

The logo for the Progressive Democrats is a blue rounded rectangle with a green border. It contains the text 'PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS' in white, uppercase letters, and 'an páirtí daonlathach' in smaller white, lowercase letters below it.

PROGRESSIVE  
DEMOCRATS  
an páirtí daonlathach

# From Good To Great

Continuing Ireland's  
Radical Transformation

General Election Manifesto 2007



# Progressive Democrats

**An Páirtí Daonlathach**

General Election

**Manifesto 2007**



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Dear Voter

By any measure, our country has made remarkable progress in the past ten years. Over two million people at work, virtual full employment, an end to enforced emigration and – finally – the prospect of lasting peace in Northern Ireland. This is progress many of us could not have dreamt of just a short time ago.

But it did not happen by accident. It is the fruit of your hard work and good management of the economy. It is also the fruit of good, experienced, steady government.

Ireland is in the process of continuing radical transformation – it is not something that is yet complete, or to be taken for granted. This country is unrecognisable from the failed economic wreck of the mid-1980s. The pace must be kept up if Ireland is to remain at the forefront, to remain the envy of nations across the globe – and most importantly remain a country that can deliver employment and prosperity to its population.

Our economic growth has provided the resources to make unprecedented investment in essential public services such as health and education, and in our infrastructure. This investment has improved both the quality of life that Irish families now enjoy, and Ireland's competitiveness.

The initiative and enterprise that brought about this dramatic change was unleashed by the policies of low taxes, competition, and investment in innovation and enterprise, which the Progressive Democrats have championed in government. These policies have resulted in record inflows of investment and the development of a vibrant indigenous enterprise sector that can compete successfully on world markets.

Although we have achieved much success, we still face major challenges. Above all we face the challenge of ensuring that we continue to develop in an environmentally sustainable way, yet in a manner that continues to meet the needs and expectations of a growing population.

This challenge can only be met by an outward looking, confident and development-orientated society that is open to innovation and change. Such a society will have the resources, flexibility and creativity to meet our environmental obligations by way of the sensible and workable policies to which the Progressive Democrats are committed. It will also ensure that we do so without damaging the employment prospects of our children.

The fundamental issues for this Party - indeed for Ireland - are:

- Sound public finances and progressive taxation policy
- Pro-enterprise, pro-competition policies and reforms
- Comprehensive environmental, energy and climate change initiatives
- Major public sector reform of methods and accountability
- Continuing reform and transformation of our healthcare system
- Delivering transport infrastructure, for today and the future
- Educating our population for continued success and prosperity
- Making sure our communities are safe and that justice is delivered

This manifesto deals comprehensively with these issues and with so much more. It sets out our vision for our new Ireland, and the new opportunities it presents us.

While there has been some focus on job losses recently, it is important to note that new job gains continue to exceed job losses by a substantial margin. This position will only continue as long as our country continues to be both a magnet for inward investment and a place where indigenous enterprise can invest with confidence.

The twin objectives of environmental sustainability and full employment will not be achieved by anti-growth, anti-development policies. Neither will they be achieved by taking our prosperity for granted. They will certainly not be achieved by electing to government parties who are either indifferent or openly hostile to enterprise, initiative and progress.

I invite you to consider our proposals for continued prosperity and progress and to support the return of the Progressive Democrats to government by voting Number One for our candidate in your constituency.



Michael McDowell TD  
Party Leader

**Overview**

- Economic Growth forecast at 5% p.a.
- Day-to-day spending to grow in line with economic growth plus inflation (*per Towards 2016*)
- Capital borrowing requirement to rise to 5% of GNP.
- Tax revenues to grow at 1.1 times (nominal) economic growth.

**Economic Growth Forecasts:**

We assume GNP/GDP growth of 5%, in line with the ESRI’s Medium-Term Review (MTR), which is the most respected economic forecasting agency in the state. It is lower than the average for the past five years, which is 5.4%. Note that this period included the aftermath of the bursting of the tech bubble, and “9/11”. We are confident that sensible economic policies, not least continuing reductions in tax rates, will underpin this growth, and in fact there is every chance that growth might be stronger – but in order to be conservative we are using the ESRI’s forecasts. Note also that this is an average level – undoubtedly there will be years when growth is significantly stronger, and some when it’s significantly weaker. But 5% is a reasonable figure to use, on average.

Year	GDP Growth
2001	5.9
2002	6.0
2003	4.3
2004	4.3
2005	5.5
2006	6.1
Average 01-06	5.3%

**Tax Revenue Forecasts.**

Tax revenues, in the absence of any tax changes, will usually grow by a little more than the growth of the economy. This is because of the progressive nature of the tax system – as incomes increase, they yield more tax. Furthermore, basic goods tend to be taxed at lower rates of VAT/excise, while luxury goods and services have higher rates. So as the economy grows, a higher proportion on national income is spent on higher-taxed-items, so that tax revenues grow more quickly than the economy does. The table below shows this trend. In fact, as there were substantial tax cuts during this period, “normal” tax revenue growth would have exceeded nominal GDP growth by even more than the table shows.

% p.a.	Tax Revenue Growth	Nominal GDP growth
2003	9.6	6.9
2004	10.3	6.2
2005	10.3	9.2
2006	16.0	9.1

We take a cautious approach, however, and assume that tax revenues, without any policy changes, will grow by 1.1 times GDP growth. So if the economy grows by, say, 5%, tax revenues are estimated to grow by 5.5%, and if growth is 10%, taxes will grow by 11%, and so on. This, we believe, is a factor which would be endorsed by most forecasters, and the numbers in the table above show its validity.

**Government Spending Growth:**

We believe that the appropriate level of spending growth in the medium term is the growth in the economy, plus inflation. We are assuming average annual growth of 5%, as discussed above, and inflation of 2.5%, which gives total spending growth of 7.5%. Over the last three years spending growth has indeed tracked economic growth quite well so we think the evidence shows that this is a reasonable assumption.

*Towards 2016* endorses this approach to public spending growth, calling for “a public expenditure profile that reflects the growth in the economy” (*Towards 2016, page 16*).

Growing spending in line with economic growth (including inflation) means, on our economic assumptions, that day-to-day departmental spending will rise from €32.9bn last year to €53.4bn in 2012 – an increase of a little more than €20bn.

In many European countries, government spending rises only in line with inflation. But Ireland has a fast growing population, and an economy that is performing well. So we think it is reasonable to grow public spending in line with economic growth, although we also recognise that problems in public services will never be solved only by “throwing money at the problem”.

**Capital Spending:**

Estimating the likely level of capital spending is complex, as in the Exchequer accounts it is usually presented as the level of capital borrowing that will be required, after taking account of capital receipts (from a range of sources such as repayments of loans, or sales of state property or other assets). The Exchequer's contribution to the National Pension Reserve Fund is also included in this category. We are committed to the expenditure outlined in Transport 21 and the National Development Plan, and estimate that this will require an annual expenditure for capital purposes of 5% of GNP.

This is a net figure, as outlined above, and is somewhat higher than the average over the last few years (as a percentage of GNP) to take account of the ramping up of capital spending over the next few years in order to deliver Transport 21 and the NDP. (Note: This 5% of GNP capital borrowing requirement cannot directly be compared to the 5.4% of GNP figure in the NDP – one is gross and one is net, and there are also other definitional differences).

**Budget Balance Measures:**

The budget balance measure we use is the General Government Balance (GGB), which is the EU-agreed common definition of the budget balance, and which has largely replaced the old Exchequer Borrowing Requirement (EBR). The differences between them are complex, and mainly relate to the exclusion from the EU measure of the State's contribution to the National Pension Reserve Fund (NPRF), as well as the return from the fund (there are also a variety of other differences, which those interested can see outlined each year in the Budget documents). We assume that the net difference between the two measures will be about 1.3% of GDP each year.

**Conclusions:**

Taking the above assumptions and forecasts into account, we can forecast that if there are no significant tax changes, the government will collect €6.3bn from taxpayers (in 2012 money) more than it needs, or in other words it will run a budget surplus of about 2.3% of GDP. We believe that our plans set out in this manifesto are so prudent that the net national debt will be eliminated by 2013.

## **New Ireland**

### **Progress Since 1997**

This Party has achieved significant progress in reducing tax. The top rate has been reduced from 48% to 41%. Our commitment, should we be re-elected, is to further cut the top rate by another 1% in Budget 2008. There have been substantial reductions in the basic rate of income tax too, down from 26% to 20%. The net effect is that the income tax system has been made considerably more progressive under this government:

- In 1997, a single person on the average industrial wage paid 22% of their income in income tax. In 2007 such a person will pay just 9%.
- In 1997, the top 1% of income earners contributed 14% of the total income tax take. Now they contribute over 20%.
- As a result, unemployment has tumbled from "old Europe" levels of over 10% with emigration under the opposition parties to less than 5% with considerable immigration today.

### **Current Background**

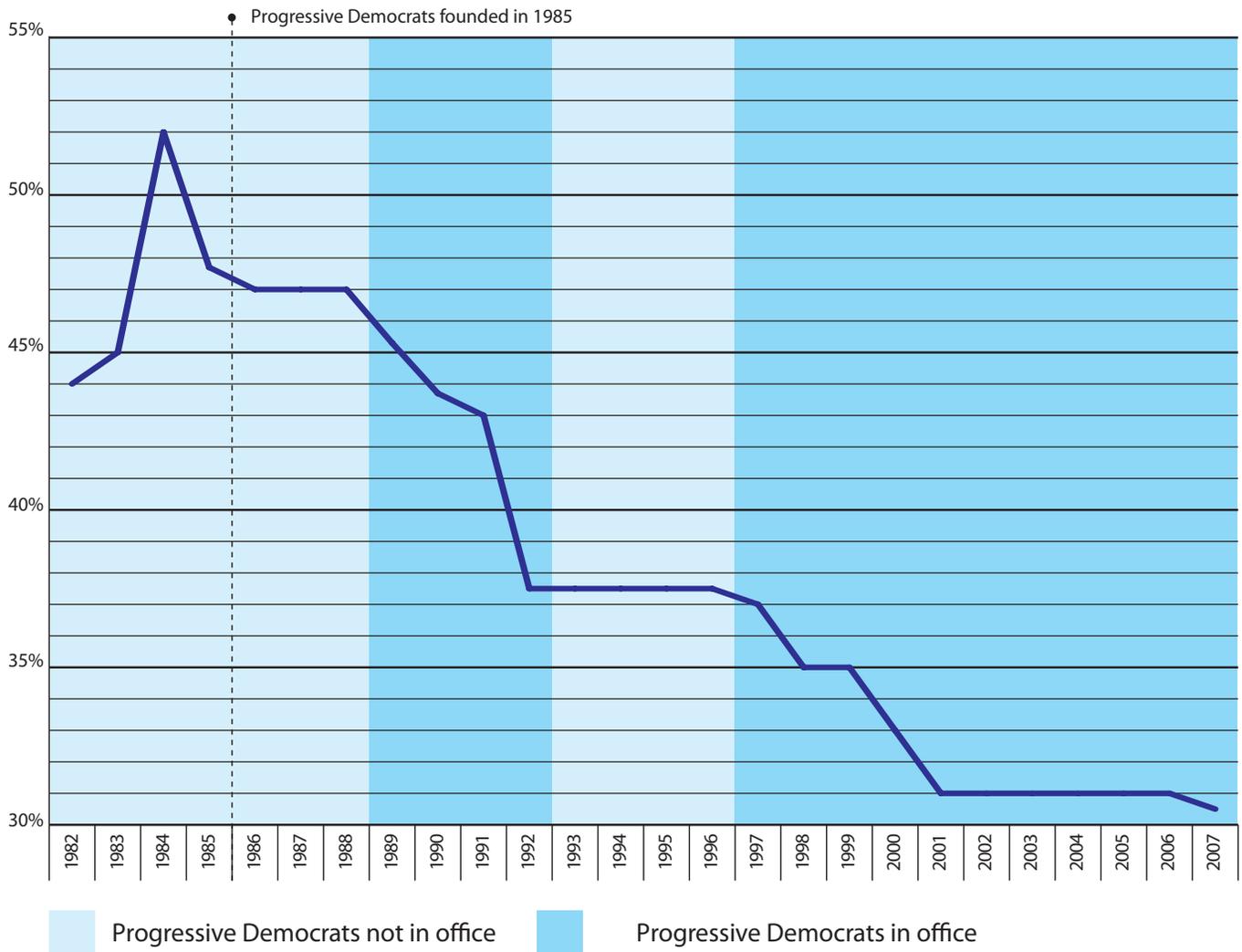
There is a consensus amongst economic commentators that apart from a major external or internal shock the Irish economy should continue to grow strongly in a range from just under 5% to 5.7%. This will generate a considerable increase in the resources available to the Exchequer.

The question is whether all of these resources should be spent further growing public expenditure? The Progressive Democrats believe in returning a significant portion of the increased resources to the people by way of tax cuts. The Progressive Democrats believe that tax reduction should be a strategic objective for the next government. We believe that it will be possible to significantly reduce the tax bill of middle-income earners while allowing for generous growth in public spending.

## **New Opportunities**

Subject to maintaining budgetary prudence, in government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Adjust tax bands so that a couple, both earning, can earn at least €100,000 and only pay income tax at the standard rate. This would mean that a single worker could earn €50,000 and only pay income tax at the standard rate.
- Increase tax credits so that couples earning up to €40,000 will pay no income tax. This would mean that a single worker could earn €20,000 and pay no income tax.
- Reduce the higher rate of income tax to 38% in the lifetime of the next government.
- Reduce the lower rate of income tax to 18% in the lifetime of the next government.
- Ensure no new, additional taxes / levies on employment.
- Guarantee that those earning the minimum wage pay no income tax.
- Continue to increase tax credits and bands so that inflation is not used as a tax-raising mechanism.



**Average Income Tax Rate**

## New Ireland

### Current Background

Property prices have risen dramatically over the last decade and this has fuelled a massive rise in receipts of Stamp Duty. Stamp Duty receipts have jumped from €0.5 billion in 1997 to €3.6 billion in 2006. Stamp Duty operates in a way that is arbitrary and often unfair. Consider these examples:

- A couple who each own an apartment worth €300,000 would have to pay €45,000 in Stamp Duty if they were to simply buy and move together into a second-hand €600,000 house. In other words, the couple would have to pay about one-and-a-half times the average wage just to move in together and without increasing their net investment in property.
- A first-time buyer couple might decide to purchase a second-hand house which is on the market for €630,000. They expect to pay Stamp Duty at 6% totalling almost €38,000. But if the house price goes above €635,000 they have to pay Stamp Duty at a rate of 9%. If the house price rose to €640,000, the couple would have to pay almost €58,000. In other words, a rise in the house price of just €10,000 could trigger an increase in Stamp Duty of €20,000.
- A couple whose children have left the family home might decide to sell their home in order to move into a smaller second-hand house costing €450,000. They would have to pay almost €34,000 in Stamp Duty.

Michael McDowell raised the issue of Stamp Duty at a meeting of the Progressive Democrats on September 18th, 2006. In his statement he said:

*Stamp duty is an issue of huge concern for thousands of home owners and would-be home owners around the country. It is our belief that there is scope for a significant re-adjustment of the stamp duty situation as it pertains to homeowners. We intend in our election manifesto, which will be published next year, to address this issue head on.*

The Progressive Democrats believe in speedily reducing the burden of Stamp Duty on owner-occupiers and in reducing the unfairness of the current system caused by the lack of tapering relief. We do not see any need to reduce Stamp Duty for professional investors.

## New Opportunities

Subject to maintaining budgetary prudence, in government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Abolish stamp duty for first time buyers
- Make stamp duty fairer by "banding" rates so that owner-occupiers pay the higher rate only on the portion of the price over each threshold

Given the critical nature of this particular reform we will:

- Implement our reform with an immediate effect.
- Implement our reform via legislation enacted before the new Dáil rises for the 2007 Summer Recess.
- These changes will mean:
  - Reducing stamp duty to be paid on the average national house price by €8,250 - from €15,500 to €7,250, and reducing stamp duty charge to be paid on the average home in Dublin by €17,050 - from €32,250 to €15,200

The terms that currently apply regarding stamp duty exemption will also apply to the Party's new proposal to abolish stamp duty for all first time buyers.

That is:

- A first time buyer is a person who has not previously purchased or built a house or apartment anywhere in the world and who is purchasing a house or apartment for use as their principal place of residence.
- Where there is more than one buyer, each of the buyers must be a first time buyer to qualify for first time buyer provisions.
- The exemption applies only where the size of the property does not exceed 125 square metres / 1,345 square feet.

Also:

- The 'banding' proposal applies only to principal place of residence.

## **New Ireland**

The Progressive Democrats in Government have devised and implemented policies to deliver increasing prosperity to our population via economic growth. Another product of our economic success is the 17% increase in the population of our country over the past ten years - now 4.2 million people. By 2021 our population may well exceed 5 million people. This population growth places incredible demands on our transport infrastructure and Ireland is moving from a low base towards world-class transport infrastructure provision.

Significant strides have been made over the last decade in the area of infrastructural development. We have invested €655 million to make our national rail network safe. The National Development Plan (2000 – 2006) provided for the investment of €57 billion of public funds. We have delivered, among other things:

- 526 kilometres of new roads including 173 kilometres of motorway and 137 kilometres of dual carriageway. Projects completed include:
- Dublin Port Tunnel
- M1 Dublin – Dundalk
- M4 Kinnegad – Enfield
- M7 Monasterevin bypass
- M7 Kildare bypass
- M50 South-Eastern motorway
- Second M50 bridge

### **Current Background**

The recently published National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 sets out the framework to invest €184 billion over the coming 7 years in order to:

- Eliminate infrastructural gaps.
- Maintain the strength of our enterprise economy by investing in worker training and skills and by expanding our science, technology and innovation capacity.
- Develop our social infrastructure and address the needs of social inclusion.
- Achieve balanced regional development.
- Protect and improve our natural environment.

Economic growth is not an end in itself. The Progressive Democrats believe we must not only end Ireland's infrastructure deficit we must create a platform to create balanced regional growth throughout the island and a better quality of life for all our people. In particular, we are concerned that the regions should not fall behind. That means providing housing within an easy commute of work, and cities and suburbs that are well-planned, family friendly and pleasant places to live. Quality living requires the highest quality infrastructure across the State, with well-thought out proposals to provide some counter-balance to the expanding Greater Dublin Area.

Over the lifetime of the next Government, the Progressive Democrats will build on the objectives of the National Development Plan to:

- Fully implement Transport 21 and the new National Development Plan:
- Create a road network, in line with the timetable in Transport 21, that will see the completion of the major inter-urban routes and will upgrade links generally between the National Spatial Strategy gateway Centres and improve the non-national road network;
- Deliver a radically upgraded public transport system in line with the timetable in Transport 21, especially in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), but with significant impacts in other areas;
- Promote North/South co-operation in infrastructure planning and delivery to develop integrated all-island infrastructure for the benefit of all on the island;
- Improve the infrastructure of the three State Airports and provide support for investment in the regional airports;
- Better equip the ports sector to meet national and regional capacity and service needs;

The Progressive Democrats commit ourselves to prioritising road safety measures in our transport and infrastructure plans. The establishment of the Road Safety Authority in September 2006 is an important development and we will continue to support the Authority in its role to co-ordinate and advance the road safety agenda. The Authority rightly has responsibility for the testing of drivers and vehicles, oversight of the driver licensing system, driver education and the promotion of awareness of road safety in general. It will also have responsibility for the road research element of the NRA, which researches road accidents. We will pursue policies to support and augment the work of the Authority over the next 5 years.

## New Opportunities

### Public Transport

In Government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Prioritise the statutory establishment of the Dublin Transportation Authority, and establish a national regulatory framework for public transport, which facilitates the optimum provision of such services by way of a level playing field for all market participants.
- Upgrade public transport services in provincial cities and in the regions, including additional buses, new bus priority measures and new park and ride sites.
- Mainstream accessibility for persons with disabilities across all modes of public transport, including fully accessible city buses and enhancing the accessibility of bus and railway stations.
- Promote sustainable and integrated transport solutions, including clean urban public transport modes, clean vehicle technologies and fuels, and walking and cycling.  
(Please see our extensive environment policy chapter).
- Introduce a fully integrated, customer-friendly, smart card ticketing system in the Greater Dublin Area, facilitating the use of different transport modes (bus, LUAS, DART, Irish Rail etc) in single journeys.
- Invest €90 million under the NDP in the Rural Transport Initiative.
- Implement our *Access All Stations* policy:
  - Establish a passengers' charter to guarantee improved access to commuter rail stations across the country.
  - Ensure all commuter railway stations will have affordable and accessible local feeder services, subsidised as necessary, based on best value for public money.
  - Instruct the new Dublin Transport Authority (DTA), to carry out a study of feeder bus services, car parking and park-and-ride services for all commuter rail stations.
  - Ensure the DTA, Áirnród Éireann Rail and Local Authorities have clear areas of responsibility for linking services and pedestrian access to stations.
  - Work to see that in large urban areas commuters will not have to walk for more than 10 minutes to a stop for at least one form of public transport service, be it bus, LUAS, DART, Metro or suburban rail.
  - Develop a network of Park and Ride Facilities outside the M-50 as being critical to cutting commute times and to fully exploit the existing rail network.
- Evaluate the scheduling and timeliness of bus and rail commuter services to support service operators deliver adequate and appropriate service.
- Ensure adequate infrastructure so people may commute safely on bicycle and on foot.

### Roads

In Government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Complete the development of a European standard motorway and road system for Ireland.
- Develop a new Outer Orbital Route to run from the M7, and connect to the M4, M3, M2 and M1, serving the new Dublin regional port at Bremore. To ensure that the orbital route does not become congested by short haul traffic, the number of off ramps will be strictly controlled.
- M1 Motorway - Dublin to Border
  - Provide motorway standard road all the way from the present Dublin Port site to the border.
- N2 Dublin to Monaghan, the border and on to the northwest
  - Complete a standard or wide two lane single carriageway from Dublin, to the border, and serving Donegal, Letterkenny and Derry.
- M3 Dublin to Cavan and the Border
  - Provide motorway to link the North West, Cavan and North Meath with Dublin City by 2010.
- N4 Dublin to Sligo
  - Provide a high quality link between Sligo and Dublin by 2015.

- N5 Dublin to Westport and Castlebar
  - Complete high quality link between the strategically important towns of Westport and Castlebar and Dublin, by 2015. Deliver bypasses of Ballaghaderreen, Longford, Strokestown, and major improvements on the Castlebar/Westport section of the route.
- N6 Dublin to Galway / N7 Dublin to Limerick / N8 Dublin to Cork / N9 to Waterford
  - Ensure major interurban routes are completed by 2010.
  - Deliver Galway City Outer Bypass in 2011.
  - Progress a bypass of Claregalway.
  - Progress an orbital route north of Limerick, linking the N7 and the Limerick-Ennis road.
  - Complete the N21 Adare Bypass- Newcastle West -Abbeyfeale route.
- N11 Dublin to Rosslare
  - Provide motorway/high quality dual carriageway from south of Gorey to the M50 by 2010.
- N15-N17-N18-N20-N25 Atlantic Corridor
  - Improve access between Letterkenny to Waterford via Sligo, Tuam, Ennis, Limerick, Mallow and Cork, by 2015.
- N25 Rosslare to Waterford
  - Link Port of Rosslare with the Atlantic Road Corridor and the N9 and N11 by 2015.
- N28 Cork to Ringaskiddy
  - Progress this scheme to facilitate docklands development.
- M50 Upgrade
  - Provide 32km of motorway from 2 to 3 lanes in each direction (with a 4th auxiliary lane in places), from the M50/M1 interchange near Dublin Airport through to the Sandyford Interchange and the upgrade of 10 junctions along this route, by 2010.
  - Purchase the Westlink bridge and remove the toll-plaza.
  - Introduce barrier-free tolling in 2008.
  - Introduce free-flow interchange junctions.
- Invest €13.3 billion in national roads and €4.3 billion in non-national roads under the NDP to:
  - Improve the road links between our main towns and cities.
  - Continue upgrading of road links to Northern Ireland.
  - Target improvement of key national secondary routes.
  - Improve and maintain strategic non-national roads, which will complement the national roads investment.

## Rail

In Government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Focus NDP investment on the provision of enhanced rail services, including either hourly/two hourly services on the principal intercity routes serviced by modern rolling stock.
- Complete the Metro North line from city centre to Swords via Dublin Airport, and develop the Metro West line. Integration with other modes will be maximised.
- Enhance, link and extend the LUAS network to City West, Cherrywood, Docklands, Bray and Lucan.
- Expand the capacity of the suburban rail network through city-centre resignalling, four-tracking the line between Hazelhatch and Heuston, electrifying the Kildare line to Hazelhatch, the Northern line to Balbriggan, and the Maynooth line, and re-opening the Dublin to Navan rail link
- Commence the Heuston Docklands Interconnector and the electrification of sections of the Dublin suburban rail network.
- Develop the Atlantic Corridor rail link in order to release the full potential of the Mid-West and West
- Develop the commuter rail system (Tuam-Athenry-Galway) for Galway, and progress the phased re-opening of the Western Rail Corridor from Ennis to Claremorris.
- Build a light rail system linking Cork city centre, Docklands, Douglas, Rochestown, Carrigaline, Airport, Bishopstown, and Ballincollig and extend the Middleton-Cork line to Mallow and Blarney.
- Initiate an urgent feasibility study on commuter rail for Limerick, and on the LASER (Limerick And Shannon Express Rail) Project.

## Air

In Government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Invest €1.9 billion in air transport under the NDP
- Extend overall capacity at Dublin Airport to cater for in excess of 30 million passengers by:
  - Opening a new Pier D at Dublin Airport, with a capacity for an additional 14 departure gates, by 2008.
  - Completing the second terminal at Dublin Airport by the end 2009.
  - Progressing the provision of a second runway at Dublin Airport.
  - Planning further terminal capacity provision at Dublin Airport in advance of inevitable demand.
- Complete the Metro North connection from the Airport to the city centre.
- Ensure the process of establishing independent airports - a policy driven by this Party - at Cork and Shannon is completed.
- Support regional airports at Waterford, Farranfore, Knock, Sligo, Galway and Donegal, complement the State Airports and to help promote regional development. €96.5 million of capital funding will be made available under the NDP, and deliver on a commitment of €7.5 million for the development of the City of Derry Airport.
- Provide subventions to the regional airports for core operational expenditure and to airlines operating public service obligation routes, while promoting commercially viable routes from and between the regional airports.

## Sea Transport

In Government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Relocate the industrial activities of Dublin Port over time to Bremoore in North County Dublin and redevelop the port site for a high quality mixed use development of cultural commercial and housing as well as a port for cruise and passenger ferries – creating A New Heart for Dublin.
- Rapidly advance Cork Docklands development.
- Create a major international air-sea freight hub on the Shannon estuary, which will integrate mid-western road, air and sea facilities.

## Road Safety

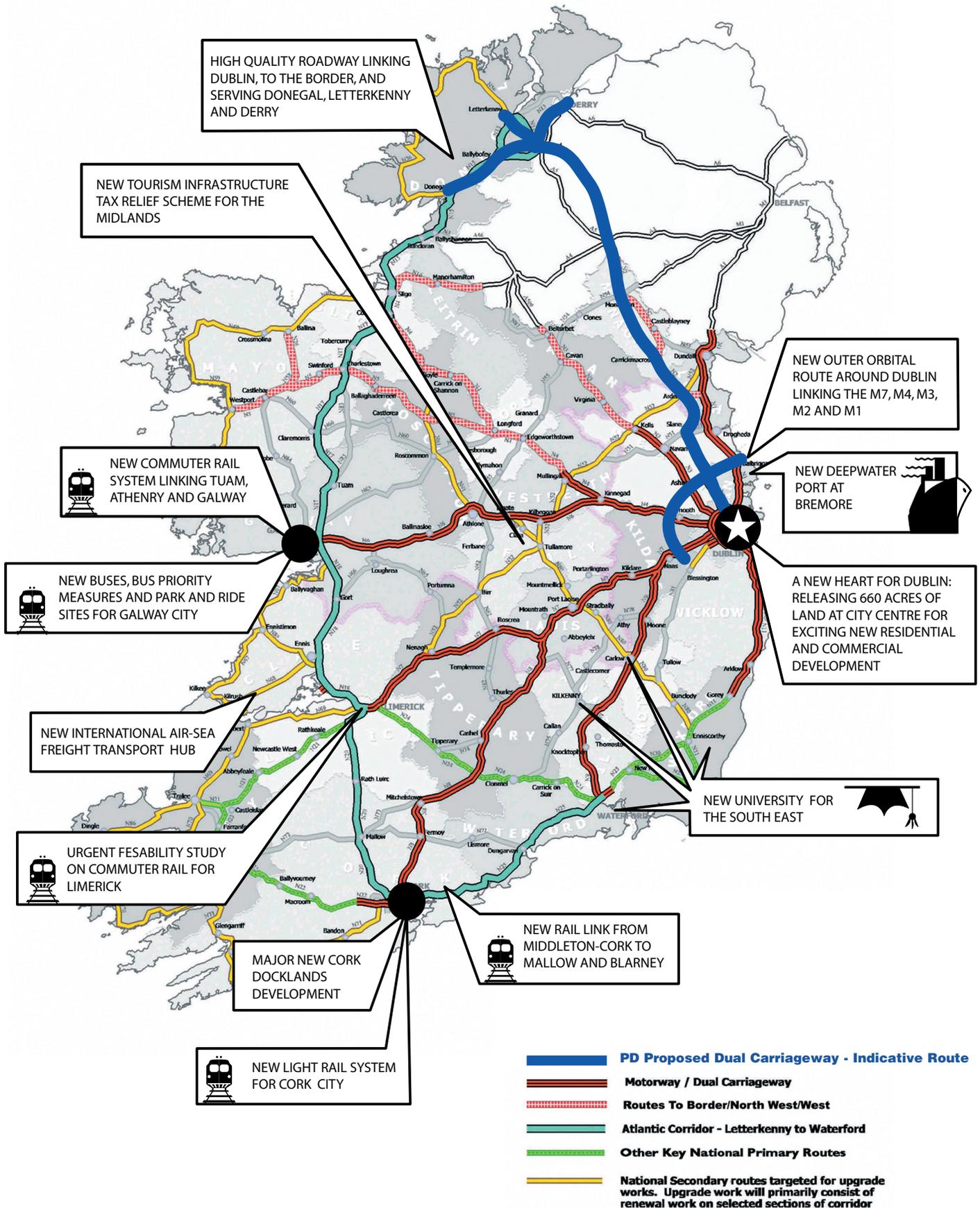
In Government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Work with and support the Road Safety Authority to prioritise road safety measures across all relevant government Departments and agencies. Action will be taken in four specific areas:
  - Education-
    - Making road safety training a mandatory element of the secondary school curriculum.
    - Encouraging and helping schools deliver age appropriate safety messages.
    - Ensuring effective safety campaigns using media to target various groups.
    - Guaranteeing an effective and efficient driver testing system.
    - Regulating the driving instruction industry to enable the delivery of quality tuition to learner drivers.
    - Implementing a scheme of training for vocational drivers.
  - Enforcement-
    - Making certain all necessary and appropriate resources are provided to An Garda Síochána to ensure our road safety laws are properly policed and enforced.
    - Ensuring Ireland has an effective and efficient driver licensing regime.
    - Enforcing and monitoring compliance with roadworthiness testing regimes for motor vehicles and the rules relating to road haulage.
  - Engineering-
    - Providing adequate capability and resources to the NRA and Local Authorities to ensure optimum road design, construction, maintenance, rest facilities and signage – employing a ‘total system’ approach.
  - Evaluation-
    - Supporting the development of a comprehensive road safety research programme by the Road Safety Authority.
    - Ensuring all necessary road safety interventions are properly monitored for effectiveness.
    - Providing for the identification of hazardous crashed vehicles by the use of centralised crash data.

### Dublin Metropolitan Plan

The Progressive Democrats understand the strategic importance of a thriving capital city to the success of Ireland as a whole. Consequently, we believe the individual elements below represent a comprehensive metropolitan plan for Dublin, and we will prioritise its implementation in government:

- Relocate the industrial activities of Dublin Port over time to Bremore in North County Dublin and redevelop the port site for a high quality mixed use development of cultural commercial and housing as well as a port for cruise and passenger ferries – creating A New Heart for Dublin. See [www.newheartfordublin.ie](http://www.newheartfordublin.ie)
- Upgrade public transport services in Dublin, including additional buses, new bus priority measures and new park and ride sites.
- Prioritise the statutory establishment of the Dublin Transportation Authority to facilitate the optimum provision of services by way of a level playing field for all market participants.
- Significantly expand the bus fleet and bus priority measures.
- Introduce a fully integrated, customer-friendly, smart card ticketing system in the Greater Dublin Area, facilitating the use of different transport modes (bus, LUAS, DART, Irish Rail etc) in single journeys.
- Implement our Access All Stations policy (above) in respect of all of Dublin's rail stations.
- Ensure adequate infrastructure across the city so people may commute safely on bicycle and on foot.
- Develop a new Outer Orbital Route to run from the M7, and connect to the M4, M3, M2 and M1, serving the new Dublin regional port at Bremore. To ensure that the orbital route does not become congested by short haul traffic, the number of off ramps will be strictly controlled.
- Complete construction of all the major interurban routes linking Dublin to our large provincial centres.
- Focus NDP investment on the provision of enhanced rail services, including either hourly/two hourly services on the principal intercity routes serviced by modern rolling stock.
- Complete the Metro North line from city centre to Swords via Dublin Airport, and develop the Metro West line.
- Enhance and extend the LUAS network.
- Expand the capacity of the suburban rail network through city-centre resignalling, quadrupling of track on the Kildare line and re-opening of the Dublin to Navan rail link.
- Commence the Heuston Docklands Interconnector and the electrification of section of the Dublin suburban rail network.
- Extend overall capacity at Dublin Airport to cater for in excess of 30 million passengers by:
  - o Opening a new Pier D at Dublin Airport, with a capacity for an additional 14 departure gates, by 2008.
  - o Completing the second terminal at Dublin Airport by the end 2009.
  - o Progressing the provision of a second runway at Dublin Airport.
  - o Planning further terminal capacity provision at Dublin Airport in advance of inevitable demand.



## New Ireland

### Progress Made Since 1997

Ireland's largest employer is the State which accounts for 40% of all economic activity, spends over €50bn a year and employs almost 350,000 people in almost 600 Departments and Agencies. It is critical to Ireland's continued competitiveness that we increase productivity in all sectors of the economy - this applies as much to the Government as to the private sector. The Progressive Democrats have contributed to significant government advances in public service management by:

- Establishing the Garda Inspectorate. This is an example of implanting an engine for reform within a public service body.
- Establishment of the National Treatment Purchase Fund – Following the establishment of the NTPF, hospital waiting lists have fallen heavily. This is an example of successful outsourcing.
- Ending the vast expense of prison overtime.
- Establishing the Health Services Executive. As a society, we benefit from a depoliticised system area and the application instead of health and professional considerations.
- The Shared Services Centre of the Department of Justice (based in Killarney) provides back-office services for the finance and administration Departments of a number of government departments. This is an example of improving productivity by bundling provision of similar services for different agencies together. The finance functions of various government Departments have much more in common with one another than with their actual parent Departments.

Despite much progress, there are well-founded concerns about the efficiency and responsiveness of many public services.

### New Opportunities

The Progressive Democrats regard reform of the public sector as hugely important. Such a reform process has to build on the strengths of the public sector and address any weaknesses. As taxpayers, the people of Ireland need to be confident that best value for money is being secured, that expenditure programmes are effective, and that these programmes are carried out efficiently. Time must be made of the essence in public service delivery, and the project management skills and personal accountability associated with the private sector must be imported to the public service in cases where it is lacking.

The public service must construct and adhere to strict value for money criterion, and every Government Department and State Agency must constantly self-evaluate its own effectiveness and assess whether better, alternative methods of meeting objectives can be adopted.

**To this end, the Progressive Democrats place at the heart of our policy on public service reform the establishment of a Public Service Inspectorate, located in the Department of Finance, in order to drive forward efficiency, increased value for money, effectiveness and customer responsiveness in our public services.**

### Public Sector Reform & Value for Money

In Government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Establish a Public Service Inspectorate, located in the Department of Finance, in order to drive forward efficiency and customer responsiveness.
- Use the customer charter process to improve service provision, accessibility for customers and service delivery across the Public Service.
- Promote the further use of shared service centres and appropriate outsourcing for central and local government functions in areas such as Human Resources, Information Technology and Finance.
- Progress the public service decentralisation programme to allow interested public servants move from Dublin or their existing provincial location.
- Appoint a Government Chief Information Technology Officer to ensure cost-effective implementation of government information technology projects.
- Ensure performance measures for semi-state bodies (e.g. Íarnród Éireann, Dublin Bus, ESB), which are already gathered by in-company inspectors, are made public on at least a quarterly basis.

- Provide for binding Ministerial policy-directives to market regulators, subject to Oireachtas approval, to enhance consumer protection.
- Establish “TV Licence PLUS”, to licence all subsequent signal-receiving devices you own. It may be purchased for an additional one-fifth of the cost of the standard licence.

### **Reform of the Democratic System**

The Dáil – with its all too frequent wrangling – offers a poor example to the rest of the public service. There is a need for a driver of efficiency within the public service. And many government departments could be better defined to meet the needs of modern Ireland.

In Government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Establish an independent Electoral Commission should be permanently established to take charge of:
  - Overseeing the overall election process in the State.
  - Compiling and maintaining the electoral register.
  - Setting the boundaries of Dáil constituencies.
- Resist the implementation of any electronic voting system that cannot reliably, and to the satisfaction of the electorate, produce a transparent, verifiable printed voter audit.
- Engage in a process of meaningful Dáil reform that will see greater number of sitting days and that maximises the work undertaken on those days.
- Introduce increased use of technology in the legislature, to maximise efficiency and greater reflect the changing nature of modern business practice.
- Establish an Oireachtas Channel as part of the roll-out of digital terrestrial television and radio services across the State.
- Implement the key recommendations of the 2004 Oireachtas Committee report on Seanad reform.

### **Local Government Reform**

In 1999, the Irish people amended the Constitution to give local government a clear constitutional role. In 2001, the Oireachtas voted to end the dual mandate in order to underline the need for separate democratic accountability at local government level.

Despite these changes, local democracy in Ireland is extremely limited, with an inadequate sense of local accountability. Apart from a small number of reserve functions, the day-to-day activities of Local Authorities are almost exclusively carried out by public service management staff under the County Manager system. The Progressive Democrats believe that the time has come to pilot the directly elected executive Mayor model in a county or city council, and evaluate its potential for later roll-out to other authority areas.

Therefore we propose:

- To pilot a directly elected Mayor in one administrative area, with executive power for a fixed term.
- The vesting of all possible expenditure programmes in the executive Mayor of the pilot area, subject to annual approval of capital and current budgets by Local Authority members.
- The re-designation of all existing current and capital funding programmes from central government as a common local government fund, to be allocated in a manner prescribed by law as the entitlement of each county council.
- The creation of a more effective Local Government Audit Office at national level to identify and prevent the misuse and waste of Local Authority funds.
- The establishment of a dedicated Local Government Ombudsman in the relevant Department to provide citizens with a remedy in the case of justifiable complaints against the Local Authority.

### **Reorganisation of Government Departments**

The Progressive Democrats propose a major reorganisation of government Departments to maximise cohesion, and better reflect today’s challenges. We support the linking of Energy and Environment, and removal of local government concerns – which needs greater focus. Managing the equality agenda will become the responsibility of the Social Affairs Department. We will also look at more effective Minister of State portfolios to manage the most pressing areas of these new Departments.

Taoiseach  
 Foreign Affairs  
 Environment and Energy  
 Agriculture and Food  
 Education and Science

Public Works and Heritage  
 Defence and Marine  
 Health and Children  
 Transport  
 Social and Equality Affairs

Finance  
 Justice and Home Affairs  
 Enterprise, Employment and Communications  
 Culture, Sport and Tourism  
 Local Government, Gaeltacht and Community Affairs

## New Ireland

### Progress Since 1997

A vibrant enterprise culture has always been seen by the Progressive Democrats as central to national growth and development. Since 1997 we have accorded priority to creating a climate, across the whole of government, in which enterprise could flourish.

Measures to promote enterprise and reward work included

- A corporation tax rate of 12.5%.
- A capital gains tax rate of 20%.
- A personal income tax regime for low and middle-income earners that is the most benign in the EU.
- A 45% reduction in motor insurance costs and a dramatic reduction, in many cases of the order of 50%, in employer and public liability insurance as a result of the reforms brought in since 2002.
- Significant direct State support for Investment through the Business Expansion Scheme and through IDA/Enterprise Ireland programmes.
- High levels of investment in education and training combined with growing support for Research, Technology and Innovation through R&D Tax Credits, R&D grants from EI/IDA as well as a huge investment programme in basic R&D and Industry/Third Level cooperation via Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions.
- Investing in the modern infrastructure that is essential to modern business and balanced regional development.
- A major overhaul of competition law so that competition across the economy was increased to the benefit of our international competitiveness and the domestic consumer.

This has resulted in both record levels of inward investment and a vibrant indigenous enterprise sector that together have transformed the country through a decade of high and sustained economic growth. As a result, Ireland now boasts more people in employment than at any time in the history of the State and we enjoy living standards that exceed the EU average. This has provided a solid basis for overall social progress, with Ireland ranked 4th in the world on the United Nations Human Development Index.

### Current Challenges

Many new EU members and other emerging economies view Ireland as a role model to be learnt from. According to the OECD, Ireland is viewed as a "model country", due to the success of the State's employment market policy. But despite substantial progress in recent years, Ireland faces a number of challenges today:

- There is a global shift towards services and the knowledge economy as the key drivers of economic growth.
- Globalisation and the rise of China and India. These countries, with a combined population of over 2 billion, are producing hundreds of thousands of graduates each year.
- Ireland is no longer a low wage economy and competitor countries are increasingly emulating our low-tax model.

This makes it essential that we move to an even more knowledge-based economy with the capacity to develop and sell sophisticated goods and services on world markets. This will require a first class business environment with high quality infrastructure.

## New Opportunities

### Promotion of Enterprise

In government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Continue to promote a positive approach to enterprise across all areas of government. This will ensure that the creative strengths of our companies are fostered and matched with an increasingly educated and experienced labour force, in a climate conducive to work and risk-taking.
- Maintain and vigorously defend the 12.5% corporation tax rate and the 20% rate on capital gains.
- Ensure no new, additional taxes / levies on employment.
- Adjust tax bands so that a couple, both earning, can earn at least €100,000 and only pay income tax at the standard rate. This would mean that a single worker could earn €50,000 and only pay income tax at the standard rate.

- Increase tax credits so that couples earning up to €40,000 will pay no income tax. This would mean that a single worker could earn €20,000 and pay no income tax.
- Reduce the higher rate of income tax to 38% in the lifetime of the next government.
- Reduce the lower rate of income tax to 18% in the lifetime of the next government.
- Guarantee that those earning the minimum wage pay no income tax.
- Continue to increase tax credits and bands so that inflation is not used as a tax-raising mechanism.
- The State development agencies will prioritise the attraction and development companies with strong product development and international sales capabilities through focused support for these activities.
- Ensure that such companies have access to competitive sources of finance.
- Invest over €8billion in Science, Technology and Innovation to build on the success of Science Foundation Ireland and the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions.
- Double the output of 4th Level graduates and provide greater support for applied R&D, and enable Ireland to join the ranks of the world's most innovative societies.
- Complement Ireland's historic commitment to education by a €26billion investment in education and training that will ensure we have the level of education and skills needed to compete in the rapidly changing world of the 21st century.
- Give a firm commitment to the investment in needed infrastructure to boost productivity and promote balanced regional development including the completion of the inter-urban motorway network.
- Guarantee a state-of-the-art communications network, driven by competition, to which all players in the market have equal access.
- Fund nationwide broadband coverage.
- Support consideration of the Dublin commuter belt as a 'single region' in terms of job creation and investment-seeking activity by the IDA and other agencies and aim to create a series of economic clusters within the region.
- Encourage the establishment of a voluntary database of workers and professionals living in the commuter region who are interested in working locally, to readily inform multi-national organisations of the adequate supply of skilled workers.
- Consider the creation of a dedicated taskforce to identify the critical infrastructure needs of the commuter belt and allocate targeted resources to accelerate the development of projects in the region.
- Continue to reduce as much as possible the administrative and regulatory burden on small and medium size businesses, to foster and encourage this vital sector.

### Promoting Competition

Effective enforcement of competition is central to our international competitiveness and providing value for money to consumers.

The Progressive Democrats in government will:

- Enhance the implementation and enforcement of the 2002 Competition Act by legislating to:
  - Allow Competition Authority to prosecute cases on its own initiative.
  - Provide for the imposition of administrative fines by the Competition Authority where anti-competitive activity or abuse of dominant position is established on the balance of probabilities. If necessary constitutional provision will be made to this end.
- Ensure that competition cases, receive priority in the scheduling of court cases. If necessary, we will establish a dedicated "Competition Court" in order to fast-track competition cases.
- Require the Competition Authority to accelerate the pace at which it completes reports into specific sectors. Reports should normally be completed within strict time limits. It will require a formal vote of the Authority to permit a report on a sector to exceed the pre-determined limit.
- Commit the Government to respond, within 6 months at most, to any formal proposals from the Competition Authority for the improvement of national competition policy.
- Ensure that the planning process is not used to inappropriately stifle competition by ensuring that Local Authorities provide adequate zoning for retail space.
- Require planning bodies to have regard to consumer interests and to consult with the Competition Authority if their decisions are likely to have a significant impact on competition.
- Continue reform of the public transport market so as to promote private sector involvement and competition so as to deliver greater choice and value for our citizens.

## New Ireland

### Progress Since 1997

The Progressive Democrats believe in empowering consumers by providing them with a choice of competing suppliers, the right to information on competing products and protection and ready means of redress from defective products/consumer fraud. In government we have vigorously pursued the consumers' interests.

Insurance – five years ago rising insurance costs were posing an enormous burden for households and a hidden tax on enterprise. As Minister for Employment, Trade and Enterprise, Mary Harney established the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB). As Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Michael McDowell reformed court procedures to combat fraudulent claims. As a result of these reforms, the Irish Insurance Federation reports that car insurance costs have fallen by 45%. There has also been a significant reduction in home and business insurance premiums.

On foot of a report by Michael McDowell, which was progressed tenaciously by Mary Harney as Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority (IFSRA) was established in 2003 with strong powers to protect consumers, enforced through a statutory consumer director.

Abolition of the Groceries Order – this Order limited competition in the retail trade and its abolition has led to significant retail price reductions, with retailers stating they have reduced the price of thousands of items previously controlled by the Groceries Order.

The abolition of the cap on taxi licence numbers by Progressive Democrats Minister Bobby Molloy transformed the market by vastly increasing the supply of taxis thus enabling more consumers to travel in comfort and safety.

An initiative by Mary Harney led to the establishment of the National Consumer Agency (NCA), which ensures that the voice of the Irish consumer is heard and brought to the forefront of national and local decision-making in Ireland.

### Current challenges

Despite substantial progress there is still much to be done to embed a consumer culture in Ireland as well as specific areas where consumer choice needs to be increased and services reformed. These include:

- Reform of conveyancing
- Regulation of auctioneers
- Control and regulation of property companies
- Greater choice and increased value for money for public utilities
- Combating pyramid schemes
- Clarity as to the rights of credit card users

## New Opportunities

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Introduce greater competition and choice in public utility markets and amend the law to allow the government, subject to Dáil approval, to issue a public policy directive to any of our market regulators.
- Introduce a system of e-conveyancing along the lines proposed by the Law Reform Commission.
- Enact legislation to establish a Property Services Regulatory Authority on a statutory footing.
- Evaluate the operation of the Private Residential Tenancies Board to ensure it can effectively carry out its functions regarding the resolution of disputes between landlords and tenants, operate a national tenancy registration system, and provide information and policy advice on the private rented sector.
- Radically reform the law so as to:
  - Regulate the management company sector for residential dwellings.
  - Put in place a proper legal structure for multi-unit (apartment) developments.
  - Significantly strengthen the rights of individual apartment owners / tenants, and ensure transparency and reasonableness, and fairness of service charges.
  - Ensure the establishment of a professional body representing residential management agents to mirror the association of residential management agents in the UK.

- Ensure that the planning process is not used to inappropriately stifle competition by ensuring that Local Authorities provide adequate zoning for retail space.
- Require planning bodies to have regard to consumer interests and to consult with the Competition Authority if their decisions are likely to have a significant impact on competition.
- Restructure the ESB's transmission and distribution operations to produce savings in customer bills.
- Enact and implement the Consumer Protection Bill, which would outlaw the promotion and operation of pyramid schemes. The Bill would also allow Courts compel rogue traders to pay compensation to consumers.
- Request the Competition Authority to carry out an examination of the cost of credit cards in Ireland.

## New Ireland

### Progress Since 1997

Ireland has a body of modern environmental legislation. As EU Directives develop, this body of legislation needs regular updating. Action taken by this government for the benefit of the environment includes:

- Record levels of investment in waste recycling and water services infrastructure. Over €3.2 billion was spent under the NDP 2000 – 2006 on environmental infrastructure projects including over 300 water service projects. Over €500 million was spent upgrading the water supply for over 500,000 people in rural households.
- Action on emissions control
  - The National Emission Reduction Plan for large energy users is significantly reducing sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides emissions.
  - An ambitious National Programme to reduce emissions of transboundary pollutants (sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and ammonia) by 2010 is being implemented. This will greatly reduce air pollution.
  - Rapid progress has been made in meeting targets under the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, with secondary treatment compliance rising from 25% to 90% at the end of December 2005.
- Action on waste management and recycling
  - The Plastic Bag levy was introduced in 2002 and is an outstanding success. The fall in the consumption of plastic bags is estimated at over 90%.
  - The national recycling rate hit its target of 35% in 2006, well ahead of the 2013 target date.
  - The Waste Management (Packaging) Regulations 2003 require all manufacturing and retail businesses participating in placing packaging on the market to segregate and have collected the packaging waste arising on their own premises.
  - The EU Directives on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and the Restriction of Hazardous Substances in Electrical and Electronic Equipment were fully transposed and implemented in 2005.

### Current Background

Climate change is the greatest environmental problem facing us, and our future generations. It is true that poor economies can cause much greater environmental damage than stronger economies. We also recognise the threat climate change poses to the development goals of the world's poorest people. Those who argue that we must go backwards if we are to maintain or achieve sustainability are wrong. We believe that only a high-performance economy will generate the resources to successfully address the question of sustainability. The right political leadership can deliver continued economic success AND achieve world-best standards in terms of emissions control, biofuel production and use, and energy conservation.

## New Opportunities

At the heart of the Progressive Democrats approach is the commitment to establish a Department of Environment and Energy to drive a national programme across government that will ensure Ireland reduces its pollution and emissions in line with our international obligations, secures energy supply and promotes maximum use of sustainable energy sources.

In relation to emissions we will ensure that our Kyoto target for 2012 is fully met, and that we are in a position to contribute fully to meeting the EU target of at least a **20% reduction in emissions** below 1990 levels by 2020. Specifically, this will mean:

- **Promoting efficient energy use and energy conservation across the economy.**
- **Maximising the development, production and use of biomass and biofuels.**
- **Ensuring that 30% of electricity is generated from renewable sources by 2015, and 33% by 2020.**
- **Making Ireland a world-leader in terms of the development and use of renewable energy technologies.**
- **Establishing, in addition to the new Departmental configuration, an Independent Commission for Sustainable Development to provide independent advice to government on Ireland's sustainable development.**

### Action on Energy

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Provide for a massive increase in investment in onshore and offshore wind farms, including investing €276 million under the National Development Plan.
- Invest €270 million under the National Development Plan as part of our strategy to meet Ireland's international obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions set by the Kyoto Protocol.

In government the Progressive Democrats will commit to **match best European standards in energy conservation and emissions reduction** by:

- Investing in our electricity network to continue to reduce losses of electricity, as a percentage of electricity distributed.
- Upgrading the natural gas transmission and distribution network to reduce fugitive emissions from the network.
- Maximising the potential benefit of Combined Heat and Power (CHP), by supporting small scale CHP and large-scale biomass-fed CHP, and additional research and development supports.
- Developing and implementing a comprehensive Demand Side Management Plan, which will include the progressive provision of real-time electricity displays (Smart Meters), linked to meters to provide information to consumers on electricity usage and its cost.
- Progressing a National Ocean Energy Strategy to help Ireland become a world leader in the development and deployment of ocean energy technologies, and to see 500Mw of installed ocean energy capacity by 2020.
- Raising the energy efficiency of all new homes by at least 40% by reviewing the scope, structure and form of the current building regulations, thermal performance requirements, use of high efficiency boilers, renewable energy systems, energy efficient lighting, as well as the scope for tighter insulation and air infiltration requirements.
- Investigating the mandatory use of condensing boilers in home-heating systems.
- Launching a €15 million multi-annual climate change awareness campaign.
- Providing €50 million for grant assistance to homeowners who intend to purchase a new renewable energy heating system for either new or existing homes.
- Continuing to provide appropriate exemptions from planning permission for the installation of micro-renewable technologies for homeowners (wind turbines, solar panels, heat pumps and biomass systems).
- Providing new energy efficient designs for schools (2.3 times more energy efficient than international normal standards)
- Encouraging one-off housing projects to use sustainable methods of construction and to install renewable energy heating technology.
- Introducing enforceable energy conservation guidelines, including mandatory use of energy efficient lighting, for Government Departments, State Agencies, Local Authorities, the Health Service and the public sector generally. This will help us meet a public sector target of a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to a 33% saving in energy use by 2020.
- Ensuring that those responsible for the design and building of all new State buildings are required to consider renewable heating options by implementing the EU directive 2002/91/EC of the 16 December 2002 (Energy Performance of Buildings).
- Investing €25 million in the Commercial Bioheat Support Scheme to enable companies and small businesses to obtain grants for the installation of wood chip and wood pellet boilers in large buildings and commercial premises.
- Introducing the equivalent of an 'Energy NCT' for all commercial buildings over 5000 square meters to ensure that all heating and cooling systems are working effectively and at optimum level. We propose the phased introduction of fines for non-compliance.
- Phasing out the use of low-efficiency incandescent and halogen light bulbs over the lifetime of the next government, in favour of more energy efficient bulbs. An environmental levy will be introduced on incandescent bulbs, to reduce their price advantage and encourage consumers to switch to CFL bulbs.

In government the Progressive Democrats will **maximise the use of biomass** by:

- Ensuring all peat electricity power stations are co-fired by 30% renewable material by 2015 (this will lead to CO2 savings of 900,000 tonnes per year).
- Guaranteeing that 12% of all residential and commercial heating will be powered by renewable sources (wood chips, solar, etc) by 2020 (5% by 2010).

In government the Progressive Democrats will **promote the indigenous production of biomass** by:

- Using every appropriate tax, excise relief and financial incentive to make Ireland a world-leader in terms of renewable energy crop production and use. (See our extensive agriculture policy section also).
- Ensuring that adequate establishment grants are paid to farmers to plant willow and miscanthus to make certain that sufficient biomass is available.
- Radically reshaping Irish agricultural policies towards increasing production of renewable energy, which will both provide a valuable source of renewable energy and simultaneously reduce agricultural sector emissions.
- Leading a campaign at European level to remove all existing obstacles to maximum production of energy crops.
- Facilitating the transformation of Bórd na Mona from a fossil fuel company into a sustainable energy enterprise, and maximise Coillte's forestry and wind farm potential.
- Supporting enterprises to build anaerobic digester plants to convert slurry to biogas, to encourage the creation of a biogas industry in Ireland.

### Action on Transport

In government the Progressive Democrats will **increase the use of biofuels and reduce emissions** by:

- Producing a Sustainable Transport Action Plan, which outlines sustainable mobility indicators and targets, and the optimal policy mix to deliver a sustainable transport system.
- Promoting the switch from private to public transport. Transport 21 is a €34.3 billion capital investment framework for the transport system for 2006 to 2015, which will result in a switch from private to public forms of transport. While €18.5 billion will be invested in the national roads programme, an additional €15.8 billion will be provided for public transport projects and for regional airports.
- Introducing a biofuels obligation scheme, requiring that biofuels represent a given volume of overall sales, and that all petrol and diesel to have on average a 5.75% biofuel mix by 2009.
- Working towards a 10% biofuel market penetration for the transport fuel market by 2020.
- Making the excise relief that public transport providers receive conditional upon their meeting increasingly ambitious annual targets in relation to their use of biofuels in their overall fuel mix.
- Ensuring all new busses in the public fleet use a biofuel blend of at least 30%.
- Require all major transport fleets to convert vehicles on a phased basis to biofuel, and ensure that all new and replacement vehicles run on biofuel.
- Implementing a National Efficient Driving Campaign.
- Transforming the current VRT and motor tax system to one where the tax paid is aligned to the emissions of the car.
- Extending beyond December 2007 the existing preferential VRT treatment available to hybrid-electric, flexible fuel and electric vehicles.
- Incentivising the conversion of all taxis in the State to run on biofuels

### Leading Research and Development

In government the Progressive Democrats will assist **Ireland become a world-leader in terms of renewable energy technology research and development** by:

- Establishing a dedicated Renewables Venture Capital Scheme, under which Enterprise Ireland would partner with Venture Capital funds to provide finance for businesses developing renewable energy source technology such as wind, tidal, and solar power. Initial funding for the scheme will come from the allocation of seed and venture capital funding announced in the Budget (€175 million over a period of ten years), with further extra funding allocated as required.

- Separating the research and education functions of Sustainable Energy Ireland and focus research on more ambitious projects. Given the strategic importance of Research and Development in this area research funding should be increased significantly.
- Mandating IDA Ireland to give particular attention to attracting international Renewable Energy Research and Development facilities to Ireland.
- Establishing a dedicated environmental research fund for which third-level institutions will compete.
- Refocusing Teagasc towards sustainable energy promotion, education, research and development.
- Funding research into the conversion of cellulose to ethanol, with a particular emphasis on species suitable for Ireland and promoting research co-operation with other countries interested in the same species.

### Action on Waste, Water & Sewerage

In government, the Progressive Democrats will ensure Ireland has the **optimal waste, recycling, water and sewerage systems and infrastructure** to protect our shared environment by:

- Upgrading and expanding water treatment capacity, including an investment of €4.7 billion under the National Development Plan.
- Cleaning up existing landfill facilities with investment of €753 million under the NDP.
- Expediting the installation of landfill gas recovery at all existing sites under EPA licensing control.
- Establishing a National Waste Management Agency to help set policy, drive implementation and police standards in the waste management sector.
- Progressing the National Strategy on Biodegradable Waste to ensure that 80% of biodegradable municipal waste is diverted from landfill by 2016.
- Promoting the most developed recycling infrastructure possible for Ireland, identifying market opportunities for materials recovered for recycling and producing a Market Development Programme focusing on the priority waste streams of paper, plastic and organics.
- Obliging all large supermarket and retail chains to set aside space in their stores to allow customers to dispose of packaging before leaving the store.
- Building on progress to date made under the National Anti-Litter Strategy by reviewing, among other things, the appointment of litter wardens by all Local Authorities, the enforcement responsibility available to litter wardens, the level of fines for breach of litter laws, the funding for and frequency of rural roads litter removal, and the participation by all Local Authorities in the "Clean to European Norms" scheme.
- Resisting mass burn incineration of unsegregated waste - which gives rise to toxic emissions and residual ash, conflicts with long-term strategies to cut waste volumes by recycling and reduction, requires huge scale to operate efficiently and generates large volumes of traffic. Ireland must take advantage of innovation in the waste industry to deal with waste without recourse to mass-burn incineration.
- Creating a National Water and Sewerage Services Office in the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure the provision of an adequate and efficient network of water and sewerage infrastructure, and oversee the implementation by Local Authorities of Water Services Investment Programmes.
- Delivering incremental capacity as required in critical areas of drinking and wastewater treatment rather than postponing improvements until larger-scale projects can be delivered.
- Targeting new funding and programmes to protect and improve water quality in our lakes and rivers, coupled with new public awareness campaigns and speedy incorporation of relevant EU directives into Irish law.

### Conserving Our Natural Environment

In government, the Progressive Democrats will work to **protect and enhance Ireland's natural environment** by:

- Investing €167 million under the National Development Plan in areas of special conservation.
- Ensure Local Authorities zone as 'hands-off' all sports, recreational and education-related lands, to prevent development on land important to communities and to preserve these urban "green lungs".
- Require all Local Authorities to legally secure the title on all open spaces and public amenities.
- Investigating the feasibility of a National Wildlife Park to house indigenous Irish species along the lines of the Scottish Wildlife Park.
- Targeting new funding and programmes to protect and improve water quality in our lakes and rivers, coupled with new public awareness campaigns and speedy incorporation of relevant EU directives into Irish law. This will also include measures to eradicate and prevent the spread of plant species damaging to our lakes, such as *lagarosiphon* and *zebra mussels*.
- Supporting with funds a volunteer Wildlife Protection Corps to assist in the protection of our natural environment and in the education of young people and other citizens in the value of our natural environment.
- Building on our progress on salmon protection, to promote more fisheries protection initiatives including evaluating how water bailiffs and angling clubs can supplement protection measures.
- Bringing forward new legislation to create a network of Marine Protected Areas that represent all habitats and species. Such a network will include some areas that are highly protected to stop all damaging commercial and recreational activities.
- Creating at least one major undersea nature reserve, in the lifetime of the next government.

## New Ireland

Planning is a critical area of policy as the decisions taken now will have consequences not just for this generation of Irish people but for generations to come. Good planning supports functioning communities and the development of social capital. Bad planning leads to the destruction of communities, the rise of anti-social behaviour and an overall lowering in the quality of life of these people who are unfortunate enough to have to live with it. Planning has become an even more central political issue in recent years as the explosive growth of our cities has resulted in traffic congestion and a serious deficit in physical and social infrastructure in many areas.

## New Opportunities

In government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Create a National Planning Monitoring and Enforcement Office in the relevant Department, to police the planning system. This Office would have a mandate to ensure that planning laws are enforced effectively and uniformly across the country. It would also have the power to investigate breaches of the planning law, to seek legal redress against developers and, where appropriate, individuals responsible for breaches of the planning law by development companies. In addition it would compile and publish a "Defaulters Register" of developers or others who had previously not kept to planning conditions agreed with a Local Authority. In relation to new housing developments, the Office would be able to ensure compliance by planning authorities with directives requiring developers to provide social infrastructure (schools, open spaces, recreational facilities etc.) and ensure completion of estates.
- Ensure the 'hands-off' zoning by Local Authorities of all sports, recreational and education-related lands, to prevent development on land important to communities.
- Permit land swaps by Local Authorities only following public discussion and a formal public consultation process.
- Require all Local Authorities to legally secure the title on all open spaces and public amenities.
- Create a Geographic Information System (GIS) national planning database to collect all the relevant planning information to provide statistics on planning in Ireland in real time. Information from this database will be available to all relevant Government Departments and should (using predictive modelling) form the basis of planning the roll-out of public services such as education and health, where possible
- Propose a more accurate definition of a 'local person' in planning guidelines and development plans to mean either a person born and reared in a rural area; a person who has lived in a rural area for at least 7 years and who has forged strong links with the local community.
- Ensure that in areas of outstanding scenic amenity, planning permission will not be easily obtained.
- Remove responsibility for hearing appeals, including those on rural housing, from the current board of An Bórd Pleanála and give to three regional boards operating under the aegis of An Bórd Pleanála and based on the EU election constituencies.
- Post all planning decisions on the internet and the reason for the decision given, including the names and contact details of the engineers/architects who submitted the original proposals.
- Limit enurement clauses, which prevent the selling on of a site once planning permission has been granted, to 7 years. Allow relaxation of enurement clauses only where a rural dweller can supply definitive evidence that he or she must relocate because of employment or other significant commitments.

## New Ireland

Significant progress has been made in the fight against crime since 1997, and especially since 2002 when Michael McDowell became Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform:

- Increased Garda numbers - Significant recruitment has increased the size of the Garda force from 10,700 in 1997. By the end of 2007 the force will have 14,300 recruits (including trainees). We will increase this number to 15,000 by the end of 2008, and if re-elected up to 16,000. Increased civilianisation (use of civilians to free Gardaí from clerical duties) will also increase the number of Gardaí on the beat.
- Unprecedented Garda funding – At €1.4 billion, the budget for the Gardaí has been increased by over 130% since 1997.
- Garda Reserve - Michael McDowell established the Garda Reserve in order to secure the links which the Gardaí have in our communities and to encourage practical patriotism.
- More prison places - A new cell block at Portlaoise and new prisons in County Cork and at Thornton in north Dublin will substantially increase the number of prison places.
- More CCTV systems - At present there are 10 Garda CCTV systems currently in place in Bray, Cork, Dundalk, Dublin (North Central), Dublin (South Central), Dundalk, Dun Laoghaire, Galway, Limerick and Tralee as compared to 4 in 2002. Contracts for Ballyfermot, Clondalkin and Tullamore, have already been signed by the Garda authorities and implementation of these systems is now underway.
- Tougher life sentences – Following an intervention by Michael McDowell, prisoners serving life sentences for murder are no longer considered for release after serving just seven years of their sentence. At least 12 years must now pass before an adult convicted of murder, can be considered for release. In the case of murder committed in the course of or in the context of violent criminality - such as robbery, gangland activity or drug crime - no consideration of release on licence will be given until at least 15 years has elapsed.
- Targeting middle level drug-pushers - A nationwide joint Garda National Drugs Unit/Criminal Assets Bureau initiative is now in place which targets the assets of middle ranking criminals involved in drug dealing. A key feature of this initiative is An Garda Síochána's deployment of asset profile officers in each Garda region.
- Supporting victims of crime - In March 2005, Michael McDowell established the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime with a three-year remit to devise an appropriate support framework for victims of crime into the future and to disburse funding for victim support and assistance measures.
- ASBOs – Anti-social behaviour orders have been introduced this year. Senior Gardaí can apply to the District Court for an "order" which would prohibit a person from behaving in an anti-social manner. Similar to civil injunctions (breaches of which are punishable as a criminal contempt) a breach of an ASBO will be a criminal offence.
- Office of the Garda Ombudsman – This independent office was mandated by An Garda Síochána Act 2005. The Garda Ombudsman will replace the Garda Síochána Complaints Board and is expected to be operating in the coming months.
- Garda Inspectorate - An Garda Síochána Act 2005 also mandated the establishment of the Garda Inspectorate. The principal job of the GI will be to review Garda operations and administration on behalf of the Minister for Justice and to provide him with advice on best policing practice.
- Tougher laws against gangland crime – The recently passed Criminal Justice legislation has significantly strengthened our law in confronting serious crime:
  - o Right to silence – The law now provides for inferences to be drawn as to the credibility of a defence if details of that defence are not mentioned under Garda questioning.
  - o Bail - A Garda Chief Superintendent is now allowed give his or her opinion that the applicant for bail is likely to commit serious offences if granted bail. The applicant is required to provide a statement of his or her assets and income as well as details of his or her previous criminal record and details of previous bail applications. Those granted bail may be subject to electronic monitoring, to ensure they are complying ] with the conditions set down by the Court. The prosecution authorities are being granted a right to appeal against a grant of bail or against any conditions attaching to bail, where granted.

- o Sentencing: Second Grave Offence - A person who commits any one of a list of scheduled grave offences and, within 7 years, commits another one of those offences will be subject to a penalty of imprisonment equal to at least three quarters of the maximum laid down by law for that second offence. Where the second offence carries a potential maximum of life imprisonment, a sentence of at least 10 years should be imposed.
- o Sentencing: Conditions - A person who has been imprisoned for one of the scheduled offences may be made subject to a 'crime prevention order'. That would require the person to observe any conditions laid down by the court. These may include a condition that he or she keeps the Gardaí informed of his or her movements. The order may last for up to 10 years or until the maximum sentence for the offence, had it been imposed, would have expired.
- o Sentencing: Drugs – There will be a mandatory minimum sentence of at least 10 years in cases where a convicted person had drugs to the value of €0.5m.
- o Detention Periods – Maximum detention periods will be extended to 7 days in murder, kidnapping and other serious offences involving firearms or explosives. This would be of major benefit in combating gangland crime.
- o Retention of Samples – We now allow for the indefinite retention of fingerprints, DNA, palm prints and photographs of suspects.

### Current Background

While crime ranks high in public concern, the reality is that crime rates today are actually lower than they were in the past. The headline crime rate in 1983 was 29.3 per 1,000 population. In 2006 the figure had fallen to 26 even though recording of crime had probably increased due to the introduction of the Garda Pulse system and the fact that more items are insured.

But regardless of whether crime is a greater problem or a lesser problem than in the past, it remains a serious problem which we are committed to combating. And there is no doubt that gangland crime and drug crime are running at very serious levels. For that reason, the Gardaí were asked to set up Operation Anvil. This is one of the most intensive special policing operations ever undertaken in the State. It is intelligence-driven and targets those involved in gun crime.

In addition, the importance of child protection was highlighted by the Supreme Court's decision last summer to declare unconstitutional the crime of statutory rape.

### New Opportunities

If elected to the next Government the Progressive Democrats propose the following further reforms over the lifetime of the government:

#### An Garda Síochána

- Garda numbers - In line with the commitment given in 2002, the number of recruited Gardaí has already increased from 12,200 to 14,200, and will be raised to 15,000 by the end of 2008. If re-elected the Progressive Democrats will further increase the strength of the Force to 16,000.
- Civilian Support – In order to ensure that provincial full time Gardaí are not deployed in routine administrative duties and to provide back up to the front-line policing function, an extra 1,200 administrative and back up staff will be attached to An Garda Síochána. These staff will provide administrative, technical, H.R., training and analysis service to the Force.
- Crime Analysts - The Force will be assisted by the establishment of a specialist crime analysts' service operating at both local and regional levels.
- Garda Reserve – The Garda Reserve has been established and is recruiting new members. The Progressive Democrats in Government will accelerate the recruitment process across the State and bring the strength of the Reserve to 3,200 members.
- Garda Equipment - The Progressive Democrats will ensure that Gardaí have world class equipment:
  - o The Tetra Digital Radio Network will be completed.
  - o Gardaí will be given all necessary protection equipment including batons, ballistic vests, spray kits, in line with the advice of our Garda Síochána Inspectorate.
  - o The Garda car fleet renewal programme will be completed and sustained.
  - o A new tactical training centre has been acquired and will be developed.
  - o Real and virtual firing ranges will be made available for all members who carry firearms.

- o Extensive investment will be made in I.T. equipment including the following:
    - updating of PULSE
    - computerised finger print and DNA records
    - vehicle registration I.D. equipment with access to appropriate data bank, with fixed locations and on-board vehicle scanners.
- Garda Efficiency - The Garda Inspectorate will report on the efficiency and effectiveness of An Garda Síochána including rostering, deployment and related issues. The Progressive Democrats will also ensure that a COMP-STAT system is put in place to ensure that Garda numbers and resources are matched to changing “on the ground” circumstances, on the basis of a regular ongoing analysis at local and regional level.
- Ombudsman - The Garda Ombudsman Commission which has been established will be made fully operational on the basis of adequate resources.
- Garda Accommodation - The Progressive Democrats will ensure that responsibility for Garda Stations building and maintenance is devolved to a single unit which will include legal and planning expertise and will ensure that split responsibilities are no longer a cause of delay.
- Garda Management - It is essential that the management of An Garda Síochána be modernised and kept in line with best international bench-marked standards:
  - o There will be a Management Board with expert lay membership to advise the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners.
  - o A special Oireachtas Committee will be established to ensure appropriate democratic accountability by the Force and to compliment existing Ministerial accountability to the Dáil.
  - o Members of the Oireachtas Committee will participate with members of the PSNI Board in an All-Ireland Policing Forum.
  - o The Progressive Democrats will complete the network of Local Policing Committees and will adjust Garda policing districts that they correspond with local government boundaries.
- CCTV systems – we will roll out Garda CCTV systems in the following locations: Athlone, Carlow, Castlebar, Clonmel, Drogheda, Dungarvan, Ennis, Kilkenny, Kinsale, Mullingar, Portlaoise, Sligo, Tallaght and Waterford. We will strongly support Community based CCTV and special CCTV schemes for sheltered and senior accommodation.
- Victim support – we will double funding for victim support over the lifetime of the government.
- ASBOs – we will monitor closely the implementation of ASBOs to ensure that they prove effective in the fight against petty crime and anti-social behaviour.
- D.N.A. and Forensic Science - The Progressive Democrats will provide for a comprehensive DNA and Forensic Science Service for the State including the construction of a new Forensic Science Laboratory which was recently announced.
- Criminal Assets Bureau - The CAB will be further strengthened and at local and regional level provision will be made to deploy its power and resource in respect of assets, wealth and property accumulated by criminals who are engaged in low-level smuggling, drug dealing and theft.

### Re-Balancing the Criminal Law

The Progressive Democrats strongly believe that the Criminal Justice system must be the subject of a major overhaul to make it effective and fair. The Progressive Democrats will bring forward proposals to deal with the issues raised and considered in the Report of Balance of Criminal Law Group published in March 2007. Our aim is to keep the Criminal Law effective and fair. The Rebalancing Package will respect fundamental human rights and at the same time make the criminal justice process fairer from the point of view of the victim and the community. Our proposals will include the following:

- Character Evidence - In a case where an injured party has died or has become incapacitated and is unable to give evidence, and where the accused attacks their character, the accused will be cross-examined as to his or her character without the permission of the court. The prosecution will be entitled to use evidence regarding the defendant's character in cases where a defendant has made efforts to attack the character of an incapacitated injured party or has through any other means tried to introduce evidence as to his/her own good character.
- Exclusionary Rule – Courts will have discretion to admit evidence obtained in good faith having considered all of the circumstances and the rights of the victim.

- Defendants in jury trials will be required to outline their defence to the jury at the beginning of the trial.
- Videos of Garda Interviews - Videos of interviews will only be given to suspects after charges are pressed. It will be an offence to show such videos to other persons without lawful excuse.
- Pre-Trial Disposal of Issues - In order to avoid a situation where juries are forced to endure long breaks in between the hearing of evidence, all issues around the admissibility of evidence be disposed of before juries are sworn in.
- Re-opening Acquittals Following New Evidence - Legislation should be enacted to give a right to the prosecution to complain in respect of miscarriages of justice on the basis of new or newly discovered evidence.
- Identity parades - The injured party should be allowed identify the suspect through a one-way screen.
- Victim Impact Statements - A judge should be able to direct that certain portions of a victim impact statement would not be reported upon or broadcast.

### Courts & Legal System

The Progressive Democrats will reform the way in which our courts operate:

- Judicial Council - The Progressive Democrats will proceed with the establishment of a Judicial Council with the following functions
  - Ensuring that sentencing guidelines are developed and applied;
  - Educating Judges on a continuing basis;
  - Dealing with complaints of judicial misconduct.
- Court of Criminal Appeal - The Court of Criminal Appeal will be strengthened and its membership will be made more permanent with a view of ensuring a consistent approach to sentencing for serious crimes.
- Court of Civil Appeal - The Progressive Democrats will establish a Court of Civil Appeal between the High Court and the Supreme Court to deal with appeals on matters which have no major constitutional consequences.
- Commission on the Courts - The Progressive Democrats will establish an independent Commission to prepare a report on the structures, composition, working methods and efficiency of the Court system within 18 months and to make proposals for reform.
- Legal Costs - The Progressive Democrats will complete the process of reform of the law relating to legal costs on foot of the Haran and Millar Reports.
- Community Courts and Restorative Justice - The Progressive Democrats will reform the District Court's procedures for dealing with low-level criminal behaviour by introducing a system of community court jurisdiction in which persons who admit to such offences will be required to undertake immediate reparation to the community by participating in short informal community service projects such as cleaning up graffiti, cleaning vacant houses, and assisting in community re-cycling initiatives. The Progressive Democrats will pursue the objectives of restorative justice in accordance with the aims of the National Commission on Restorative Justice which has been established and will report in 2008.
- Family Courts - Transparent information about the functioning of the Family Court system will be made available by the Courts Service.

### Civil Law Reform

The Progressive Democrats will reform our civil law in a number of ways:

- Land Law and Conveyancing - The Progressive Democrats will implement the Land Law and Conveyancing Bill and will make rapid progress towards immediate registration of land transactions and towards e-conveyancing.
- Defamation - The Progressive Democrats will enact the Defamation Bill. The issue of privacy law reform will be revisited with a view to ensuring that injunctions cannot be used to muzzle the press on matters of genuine public concern.
- Civil Partnership - The Progressive Democrats will bring forward a proposal for protection and fairness for unmarried persons who are in long-term cohabiting relationships – regardless of the sexual orientation (if any) of their relationship.
- Prenuptial Agreements - The issue of prenuptial agreements will be addressed in the light of the expected report on the matter.

### **Children's Rights Referendum**

The Progressive Democrats will bring forward comprehensive proposals designed to create a consensus on the constitutional protection of children from sexual abuse, including the absolute zone of protection for younger children.

### **Sexual Offences**

The Progressive Democrats will enact a single Sexual Offences Act as part of the recently established Criminal Law Codification Project. We will restore the absolute liability of child sex abusers in line with the recommendations of the recently published All Party Committee Report on Sexual Offences. We will put the necessary Constitutional Referendum to the people as a matter of priority.

### **Café Bars**

We will revisit and seek the introduction of café bars in line with the proposals in 2005, on foot of the 2003 the Liquor Licensing Commission recommendation.

### **Prisons & Rehabilitation**

The Progressive Democrats are determined to reform and expand the Irish Prison Service so that those who are sent to prison are treated humanely, given incentives to re-train and rehabilitate themselves, are kept in a drug free, secure environment and are prepared, where appropriate, for re-integration into society. We strongly support measures that encourage and support prisoners in their endeavouring to live law abiding and purposeful lives as valued members of society.

- Prison Capacity – We will develop modern, new prisons at Thornton, Co. Dublin and Kilworth, Co. Cork. It is intended that Thornton will be able to house 1,200 prisoners. Kilworth will house up to 500 prisoners. These new prisons will allow the existing city-centre prisons of Mountjoy and Cork to be redeveloped. New accommodation at Wheatfield, Shelton Abbey, Loughan House, Castlerea and Portlaoise will also be constructed.
- Drugs-Free Prisons - The Progressive Democrats will implement a drug-free prisons policy in all prisons and places of detention, involving mandatory random drug testing for prisoners and proper programmes to counter addiction.
- Isolation Units - A number of special isolation units will be established within the prison system for the accommodation of prisoners who are a major risk to society through organised crime links.
- Mobile Phone Blocking – We will roll out the technology currently being piloted to make it impossible for prisoners to use mobile phones while in prison.
- Probation - The Progressive Democrats will strongly support the further development of the Irish Probation Service to ensure that persons at risk of re-offending are given a clear pathway to leading law-abiding lives.
- Rehabilitation - Resources freed up by the ending of the overtime scandal in our prison system will be allocated to training and rehabilitation programmes.

## **New Ireland**

There has been a massive reduction in poverty in this country in the last decade with at least 250,000 people, including some 100,000 children, lifted out of deprivation. This has largely been achieved as a result of the unprecedented fall in unemployment and the large increases in the level of social welfare payments, particularly in recent years. Social welfare rates have increased faster than both the rate of inflation and the rate of growth in earnings thus providing a significant increase in real living standards for the less well off.

Much of the remaining poverty in today's Ireland is concentrated amongst particular groups of people and in particular geographical areas. We are strongly committed to eliminating this remaining poverty from our society. This requires a much more targeted approach tailored to meet the specific needs of these groups, as well as maintaining a dynamic economy with full employment to facilitate their full inclusion in society.

## **New Opportunities**

In our overall fiscal framework we have provided for the resources necessary to fund an ambitious targeted programme of poverty reduction. As a result in Government the Progressive Democrats will pursue the overall objective of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-16: Building an Inclusive Society, namely the reduction in the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016. Achieving this will include the implementation of the following key commitments:

### **Children**

In government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Increase the early childcare supplement from €1,000 to at least €2,000.
- Invest €12 billion under the National Development Plan to provide childcare services, child protection and recreational facilities for children, and educational help for children from disadvantaged communities and those with special needs.
- Provide an extra 50,000 new childcare places by 2010.
- Make schools accessible to students outside normal school hours in order to address the needs of commuting families.
- Develop the capacity to provide one year's free community based pre-school education initially for children from low-income families/deprived areas with a commitment to extending it to all children over time.
- Maintain the value of Child Benefit in real terms.
- Maintain the combined value of child income support measures at 33% - 35% of the minimum adult social welfare payment rate.
- Further enhance the Child Dependent Allowance, which was increased in Budget 2007, and extend it to all low-income families regardless of labour force status so as to eliminate poverty traps.
- Provide €60 million under the National Children's Strategy to advance the interests and well being of children, under the National Development Plan.

### **Older People**

In government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Increase the basic state pension to €300 per week (or 36% of the expected average industrial earnings then) by 2012.
- Introduce an option whereby people may defer receipt of their State pension in return for higher payments in later years, recognising that many people over 65 wish to continue working, on a whole or part time basis.
- Continue the unprecedented expansion of community care for older people that we have put in place since 2005, with additional home care packages, home help hours and palliative care.
- Establish an Ombudsman for Older People as a focused, statutory office to be an advocate for older people, as well as providing a dedicated service for redress.
- Enhance community services to older people including using the Rural Social Scheme to provide support services to elderly people in remote rural areas.
- Develop 500 primary care teams to improve access to services in the community, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of holders of medical cards.

- Improve provision of specialised infrastructure for older persons and / or persons with disabilities via increased thresholds for the *Essential Repairs and Disabled Persons Grants Scheme* and the *Housing Aid or the Elderly Scheme*.
- Establish a nationwide Anti Social Isolation Scheme entitled ONE- 2- ONE to assist those people in communities who are lonely and isolated. This will be community-based scheme in each county, initially run on a pilot basis. Local people and neighbours will become the outside link with the world for older people who might otherwise be isolated geographically or socially. It will involve recruiting and training 'neighbours' who will visit older people on a weekly basis and provide them with companionship.
- Evaluate our rural post office network with a view to helping it retain and enhance its role as a valuable social hub in small and rural communities, and help rural post offices develop new capabilities in a variety of services to the benefit of smaller communities. Also, examine the adequacy of post office accessibility in areas of rapid development.
- Introduce free, off-peak parking for people eligible for the free travel pass.
- Introduce an entitlement to a contributory pension for women with insufficient contributions who left employment prior 1973, by reforming the Homemakers Scheme.
- Introduce a scheme to alleviate the burden of waste-collection charges for OAPs.

### People of Working Age

In government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Provide active tailored support (including childcare) for those on long-term social welfare to help them access education training and employment, with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of those whose total income is derived from long-term social welfare.
- Maintain basic social welfare rates of at least 30% of Gross Average Industrial Earnings.
- Ensure that supplementary welfare payments are based on family income rather than labour force status so as to eliminate "poverty traps".
- Provide additional supports to increase the employment opportunities available to people with disabilities with a target of having at least 7,000 extra people in employment by 2010.
- Provide people on lower and middle incomes with increased incentive to provide for later life. We will introduce a Special Pension Incentive Account (SPIA) where the State will contribute €1 for every €2 contributed by the individual. This will be available to all individuals earning up to twice average industrial earnings (currently €66,400), regardless of their tax liability. It will be in lieu of other pension tax relief and contribution limits will be in line with those available under the current tax relief scheme. In any tax year, people investing in their pensions will be able to elect for this new scheme of benefits or for the existing scheme of benefits.
- As under SSIs the individual will be able to choose from alternative investment options provided by registered financial institutions who agree to a regime of maximum charges and a code of practice designed to ensure that the benefit of the state contribution is not offset by excessive charges. In addition we will request the National Pension Reserve Fund to provide an option whereby individuals can, for a modest fixed fee, contribute to a fund linked to the performance of the NPRF.
- Deliver increased social housing output to meet the accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households.

### Support for Carers

Carers play an invaluable role in our society, particularly by enabling older people and people with disabilities to remain in their own homes. In 1990 we introduced the carers allowance and since then it has been a valuable source of support for carers on low incomes.

As of April 2007 the income disregard for the carers allowance will be increased to €320(single) / €640(couple) per week.

In order to provide an incentive to a wider range of carers the Progressive Democrats in government will, as part of a new National Carers Strategy, at least double the disregards over the life of the next government to €640(single) / €1280(couple) per week.

## **New Ireland**

The agenda for the Progressive Democrats in the next government will be to lead Ireland towards excellence in all aspects of healthcare in our country.

This will mean transforming patients' experience of health services, so that they will know that they, and they alone, are put first.

We believe there is no impossible barrier to Ireland achieving excellence in health. We are doing it on the economy; we can do it on health. With the commitment and determination of all in health working towards shared goals, we can achieve the excellent patient-centred services we all wish to see in our country.

We have started a major reform programme in this Government and there is no going back. The foundations for excellence have been laid.

And the improvements are now coming, in A&E, cleaner hospitals, shorter waiting times, cancer care, cardiac care, GP services, and a new Children's Hospital.

### **Progress since 1997**

Since 1997, there have been tremendous improvements in health. For example

- **Waiting times for heart operations cut dramatically**  
1997: 70% of children wait over a year for heart operations.  
2007: no child waiting over a year.  
  
1997: 75% of adults wait over a year for heart operations.  
2007: most offered treatment within months.
- **National Treatment Purchase Fund has cut waiting times for the most common operations cut from years to months**  
Public patients are now offered a definite appointment for treatment in a private hospital if not treated within three months.
- **40,000 more cancer patients discharged from hospitals, a 70% increase**
- **People surviving cancer longer, cancer mortality down 9%**  
15% decrease in mortality in the under 65 age group achieved in 2001, three years ahead of target set in the first National Cancer Strategy 1996
- **Smoke-free, healthier workplaces**  
2004: smoking banned in workplaces, setting international trends
- **National cancer screening programmes introduced**  
1997: no cancer screening anywhere  
2007: Breastcheck brought to all regions; national cervical screening to start.
- **300,000 more patient discharges from public acute hospitals**
- **Acute hospital beds: fastest expansion ever**  
Increase of acute hospital bed capacity by 1,200 beds between 2001 to 2005, and by over 1,600 since 1997.
- **Largest ever expansion in services for people with disabilities in first-ever multi annual funding commitment, started in 2004**  
€900m programme being implemented. 24,000 people getting day services, 8,200 in residential care and 4,000 getting respite services.
- **Largest increase healthcare staffing: 2,394 more doctors/dentists; 8,460 more nurses, four times more A&E consultants**

### Progress under Mary Harney

Since September 2004, Minister Mary Harney has brought real progress and reforms to health.

- She has achieved measurable improvements to A&E services – now improved by over 40 per cent.
- She has introduced new legislation to set and enforce standards of care in nursing homes; for the first time, each patient will have an individual care plan.
- She has cleaned up hospitals with the first-ever national hospital hygiene audit.
- She has put services for older people on the top of the agenda, with €400 million new funding over two budgets, to provide new home care, home help and long term care. There are five times more home care packages for older people now than in 2005.
- She has invited private investment to build new hospitals faster than ever at public hospital sites, freeing up 1,000 beds for public patients.
- She is ensuring that new consultants are hired on a new contract so that patients will be seen faster and discharged faster from hospital.
- She is taking major new steps to bring fairness for public patients in hospitals.
- In the first major reform of medical regulation in 30 years, she has put a majority of lay people on the Medical Council, and ensured Fitness to Practice hearings are held in public normally.
- She has expanded the role of nurses to provide faster patient services through nurse prescribing, for example.
- She has brought in the first major overhaul of Pharmacy regulation in 130 years for patient safety. This also now allows, for example, Irish people who qualify as pharmacists in the UK to open pharmacies here without artificial restrictions or delays.
- She has expanded free GP care for families on low incomes with the GP visit card. She has made the means test for the medical card much easier, and made the largest increase in that means test for 30 years.

See [www.progressivedemocrats.ie](http://www.progressivedemocrats.ie) for a full set of achievements in health.

### Current Challenges

It is now time to use these improvements to transform the experience of health care for patients.

Our economic success has delivered substantial new resources for health. At the same time, we all know we cannot simply spend our way to excellence in healthcare. Everyone agrees that we cannot simply scale up the old system. We need to continue changing the way the system works for patients, so that patients' needs come first.

The additional investment we will make in hospitals and in community services will work to deliver better, sustainable patient services by matching funding with changed work practices and arrangements.

The fact that our population is relatively young offers us tremendous opportunities to build better health care services that will be sustained for decades ahead.

**The next stage in reform will be all about setting and enforcing standards, and providing progressively stronger guarantees for patients of what they can expect from their health services.**

In leading health policy, the Progressive Democrats in government will ensure that:

- Patient safety and quality care will drive all our decisions
- The patient interest will be put first and responsiveness to patients will be greatly improved in practical ways.
- We will continue to invest high levels of public funding in health services and facilities with financial incentives built in for the results we seek for patients.
- We will provide as many services as possible in the community, close to people, and supporting independent living. We want people to retain their independence for their full lifetime in as much as humanly possible.
- We will encourage and require local management to solve specific problems. We will empower managers, staff and clinicians to work together to make improvements for patients in their own areas.
- We will encourage innovation by both public and private providers in health for faster, quality patient services. We will bring public and private to work together for all patients; we will not freeze out the private sector.
- We will bring forward and implement recommendations of the Commission on Patient Safety recently established by Minister Mary Harney. This will deal with all aspects of system design and procedures that affect patient safety.

## New Opportunities

### 12 Guarantees to Patients

- We will progressively introduce Patient Guarantees of what people they can expect from their health service. We will ensure that these are real and practical, not aspirational. We believe that organisations and processes should be driven by the results that patients expect.
- We will work with the HSE to organise their operations of particular services so that real guarantees to patients will be managed and met.
- We will start with the following twelve guarantees:
  1. Guarantee of an offer of an appointment for treatment from the National Treatment Purchase Fund, initially after three months' waiting, reducing to two months for elective procedures.
  2. Guarantee of seven day a week discharges from hospital. Patients in hospital will be discharged as soon as medically ready. No patient will stay in hospital waiting over a weekend for a doctor to make a discharge decision.
  3. Guarantee of quality cancer care for people in every region. Cancer patients in all parts of the country will receive the same quality standard of care. The cancer centres will be required to manage services to meet target, short treatment times for each aspect of cancer care.
  4. Guaranteed frequency of screening calls for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer.
  5. Guarantee that all children needing cardiac and cancer care procedures will be treated as soon as medically ready.
  6. Guarantee that all beds in publicly-funded hospitals will be routinely available to all patients, starting at co-location campuses.
  7. Guarantee that standards of hygiene and infection control are enforced for patient safety, with the ultimate sanction of withdrawal of a license for failure to adhere to standards.
  8. Guarantee that hospitals will be organised to meet the target that no-one will wait for admission or discharge at an A&E Department beyond six hours from the time they arrive.
  9. Guarantee that no-one will face unaffordable nursing home care costs.
  10. Guarantee that clear standards are communicated, set and enforced in nursing homes and residential care settings.
  11. Guarantee that patients will have available a range of high quality, primary care, mental health and community health services, accessible locally in modern centres and delivered by teams of skilled GPs and other professionals.
  12. Guaranteed assessment for services and a personal plan for persons with disabilities.

Implementing these guarantees will require constant focus and excellent procedures, where progress is measured and managed to achieve the results.

They will also require change in the way things are done throughout health and cannot be achieved without the reformed working arrangements we envisage. Management, clinicians and health professionals all have a part to play.

Well-managed budgets are also required. We believe these service guarantees will be achieved and sustained where there is overall budget discipline and a drive for efficiency, effectiveness and value for money. If budgets are not managed well in health care, service levels will not be sustained.

We will work with the Health Service Executive to ensure that every aspect of our health services operate with clear, respectful communications with patients and their families.

## Major priority: Older People

### New Ombudsman for Older People

- We give this commitment to older people – we will do our utmost to ensure that you are supported to live in your home for your lifetime.
- We will continue to give the highest levels of priority to services for older people. We will continue the unprecedented expansion of community care for older people that we have put in place since 2005, with additional home care packages, home help hours and palliative care.
- We will support a five-year strategy on hospice and palliative care, based on the recommendations of the 2001 Report of the National Advisory Committee on Palliative Care, with appropriate funding and a dedicated manpower and training programme.
- We will appoint an Ombudsman for Older People to further support standards and quality care for health and wider public services for older people. This will be modelled on the office of the Ombudsman for Children, which the Government established by statute in 2002, and will provide a focused, statutory office to be an advocate for older people, as well as providing a dedicated service for redress beyond existing organisations.

### New, enforced nursing home standards

- We will ensure that high standards are set and enforced for nursing home care.
- We will strongly support and implement new HIQA role, especially in nursing homes and in public residential care centres and homes. Minister Mary Harney has introduced the first-ever standards for individual care plans in nursing homes, adding to physical standards of facilities. For the first time, these standards will also apply to public facilities.
- We will ensure that the Health Information and Quality Authority and the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services will set and enforce standards fairly and openly.

### Implement the Fair Deal for nursing home care costs so care is affordable for all

We will implement the *Fair Deal* from the start of 2008.

For at least the last 13 years, the system of support for people needing nursing home care was unfair, unpredictable and, in many cases, financially devastating.

No government addressed this huge problem, until Minister Mary Harney brought to Government the Fair Deal that was adopted as policy, meaning entirely new, fair, transparent rules for sharing of the cost of nursing home care.

This will mean everyone will make some contribution to the cost of care, on a fair basis, and the State will pay all the balance, even when there are price increases.

No-one will ever be asked to contribute more than four fifths their own, actual, disposable income. A Deferred Contribution of a maximum of 5% of the value of a principal private residence (2.5% for a spouse) will be made for each year of care – up to a maximum of three years. After three years in care, no additional amount will be added. It will be an option if people or their families wish to pay the deferred charge upfront.

This means, for the first time,

- No family members will be required to come up with cash to pay for their parent's care and, of course, there will be no means testing of relatives.
- No person in care, their spouse or a dependant child will ever be forced to mortgage or sell their house to pay for care.
- Patients and their families will not be exposed to rising nursing home prices.
- People will be supported equally in public and private nursing home places. Overall, the State will continue to meet more than two-thirds of the cost of long term care in our country.
- In the context of the Fair Deal, we will also invest in new public long term care places. Minister Harney has already provided funding for 800 new beds in 2007, over 400 of which will be in the public sector. A further 400 public long term care beds will be put in place in 2008.
- We will finalise the national review of long term care bed needs, in the context of the target that no more than 41/2 per cent of people over-65 should need residential care places.

### **New Licensing & Standards for hospitals and health care**

Our strategic goal for hospitals in the next term of government is to set and enforce explicit standards for the first time.

- We will bring forward and implement recommendations of the Commission on Patient Safety recently established by Minister Mary Harney. This will deal with all aspects of system design and procedures that affect patient safety. One of its key tasks is to make recommendations on a system of licensing of hospitals.
- We will introduce legislation for a mandatory licensing system for all hospitals in the country.
- Patients in all hospitals, public, private and voluntary, will increasingly be guaranteed transparent standards of care, and those standards will be enforced by the new Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) which Minister Mary Harney has now brought on to a statutory level.
- The legislation will have a robust inspection and reporting regime. Ultimately, the Authority will have the power to withdraw a license from a hospital, as well as from other health care settings such as clinics.

This will be a very challenging regime for hospitals and will strengthen assurances to the public that standards are set and enforced in all health care settings.

### **Enforce standards of hygiene and infection control**

- Our pursuit of explicit and transparent standards will mean we will press for ever cleaner hospitals until all reach a standard of excellence that is continuously raised higher. We will continue with the national hospitals hygiene audits that were commenced as a result of Minister Mary Harney's actions on A&E.

Ireland has already a low rate of Healthcare Acquired Infections by European standards, but a relatively high rate of MRSA infection. Reducing MRSA infections will require many actions, including reducing the rate of antibiotic use. This is one of the main reasons for Ireland's high MRSA rate.

- We will relentlessly pursue actions to achieve reductions in MRSA infections, first, with a 30% target reduction, and then moving on to put Ireland in the top half of European countries for MRSA control.
- We will ensure that HIQA sets and enforces a clear standard on Healthcare Associated Infections, and that the new system of licensing will put a strong emphasis on all infection control.

Ultimately, hospitals will risk losing their license if they fail to control infections to a specified minimum standard.

### **New Patient Compensation Scheme without litigation**

- Because mistakes do happen, we will introduce a streamlined patient compensation scheme to ensure that patients can receive compensation for medical and healthcare errors without lengthy legal processes involving the establishment of liability in law.
- We will use the successful model of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board to ensure patients get speedy and fair compensation.
- We will also seek to remove a blame culture in relation to medical mishaps, so that there can be real learning from mistakes. In this context, we will seek to alleviate as much as possible the burden of impending litigation from doctors and health care professionals.

### **Improved hospital and work practices for faster care**

- We will work with the HSE to measure, manage and reduce the time it takes to admit patients to hospitals (whether through A&E or planned admissions); and, we will also measure, manage and reduce the time it takes to discharge patients.
- We will invest in new and more sophisticated medical technologies, in upskilling our doctors and other professionals, and in developing new purpose built facilities to further increase day care treatments each year.
- We have greatly strengthened the diagnostic capabilities of our acute hospitals in the past decade, and we will continue to invest in better, speedier and more effective diagnostic technologies through the health capital programme.

- We will develop community diagnostic centres allowing primary care teams and GPs easier and faster access for their patients, and enabling hospital diagnostic services to concentrate on more acute cases.
- We will implement the new consultants' contract that will provide for teamwork and management among consultants, in turn helping to raise the standards of patient safety and quality care. The new contract will enable us to add 1,500 new consultants in a planned expansion of services.
- The new consultants' contract will mean patients are seen by a senior doctor faster, are admitted to hospital faster and are discharged faster. Patients will be discharged every day of the week from hospitals.

#### **Faster care, fairer access, more efficient hospitals**

We will ensure much faster access for public patients to hospital services, using a combination of investment in public hospitals; closer management of private work in public hospitals, and purchasing services for public patients, where necessary, from private sector providers. We believe there is no need to introduce a compulsory insurance system to achieve this goal of equity of access.

We will implement new services and new investments without further reviews or bureaucratic delays using, where appropriate, the private sector and philanthropic initiatives to best effect including in

- o The new national tertiary Children's Hospital
  - o The new Central Mental Hospital
  - o A new acute hospital in the North East
  - o A new Rehabilitation Hospital
  - o The new Cancer Control Strategy, including the National Radiotherapy Network.
- We will continue to invest substantially in public hospitals according to the capital funding set out in the National Development Plan – over €2 billion will be spent between now and 2013 on acute services.
  - We will support the building of new hospital facilities to free up about 1,000 public beds through the co-location initiative. This is far and away the most cost effective and fastest way of providing 1,000 extra beds. Over 400 public more will be added through the public capital programme. With these, and the 1,200 new beds since 2001, we will be very far advanced towards the Health Strategy goal of 3,000 new beds by 2011. This government has already increased public acute hospital beds at the fastest rate in modern times – about 170 per year more, compared to 30 per year under the previous government.
  - We will carry out a further review to analyse acute hospital bed needs up to 2020.
  - We will also focus public capital investment on refurbishment and creating more single occupancy rooms.
  - We will seek to get the best use out of beds, with more use of day case procedures and reducing the length of time patients stay in hospital at least to European averages (for the age structure of the population)
  - We will guarantee that all patients will have access to all publicly-funded beds in every public hospital, starting at co-location campuses. This will end the situation for many years where about 20 per cent of beds are reserved for private patients.
  - We will strongly support the new co-located facilities at public hospitals to maximise the potential for shared services between public and private hospitals to benefit all patients
  - We will systematically purchase services for public patients from private sector providers, expanding the National Treatment Purchase Fund, where value for money and faster services are achieved
  - We will re-organise the payments system for treatments provided by hospitals so as to ensure funding rewards productivity for patients. It will be focused on moving to a procedure basis for payments to hospitals as much as possible, within a budget provided by taxpayers, so that the public system can pay in the one way for treatments in both public and private hospitals. We do not need a new, compulsory insurance tax to change the payments system. This will help bring better incentives and productivity to hospitals.
  - We will not, however, introduce tax-funded fee per item payments solely to consultants in public hospitals, while all other staff are paid on a salary basis.

- We will provide as wide a range of services in local hospitals as possible, where patient safety and quality can be assured. We will create hospital networks where local hospitals are linked with larger regional hospitals for integrated and higher standards of clinical care for patients. Where appropriate, and it makes sense for patients, we will encourage the development of primary care services on or adjacent to hospital sites.
- Where hospital services are re-organised, we will require that the HSE does so in a manner that commands the confidence of patients and of the public, so that no service is changed without a demonstrably better one being put in its place.

#### **New regulation of medical and health professionals in the public interest**

The public interest has to be the over-riding concern in the way all medical and health care professionals are regulated. We will continue the overhaul we have started to the range of legislation that governs the regulation of health professionals, including doctors, pharmacists, health and social care professionals and nurses.

- We will create a modern, open regulatory regime that is responsive to patients' needs and is also supportive of continuing professional development and competence assurance.

Since the public interest and open accountability must come first, no professional regulatory body will be controlled by members of that profession themselves.

- We will implement and support the new Medical Council to regulate medical professionals in the public interest.
- Minister Mary Harney has brought forward the first overhaul of medical regulation law in nearly 30 years. With a lay majority on the Council and on the Fitness to Practice Committee, we will ensure that medical regulation is carried out transparently and with modern accountability.
- We will support the work of the Medical Council in the area of continuing competence assurance.
- Minister Harney introduced regulatory arrangements for twelve health care professions for the first time which includes a Health and Social Care Professionals' Council with a lay majority. We will ensure that the Registration Boards to support the newly established Council are operable before the end of 2007.
- She has also put the regulation of pharmacy on a new, modernised footing through the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland. We will continue to bring forward modernised legislation to regulate the business of pharmacy services in the public interest.
- During the lifetime of the next government, we will also modernise the legislation relating to the regulation of dental services through the Dental Council, and nurses and midwives through An Bord Altranais.

#### **Continued high public funding with value for money**

With the reformed health structures in place, the challenge is now to get best value for taxpayers' money in a system of health funding that is sustainable.

The easy political choice is to offer more of the same, and more of the same for free.

We believe the more sustainable and financially sound approach is to use taxpayers' money to support people who need support, rather than offering free benefits to people who are already well off and can afford, for example, health insurance or visits to the GP.

It is no answer simply to make more promises and continue spending more until health spending reaches 15 or 20 per cent of national income. Anyone, anywhere in the world, who has looked seriously at health spending recognises this.

We envisage that, with the correct policies, our economy can grow by an average of 5 per cent per annum for the next five years.

That will mean we can, and we will, bring public health current spending to approximately €21 billion by the end of a five year term of government, up from €14 billion now.

We are committed to a level of public investment in health capital projects that has already put Ireland highest in the OECD (alongside Norway) in terms of public capital investment as a proportion of national income (0.6 per cent of GNP).

Few other governments in the world can make these commitments.

As a party we are committed to these high, and sustainable, levels of public investment in health.

### Private sector involvement

We will also actively encourage the private sector to play an integrated role in the provision of health services in Ireland. We wish to see innovation in the interplay between public and private sectors. This is now the European trend. And it has been the tradition for all our modern history, in hospitals, and especially in front line community services. Other parties would now freeze out the private sector. It is against European developments to cut off a role in public health policy for the private sector.

We believe patients want quality-assured care. The vast majority of the Irish public do not reject the private sector in health – they are as happy to be treated in a private hospital as a public hospital. Public patients who have used private hospitals paid by the National Treatment Purchase Fund have expressed high levels of satisfaction.

The use of the private providers for public patients prevents a divide into a two tier health system in our country.

As we license all hospitals, they should all be available for use by the State as service providers to patients.

The co-location hospitals projects will free up public beds in our hospitals and will offer excellent opportunities for public and private management to work together at large public hospital sites.

### In summary

- Public investment in health will continue to be the predominant form of funding. We are committed to continuing sustainable growth in the levels of public spending and public investment in health.
- We will take measures also to support a competitive health insurance market and to continue support for community rating so that health insurance remains affordable for older and sicker people;
- We envisage a fair share of health costs between State and individuals; the cost to individuals should never be a barrier to accessing necessary health care; and contributions to any costs of care should be based on means. We do not believe the expansion of free services for all, irrespective of means, is the best use of scarce taxpayers' resources.
- We do not believe compulsory health insurance is necessary in addition to compulsory taxation to fund our health services.
- We believe that hospitals and service-providers will ultimately be paid on results and outcomes achieved
- The HSE will be required to set and achieve value for money targets and management held accountable for these
- The best use for public health services will be made of land assets held by the HSE.

### Excellence in community services and health promotion

We believe that people want more and better health services to be delivered outside hospitals, that is, in community settings. The community based health services are the ones that most people encounter.

We will work to ensure that entitlements to health benefits such as medical cards, GP visit cards, and community drugs schemes will be simplified, easier to obtain, and better co-ordinated with other income support payments provided by the State.

We reiterate in this manifesto the community health and health promotion strategies and implementation plans brought forward by the Government in recent years, ranging from Mental Health, Primary Care, Childrens' Health, Obesity, Alcohol Abuse and Traveller Health.

Space does not permit us to reiterate all the goals and actions of these strategies but we remain committed to their implementation.

We summarise some elements of these strategies:

- We will implement and fund expanded multi-disciplinary primary care teams around the country, and developing new out of hours services
- We will work with the private service providers and the private sector to implement a major nationwide facilities development programme for primary care and community health services in line with the National Primary Care Strategy
- We will fully implement the largest expansion in services for people with disabilities that the government commenced in Budget 2005

- We will implement new community-based cardiac and chronic disease management services using innovative technologies and new ways of working
- We will bring forward legislation to deal comprehensively with Assisted Human Reproduction
- We will support nurse/midwife-led initiatives in providing health care, for example, in developing new, patient-friendly models of maternity services.
- We will develop and implement a national Rehabilitation service, including new, purpose built National Rehabilitation Hospital beds, and stroke units across the country
- We will bring forward a comprehensive development programme for national Palliative Care services to include new and more accessible facilities and services across the country
- We will fully operate the Sexual Assault and Treatment Units pioneered under this government and further review additional centres when existing units have a track record to analyse
- We will simplify, make fairer and more understandable, the eligibility for all health and social services; we will build on the radical changes we have introduced to the means test for medical cards and GP visit cards in the last two years to ensure that these benefits are made available promptly to those who need them.
- In the past two years, we have increased annual funding by €50 million to begin implementation of the Mental Health strategy, *A Vision for Change* which will replace the old psychiatric hospitals with modern community based services and new acute units attached to general hospitals. We intend to complete this ambitious programme in the lifetime of the next government.
- We will focus resources, awareness and new forms of interventions and supports to help reduce the tragedy of suicide in our country
- We will develop and implement a new national Oral Health policy, which will include service targets for public dental services and orthodontics
- We will seek to negotiate new wage agreements excluding tobacco from the Consumer Price Index for that purpose
- We will introduce the ban on sunbed use for children
- We will take actions to change the culture of binge drinking and excessive use of alcohol; we will continuously review the effectiveness of voluntary restrictions on alcohol advertising, and require more ambitious actions by the industry where there is evidence of their effectiveness.
- We will work with other Government departments, with communities and with young people to combat the scourge of drugs, alcohol and other substance misuse that afflicts our society
- Recognising the unacceptably high levels of death and injury on our roads, and the consequences for individuals and families, and on our health services, we will work with the Road Safety Authority and other government departments in education and public information programmes to heighten awareness on road safety. (Please see our transport policy chapter)
- We will work with our counterparts in Northern Ireland to improve services for people in our border communities
- We will also work to bring forward agreed all-island programmes that bring practical health benefits to all people on the island, and we will remove, where possible, any practical barriers to all-island cooperation.

### **New work arrangements, new health pact for Ireland**

A critical step towards a change agenda that will deliver excellent patient services will be for all in health to work together as never before.

There are 120,000 people working in public health services, and many thousands more in the private sector. The recent social partnership agreement, Towards 2016, contains a wide range of commitments. With so many areas covered, the potential for a truly transformative agreement for health services remains to be achieved. We intend to pursue that opportunity now.

The Progressive Democrats will constructively work in a new health forum that will challenge all health participants to pursue the shared goal of achieving excellence in patient services. We see the outcome as a **Health Pact for Ireland** containing specific, time deliverable actions for implementation starting in 2008.

In these discussions, we are prepared to challenge, and to be challenged.

Fundamental issues will be addressed to ensure better organisation of work practices and working times for best patient care – and more satisfying, productive work for health professionals– across all services, especially in hospitals. We also seek a working environment in health that is constantly open to change, innovation and the use of new technologies for delivering more services and better patient care.

We intend that a showcase for changed work practices and organisation should enable faster and most efficient implementation of the new Cancer Control Strategy. This strategy, published by the Government in 2006, has received widespread support.

Cancer is a major service priority for the whole population. Cancer services involve nearly all aspects of health service planning and delivery: major capital investment, recruitment of a wide range of highly specialised professionals, research, patient services in the community and on a day care basis, population screening, standards and quality assurance; the best organisation of hospitals and payments processes.

**We have a big agenda for change and excellence in health. It is a complex and challenging task. But it is also compelling. And that is why the Progressive Democrats seek a mandate for ambitious health reform that puts patients first.**

## New Ireland

Ireland's education system has done an excellent job, firstly, in educating our people and, secondly, in providing a strong foundation for our recent economic growth. Irish students are performing commendably in international comparison, scoring higher than the OECD average in the latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA):

- Irish students came 6th out of 40 countries for reading literacy.
- Irish students came 17th out of 40 countries for mathematical literacy.
- Irish students came 16th out of 40 countries for scientific literacy.

Considering the factors behind variations in performance, the latest PISA report commented:

*Variations in student performance, in the PISA study, are strongly associated with parental background... But there are many things that schools can do to enhance performance.*

Key areas for consideration include:

- Modern, adequately staffed schools
- Enhanced school management capabilities
- Strong child protection measures
- Special needs and schools in areas of disadvantage
- Integration of foreign students
- Support for our third-level sector

## New Opportunities

In government, the Progressive Democrats will make sure communities have **modern adequately-staffed schools**, when they need them by:

- Investing over €5 billion under the National Development Plan in schools infrastructure, schools development, and Information and Communications Technology in schools.
- Increasing the primary school building capital budget from €305 million in 2007 to over €400 million in the lifetime of the next government.
- Increasing the post-primary school building capital budget from €241 million in 2007 to over €320 million in the lifetime of the next government.
- Establishing a new Schools Development and Building Planning body. This will have lead responsibility for assisting communities with the planning of new schools and the expansion of existing schools. It will also assist potential patrons to develop suitable plans and structures.
- Putting in place strict and enforceable conditions on planning permission to guarantee large new developments include school facilities to cater for immediate and inevitable demand.
- Ensuring that once planning permission has been granted for a new development this information is communicated to the Department of Education and Science so it can engage in the provision of a new school immediately.
- Reforming the system for allocating teachers to schools, using a five-year rolling cycle for each school where current enrolment and projected demand for places is considered. Schools must have adequate and stable teacher numbers irrespective of annual fluctuation, and be able to respond to rapid number increases.
- Moving to teacher allocation based on age profile of students, not simply on total school enrolment, and pursuing a target of having a maximum of 25 children per class in national schools.
- Considering a new supplementary allocation system whereby a small cohort of teachers are employed directly by the Department of Education and Science, and can be allocated to any of a number of schools within a specific small area at short notice. A review of the security of tenure and entitlements of substitute teachers will also be held.
- Increasing the capitation paid to all primary schools, including Gaelscoileanna and Educate Together, to the same level as that paid to secondary schools to allow, among other things, increased opportunity for students in science and the arts.

In government, the Progressive Democrats will **enhance and strengthen the management capabilities of schools** by:

- Establishing a National Forum on the Future of School Governance and Ownership to allow all stakeholders have input into how Ireland can ensure it has the optimal arrangements for a 21st century education system.
- Putting in place a formal and adequate framework of support, training and assistance for school principals and boards of management, within the Department of Education and Science.
- Funding management and administration training for elected members of School Boards, and ensuring every large school has a full-time secretary.
- Providing more democratic and accountable management of our schools by encouraging schools to have at least half of the members of the Board of Management elected by parents and have teachers elect at least one representative.
- Encouraging all Boards of Management to ensure representation of concerns of students with disabilities, immigrants, members of the travelling community and other minority groups in the school.
- Enhancing support for national primary and secondary curriculum reviews to speed-up assessment and implementation of change.

### **Child Protection**

The Progressive Democrats will promote the strongest child-protection measures in schools by establishing a child protection unit within the Department of Education and Science. This Unit will provide oversight and support to Patrons and Board of Management on all issues related child welfare. It will work to guarantee a joint-organisational response to child welfare cases. It will ensure that every school annually produces a localised, school specific anti-bullying programme.

We will also investigate how parenting classes can best be delivered via the school and / or VEC system, to support parents of school-going children.

In government, the Progressive Democrats will continue to **prioritise schools in areas of disadvantage and students with special needs** by:

- Progressing the key recommendations contained in the “Implementation Report: Plan For The Phased Implementation of Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004”, namely to address:
  - o Pre-school provision to support early intervention for all children with special education needs.
  - o Supporting inclusive education in schools.
  - o Support for professional training and development.
  - o Promoting effective integration.
  - o Developing effective appeals and mediation systems.
  - o Planning curriculum access and support certificated progression.
  - o Implementing review outcomes.
  - o Supporting development of further and continuing education.
  - o Strengthening the relevant research structures and capacity.
- Increasing the number of NEPS psychologists from 127 today to over 200 in the next two years
- Focusing investment on speeding up the assessment and resource allocation elements of the special needs process, and evaluating how a system like the National Treatment Purchase Fund could assist in this area.
- Building on progress to date on the integration of students with special needs into mainstream classes.
- Evaluating the various available approaches to address special needs to ensure Irish schools promote methods that best suit the child and reflect best international research and practice.
- Ensuring resources and assistance are allocated to special needs students in a manner that best supports the student, while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the class as a unit.

### **School Transport**

The Progressive Democrats in government will reform the present, out of date and inadequate school bus transport catchment area structure to ensure an efficient and accessible school bus system for communities across the country. The system must be safe, flexible and responsive to rapidly changing settlement patterns, and must assist pupils in rural areas in accessing the fullest range of subjects.

The Progressive Democrats will promote the **successful integration of foreign students into classes** by:

- Initiating a review of teacher training practices to ensure teachers are properly equipped to teach the growing number of students from abroad.
- Provide for 600 teachers under the National Development Plan for language supports in the education sector by 2009.
- Increasing dramatically the resources dedicated to English language teaching to help students from abroad.
- Making these increased English language teaching resources available to the parents of students from abroad where possible, out of school hours.

### **Learning Resources**

In Government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Ensure that school children in low-income families are provided with extra funds for textbooks, via an increase in the back to school allowance.
- Encourage the fullest possible use of Information Technology so as to reduce the quantity of textbooks required and ensure that students have access to the most up-to-date information.
- Increase significantly, funding for local library-book schemes.
- Make grinds and revision materials available free of charge on the Internet for all subjects on the Leaving Certificate syllabus to increase accessibility to a greater number of students.
- Provide increasing support for the adult education sector, to further promote life-long learning and progress the key recommendations of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science Report on Adult Literacy in Ireland

In government, the Progressive Democrats will continue to **strongly support our Third Level sector** by:

- Investing €2billion under the National Development Plan to support greater equity of access to Higher Education.
- Increasing opportunities for students with a disability, mature students and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, including members of the Travelling Community and refugees to progress to higher education.
- Speeding up delivery of the key recommendations in the McIver Report, to support and enhance the Post Leaving Certificate sector.
- Considering the allocation of extra points to higher-level maths in the CAO system in order to better prepare students for third-level science and engineering courses.
- Establishing a University for the South East incorporating campuses at Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny and Carlow.
- Implementing the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation, which will provide massively increased resources to third level institutions, double the output of fourth level graduates, and encourages greater commercialisation of research.
- Promoting enhanced co-operation between Institutes of Technology and Universities, and the business community to develop further practical courses reflecting the local economy and job market.
- Guaranteeing that third-level fees for undergraduate courses will not be re-introduced.
- Abolishing fees for part-time third-level courses with an initial prioritisation for those who have not previously benefited from third-level education.
- Undertaking a root and branch review of the Third-Level grants system to ensure:
  - A unified and simplified system.
  - A fair and equitable means-test process, that takes account of real living costs of students.
  - Formal consultation with student representative bodies on how student living costs are best calculated.
  - A flexible grant system for persons in difficult circumstances, families on very low incomes, students with disabilities, immigrants, members of the travelling community and other minority groups.
  - A responsive and efficient application and notification process.

## New Ireland

Providing services for people with disabilities is a majority priority of the Progressive Democrats. In government we have made significant progress for the disabled:

- The Disability Equality Section was established within the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. It provides a focal point for disability equality policy and legislation development. It was established arising from a recommendation by the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities (Report 1996).
- Budgeted and dedicated expenditure on the disabled (by the Departments of Health; Social Community and Family Affairs; and Education) has increased to four times the level in 1997.
- The Disability Act was passed in 2005. The Act establishes a statutory basis for:
  - An independent assessment of individual needs and related service statement;
  - Access to public buildings, services and information;
  - Sectoral plans for six key Departments which will ensure that access for people with disabilities will become an integral part of service planning and provision;
  - An obligation on public bodies to be proactive in employing people with disabilities;
  - Restricting the use of information from genetic testing for employment and insurance purposes;
  - A Centre of for Excellence in Universal Design aimed at making products and buildings accessible and usable for everyone, especially for people with disabilities.

### Current Background

A key question relating to the Disability Act was whether services should be rights-based. Our legislation brings Ireland to the highest international standards for the legal basis for services. The Progressive Democrats are committed to introducing rights of assessment, appeals, provision and enforcement for the disabled.

## New Opportunities

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Invest €19.2 billion under the People with Disabilities Programme in the National Development Plan
- Implement the National Disability Strategy.
- Improve provision of specialised infrastructure for older persons and / or persons with disabilities via increased thresholds for the Essential Repairs and Disabled Persons Grants Scheme and the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme.
- Provide increased funding for families with disabled children to assist them to make their homes "life time adaptable" for their disabled children.
- Develop a scheme to give targeted assistance to families that have a number of children/persons with disabilities. The scheme will allow the addition of extra facilities for each person with a disability, access improvements, and other special requirements in the home.
- Secure passage of the Comhairle (Amendment) Bill to establish a personal advocacy service for people with disabilities in relation to applications for obtaining services.
- Implement the sectoral plans for the disabled published by six Government Departments in September 2004.
- Complete the multi-annual investment programme worth €900 million targeted at high priority disability support services to run until 2009.
- Progress the key recommendations contained in the "Implementation Report: Plan For The Phased Implementation of Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004", namely to address:
  - Pre-school provision to support early intervention for all children with special education needs
  - Supporting inclusive education in schools
  - Support for professional training and development
  - Promoting effective integration
  - Developing effective appeals and mediation systems
  - Planning curriculum access and support certificated progression
  - Implementing review outcomes
  - Supporting development of further and continuing education
  - Strengthening the relevant research structures and capacity

## New Ireland

### Progress Since 1997

This government has made significant progress in the area of equality:

- Ireland's equality legislation was completely modernised by the Employment and Equal Status Acts. These acts established the Equality Authority and the Equality Tribunal.
- The funding for the enforcement of equality legislation has been significantly expanded. Additional funding for equality was provided under the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006.
- The introduction of the minimum wage by Mary Harney, while she was Minister for Employment, Trade and Enterprise helped thousands of women in low-paid jobs.
- Female participation on state boards has been further increased.
- The Gender Equality Unit was established under the National Development Plan in order to provide a support and advisory service on achieving gender equality.
- Over the course of the NDP 2000 – 2006, the numbers of women in the Irish labour market increased by 26% (compared to 17% for men).

## New Opportunities

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Invest €148 million to build on earlier NDP achievements in combating gender inequality.
- Vigorously pursue policies that tackle negative attitudes to ageing leading to prejudice against older people, negative understanding of ageing leading to stereotyping of older people; and negative treatment of older people, including discrimination against them on the grounds of age.
- Continue to promote gender equality as a priority for government.
- Transfer the 'equality' function from the Department of Justice to the new Department of Social and Equality Affairs .
- Establish COSC – the Irish Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, to provide enhanced co-ordination and leadership to address the problem of domestic violence and violence against women. It will cover issues of domestic violence against men and children.
- Continue to provide funding to tackle the problem of domestic violence, support victims, support awareness raising campaigns aimed at encouraging victims to seek assistance and fund campaigns to alert and alter public attitudes to the crime. Funding will also be available for programmes that work with the perpetrators to recognise and change their violent behaviour.
- Strongly support and fund initiatives under the National Women's Strategy 2007 - 2016 developed by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to:
  - Establish a comprehensive framework of objectives, actions, targets and indicators to push the advancement of women in Ireland
  - Equalise the socio-economic status of women
  - Ensure the well-being and engagement of women in society as equal and active citizens
- "Equality proof" government policy in order to maximise the impact of equality policy. The new Department with responsibility for Equality, in collaboration with the Equality Authority, will provide technical assistance to other Departments in proofing their policies to avoid unanticipated negative impact on any of the groups protected under the equality legislation.
- Work with the Equality Authority to ensure our labour market accommodates diversity and enhances access, participation and outcomes for groups experiencing labour market inequality on grounds covered by equality legislation.

## **New Ireland**

### **Progress Since 1997**

Since the Progressive Democrats proposed the restructuring of the State's property portfolio much has been achieved. The rationalisation and consolidation of office accommodation in Dublin – under the direction of Minister Tom Parlon - has resulted in the sale of surplus office accommodation. In 2006 alone, €221million was raised for the Exchequer by such sales.

### **Current Background**

Continuing to improve State asset management means using state property in the most efficient and cost-effective manner to serve the needs of the people. Unused or derelict assets can be used to provide funding for the benefit of those most in need. The Progressive Democrats believe that further action can be taken to realise and maximise these benefits.

## **New Opportunities**

In government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Establish a new State Property Management Agency to track and to manage State property assets.
- Make this Agency the single reference point for all public sector organisations on the available land and ensure that wider government objectives, including housing needs and regional economic and housing strategies, are factored into land disposal decisions.

## New Ireland

### Progress Since 1997

Rapid economic growth has brought with it unprecedented demand for housing. The market has responded and built over 600,000 houses since 1997. In 2006, the total number of houses and apartments completed was 93,419. In Ireland we are now producing homes at a rate of over 20 per 1,000 residents, the highest in Europe. This has enabled an unprecedented number of people avail of home ownership. But rising house prices keep home ownership out of reach for too many.

### Current Background

A increasing supply of high-standard housing should be available at affordable and reasonable cost to those on the average industrial wage. Increased supply is the key element in addressing the property price issue facing prospective Irish homebuyers. 'High-standard' not only refers to the size and condition of the home, but also its location in terms of the occupants family and work connections.

## New Opportunities

In government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Continue our successful policy-approach of significantly increasing housing supply to reduce the cost burden on homebuyers.
- Abolish stamp duty for first time buyers
- Make stamp duty fairer by "banding" rates so that owner-occupiers pay the higher rate only on the portion of the price over each threshold

Given the critical nature of this particular reform we will:

- Implement our reform with an immediate effect.
- Implement our reform via legislation enacted before the new Dáil rises for the 2007 Summer Recess.
  - These changes will mean:
    - Reducing stamp duty to be paid on the average national house price by €8,250 - from €15,500 to €7,250, and reducing stamp duty charge to be paid on the average home in Dublin by €17,050 - from €32,250 to €15,200
  - Release 660 acres of land near Dublin city centre and over 500 acres in Cork City Centre (North Docks and South Docks) for development. Development of housing will be prioritised.
  - Invest €17billion under the National Development Plan to expand the range of tailored social housing supports and an accelerated programme of renewal and improvement of the existing stock.
  - Invest €4billion in support for people seeking accommodation in the owner-occupied sector through the provision of affordable housing; to assist in the upgrading of the physical condition of homes with particular emphasis on those who are most in need including the disabled and the elderly, under the National Development Plan.
  - Evaluate the application of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority model to others large urban area developments.
  - Make more affordable housing available by holding open, transparent procurement competitions for available State-owned land. The land should be provided to the developer that scores best against pre-published State -set criteria, not necessarily the one offering the highest monetary price.
  - Build on progress made under the Homelessness – an Integrated Strategy 2000, to continue to address factors resulting in homelessness - not only related to the provision of accommodation, but also to health, care and welfare, education and training and prevention in order to effectively tackle homelessness in Ireland.
  - Prioritise the development of high-standard affordable homes by amending and expanding the use of Special Development Zones and / or a new permit scheme.
  - Create a National Water and Sewerage Services Office in the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure the provision of an adequate and efficient network of water and sewerage infrastructure, and oversee the implementation by Local Authorities of Water Services Investment Programmes. It will oversee and expedite water service provision to new developments. This will speed up supply and reduce the cost of new, as the cost of the developer providing services will not be passed on to the buyer.

## **New Ireland**

Support for the UN and for multilateral arrangements in relation to the preservation of international peace and security remains the cornerstone of our approach to international relations. Appropriate and adequate support for Óglaigh na hÉireann is also a core objective for the Progressive Democrats. We are committed to supporting their role in contributing to the security of the State principally against the threat of armed aggression and providing other services as required, thus contributing to Ireland's political and economic well being.

We also re-affirm our backing for their activities to promote the coordination of emergency planning functions across all Government Departments and other key public authorities and to oversee the emergency planning process in general. Our commitment is evident in the Defence budget topping €1 billion for the first time in 2007.

In government, the Progressive Democrats have demonstrated our unshakeable commitment to vindicating the sole legitimacy of the Permanent Defence Forces under the control of the Oireachtas, as provided for in our Constitution. We will continue to challenge and resist any dilution of this legitimacy in public debate and political discourse. And we will continue to highlight the failings of any others to lend total, unequivocal and exclusive support to our Defence Forces and Garda Síochána as the rightful forces of law and order.

## **New Opportunities**

In Government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Continue to work through the United Nations and European Union to contribute positively and effectively in international relations, particularly in areas like human rights, conflict resolution, peace-keeping and development.
- Strengthen the Defence Force numbers from 10,500 to at least 11,500, plus 250 extra personnel for training programmes, over the lifetime of the next government.
- Strongly support our Defence Forces on overseas service and those assigned to the Rapid Reaction Force, to ensure Ireland continues its noble participation in peacekeeping missions and to ensure that the European Union has the necessary capacities to provide responses in the area of crisis management.
- Provide the strongest support for our Naval Service, including maintaining the ongoing investment in the training and equipment needs of the Naval Service, ensuring modern headquarters and administrative buildings and maintaining the eight-ship flotilla.
- Ensure that money accrued from sale of military lands will be ring fenced and used for capital investment in Defence Forces.
- Ensure Defence Forces Training is properly accredited via the Higher Education and Training Awards Council.

## New Ireland

Ireland's overseas development aid (ODA) programme is rightly a source of pride to our citizens, and reflects a long-standing commitment to humanitarian endeavour by generations of Irish people, lay and religious. As a non-aligned country, human development in poor countries is a major plank of Irish Foreign Policy.

The Progressive Democrats have always delivered maximum support for, and investment in, our ODA programmes. We view ODA programmes - which prioritise the reduction of poverty, inequality and exclusion in developing countries - as an integral expression of Ireland's identity in the global community. In our Deputy Leader, Liz O'Donnell TD, we are fortunate to have one of the leading champions of this policy on the international scene, and her dedication to this cause, as Minister of State and since, has helped Ireland set and meet commitments that have benefited many of the world's poorest people.

The Party's commitment to this area in government is evident in the steady growth of the total ODA budget. In 1997 this total was €157 million. In 2007, Ireland achieved the first target set of 0.5% of GNP (three years ahead of the EU target of 2010) with ODA spending in the region of €813 million. Ireland is now a leader in Overseas Development Co-operation.

Over the five-year term of the next government we must reach the UN Official Development Assistance spending target of 0.7% of GNP (by 2012), and continue to pursue excellence both in the delivery of the official government aid programme, and in making it easy for individuals to support the needs of the people of developing countries.

## New Opportunities

In Government, the Progressive Democrats will:

- Ensure the Irish Aid programme remains a central part of Ireland's foreign policy, and strengthen the policy coherence between our aid programme and other policy areas.
- Maintain the clear focus of the Irish aid programme to ensure its maximum impact in terms of improving the lives of the poorest people.
- Ensure the allocation of overseas aid has an ethical, social and democratic ethos by establishing an Ethical Advisory Committee, comprised at least in part of respected external independent experts, which would advise Ireland Aid and the government on these issues and provide for independent audit and oversight of the Programme.
- Encourage continued and increased strategic engagement of Irish Aid with major stakeholders in Ireland, in order to strengthen the quality as well as the public ownership of the aid programme
- Maintain the untied nature and poverty focus of the Irish Aid programme, precluding the use of aid money for security, migration, trade or commercial purposes.
- Reach 0.6% of GNP target by 2010, i.e. spending in the order of €1.2 billion in that year.
- Reach the 0.7% of GNP in 2012, i.e. ODA spending in the region €1.5 billion in that year.
- Ensure that the necessary staffing and capacity is provided to manage the expanding budget.
- Work to ensure targeted and transparent spending on the Millennium Development Goals both in the EU instrument for Development Cooperation and in the annual EU budget. Ireland will work within the Council of Ministers to ensure that these targets are applied across all developing countries with which the EU has partnership agreements.
- Support the cancellation of unpayable debts of impoverished countries through a fair and transparent international process, and use Ireland's influence in international institutions, such as the IMF and World Bank, to ensure that poor countries are not required to undermine their own development in order to qualify for debt cancellation.
- Work with employers groups to promote facilitation of the payment of charitable contributions via direct payroll systems.
- Ensure that the annual individual and corporate tax return contains a section which will allow the taxpayer to voluntarily pay an additional 1% of the tax due that year, with that amount to go directly to overseas aid, and (crucially) that amount will be additional to the Exchequer provision for overseas aid. In no way will these extra funds be used to replace existing Exchequer allocations to overseas aid. This will allow taxpayers to make a contribution to developing countries with a minimum of inconvenience.
- Provide free travel and pension arrangements for Irish missionaries returning from long-service abroad.
- Legislate to regulate the charity sector, and examine how VAT is levied on charitable organisations.
- Recognise in our environment policy the threat climate change poses to the development goals of the world's poorest people. (Please see extensive earlier chapter)

## New Ireland

Thankfully, people in rural Ireland nowadays have the choice to work off-farm if they wish. But for those who do want to farm for a living or choose to live in rural Ireland, we must do everything we can to ensure they are able to do so. This Party will ensure national policy reflects this necessity. We do not support the removal of development controls in rural Ireland, but we believe that with a more balanced and just approach to rural planning, we can create rural communities with a sustainable future and allow people within these communities to reap the many benefits associated with country living.

In addition, the Progressive Democrats believe we must not only end Ireland's infrastructure deficit we must create a platform to create balanced regional growth throughout the island and a better quality of life for all our people. In particular, we are concerned that the regions should not fall behind. Quality living requires the highest quality infrastructure across the State, with well-thought out proposals to provide some counter-balance to the expanding Greater Dublin Area. Our comprehensive transport and infrastructure policy contains such proposals

The Progressive Democrats hold Ireland's agriculture and the food and drinks industry to be crucial components of our economy, and believe in targeted supports to develop a vibrant and sustainable sector capable of meeting the complex demands of modern consumers while providing a strong economic return. Funding of almost €1.7 billion is being made available to the Department of Agriculture and Food in 2007, an increase of 18% on last year. Last year Agrivision 2015 was published, which set out the actions required now to ensure the success of Ireland's agri-food sector in the future. The Progressive Democrats will continue to support all appropriate action to ensure a vibrant rural economy, society and environment, which also exploits opportunities in non-food areas, and our goal is to put in place and implement the right policies to allow the Irish agri-food sector to flourish through all stages of production.

## New Opportunities

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Invest €8 billion under the National Development Plan for the development of the agriculture and food sectors
  - €6 billion on enhancement of the environment and countryside
  - €1.7 billion on agriculture and forestry competitiveness
  - €290 million on food industry capital infrastructure and marketing
- Fund nationwide broadband coverage, ensuring among other things that rural Ireland has access to necessary technology.
- Implement our extensive transport infrastructure policy to, among other things, ensure necessary access via our critical tourism routes across the country.
- Invest €90 million under the NDP in the Rural Transport Initiative.
- Enhance community health services to older people including using the Rural Social Scheme to provide support services to elderly people in remote rural areas.
- Further develop out-of-hours GP services to enhance services to communities across the country.
- Implement new community-based cardiac and chronic disease management services using innovative technologies and new ways of working
- Provide as wide a range of services in local hospitals as possible, where patient safety and quality can be assured. We will create hospital networks where local hospitals are linked with larger regional hospitals for integrated and higher standards of clinical care for patients.
- Reform the present, out of date and inadequate school bus transport catchment area structure to ensure an efficient and accessible school bus system for communities across the country. The system must be safe, flexible and responsive to rapidly changing settlement patterns, and must assist pupils in rural areas in accessing the fullest range of subjects.
- Establish a nationwide Anti Social Isolation Scheme entitled *ONE-2-ONE* to assist those people in communities who are lonely and isolated. This will be community-based scheme in each county, initially run on a pilot basis. Local people and neighbours will become the outside link with the world for older people who might otherwise be isolated geographically or socially. It will involve recruiting and training 'neighbours' who will visit older people on a weekly basis and provide them with companionship.

- Support a negotiated and agreed approach to addressing access to land for hill-walking and other recreational activities.
- Evaluate our rural post office network with a view to helping it retain and enhance its role as a valuable social hub in small and rural communities, and help rural post offices develop new capabilities in a variety of services to the benefit of smaller communities.
- Upgrade and expand water treatment capacity, including an investment of €4.7 billion under the national development plan.
- Support the right of rural dwellers to build in their local area.
- Propose a more accurate definition of a 'local person' in planning guidelines and development plans to mean either a person born and reared in a rural area; a person who has lived in a rural area for at least 7 years and who has forged strong links with the local community.
- Remove responsibility for hearing appeals, including those on rural housing, from the current board of An Bórd Pleanála and give to three regional boards operating under the aegis of An Bórd Pleanála and based on the EU election constituencies.
- Post all planning decisions on the internet and the reason for the decision given, including the names and contact details of the engineers/architects who submitted the original proposals.
- Limit enurement clauses, which prevent the selling on of a site once planning permission has been granted, to 7 years. Allow relaxation of enurement clauses only where a rural dweller can supply definitive evidence that he or she must relocate because of employment or other significant commitments.
- Fund measures to attract young and trained people into farming and evaluate new support measures for qualifying young farmers establishing themselves in farming for the first ten years, for example, via a reduced loan-interest scheme to develop his/her business.
- Support the setting up of young farmers via increased young farmer installation aid to encourage the continued rejuvenation of the farming profession.
- Review how tax system is applied to farmers particularly, to maximise fairness.
- Apply stamp duty relief for farm consolidation, where two farmers exchange land, where only one farmer meets the consolidation criteria.
- Invest in measures to facilitate the early retirement of older farmers and farm workers with the aim of creating opportunities for younger farmers to enter farming or to increase/consolidate their holdings.
- Consider a five-year transition period to facilitate the retirement of the farmer and entry of the new person into the family farm in a mentoring capacity.
- Facilitate the establishment of effective farm partnerships and remove any current unhelpful and unnecessary restrictions.
- Support agricultural education and training in response to the increased competitive pressures in farming.
- Fund the Farm Improvement Scheme to assist farmers with the capital costs of modernisation. Support will be provided for investments that improve overall performance and market orientation.
- Implement the key recommendations of the Malone Report including incentive payments to sheep farmers.
- Recommend the age limit for BSE testing of cattle be increased from thirty to thirty six months.
- Review the "thirty day" compulsory brucellosis testing of cattle so that farmers benefit from an 'actual thirty-day movement period' and also consider allowing farmers slaughter 10% of their herd without compulsory test.
- Ensure the speedy incorporation into Irish law of the derogation for farmers under the Nitrates Directive.
- Continue to negotiate to make the cross-compliant inspection regime user friendly.
- Ensure a fair and proportionate inspection regime. Work to reduce the administrative burden faced by farmers by advocating a 'one-stop-shop' approach to Departmental inspections where practical, with 14-day notice the norm except where such notice would remove altogether the value of the inspection.
- Guarantee vigorous defence of Irish and European agriculture interests at the World Trade Organisation.
- Promote "subsidiarity" in the European Union, to mean what it should mean: only those things which must be done centrally will be done centrally.
- Defend and protect decoupled single payment to farmers and resist any reopening of the CAP budget.
- Continue to fully protect the live export trade, which offers competition in the market place for Irish farmers.
- Focus investment on projects with a renewable energy element.

- Use every appropriate tax, excise relief and financial incentive to make Ireland a world-leader in terms of renewable energy crop production and use.
- Radically reshape Irish agricultural policies towards increasing production of renewable energy.
- Refocus Teagasc towards sustainable energy promotion, education, research and development.
- Ensure that adequate establishment grants are paid to farmers to plant willow and miscanthus to make certain that sufficient biomass is available.
- Ensure farmers in disadvantaged areas who produce energy crops can receive the disadvantaged area ] payment where appropriate.
- Continue to support appropriate proposals at EU level to further integrate environmental considerations into agriculture policy, and support all reasonable steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the agriculture sector.
- Promote awareness among farmers of the benefits of low emission technology for slurry spreading which reduces the need for additional chemical nitrogen, and develop mechanisms aimed at increasing the uptake of this technology.
- Ensure adequate funds are available for the revised Farm Waste Management Scheme, introduced in March 2006, to help reduce water pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources, prevent further such pollution, improve water quality and safety and prevent eutrophication of rivers and lakes.
- Review annually the standard costings used to determine grant aid.
- Invest in continued improvement in quality through breeding improvement and development actions, to maximise the potential of breeding and production of the cattle, sheep and equine sectors.
- Use the Beef Quality Assurance Scheme to support the objective of continued penetration in high value export markets, and increase participation to 30,000 farms by end of 2008. We will also establish a similar Lamb Quality Assurance Scheme.
- Progress the introduction of the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme this year.
- Ensure the highest-standards and necessary traceability requirements are applied to food products imported into the European Union to guarantee equity and fairness to domestic producers, and ensure full transparency to maximise consumer confidence.
- Invest €6 million under the NDP to address the public good aspect of the agri-food sector and, in particular, its contribution to the environment and the countryside, including the enhancement of biodiversity, water quality, heritage and environmentally-friendly systems of farming.
- Ensure adequate facilities to enable agricultural colleges and local training centres to achieve best educational practice and provide students with a top class-learning environment.
- Invest €640 million under the National Development Plan to provide a scientific foundation and support for a sustainable, competitive, market oriented and innovative agriculture, food and forestry sector.
- Support with funding the Research Stimulus Fund for research in sustainable agricultural production, including advances in animal and plant biosciences, animal and plant health, agri-environment and biodiversity, non-food land use, rural economy and other areas.
- Fund research that is relevant to the needs of a diverse modern, innovative, market-led food industry.
- Ensure continued agricultural land use and thereby help maintain the countryside by providing financial support to those farming in areas formally classified as agriculturally disadvantaged.
- Use the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) to support Irish farmers who enhance the environment to a level above mandatory requirements. Payments will be made under the scheme to farmers who, on a voluntary basis, make agri-environmental commitments that go beyond the relevant national and EU mandatory environmental requirements. We will ensure that the scheme has maximum availability.
- Make support payments directly available to organic farmers both during conversion and after full organic status has been achieved.
- Provide support for continued afforestation and the integration of forestry with agriculture, adopting a whole-farm approach and encouraging the establishment of agri-forestry systems.
- Provide capital investments in the marketing and processing of agricultural products where there are real market opportunities to ensure the repositioning of the Irish food industry as a diverse modern, innovative and market focussed food sector.
- Make funding available to the agri-food sector by Bórd Bia by way of a portfolio of leading edge market intelligence, promotion and market development services for companies engaged in developing increased and value added business, particularly in continental EU and Asian markets.
- Support with funding small and speciality food enterprises, targeted initiatives to promote consumption of fruit and vegetables, and promote the marketing by industry of new and innovative products to cater for new consumer tastes and needs. Support farmers to enable them set up alternative complimentary businesses on farms.

## New Ireland

### Progress Since 1997

Reaching agreement on the Good Friday Agreement is one of the central achievements of this government. The Agreement provides the framework for both communities to work together in peace. It also settles the constitutional question and makes clear that the people of Northern Ireland have the final say on their constitutional status.

Paramilitary activity has dropped dramatically as a result of the Agreement. Much practical progress has also been made. The North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC) has met 65 times. But fully implementing the Agreement has proved difficult and time-consuming. Unionists were reluctant to enter the Northern Ireland Executive while the IRA retained its arsenal. The IRA was reluctant to live up to the aims of the Agreement that full decommissioning would have taken place within two years.

In late 2004, talks were held at Leeds Castle to resolve these issues. We stood firm in the face of the refusal of the IRA to commit themselves to respecting people's human rights. Within months that position was vindicated when the IRA carried out the Northern Bank robbery and associated kidnappings. Later, IRA members brutally murdered Robert McCartney.

### Current Background

The IRA has decommissioned its weapons. Sinn Fein has endorsed policing and the PSNI. On the 26th March last, we witnessed unprecedented, positive and welcome developments with agreement between Sinn Fein and the DUP on the restoration of the devolved institutions. This new Executive must be able to discharge its responsibilities with full and immediate effect from May onwards.

Other issues that remain open regarding Northern Ireland include:

- Eliminating sectarianism at local level.
- Promoting cross-border social and economic activity.
- Enhancing cross-border cooperation between the two governments.

### New Opportunities

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Refocus the work of the International Fund for Ireland, whose Secretariat is jointly provided by both Governments, to target reconciliation activities in the most deprived and marginalised communities in Northern Ireland and the border counties.
- Work to develop an all-Ireland energy market.
- Continue working with the Northern Ireland authorities to jointly promote Ireland as a tourism destination.
- Work closely with the Northern Ireland authorities to keep Irish agriculture disease-free.
- Broaden out the agreement for Donegal people requiring cancer treatment to get it in Belfast to include more medical services and more people living along the border.
- Promote personnel exchanges between the Garda Síochána and PSNI.

## New Ireland

### Progress Since 1997

The Progressive Democrats strongly support the European Union. We have always supported the various constitutional treaties as they were put to the Irish people. Our Party constitution has set as one of our aims to 'promote a European Union dedicated to liberal and democratic principles'. The current government has made substantial progress advancing Ireland's interests in the European Union:

- Ireland entered the European Monetary Union in 1999.
- This government achieved agreement with the EU on a single, low rate of corporation tax. This government has protected the requirement for unanimous decisions on taxation in negotiations for the Nice Treaty and for the draft EU Constitution.
- We established the National Forum on Europe to promote open and considered debate on Europe.
- We have strongly promoted the work, begun at the Lisbon European Council in 2000, to enable the EU to enhance its competitiveness so as to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.
- We secured approval of the Nice Treaty together with a constitutional amendment excluding the State from taking part in a Common European Defence policy.
- Ireland successfully negotiated agreement of the draft European Constitution.

### Current Background

The European Union currently faces two major challenges:

- Winning public support for the draft Constitutional Treaty.
- Promoting the Lisbon agenda.

## New Opportunities

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Promote ratification of the draft European Constitution as a fair agreement, which balances national sovereignty with the need for the EU to operate efficiently.
- Promote a Partnership view where the European Union operates as a partnership of nations working together for their common good in practical and sensible ways. We agree with the Laeken Declaration which stated that what citizens expect is:  
*More results, better responses to practical issues and not a European superstate or European institutions inveigling their way into every nook and cranny of life.*
- Oppose those who push a Federalist view, which would seek to establish a European Super-State.
- Oppose those who seek to misappropriate the EU for the sake of having arguments with the USA.
- Promote 'subsidiarity' to mean what it should mean: only those things which must be done centrally will be done centrally.
- Strenuously oppose any attempt to remove the requirement of unanimity for EU decisions on taxation.

## New Ireland

### Background

Rapid economic growth and the accession of new members to the European Union has transformed Ireland from a net emigration country to a net immigration country. Many immigrants play key roles in our economy. There are three separate elements that comprise the flow of immigration:

- EU citizens - persons who are entitled to come here to reside or work (with the exception of citizens of Bulgaria and Romania).
- Citizens of non-EU countries - persons who must apply for a residence permit (to reside) and for a work permit (if they wish to work). They do not have an entitlement to come here, and there are cases where persons remain here illegally without a permit or after a permit has expired.
- Asylum seekers - persons not entitled to work while their application for asylum is considered. About 90% of asylum applications are rejected. The challenge facing us is to afford protection to genuine refugees while ensuring that our immigration laws and procedures are respected not only in the interests of our own citizens but also in support of international efforts to combat transnational crime syndicates which exploit migrants.

### Progress Since 1997

The Government has made considerable progress in the area of immigration and integration:

#### *EU Citizens*

When the EU expanded on January 1st, 2004 to include the 10 "Accession States", Ireland made the generous decision to allow the citizens of these States to come and work here without work permits. Only the UK and Sweden joined us in that decision – the other 12 member States did not.

When Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU on January 1st, 2007, the Government decided to take a cautious approach. Romanian and Bulgarian nationals will continue to have to apply for work permits to work in Ireland.

However they will be given preference over migrants seeking to come and work in Ireland from non-European Economic Area countries.

#### *Non-EU Citizens*

On September 6th 2006, Minister Michael McDowell, TD published the general scheme of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill. The principles which underlie the Bill are:

- No foreign national has an absolute right to come here.
- The immigration system must protect security and good order in the State.
- Human rights must be fully respected.
- Economic and social sustainability in Ireland.
- Drawing a clear distinction between those who are here legally and those who are not.
- Selectivity – the Employment Permits Act sets out provisions aimed at attracting highly-skilled people in particular sectors.
- It also provides that they can bring their families with them. Provision will be made for long-term residence permits (modelled on the US Green Card system).

### *Asylum Seekers*

Asylum seeking has been controlled by a series of measures which has cut the flow of application from 11,634 in 2002 to 4,314 in 2006, a 63% reduction:

- Changes were made to our asylum legislation to introduce the “safe country of origin” concept in September 2003. This means that asylum seekers must apply for asylum in the first safe country they arrive in (rather than use such countries as a transit point from which to travel to Ireland).
- Carriers’ liability was introduced in September 2003 to deter airlines and other carriers from bringing illegal immigrants into Ireland.
- Rent supplement to asylum seekers no longer provided.
- Legal sanctions against employers have been introduced to penalise the employment of illegal immigrants in the Employment Permits Act, 2003.
- The citizenship referendum meant that children born to asylum seekers were no longer automatically entitled to Irish citizenship.
- Genuine asylum seekers under U.N. Programmes have been increased from 40 to 200 per year.

### **Integration**

The National Action Plan Against Racism reflects our general approach to integration policy. It incorporates intercultural frameworks which involve principles of inclusion, accommodating diversity in service provision and full participation in Irish society - the core tenets of any integration policy. The challenge now, of course, is to extend our horizons; to go beyond antiracism measures as we begin to understand the totality of initiatives needed to work towards societal cohesion.

The State-run Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) has established an Integration Fund aimed at encouraging and facilitating cross-cutting projects which will have a major leverage effect in the integration area. These projects cover English language training, information provision to immigrants and interpretation and translation facilities. (Please see our extensive education chapter also)

### **New Opportunities**

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Promote integration as a two-way process, which requires give and take on both sides. We have little historical or constitutional basis for seeing ourselves as having a monochrome, monofilament authentic Irish identity. While the precise agenda for our common space needs to be debated and agreed, they must surely include essential items; obedience to our national laws, freedom from discrimination of any sort (including gender), and inclusion in the democratic process.
- Use the NDP to promote immigrant integration (€36 million), language support (including 550 additional teachers - €637 million) and to continue funding the National Action Plan Against Racism €27 million).
- Pass and implement the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill. This will set out a clear and fair structure for immigration from non-EU states in the future. The new law will make clear that those who are present illegally in the country will be deported and refused access to welfare and other Government services.
- Continue to accelerate the processing of asylum applications.
- A programme of major investment in IT systems will enable the State to control immigration through the visa system and through immigration ID cards with biometric details.
- Consider tightening the asylum system. In particular, consideration is being given to a scheme which already operates in the UK and the Netherlands. This would compel asylum seekers to remain in asylum centres while their applications are being considered. They would not be locked into these centres but their asylum application would lapse if they abscond. Such a system already operates in the UK and the Netherlands. This system limits fraud (via illegal employment and multiple welfare receipts) by asylum seekers.
- Transfer the ‘equality’ function from the Department of Justice to the new Department of Social and Equality Affairs, with responsibility for integration policy.

## New Ireland

Our Party is firmly of the view that participation in sport is central for the health and well being of the nation. Sport is part also of our unique cultural heritage. Over the last decade we are proud to have been part of a Government that has delivered huge increases in financial support for sport and sporting infrastructure throughout the country and across all sports. Since 1997 we have invested almost €1 billion in sport, with an increase of over 30% in the budget for sport in 2007 - providing in excess of €316m.

Our sport policy is aimed at encouraging and facilitating increased participation and access to sport and physical activity by providing community-based, multi-faceted sports facilities at local level- for all.

Increased participation plays a vital role in promoting physical and mental health, fitness, positive social interactions, skill enhancement, and general well being - as well as helping to reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour. Research shows that participation in sport improves general behaviour, respect for authority, discipline, attention levels, self-confidence and attitude to peers.

Recent ESRI research carried out on behalf of the Irish Sports Council shows that a large proportion of the population are not gaining the full health benefits of participation in sport. The single largest barrier to participation is the lack of facilities; specifically safe, affordable indoor recreational facilities, where the participants and community have a sense of ownership. Such facilities can provide a focal point to develop social cohesion and community spirit.

## New Opportunities

In Government the progressive Democrats will:

- Invest €991 million in sports infrastructure under the National Development Plan.
- Deliver funding for the following:
  - Development of the national centre of excellence for sport
  - Redevelopment of the stadium at Lansdowne Road
  - Continuation of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme
  - Provision of sport and recreational facilities on a nationwide basis
  - Continued development of horse and greyhound racing industries
- Develop a network of Community Sports Complexes (CSC) across the country to facilitate the Lifelong Involvement in Sport & Physical Activity (LISPA) Model proposed by the Irish Sports Council.
- Invest National Development Plan and other sports capital funds to provide these new facilities.
- Construct five pilot CSC projects, one each, in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Waterford and Limerick, each fully funded by the State.
- Thereafter, hold tendering competitions for State subsidy to construct and manage each CSC across the country.
- Ring-fence land / facilities available under Party's State assets management policy (see earlier section) for CSCs where appropriate.
- Ensure each CSC contains facilities for active participation in as wide a range of sports as possible.
- Ensure each CSC is staffed with qualified NCEF (National Certificate in Exercise and Fitness) personnel.
- Make the management of each complex an exercise in local democracy. Each CSC will be managed by the local community with a clear charter of direction to ensure maximum benefit to the community.
- Introduce a *Holistic Education & Activity Development Scheme* (HEADS), which will see the creation of a Corps of Professional Trainers to co-ordinate voluntary youth activity in communities to provide support and expertise to community groups. This will strengthen communities and help prevent the rise of anti-social behaviour.
- Provide seed-capital funding to encourage the establishment of more youth cafés across the country.

## New Ireland

We recognise the importance of Ireland's cultural heritage and support continued provision of the capital infrastructure for our national cultural institutions. We also seek the development of the private sector cultural industry via appropriate financial support for projects to improve the cultural infrastructure in Ireland.

In 2007, over €216m is being provided for arts and cultural projects in Ireland. We have delivered unprecedented level funding for arts and culture and will continue to confirm our support for the arts and culture via significant funding over the lifetime of the next government.

Almost 1.6 million people in the Republic of Ireland can speak Irish and 92% of people surveyed feel that promoting the Irish language is important to the country, to themselves personally or to both, and the Progressive Democrats share that view. In government we have affirmed our support for the development and preservation of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht in *the Statement On The Irish Language 2006*.

**Creideann muid go bhfuil tábhacht ar leith ag an nGaeilge do mhuintir, do shochaí agus do chultúr na hÉireann. Tacaíonn muid go láidir le Ráiteas i Leith na Gaeilge 2006 a foilsíodh le gairid. Tá an Ghaeilge sainiúil don tír seo mar theanga labhartha pobail agus dá bhrí sin tá sí rithábhachtach d'fhéiniúlacht mhuintir na hÉireann agus don oidhreacht dhomhanda.**

The Party believes that the Irish language is of particular importance for the people, society and culture of Ireland. As a spoken community language, Irish is unique to this country and is, therefore, of crucial importance to the identity of the Irish people and to world heritage.

## New Opportunities

In Government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Invest €1,130 million in Ireland's cultural infrastructure and the Irish language under the National Development Plan
- **Seasfar leis an stádas faoi leith atá ag an nGaeilge sa Bhunreacht agus i ndlíthe na tíre ar nós Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003, An tAcht Oideachais 1998, An tAcht um Phleanáil agus Forbairt 2000 agus An tAcht um Chraolacháin 2001.**

The special status given to the Irish language in the Constitution and in legislation such as the Official Languages Act 2003, the Education Act 1998, the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Broadcasting Act 2001, will be upheld.

- **Cuirfear Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla I bhfeidhm go hiomlán. Forbrófar cearta an phobail an Ghaeilge a úsáid agus iad ag plé leis an Stát agus le dreamanna eile agus déanfar socrúithe cuí chun é seo a chur I bhfeidhm.**

The Official Languages Act will be fully implemented. The right of the public to use Irish in dealings with the State and with other bodies will be developed and the appropriate arrangements to deliver this will be put in place.

- **Tabharfar spreagadh agus tacaíocht do phobal na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht agus lasmuigh de, an Ghaeilge a thabhairt don chéad ghlúin eile mar theanga teaghlaigh. Chuige sin, cuirfear réimse leathan seirbhísí ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge.**

The Irish language community inside and outside the Gaeltacht will be given encouragement and support to transmit Irish to the next generation as a living household language. Towards this end, a wide range of services in Irish will be provided.

- **Tabharfar tacaíocht ar leith don Ghaeltacht mar cheantar labhartha Gaeilge.**

The Gaeltacht will be given special support as an Irish-speaking area.

- Déanfar an Ghaeilge a theagasc mar ábhar riachtanach ó leibhéal na bunscoile go leibhéal na hArdteistiméireachta. Cuirfidh an curaclam ar chumas na ndaltaí an Ghaeilge a labhairt agus a scríobh go cruinn, chomh maith le tuiscint a thabhairt dóibh ar fhiúntas na teanga dúinn mar phobal. Chun na críche seo, déanfar infheistíocht fheabhsaithe i bhforbairt phroifisiúnta agus i dtacaíocht leanúnach do mhúinteoirí maraon le i soláthar téacsleabhar agus acmhainní, agus i dtacaíocht do mhodhanna nuálacha teagaisc agus foghlama.

Irish will be taught as an obligatory subject from primary to Leaving Certificate level. The curriculum will foster oral and written competence in Irish among students and an understanding of its value to us as a people. This will be supported by enhanced investment in professional development and ongoing support for teachers, as well as in provision of textbooks and resources, and in support for innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

- Cuirfear oideachas lán-Ghaeilge ar ardchaighdeán ar fáil do dhaltai scoile arb é mian a dtuismitheoirí/gcaomhnóirí é. Leanfar leis an tacaíocht do Ghaelscoileanna ag leibhéal na bunscoile agus déanfar forbairt ar sholáthar lán-Ghaeilge ag leibhéal na h-iarbhunscoile chun freastal ar éileamh de réir mar is gá.

A high standard of all-Irish education will be provided to school students whose parents/guardians so wish. Gaelscoileanna will continue to be supported at primary level and all-Irish provision at post-primary level will be developed to meet follow-on demand.

- Leanfar leis an tacaíocht a thugtar don réamhscolaíocht Ghaeilge agus déanfar breis forbartha ar an gcóras oideachais tríú leibhéal trí mheán na Gaeilge.

Irish language pre-school education will continue to be supported and third-level education through Irish will be further developed.

- Leanfar leis an tacaíocht a thugann an Stát d'Fhoras na Gaeilge de réir an Achta um Chomhaontú na Breataine-na hÉireann 1999.

The State will continue to support Foras na Gaeilge in the context of the British-Irish Agreement Act 1999.

- Déanfar cinnte de go bhfuil seirbhísí cuimsitheacha craolacháin ar ardchaighdeán ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge, go mór mhór trí fhorbairt leanúnach a dhéanamh ar RTÉ, ar Raidió na Gaeltachta agus ar TG4.

High quality broadcast services through the medium of Irish will be ensured, especially through the continuous development of RTÉ, Raidió na Gaeltachta and TG4.

- Tabharfar gach cúnamh agus tacaíocht don Aontas Eorpach i bhfeidhmiú an chinnidh an Ghaeilge a bheith ina teanga oibre agus ina teanga oifigiúil san AE ón 1 Eanáir 2007.

Every assistance and support will be given to the European Union in implementing the decision to make Irish a working and official language in the EU from 1 January 2007.

- Leanfar le treisiú na hoibre atá ar bun ag An Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta agus ag na gníomhaireachtaí agus na comhlachtaí a thagann faoina scáth, ar nós Foras na Gaeilge, Údarás na Gaeltachta agus Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn go náisiúnta agus chun í a chaomhnú agus a threisiú sa Ghaeltacht.

In order to promote Irish nationally and to preserve and strengthen it in the Gaeltacht, the work being done by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and by agencies and bodies which come under its aegis, such as Foras na Gaeilge, Údarás na Gaeltachta and Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge will continue to be reinforced.

- **Leanfar agus déanfar forbairt ar úsáid na Gaeilge sa Gharda Síochána agus sna Fórsaí Cosanta.**

The use of the Irish language by the Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces will be continued and developed.

- **Aithníonn an Rialtas an ról fiorthábhachtach atá ag an earnáil dheonach Ghaeilge agus leanfar ag tabhairt tacaíochta di.**

The Government recognises the vital role of the Irish language voluntary sector and will continue to support it.

### **Supporting the Arts**

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Invest €1,130 million in Ireland's cultural infrastructure and the Irish language under the National Development Plan
- Ensure that Ireland's National Collections are housed in appropriate modern facilities and displayed in the most appropriate fashion.
- Support our National Cultural Institutions to pursue positive educational and outreach programmes expanded to take account of the multi-cultural society, which now exists in Ireland.
- Promote universal access to arts and cultural facilities by the exploitation of technological developments through the commencement of a digitisation programme.
- Provide funding for a new National Concert Hall, a new National Theatre and for additional facilities for the conservation and safeguarding of collections.
- Fund major capital developments at the other National Cultural Institutions, including the provision of a repository at the National Library; delivery of a number of projects at the National Gallery in line with the Gallery's development control plan a major programme of works at the National Museum at Collins Barracks involving the development of the new Centre Block exhibition galleries; providing a building to house the Asgard at Collins Barracks where it will be conserved; and evaluating proposals to locate a sports museum at Collins Barracks.
- Ensure funding for the enhancement of facilities at the Irish Museum of Modern Art and the provision of additional exhibition space for IMMA; invest in upgrading the Crawford Gallery in Cork which has recently been designated as a National Cultural Institution; enhance the Chester Beatty Library, progress shared off-site storage facilities for the National Cultural Institutions, provide new headquarters for the National Archives.
- Continue to fund flagship commemorative projects.
- Develop cultural facilities across the country, by exploiting the potential for sharing by the Dublin-based institutions of national resources with regional institutions.
- Support a new Access Programme, which will aid arts and culture facilities throughout the country.

## New Ireland

The Progressive Democrats ongoing strong commitment to a marine industry that has long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability, is needed at this time more than ever. We are aware of the significant regulatory and environmental challenges facing the marine sector, and are determined to equip the industry to meet each of these so it can grow and develop.

Our responsible approach to the changes required in response to the increasingly competitive international food market and the conservation challenge has been evident in our recent policy approach. For example, since 1999 we have linked any change in the salmon drift net policy to a fair compensation package for fishermen. Thanks in part to our determined stance in government, the changes in drift netting last year were accompanied with a €25 million compensation scheme for nets and a further €5 million to develop economic activity in communities affected by the change.

We will continue to promote and implement marine policy that protects and promotes the sector, and the communities who work in it, in a sustainable and responsible way.

## New Opportunities

In Government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Invest €442 million under the National Development Plan including:
  - €216 million on Seafood Development
  - €203 million on Fisheries and Coastal Infrastructure
- Draw on the key recommendations of the Cawley Report, the vision for the Irish seafood industry by 2013, where all sectors can be described as “a sustainable, profitable, competitive and market-focused seafood industry making the maximum long-term economic and social contribution to coastal communities and Ireland as a whole.”
- Support measures required to manage the transformation required in the fishing fleet so as to achieve a balance between fleet capacity and the resources available.
- Ensure government policy is focussed on quality seafood supply that is reliable and competitive and enables action required in environmental management and the maintenance of the economic and social fabric of fishing communities.
- Invest the application of technological innovation in aquaculture to further develop environmentally sustainable techniques.
- Establish set-up funds to attract investment from the wider food processing industry, to facilitate the restructuring of the sector and the development of an appropriately scaled processing industry capable of competing within an increasingly cost competitive market and of attracting investment from the wider food industry.
- Set a sales increase target in excess of 40% in seafood exports and a minimum 10% growth in domestic seafood sales, and instruct Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia to strengthen inter-agency co-operation agreements on seafood marketing to achieve these targets.
- Develop our harbour infrastructure to facilitate increased landing and downstream activities, especially at the five Fishery Harbour Centres, Howth, Dunmore East, Castletownbere, Ros-An-Mhíl and Killybegs. Subject to feasibility and prioritisation of resources, other strategic harbours such as Greencastle, Kilmore Quay and Cromane will be developed to meet increased demands.
- Promote other industries such as aquaculture, tourism and the leisure industry, and maximize the scope for diversification to marine leisure and other activities through the utilisation and development of our coastal infrastructure, to provide alternate means of employment for communities dependant on fishing
- Invest €23 million under the National Development Plan to protect the coastline from erosion and manage the problem of coastal flooding so as to minimise its impact on the commercial and social activities of coastal communities.

## New Ireland

In our last general election manifesto, we outlined the main requirements for success in the tourism industry - product, people, and access / supporting infrastructure – and we pursued policies to develop each of them. That approach in government has delivered significant success. Today our indigenous tourism industry supports 150,000 direct jobs, and generated an estimated €4.6 billion in foreign revenue earnings in 2006. The Progressive Democrats believe this approach will serve us again over the period of government and help Ireland achieve ambitious targets of double overseas tourism revenue to €6 billion by 2012, with an associated increase in visitor numbers of 10 million in 2012.

## New Opportunities

### Product

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Invest €317 million in enhancing Ireland's tourism product and infrastructure under the National Development Plan.
- Implement our extensive Culture & Irish Language policy. (Please see earlier chapter)
- Provide increased capital investment in visitor attractions and visitor activity facilities.
- Market Ireland internationally on an all-island basis as a tourism destination supporting the marketing of new access routes and the international marketing of niche special interest products
- Ensure increased use of e-marketing and websites in line with general industry trends and in building capacity/competitiveness in the industry and the State Agencies

### People

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Invest €149 million on tourism training and human resources under the NDP.
- Ensure targeted investment in the education and training of the tourism workforce, both domestic and non-national.
- Sustain structured education opportunities in our third level institutions.
- Continue the roll out of initiatives, in collaboration with organisations recognised as experts in the personnel, marketing and financial management areas, aimed at improving management capability and networking in SMEs and microenterprises at regional level.

### Access and Supporting Infrastructure

In government the Progressive Democrats will:

- Implement our extensive transport infrastructure policy to, among other things, ensure necessary access via our critical tourism routes. (Please see earlier chapter)
- Invest €335 million under the NDP marketing Ireland abroad as a tourist destination.
- Target investment in infrastructure and services relevant to tourists on major new events and other innovative products that will attract additional visitors.
- Continue to support the provision of a National Conference Centre in Dublin as an essential element of national tourism infrastructure. The Conference Centre, when fully operational, is expected, according to a number of independent estimates, to generate additional foreign revenue earnings of between €25 million and €50 million per year.

## Our Core Values

- Build in Ireland a democratic society organised on republican principles, in which legislation, where possible, allows citizens freedom of choice free from unnecessary state interference and regulation, taking into account the views of minorities.
- Promote policies that allow individuals, each in their own way, reach their maximum potential and protect and help weak and deprived members of society and promote social justice for all
- Establish and maintain laws that safeguard the rights of the individual and to minimise unnecessary regulation by the State in the affairs of its citizens.
- Ensure that while society gives the individual rights, the individual has a corresponding responsibility towards society.
- Promote liberal economic policies that: foster competition and innovation; reward initiative and encourage ever-greater economic and political participation by all its citizens; and promote subsidiarity and balanced regional development.
- Foster a fair and just system of taxation that promotes the work ethic and encourages creative endeavour.
- Ensure that the wealth produced by this nation is wisely used to afford a decent standard of living to all its citizens.
- Ensure that the legislative, judicial and administrative arms of government function independently, effectively and with accountability to safeguard the common good.
- Conserve, protect and enhance the natural, the physical and the built environment of Ireland, promote sustainable development and foster civic awareness and pride.
- Promote unity of the Irish people by peaceful means based on consent and pluralist principles.
- Promote and maintain laws that reflect the independence of both Church and State while valuing the contribution to society of religious and philosophical beliefs.
- Promote and support the development of community and voluntary organisations.
- Safeguard and develop all strands of Irish culture, language and heritage.
- Promote a European Union dedicated to liberal and democratic principles.





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