made. Banning the dual mandate a progressive measure this Government failed to deliver on would have assisted the opening up of the political process. The Green Party will continue to oppose the dual mandate. Other barriers, such as family unfriendly political structures, need be examined. We will also support the implementation of a 40/60 gender balance among election candidates as a condition to qualify for 50% party funding.

The Green Party will work to ensure that there is an increase in the numbers of women in decision-making civil service positions and similar management positions in semi-state bodies and state agencies.

Equally, discrimination against men in any forum cannot be tolerated. Men have equal rights to all jobs, membership of organisations, and support services.

With regard to the area of custody and access to children when a partnership or marriage has dissolved, the Green Party believes that legislation should be examined so that there is absolutely no possibility of gender based discrimination against men. In all cases, the best interest of the child must be viewed as paramount and decisions on access and custody should be based on that premise, regardless of possible gender based conceptions.

Gay and Lesbian Rights

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas favours the strong use of anti-discrimination legislation to remove remaining discrimination against the gay and lesbian communities. We will

introduce legislation in such areas as employment concessions for couples, and pension and inheritance rights.

People with Disabilities

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas is committed to implementing fully the 402 recommendations of A Strategy for Equality, the Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disability. We also favour legislation along the lines of the National Parents and Siblings Alliance, Disability Commissioner Bill 2001, with its rights-based provisions.

Specifically, the Green Party will ensure that:

- The National Disability Authority and Comhairle develop to be a real resource to people with disabilities;
- The entire public transport system is made accessible to all members of the community;
- Criteria for access to the Disabled Driver Grants Scheme are broadened so that the current anomalies excluding many disabled people from the scheme are removed;
- A Respite Care Policy is initiated in full consultation with disabled people and their carers;
- Long awaited Disability legislation is introduced as a matter of urgency with a short timetable for its implementation;
- Medical card eligibility is extended to all people living with a registered disability;
- Those in Ireland with a mental disability such as autism are entitled to free life-long education;
- There is increased funding for research into the causes of disabilities such a autism.

Travellers

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will appoint a Traveller Ombudsman. We will immediately establish an independent Traveller Accommodation Agency and ensure the full implementation of the Traveller Health Strategy

In addition, the Green Party will establish a Traveller Education Service within the Dept. of Education & Science and establish a dedicated Authority within the Department of Education to create an intercultural curriculum in primary and secondary schools.

Finally, the Green Party will extend the medical card scheme to Travellers who are in employment or training, given the unacceptably low status of traveller health.

Senior Citizens

We will work within all Government Departments to ensure that our society fully values the resource that is our senior citizens.

We will strongly support the work of organisations such as Muintir Na T'ire, Age Action Ireland and Care Alliance Ireland. We will amend the Employment Equality Act to abolish the present upper age limit of 65 and abolish the upper age limit of 65 for FcS training and employment programmes.

Refugees/Asylum Seekers and Immigration

Ireland of the Welcomes?

Emigration has been a fact of Irish life for generations. Immigration, on the other hand, is a new phenomenon for Ireland. Growing numbers of people want to come to Ireland to live and work. However, the Government has not been able to cope with this new reality. It has no immigration policy, a situation which has been largely responsible for the current crisis that has caused so much division in the country.

Refugees/Asylum Seekers

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Develop an immigration policy separate from asylum/refugee policy ensuring that Irish policy observes and implements the 1951 Geneva Convention and Protocol;
- Implement the 1996 Refugee Act with amendments as recommended by the Irish Refugee Council;
- Halt any further deportations until an appeals procedure independent of the Department of Justice is established;
- Extend the right to work to all asylum seekers whose cases haven't been decided within six months;
- End the inadequate and discriminatory practice of direct provision.

Immigrants

A separate Immigration Policy will be developed based on the principles of sustainability and observance of humanitarian and human rights practices. It will be administered by a new National Immigration Service which will be established separate from the Department of Justice's asylum/refugee sections. Expertise will be drawn from a number of Government departments, business and trade unions, and development/human rights NGOs, as well as local and new ethnic communities. Policy guidelines will be written within a human rights framework, in particular European and UN Conventions on migrant workers.

Ireland and the Wider World

The Green Party sees Ireland having a very unique and valuable role as an honest broker in non-violent conflict resolution. But developments in EU common foreign and security policy, including the development of an EU Rapid Reaction Force, and the alignment of Ireland with the NATO nuclear alliance via our membership of NATO's Partnership for Peace have all but destroyed Ireland's independent voice and peacekeeping credentials.

Foreign Affairs

European Union

The Green Party strongly believes that the greatest achievement of the EU has been the creation of structures for the development of peaceful, mutually beneficial relations between states. However, we are firmly opposed to any measures towards the creation of a militarised and federal EU superstate. The defeat of the Nice Treaty was an opportunity to assess the future direction of the EU, in complete cooperation and consultation with the peoples of Europe.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas supports the defeat of the Nice Treaty as the final, democratic verdict of the Irish voters and will oppose any attempts to re-run another referendum on the same Treaty. We also support the addition of new member-states to the EU, with social and human rights criteria being given greater weight than economic criteria. We will continue to be critical of the expansion of flexibility (enhanced cooperation) clauses and qualified majority voting into more and more areas of EU decision-making.

We will support reforms to Oireachtas procedures to ensure much closer, more accountable, and more open and democratic scrutiny of EU proposals.

We will oppose a military Rapid Reaction Force, and encourage instead the establishment of a European Civilian Peace Corps (ECPC).

Finally, we will work for the removal of all military provisions from the EU Treaties. In the interim, Ireland will negotiate a Protocol to the EU Treaties, exempting Ireland from all EU military involvement.

The Wider World

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will ensure that Ireland's foreign and defence policy will be based on the principle that the settlement of international disputes should rest solely with the UN. We will legislate that Irish troops will only serve overseas at the behest of the UN and under the UN flag. We will initiate a referendum to enshrine these principles and Ireland's Neutrality in the Irish Constitution.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will support:

- Policies to strongly improve the budget of the UN;
- Policies to bring the IMF, World Bank and WTO firmly back into the UN policy framework as envisaged in Articles 55 and 58 of the UN Charter;

- Campaigns to relieve and cancel debts in the worlds poorest countries.

The Developing World

The downside of globalisation is most clearly evident in the devastation to local economies and communities in the developing world. We believe the worlds trading system is biased against the poorest countries, flooding their markets with cheap food while denying them access to the richest markets.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will work for the following:

- The achievement of a 0.7% GNP allocation for Overseas Development Aid within a year and a level of 1% of GNP within a five year period;
- A halt to any further liberalisation of trade under the WTO regime until there is a comprehensive assessment of the impact of existing agreements under the WTO on developing countries;
- The reform of CAP, stopping the dumping of subsidised produce on developing countries;
- The cancellation of debt repayments from the 41 poorest countries.

Defence

Irelands defence forces have served this country well. Irelands admirable record in UN peacekeeping has already been cited and this is a role the Green Party believes should be maintained.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Strenuously oppose Irelands commitment to NATOs PfP and to the EUs new Rapid Reaction Force;
- Ensure that our defence forces are properly equipped. However, the highly expensive military re-equipment programme now underway will be re-evaluated;
- Redefine the naval services as a coast guard service;
- Provide additional resources and training for the Air Force.

The Arms trade and Ireland

There has been a dramatic increase in exports of military equipment from Ireland. All such exports should be banned and the IDAs terms for new industry in Ireland should stipulate that no such arms shipments can be made from Ireland. In addition, the EUs Code of Conduct on arms sales must be strengthened.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland remains the problem closest to home and at the same time most amenable to resolution through our diplomatic skills and commitment to non-violent resolution.

The Good Friday Agreement, and the joint referenda which gave it effect, provided for the

balanced constitutional change which the Green Party has campaigned for since its foundation. We remain whole-heartedly in support of it. It represents the best, perhaps the only chance, for achieving a lasting resolution to conflict here in Ireland and between us and the United Kingdom.

We recognise that the main concerns of the Agreement are its lack of clarity with regard to police reform, de-commissioning and de-militarisation.

The incoming government will have to balance wholehearted support for the Agreement with an openness to improving it through a review process. It will have to encourage the most sceptical of the agreements ability to deliver in the areas of de-commissioning, de-militarisation and police reform. Perhaps the most difficult task of all will be to address the issue of working class unionist alienation from the process.

The Green Party is as eager, and as ready as ever, to play its full part in rising to these challenges.

A New Politics

Those with money have an inordinate influence on Irish politics. The Green Party wants to break that link forever.

Green Politics is Clean Politics

Cleaning Up Politics

Corruption is defined as benefiting personally from public life. The Green Party believes that this definition needs to be widened to include the undue influence on policy and decision-making through donations. Those with money have an inordinate influence on Irish politics. The Green Party wants to break that link forever.

The Green Party believes that democracy is damaged by the private funding of politics. Therefore, we support an accountable limit on spending during and between elections to be paid from public funds.

Specifically, the Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Ban corporate donations and allow personal donations no greater than 650 euros in any financial year;
- Hand over the power to set limits on spending to the Public Offices Commission;
- Limit the amount of money spent between elections at both local and national level. If you limit only at election time parties/candidates will spend between elections;
- Enact changes required to the Defamation Act in order to allow the media to carry out its investigative work more effectively;
- Ensure that candidates in elections have to produce an up-to-date tax clearance certificate;
- Ensure that expenses for public representatives are fully receipted.

Oireachtas Reform

The Green Party recognises that the need for Oireachtas Reform is now urgent if both Houses are to be seen as politically relevant. The key elements in our Reform Package consist of greater accountability, more democracy and transparency, and greater resourcing of parliamentary activities.

We will change the system so that the Electoral Mandate of each member is recognised. Time in the House must be distributed proportionately.

The continuing Tribunals, at great public expense, reveal the shortcomings of the Oireachtas in relation to real accountability. If Committees are to undertake major investigations they must be adequately resourced in terms of back up, research and overall staffing arrangements.

Ministers Question Time should take place in Committee and for longer periods than heretofore. If, in the opinion of Members of the House, a Minister has misled the House, a petition signed by

a quarter of the members will mean that the matter should be fully investigated by the relevant Committee. If it is found that the Minister deliberately misled the House he/she should be forced to resign from his/her position.

The Greens believe that the Dáil should sit for four days a week and that the House should be open longer and more frequently for members. The Dáil should also become more people friendly with ready access for members of the public.

Electoral Reform

Reform of the Electoral System is required if a proper distinction between national and local politics is to be achieved.

The Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas will:

- Work vigorously to end the Dual Mandate;
- Retain a PRSTV General Election system. However, we propose that half the seats will be filled by direct vote from the constituencies and the other half elected by a top-up system;
- Ensure that members of EU States who have resided in this country continually for over five years will have the right to vote. This will require a referendum;
- Support the introduction of votes for Irish citizens who live abroad;
- Introduce weekend voting.

Green Politics for Quality of Life

In Government the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas will:

1. Transfer the bias in the collection of taxes from tax on income to eco-taxes to fund better public services. This will mean different – not more – taxation.
2. Phase in a Refundable Tax Credit system to provide an adequate income for the least well off and to avoid many of the negative side effects in social welfare payments.
3. Work towards a decentralised health service, providing significant resources to local clinics and district hospitals and appoint a Health Ombudsman.
4. Introduce a medical card for children and people with a disability.
5. Direct fiscal policy towards pre-school and primary school education, aimed at eliminating early school leaving within four years.
6. Establish a nationwide network of community childcare centres, introduce fiscal policies to allow one parent to remain at home if he/she wishes, and provide proper play facilities as a key element of development plans.
7. Vehemently oppose all plans for incinerators and superdumps, putting in place a Zero-Waste Management Plan with local area emphasis.
8. Create a new Department of Consumer Affairs dedicated to protecting consumers rights.
9. Provide d6 billion for public transport, by transferring some monies currently allocated for roads in the National Development Plan.
10. Increase the availability of housing at affordable levels. Introduce legislation to provide security of tenure, reasonable rents and minimum standards of accommodation.
11. Aim to convert 30% of agricultural land to organic usage and ensure Ireland becomes a Genetically Modified Free Zone.
12. Increase funding for the Gardaí, and restructure the force so that time can be freed up to deal with serious and violent crimes.
13. Oppose any attempts to re-run another referendum on the Nice Treaty, oppose a military Rapid Reaction Force and negotiate a Protocol to all EU Treaties exempting Ireland from EU military involvement.
14. Ban corporate donations in politics and pursue an end to the Dual Mandate.
15. Insist that decommissioning of Sellafield and all British nuclear plants commences immediately.

ENDS