

Proposed Renewed Programme for Government

10 October 2009

Preface

Fianna Fáil and the Green Party have worked well together over the past two years providing good government for country during a period of unprecedented global economic turmoil.

We are now publishing the results of the Review of our Programme for Government. Our initial Programme for Government made clear that its delivery was based on a growth rate of 4.5%.

It was negotiated prior to the worst to the worst global downturn since the 1930s. Our review is about ensuring the Programme for Government reflects current economic realities. Achievement of the goals set out in both documents, subject to resources, will provide the political basis of Government action, until we complete our term in 2012

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1. Introduction

When this Government took office in June 2007, few foresaw that record levels of economic growth were coming to an end. The international financial crisis plunged Ireland into the worst recession we have experienced in 80 years.

The Irish Government acted quickly to prevent collapse. Difficult decisions had to be taken. They were painful to many, but necessary for all.

After a decade of unprecedented growth, Ireland now has to deal with a period of unprecedented challenge.

We can rise to that challenge. We are the same people we were a year ago: enterprising, confident and compassionate. Neither our talent nor our determination has been dimmed by our current difficulties.

The time for crisis management is over. Now we must set about re-creating the Republic. This Renewed Programme sets out the Government's vision of national renewal and economic recovery.

This is an unparalleled programme of reform in all areas of Government activity – in politics, economics and across our society.

We will return this economy to a position of sustainable recovery. Never again will we find ourselves overly reliant on one sector or stream of revenue.

We need vital credit for our cash strapped businesses to work. Our banks must reconfigure and reform. We will also ensure that a new regime of corporate responsibility is put in place. Any wrongdoing will be uncovered by the institutions of the state and brought to its logical conclusion. We cannot accept a return to the old ways and we will simply not allow this to happen.

The credit crisis hit more than our banking system. It is hurting homeowners and those in arrears. Government will support families having difficulties with their mortgage payments.

From the multinational company to the small shop-owner, we will take all possible measures to support existing jobs. We will build a high-productivity, low-carbon, Smart Economy to create new and quality jobs. We must think smarter, work smarter and be smarter – getting more for less across all sectors of the Irish economy, public and private.

There will be great rewards for the country that understands and responds quickly to the environmental challenges of this new century. Moving to a low-carbon economy, we will take advantage of our own natural resources in energy, forestry and food.

Ireland has the chance to be at the vanguard of the fight against climate change. Our carbon emissions targets will be legally binding.

We will invest in public transport, new broadband infrastructure and more energy efficient buildings because it makes economic as well as environmental sense.

The best investment with the greatest return any Government can make is in education. It empowers the individual, strengthens society and is truly transformational. In the savings that must be made, we will protect our children's education insofar as we can.

As political leaders we have responsibility to lead by example. We are mindful of our role, first and foremost, as servants of the people. We need to start a process of radical reform of our democratic structures so that the highest standards apply and they are truly representative.

We will reform the public service to enable it to meet the demands of the tasks ahead. As elected representatives we will work to earn and repay the trust that is placed in us.

We will do what is appropriate and necessary for Ireland's recovery. To succeed, we will work with all sectors of Irish society. We must all pull together.

We are determined to succeed and, together, we will succeed.

Teastaíonn spiorad an Mheitheal anois níos mó ná riamh. Spiorad an chomharsanacht, spiorad an chomhoibriú. Ní neart go cur le chéile agus seo í an t-am chun brú ar aghaidh i dteannta a chéile agus le tacaíocht dá chéile.

2. The Economy & Public Finances

Our overarching objective in the short-term is to return the economy to a sustainable position. We will stabilise the public finances through a combination of taxation and expenditure savings. Our taxation will be simpler, fairer and have a redistributive effect. Those who can afford it will pay more; those most in need will be protected.

The banking system on which we rely will be reconfigured and restored to health. Credit to Irish business will be guaranteed and new laws governing the conduct of our banks will ensure the mistakes of the past will not be repeated.

Our recovery will be balanced and sustainable, avoiding over-reliance on any one sector and aware of the resource constraints and environmental damage associated with unmanaged growth.

Economic Basis for the Programme

The revised Programme for Government is based on the broad macro economic framework set out in the April Budget taking account of the latest fiscal trends. To get a better measure of progress in the country we will introduce a new national performance indicator which will be formulated using traditional economic data, along with other quality of life measurements which can be assessed and reported on a regular basis.

Our guiding principles to achieve economic stabilisation over the next three years are:

1. *Correction of the public finances*
This review is based on the plan to correct the public finances which the Government set out in the Supplementary Budget last April. That Budget outlined a path to reduce the deficit to 3% of GDP by end-2013. This plan has been welcomed by the European Commission. Its delivery requires significant adjustments to be made over each of the next four years. The Budget forecast that the public finances would need to be corrected by €4 billion in each of the next three years (2010, 2011 and 2012). This will take account of the findings of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes and the Commission on Taxation, while creating the room for targeted spending and taxation initiatives that can be demonstrated to promote economic renewal. Any such plans will be done within the agreed overall multi-annual fiscal consolidation targets."
2. *Restoring our damaged banking system*
Credit is the life blood of the economy. Unless we take radical and bold action to resolve the crisis that has stanchied the flow of credit, the economy will not recover.
3. *Regaining competitiveness*
The future of the economy lies in exports. We must work harder to gain market share. We must drive down our costs and improve the quality of our products so that we are well placed to gain when the tide changes.
4. *Protecting jobs and investing in retraining those who have lost jobs*

The number of people in employment has fallen sharply and we must take all possible and sensible measures to protect and support existing jobs.

Capital Investment

- We will revise our Capital Investment programme to take into account new budget realities and the need for us to meet our mandatory climate change emissions reduction targets. We will set out our priorities for capital investment over the next 5 years by the end of 2009.

Tax Reform

- Introduce new targeted and efficient taxation policies which encourage sustainable enterprise development and the creation of sustainable employment in the Green and Smart Economy.
- Eliminate unnecessary tax reliefs and ensure that those relief schemes which are closed to new entrants will be eliminated during the lifetime of the government where possible
- Reform residency rules to ensure that those who benefit from living in Ireland are subject to taxation in Ireland.

Income Tax

- We will abolish the employee PRSI ceiling in parallel with the reduction of the temporary income levy in order to remove the inequity whereby higher paid employees pay proportionately less of their income for social insurance than low paid employees.
- Begin the simplification and rationalisation of the various levies into the income tax system beginning in 2010
- Introduce a single 30% rate for tax relief on private pension provision in the context of the national pensions framework.

Taxation for Sustainable Development

- Introduce Carbon Tax in Budget 2010. The principles underlying the carbon levy to be introduced in 2010 will be
 - those most at risk of fuel poverty will be protected,
 - we improve the fuel efficiency of our current housing stock,
 - the relative tax burden on labour will be reduced.The revenues generated through the application of the tax will be accounted for in the Carbon Budget in identified areas of spending.
- Starting with the necessary valuation and registration process, we will move to introduce a Site Valuation Tax for non-agricultural land. This system will provide a fair and stable basis for offsetting stamp duty on residential property.

Business Taxes

- We will retain the favourable tax treatment of so-called ‘smart capital’ for investing start-up innovative companies and for scaling indigenous companies.

Local Taxation & Charges

- Introduce a new system for the financing of Local Government, ensuring the viability of local services and that Government policy for the reform of Local Government is implemented.
- Introduce charging for treated water use that is fair, significantly reduces waste and is easily applied. It will be based on a system where households are allocated a free basic allowance, with charging only for water use in excess of this allowance. In keeping with the allocation of greater responsibility to local government, Local Authorities will set their own rates for water use.

3. Enterprise and Jobs

We will manage a recovery in the Irish economy with care, skill and determination. There are strong indications that the tough decisions of the past year are starting to bear fruit. However, there is no room for complacency.

We have two objectives for the next two years: to protect existing jobs in the economy of today and to build our capability for the economy of tomorrow.

We must support viable but vulnerable businesses and employment in the very difficult trading environment and international financial crisis. We must also assist those who lose their jobs during the downturn.

At the same time, it is not good enough to survive this major global crisis. The lesson from severe global recessions in the past is that as well as weathering the economic storm, countries need to restructure their economies to be in pole position for taking advantage of the global upturn.

Stabilising the Economy of Today

In order to stabilise the economy and protect jobs and businesses, our priorities are to:

- retain as many existing jobs as possible and support businesses;
- re-skill people who are working in traditional business and those who have lost their jobs;
- Create new jobs in existing and new industries;
- Sort out the banks and get them lending again.

Retain existing jobs & supporting viable but vulnerable businesses

- We will roll out the €100 million Enterprise Stabilization Fund to secure viable but vulnerable export-led businesses.
- We will take on 1,000 Third and Fourth level graduates to provide additional capacity and skills across the public service and in Government Departments and provide valuable work experience.
- We will mandate the €200 million “Green Fund” established in AIB & BOI to prioritise the following activities:
 - Help existing mechanical/electrical engineering firms to become Energy Services Companies (ESCOs) providing managed energy services to public buildings by providing capital to install equipment on client sites;
 - Supplement the grants schemes run by Sustainable Energy Ireland (€50m Home Energy Scheme) by lending to homes and businesses that are retrofitting energy efficient equipment in their homes/businesses. There are 3,000 contractors newly registered with SEI to carry out this work.
- Participating institutions in NAMA will be obliged to offer a deposit account to consumers which will be ringfenced for lending to Green projects.

- Implement a Code of Practice for doing business in the Grocery Goods Sector to develop a fair trading relationship between retailers and their suppliers. We will review progress of the Code and if necessary we will put in place a mandatory code.
- We will conduct an independent review of the effectiveness of state agency support for enterprise, including the interaction between IDA, EI and County Enterprise Boards.
- The multinational community will continue to be incentivised to intensify innovative, high-value activity and technological convergence which will provide quality jobs. We recognise the vital role played by low taxes in our economic success. We guarantee that the 12.5% rate of corporation tax will remain.
- We will act on recommendations contained in reports of the Competition Authority within nine months of their publication.
- We will introduce legislation to merge the Competition Authority and the National Consumer Agency and provide for the transfer of consumer functions from the Financial Regulator to the merged agency.
- We will support companies in securing overseas markets and entering new eurozone and high growth emerging markets.
- We will expand the role of innovation vouchers in allowing growing local enterprises bridge the innovation gap in getting their products or services to market
- The Rural Development Programme will create 12,000 jobs in locally-based rural enterprises between now and 2013.
- Establish Community and Development Agencies as a ‘one-stop shop’ for advice on grant supports, business opportunities, training and development, and to manage grant spending under the new EU fund for rural development
- We will develop a programme of Labour Activation Measures in Tourism, building on the changed profile of unemployment and the advantages of enhancing the visitor experience through the Fáilte brand.
- We will continue the apprenticeship programmes at the National Cultural Institutions.
- We will review insurance costs to ensure the consumer is benefiting to the maximum extent possible from competition in the sector.

Re-Skilling People for New Job Opportunities

- We will target the €375 million available through the European Social Fund and the European Globalisation Fund at the following priority areas:
 - Increase activation of the labour force;
 - Increase participation and reducing inequality in the labour force;
 - Technical assistance.
- We will restore public confidence in the governance and management of the State’s employment and training agency, FÁS, by putting in place a legislative structure with greater accountability to the taxpayer, through the Minister in Dáil Éireann and ensure that FÁS is fit for the purpose of equipping people for employment in the Smart Economy.
- We will implement incentives for employees to up-skill in preparation for the Smart Economy skills on a part time basis, as set out in the Comhar “Green New Deal”.

- We remain committed to supporting Community Employment Schemes as an essential activation measure that also provides a significant benefit to local communities. To assist jobseekers further, we will review provision for and the structure of the Community Employment Programme to ensure it meets current needs .
- We will provide places in Local Authorities for participants on the new Work Experience Scheme to ensure that each town, city or county area can benefit from the skills of participants as they gain valuable work experience.
- We will undertake an early evaluation of the pilot training programme aimed at sustaining vulnerable employment and if evaluation is positive organise expansion across the country

Building the Economy of Tomorrow: Innovation Ireland

The Smart Economy framework document published in December 2008 outlines the vision and a series of objectives to restructure the Irish economy. Ireland's Smart Economy will be high-productivity and low-carbon, producing the products and services of tomorrow and providing sustainable jobs for our citizens. Ireland will be a test-bed for emerging technologies. We will have smart, efficient and citizen-oriented public services. And we will be energy independent with a high-quality living environment with smart transport solutions.

This sustainable approach to economic development complements the core strength of our economy in the use of natural resources in the agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism and energy sectors.

Three working groups, the Knowledge Society, the Green Enterprise Action Group and the Innovation Taskforce were established to advise on specific action points for this strategy. We have agreed budgetary support for these initiatives and full Government commitment to this vision.

The first two groups have concluded their work and come up with specific projects which are ready to go. The Smart Economy framework and the concepts from the working groups were tested and validated at the Farmleigh Global Economic Irish Forum.

With the Innovation Taskforce still to report, the potential for employment creation has so far been identified at over 127,000 new jobs.

The Innovation Taskforce

- The €500 million 'Innovation Fund Ireland' is committed and will be finalised, pending the recommendations of the Innovation Taskforce. The Fund will support innovative SMEs and to help to scale indigenous companies. Market-testing will be completed by December 2009 and Requests for Tender will issue in Quarter 1 2010.
- We will retain the favourable tax treatment of so-called 'smart capital' for investing in start-up innovative companies and for scaling indigenous companies.

The significantly enhanced R&D tax arrangements will be also be retained. Revised arrangements for the taxation of Intellectual Property will be retained and further enhanced where possible.

- In the light of the above, we will review the potential for the active management of Intellectual Property, whether generated or domiciled in Ireland.
- We will introduce new targeted and efficient taxation policies which encourage sustainable enterprise development.
- We will act on recommendations from the Innovation Taskforce in, inter alia, the areas of legislation, educational policy, Intellectual Property arrangements, venture capital and immigration policy in order to create an exemplary innovation and commercialisation ecosystem.
- As suggested at the Global Irish Economic Forum at Farnleigh, we will establish an Expert Private Sector Panel to identify areas of distinct expertise in Ireland. Particular opportunities exist in areas such as health, aging and medical devices; Pharma; ICT; water and renewable energy; and agri-business that can be exploited to address existing Irish needs and also have the potential to service large global market needs.
- We will invest for the future by setting a target to achieve a national R&D investment of 3% of GDP, public and private combined.

Knowledge Society

We are committing budgetary support for the six priority areas in the Knowledge Society Report:

1. Deploy the new exemplar fibre-optic technologies on state communications infrastructure to further advance its development;
2. Establish an International Content Services Centre in cooperation between the Digital Hub and IDA;
3. The roll-out of Smart Grid technologies such as smart metres and electric vehicles;
4. Progress remote sensory technology such as the Smart Bay project in Galway Bay;
5. Introduce 'Work Flow' smart commuting real time transport information systems;
6. Develop Ireland as an international location for Energy Efficient Data Centres and cloud computing.

Championing ICT Innovation in the Public and Private Sectors

- We will appoint a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to provide leadership for the development of information and communications technology (ICT) and other relevant technologies within and outside Government. The CIO will report directly to the Taoiseach. The CIO will advise the Government on how to take a proactive, leading role in championing IT innovation and development externally as part of the building of the Smart Economy. The CIO will assist public sector modernisation by driving changes in government business processes and implementing improvements in how government communicates with its citizens through ICT. The CIO will take a cross-departmental and agency leadership role in driving the e-government programme.

- We will deliver 100MBs for all second-level schools by 2012, and roll out new digital access devices for teachers and students to coincide with this new high-speed broadband capability in our schools.
- Subject to European Stimulus Funding, we will make broadband available to every house in the country by 2012.
- We will provide a ‘One-Stop-Shop’ to provide open access to state-owned fibre-optic ducting and to ensure fibre is provided from the start in new housing developments.
- We will implement a new system for national post and location codes to allow improvements in e-commerce and other applications.
- We will support private sector investment and, wherever appropriate, invest in our own communications infrastructure to ensure that Ireland has the necessary domestic and international broadband connectivity to compete as a trading digital economy.

The Green Economy

A key pillar of economic policy will be to implement a Green New Deal to move away from fossil-fuel based energy production through investment in renewable energy and increased energy efficiency to reduce demand, wastage and costs.

- We will put in place new public procurement procedures and guidelines to ensure that green criteria are at the centre of all state procurement.
- We will revise our Capital Investment Programme to take into account new budget realities and the need to deliver a Smart Economy and to meet our mandatory climate change emissions reduction targets.
- We will prioritise research and technologies that offer strong development opportunities in the area of water management, leaks, measurement, metres etc.
- We will extend our system of Accelerated Capital Allowances to develop the Green Economy into areas such as renewables, waste disposal and water usage.
- We will work with the ESB and international motor companies to see a deployment of some 6,000 electric vehicles over the next three years.
- We will implement the GRID 25 electricity grid plan to ensure we deliver on our ambitious renewable energy targets.
- We will present a plan for a high voltage off-shore electricity grid as part of the wider European electricity ‘Supergrid’ so that in the future we can become an energy-exporting nation.
- We will select a “Smart Town” test site of at least 1,000 homes for energy companies to test new smart grid and other energy efficient applications.
- We will transfer foreshore licensing to the Department of the Environment and integrate it with the planning system to assist the development of our ocean energy resources.
- We will introduce new energy demand reduction targets for energy utilities, thus allowing the customer to “save as they pay” through energy efficient measures.
- We will facilitate the establishment of energy research and technology centres by international institutions in Ireland.

Agriculture and Food

- We will support a well-resourced CAP post 2013 to underpin a strong European agricultural and food production base.
- We will obtain EU approval for, and implement, the revised Rural Development Programme which includes targeted agri-environment and farm investment measures, consistent with full drawdown of EU funding.
- We will continue to support family farms through a more targeted scheme of on-farm investment. We will also continue to support low-income farmers through the Farm Assist Scheme and adapt it in consultation with the relevant farming organisations.
- We will support Teagasc in enhancing its scientific capacity to enable it to foster science-based innovation on farms and in firms.
- Ensure the achievement of the target of 5% of land in organic agriculture and meet the growing demand for domestically produced organic produce by providing adequate resources and supports for the achievement of the target, with a focus on import substitution in areas where Ireland is under producing at present e.g. horticulture. Beginning in 2010, and rising in subsequent years, stepping up supports for the Organic Farming Scheme for conversion to organic production, Capital Grants for the Organic Sector and Non-Capital costs.
- Declare the Republic of Ireland a GM-Free Zone, free from the cultivation of all GM plants.
- To optimise Ireland's competitive advantage as a GM-Free country, we will introduce a voluntary GM-Free logo for use in all relevant product labelling and advertising, similar to a scheme recently introduced in Germany.
- Conduct a review of our National Food Security Policy to develop resilience in food production capacity to future proof against substantial rises in price and availability of oil and to meet the challenge of Climate Change.
- We will increase horticulture production to meet the requirements for Irish produced fruit and vegetables, in line with recommendations in the Obesity Report.
- We will ensure that new public procurement guidelines for food include criteria based on giving greater weight to sustainable local produce, seasonal menus and organic production, building on good practice in other EU countries in this area.
- We will review standards to ensure that micro production and direct selling by producers are not impeded, building on good practice from other EU countries.
- We will promote a positive environment within the food inspection systems to foster innovation in the food business. In particular we will ensure adequate training and support for relevant officials to assist them in providing advice to start-ups, facilitating growth and innovation and fostering a problem-solving environment within the system.
- We will promote and support a network of farmers' markets at Local Authority level to encourage more direct selling from producers to consumers.
- We will develop a template for the establishment of farm-gate shops and ensure that the necessary legislative arrangements are made to facilitate this.
- We will develop and introduce a healthy schools' meals policy, building on existing pilot projects, and implement it gradually across the country.

Forestry

- We will review state forestry policy to take account of its critical role in relation to climate change and its importance to construction, bio-energy, bio-diversity and its potential to deliver long-term employment in other downstream industries e.g. eco-tourism, furniture, crafts etc. The review will include the role of Coillte and its functions and operations. It will also assess the effectiveness of current forestry grant schemes and make recommendations on how best to deliver supports in the future.
- Following this review, we will overhaul and significantly enhance the current range of programmes and supports to facilitate the attainment of the target of 17% forestry cover by 2030 and contribute to meeting our climate change commitments.
- We will promote a diverse forestry culture with an emphasis on native trees and ensure that a minimum of 30% broadleaf will be planted annually.
- We will increase the level of new forest planting to 10,000 hectares per annum. Towards that aim, we will increase the level in 2010 through the use of direct funding and appropriate tax incentives.
- The Government will also work with the Irish forestry sector, including Coillte, to develop a scheme through which some of the monies currently set aside to purchase carbon credits abroad will be diverted for forestry investment in Ireland.

Marine

- We will vigorously pursue Ireland's interests through the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.
- Through sustainable management based on scientific advice, we will work to rebuild fish stocks and maintain the quota fished annually by the Irish Fleet.
- We will support the economic and social development of maritime communities by developing harbour and landing infrastructure, support for innovation and product development and the provision of training and upgrading of existing skill levels.
- We will support the Aquaculture sector to develop technological innovation and environmentally sustainable techniques, including organic farming, and diversification into new species.
- We will instigate a National Marine Biotechnology Initiative to make Ireland a world leader in this important sector and further develop Ireland's reputation as a centre of excellence for marine research.
- We will encourage and support the development, through BIM, of innovation, product development and high value-added branded seafood exports.
- We will commit to developing sustainable management for fisheries and aquaculture in Natura 2000 sites and assist the sustainable development of inshore and small boat fisheries, through better targeting of supports and quota
- We will maintain the highest standards in maritime safety.

Tourism

- We will develop the potential for "Food Tourism", starting with "food trails" and the provision of food in public houses particularly in rural areas.
- We will promote the development of cycling as a growth area for tourism.

- We will introduce an All-Ireland Walkways Development Plan, mapping out infrastructural needs and routes and maximising their use. We will pursue the possibility of using former railway infrastructure as recreational trails for cycling etc. in partnership with Iarnród Éireann.
- In the period to 2012, we will position the suite of *Discover Ireland* websites as exemplars for an information, content and reservation tourism system, with ease of bookability and comprehensive linkages to industry platforms.
- We will position Dublin as an important centre for conference tourism business.
- We will invest in key selected minor tourist attractions and position Ireland as an important international cultural tourism destination.
- We will develop tourism business from new emerging growth markets in the East and Middle East through the opening of a new hub by Tourism Ireland in Dubai.
- We will develop a world class rural and marine recreational industry.

Making the Banking System Work for People and Businesses

Banking Reform

The Government is determined to ensure that the Irish banking system is able to provide the credit and financial services that the economy needs for sustainable economic recovery, and that it is fully and properly regulated and supervised for the future.

For this reason, the Government has taken decisive steps over the past year to stabilise and reform our financial system – a process that will and must continue. The purpose of this programme of activity is not to benefit bankers or major borrowers, but to protect the security of bank depositors, reduce the risks to our economy, and ensure we can have a future based on sustainable economic development, supplied by, but not led by, an efficient financial system. The Government will continue to implement this programme in a way that protects the taxpayer.

Importantly, having stabilised our banking system we will ensure there is a root and branch reform so that we never see a return to the reckless lending practices that led to the banking crisis.

Participating banks will be required to submit detailed restructuring and lending plans, dealing with the key elements of their business strategy. This will include lending targets to different business sectors and the future balance between their Irish and international operations.

The Government and Financial Regulator will develop a new code of conduct for treatment of non-performing loans for small and medium businesses.

We will put the principles of the ‘Combined Code’ of Corporate Governance on a legislative footing for all banks, public companies and state-sponsored bodies to deal with the following key areas of governance of institutions:

- Board composition and independence

- Segregation of CEO and Chair
- Clear definition of executive and non-executive responsibilities.
- Audit committee composition, independence, role and function
- Responsibilities and composition of board committees.
- Segregation of committee chairs
- Risk management
- Selection of non-executive directors
- Sanctions for non-compliance

Additionally, and consistent with this, in the context of the planned reform of the regulatory structures for financial regulation, the Government in consultation with the Financial Regulator will develop new statutory rules in relation to the governance of major financial institutions.

Pending legislation, all credit institutions participating in NAMA or availing of a Government Guarantee will be expected to comply fully with the key principles of the 'Combined Code', subject only to necessary adaptations agreed with the Minister for Finance or the Financial Regulator.

Government is drafting legislation for the reform of the regulatory system for financial services. In preparation for this, the Government will shortly restructure the Boards of the Central Bank and Financial Regulator and will select members having regard to the renewed mandate and focus of the central banking and regulatory structures.

Within the new structures for regulation of the financial sector, a specific executive will be assigned responsibility for all of the Central Bank's issues in relation to the ongoing oversight of state-owned and state supported institutions.

The Government's approach to asset valuation within the NAMA initiative is a carefully balanced and reasonable approach, having regard to the need to stabilise the financial system and to ensure that the economy has access to credit and financial services. Alternative approaches risk leaving the banking system impaired and without access to funds or capital for future development.

Public concern in relation to the risk undertaken by the Exchequer is, of course, appropriate, and entirely shared by the Government who have taken considerable steps within the proposed NAMA legislation to mitigate and control risks and ensure the best possible return for the taxpayer. Included among the measures to mitigate risk is the proposal that a portion of the consideration for the assets transferred would be in the form of issued subordinated bonds, ensuring that risks are shared by the institutions. In addition, the Government has always stated that, should NAMA make a loss over time, a levy would be imposed to recoup the cost to taxpayers. The Government proposes to amend the legislation to ensure this levy is put on a statutory basis. This levy will be dealt with in the legislation establishing the Agency, having regard to the importance of maintaining the sustainability and stability of financial institutions. Any such levy would arise only if NAMA has made a loss on its eventual wind-up or after 10 years, and would be carefully judged so as not to disrupt the stability and sustainability of the banking system.

Protecting the Family Home

We will introduce new measures to protect families having difficulties with their home mortgage payments.

The existing statutory Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears and the recently agreed protocol between the Irish Bankers Federation (IBF) and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) on debt default will be further reviewed with a view to expanding the options available for dealing with debt situations, including for example the use by banks and lenders of more flexible mechanisms to avoid foreclosure in appropriate circumstances. These could include:

- reduced rates
- longer maturity dates
- rolling-up of outstanding interest
- bank taking equity in the house
- bank taking ownership and leasing back to the resident with rent payments coming off the loan

With reference to the measures adopted in other jurisdictions, the Government will examine ways of expanding its own mortgage -support measures.

Helping Those in Debt

We will reform debt enforcement in light of the deliberation of the Law Reform Commission, which has recently published a consultation paper on the matter. We will regulate debt collection agencies.

We will create a new system of personal insolvency regulations allowing for a statutory non-court-based debt settlement system.

We will seek to establish a central Debt Enforcement Office to remove as many debt enforcement proceeds from the courts as possible.

4. A More Caring and Just Society

Promoting care and a sense of personal responsibility for the welfare of others is one of society's greatest moral challenges. In these straightened times we must avoid the temptation to retreat to self interest as a method of survival. We are obliged to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

A caring society respects its citizens equally while recognising their difference, it celebrates diversity.

The way we treat our sick is a true test of our values and the effectiveness of our social provision. The Government is determined to reform the healthcare system to improve the services to all people, regardless of income.

Where the unemployed, the young and the old need the safety net of Government support it will be provided as a matter of right. Childhood will be cherished as a special time requiring special protection.

The mentally ill, the disabled and the marginalised should not fear isolation. Our society should and must respect the right of our citizens equally while continuing to recognise their individual differences

Welfare

- We will radically overhaul the Taxation and Social Welfare systems so they become more integrated to better meet the needs of citizens and eliminate anomalies.
- In seeking to manage the social welfare budgets, We will place strongest emphasis will be placed on protecting basic payments for the most vulnerable in society.
- We will publish a Fuel Poverty Strategy by the end of 2009, in keeping with the introduction of a Carbon Levy.
- We will minimise any disincentives for moving from social welfare into employment or training, through appropriate income disregards, tapered welfare withdrawal rates and initiatives such as the Back to Education Allowance and Back to Work (Enterprise) Programme.
- We will continue to support the Money Advice and Budgeting Service to help people both to avoid debt problems in the first place and to manage debts that they do have.
- We will ensure that Government policy as a whole is directed at enabling people to meet their full potential and reducing long-term dependence on income support payments
- We will reduce the long processing times for jobseekers' claims that are currently evident in some parts of the country
- We will intensify measures to tackle social welfare fraud and minimise payment errors.
- We will ensure that the rent supplement scheme is effective in providing short-term support for people who have lost their jobs, while providing value for money for the taxpayer and ensuring that long-term housing needs are met

through more appropriate initiatives such as the Rental Accommodation Scheme and Social and Affordable Housing

- The Community Welfare Service will transfer from the HSE to the Department of Social and Family Affairs in early 2010. This transfer will lead to more effective policies in support of the most vulnerable in society. It will also enhance customer service, improve control of spending and bring about administrative efficiencies, with consequential savings to the Exchequer and better outcomes for users of social welfare services.
- We will be more flexible with the Back to Education Allowance.

Health

We will take further progressive, detailed steps towards building universal health services that provide high-quality care, fair access and affordability for all. To achieve this, we will focus our actions on several key areas:

- **Cancer Care:** implement the Cancer Control Strategy so that people in all regions of the country receive the highest quality care led by multi-disciplinary teams at the designated cancer centres; expand cancer prevention measures such as colorectal screening and cervical vaccination programmes at the earliest opportunity, in accordance with clinical priorities.
- **Primary Care:** continue to lead a major re-orientation of health care delivery to primary and community-based care as the location where most healthcare is provided; create more primary care teams, through re-deploying existing staff, so they can deliver more planned and integrated care to patients, particularly those with chronic diseases; and ensuring that a comprehensive primary care service is supported in modernised health eligibility legislation.
- **Equity of Access;** implement key features of the new consultants' contract to ensure that public and private patients are treated equally for access to key outpatient and diagnostic services, for example in cancer care and colonoscopies.
- **Older People:** implement "Fair Deal" and support care in the community.
- **Funding:** using the expertise and recommendations of the Expert Group on Resource Allocation in the Health Sector due to report in April 2010; change the allocation of health funding and budgets to achieve best outcomes for patients and further support primary and preventative care, so that money follows the patient.
- **Financing:** also taking account of the report of the Expert Group on Resource Allocation in the Health Sector, we will examine the most appropriate future mix of sources of finance to support this vision of the health services, from among general taxation, social insurance/health levy, private health insurance and individual co-payments.
- Proceed with the current programme of co-location, limited to already committed projects under the existing project contractual agreements.
- We affirm our commitment to improve income eligibility limits in the assessment for medical cards for children with intellectual disabilities.

We will fully support the development of the new National Paediatric Hospital to bring complex care for children together in one place in order to achieve the highest standard of care and outcomes for children.

We will commence a bio-monitoring programme in 2010 to measure fluoride levels, which will provide robust baseline data on the level of fluoride in the general population.

We will support the economy by increasing Research and Development in the health sector; make Ireland a leading country for timing, access and relevance of clinical trials; build on existing research projects, particularly in relation to better health for older people.

We will introduce stricter requirements for labelling of alcohol products.

Hospitals

- We will organise hospital services on the basis of clear patient safety and quality care standards, drawn from best international practice, and progressively move towards mandatory licensing of services based on explicit standards.
- In particular, we will ensure safe access for patients to 24-hour acute A&E services that meet such standards, staffed with teams of consultants and qualified nurses treating a range and number of patients to sustain high levels of patient safety and professional competence.
- Implement reforms to hospice and palliative care, in line with international best practice.

Mental health

Our key priorities for mental health will be to reduce admission rates to acute units; reduce waiting times for child & adolescent services; progress the transfer of the Central Mental Hospital to a new site; and use the proceeds of the sale of older assets in the mental health area to fund new capital developments for mental health.

In 2010 we will publish a plan with an implementable timeframe for the achievement of faster access to mental health services and improved mental health status, building on Vision for Change with an emphasis on:

- The role of primary care as the backbone of mental health services;
- Preventive medicine and early detection and intervention, based around primary care services in the community making full use of multi-disciplinary primary care teams;
- Ensuring greater access to counselling and psychological services;
- Close integration of psychotherapy, counselling and social care services with primary care teams;
- Making appropriate amendments to the Mental Health Act 2001 to address concerns regarding involuntary committals and procedures;
- Address the gaps in provision of mental health facilities for children and young people.

Equality

- We will monitor, report annually and respond to the impact of the current economic conditions on gender equality in employment, political participation, access to public services and care infrastructure, to ensure that gender equality continues to advance in difficult times.
- We will ensure the introduction of the Civil Partnership Bill to the Oireachtas before the end of 2009 and its early passage and implementation.
- We will review legislation in the area of guardianship, custody and access, following the publication of the report of the Law Reform Commission Report on Legal Aspects of Family Relationships.
- We will introduce legal recognition of the acquired gender of transsexuals.
- We will proceed, subject to appropriate Oireachtas approval, with proposals to hold a constitutional referendum to consider amending Article 41.2 of the Constitution, broadening the reference to the role of women in the home to one which recognises the role of the parent in the home.

Disability

- We will prioritise the interests of people with disabilities and actively advance the implementation of the National Disability Strategy (NDS) throughout the recession having regard to the progress made to date and subject to available resources.
- We will ensure that the NDS is driven and managed from a whole of Government perspective. We will prioritise and protect this important area of Government policy.
- We will publish a “NDS Recession Implementation Plan”, central to which will be the availability of accessible public and social services to vindicate the rights of people with disabilities to full participation within the State.
- We will maximise the efforts of the State and the voluntary disability sector in order to deliver cost effective services that promote independence and choice for people with disabilities.
- We will advance measure to specifically strengthen collaborative working across Departments, Public Bodies and the voluntary disability sector to ensure person centred public service provision.
- We will ensure that all Government Departments make decisions that are consistent with advancing the National Disability Strategy in keeping with Government policy
- We will strongly progress the NDS in parallel with Ireland’s economic recovery.

Children

- We will fully implement the Government Implementation Plan in response to the Ryan Report, including the improvement of children’s services and a National Day of Atonement.
- Ensure that the office of the Children’s Ombudsman will be able to fulfil its statutory duty.

- We will proceed, subject to appropriate Oireachtas approval, with proposals to hold a constitutional referendum to consider Children's Rights, based on the work of the Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children.
- We will implement the new Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme which is being introduced from January 2010.
- We will establish a Children's Services Committee in each country by 2016.
- We will develop and put in place a regulatory framework for the provision of after-school services.

Older People

- We will publish the forthcoming Positive Ageing Strategy and provide a timetable for the implementation of its agreed recommendations.
- We will continue to recognise and support the role of carers, who provide a vital service not only for their own loved ones but for our community as a whole.

Community and Social Economy

- Continue to develop the RAPID Programme that is giving local communities in the most disadvantaged urban areas a real voice for change for the better in their own communities.
- CLÁR - disadvantaged rural communities: Since the start of 2004 some €100 million has been provided for local social and physical infrastructure in the CLÁR areas and this has leveraged out almost the same figure in matching funds. In these times of economic constraint we will focus the CLÁR programme on priority local needs in CLÁR areas.
- We will implement the new Drugs Strategy.
- Realise the potential of the Social Economy, building on existing supports and structures. With the involvement of the Social Partners, we will reshape current structures and arrangements to ensure that they assist jobseekers to access further training, education, work experience or employment. These activation programmes will also build on social capital, involving participants in provision of useful services while making a significant contribution to their own communities.

Justice and Crime

- We will ensure that every effort is made to pursue perpetrators of white-collar crime, including financial irregularity, and institutional criminal malpractice, and to ensure that the Criminal Assets Bureau has the appropriate professional and expert staff including forensic accountants, auditors, risk-assessors and IT experts.
- We will request the Courts Service to undertake an immediate review of the efficiency of court operation activities with a view to reducing delays and related costs in court proceedings.
- We will maintain the focus on tackling gang and terrorist criminality.
- We will continue to target Garda actions within communities experiencing significant anti-social behaviour and drug crime.
- We will develop a White Paper on Crime.

- We will progress our new Prison Building Programme.
- We will operate the oversight provisions contained in the Criminal Justice Amendment Act 2009 relating to the use of the Special Criminal Court, utilising fully the observations of the Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence & Women's Rights to ensure the efficacy of the Act in that regard.
- We will maintain the highest possible level of policing services.
- We will extend the network of safety cameras at national black spots and dangerous stretches of road to ensure maximum effectiveness in reducing deaths and accidents on our roads.
- We will proceed, subject to appropriate Oireachtas approval, with proposals to hold a constitutional referendum to consider the establishment of a Court of Civil Appeal.

Penal Reform

- We will implement the Fines Bill to ensure that prison is only used as a penalty of last resort for debtors and fine defaulters and will in general attempt to ensure that prison is the option of last resort for non-serious crime
- We will strengthen measures to improve literacy levels and support good mental health among the prison population.
- We will improve prior and post-release supports for prisoners to facilitate their reintegration in to society and expand the use of alternatives to custody within youth justice services.

Victims of Crime

- We will implement in full the Justice for Victims Initiative, conclude the work of updating the 2005 Victim's Charter, continue to support the work of the Victims Support Commission and explore services and supports specifically targeted at youth victims.
- We will examine further options for restorative justice, building on the work of the National Commission of Restorative Justice, that is focused on offenders making amends directly to the organisations and groups they have harmed.

Immigration and Integration

Following commencement of the Immigration, Residence & Protection Bill we will:

- Introduce a scheme to examine the cases of aged-out minors on a case-by-case basis;
- Implement the recently announced scheme for consideration of cases of persons who have become undocumented through no fault of their own;
- Implement the recently announced Scheme for non-EEA work permit holders who have become redundant;
- Consider the extension of the Ombudsman in relation to specified immigration matters having due regard for the need to avoid systemic delays;
- Operate fully the provisions of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill as they relate to unaccompanied minors. Following an appropriate period of

time we will review the operation of the Act and, if necessary, improve its operation in this regard;

- Remove the labour market needs test for current and future work permit holders who have been made redundant. Policy in this area will be kept under review in light of the changing needs of the national labour market.

5. Our Environment

Climate change is the greatest threat to humanity. In the next decade we must stabilise greenhouse gas emissions and begin to reduce them. Our plans for emissions reductions will be enshrined in law.

Preserving our water resources and reducing our waste will become increasingly critical competences for our local government while protecting our built heritage and ensuring the right standards of animal welfare will be an important test of our society.

Climate Change

- We will introduce a Climate Change Bill to give a statutory basis to the annual carbon budget, incorporating the following elements:
 - Target of 3% annual average reduction in GHG emissions
 - Annual carbon budget put on a statutory basis
 - Government Departments to take responsibility for changes in emissions associated with their policies so that they are consistent with the overall 3% annual reduction target.
 - Estimates of carbon impact of expenditure programmes announced in the annual budget to be included in the carbon budget.
 - Adaptation and mitigation obligations on emanations of the State.
 - Monitoring and reporting obligations on the private sector.
- We will add a ‘Climate Change Impact’ assessment to considerations which must be taken account of for all Cabinet decision-making.

Adaptation

- Develop a National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy to inform actions at every level of society to adapt to the challenges which will be presented by Climate Change.

Planning

- We will ensure a strong and uniform planning enforcement regime across all Local Authorities to ensure effective oversight and enforcement levels.
- We will put in place a new licensing and planning scheme for quarries.
- We will ensure that Ireland can ratify the Aarhus Convention by March 2010. This will require the immediate enactment of the Foreshore Licensing and Dumping at Sea Bill 2009.

Natural Heritage

- We will fully implement the Habitats and Birds Directives.
- We will introduce a registration system for off-road motor vehicles.

Built Heritage

- We will implement the agreed recommendations of the review of archaeological policies and practices in the National Monuments Bill.
- In consultation with local communities, we will actively promote new sites for acceptance onto the UNESCO World Heritage List, including Clonmacnoise, Tara, the Burren and Georgian Dublin.
- We will make provision in upcoming planning legislation to prevent Local Authorities from removing buildings of national or regional importance from the Record of Protected Structures, without the explicit approval of the Minister for the Environment.

Water

- We will Continue the record levels of investment in water infrastructure, creating and supporting thousands of jobs in the provision of quality water and the prevention of pollution in rivers and groundwater.
- We will Introduce a scheme for the licensing and inspection of septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems.
- We will reduce water leakage from municipal systems in line with international best practice.

Waste

- We will adopt and implement a new waste policy following the completion of the current review.
- We will develop and implement a Food Waste Strategy, with the goal of reducing the waste of fresh food through public education and other programmes
- We will use a resource management approach to waste and embed resource recovery and sustainable production and consumption systems in waste policy, leading to increased employment and new opportunities for business.
- We will place a cap on incineration capacity to prevent waste being drawn to incineration which could otherwise have gone to recycling, having regard to the recommendations of the International Review of Waste Policy.
- We will use producer responsibility to reduce levels of packaging waste generated and increase the target for recycling of such waste to 75% by 2013, in line with the recommendations of the international review of waste policy.

Animal Welfare

- We will enact the Animal Health and Welfare Bill, which will consolidate and update existing legislation in relation to the health and welfare of our nation's animals. Among the provisions of the legislation will be a commitment to:
 - Adopt the principles and 5 freedoms set out in the recent Scottish Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, particularly in relation to cruelty and neglect, to ensure that the welfare of animals is

properly protected and that the penalties for offenders are increased significantly,

- Replace the culling of badgers with more effective and humane methods of control
- Phase-out fur farming over three years
- End stag hunting

6. Building for the Future: Infrastructure

The Government will prioritise capital spending in those areas which contribute to our sustainable development. The provision of public transport will prepare us for a post-world where oil supplies are contracting. We will build flagship modern transport connections linking people to their places of work. Properly planned public transport gives back to commuters that most valuable of commodities - time. We want to reduce journey times and congestion, which bring economic and social costs. We will develop a first-class infrastructure for the modern age.

Plan for National Recovery: Review of Investment

We will publish a revised public investment programme by December 2009, ensuring that sustainability and climate change are at the heart of our plan for national recovery. The programme will set out our revised priorities for investment.

Transport

Having successfully focused on the delivery of major roads infrastructure in Transport 21 over the past five years, the emphasis in new projects will shift significantly to public transport. Following the completion of payments for the major motorways programme in 2011, the ratio of expenditure on new Transport 21 projects between public transport and the national roads programme will be 2:1 in favour of public transport.

This Government will continue its programme of major reforms in the public transport area, which started with the DTA Act. This is now being advanced further with the Public Transport Regulation Bill and which will be finalised with the further proposals agreed by the parties to this Review as outlined below.

We will vigorously pursue the delivery of the Government's "Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future" and the recently published "Cycle Framework Policy" document.

We will ensure that Public Service Obligation payments to Irish Rail, Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann, are consistent with the policy in "Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future".

- We will ensure that consumer needs and the integrity of the public transport network are at the centre of consideration of applications for all bus route licences in future.
- We will deliver a transparent, faster, more integrated, efficient system for granting bus licences.
- We will work with bus companies to maximise the efficient and effective utilisation of the existing fleet by ensuring the implementation of the Deloitte Report in full, nationwide, to:
 - Eliminate duplication of services

- Create even headways between departures
- Reduce the “bunching” of services
- Provide reliable direct services where people are working, living and shopping
- Improve passenger information on a real time basis and timetable information in a more understandable format.

By end 2010 we will have Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) at over 500 bus stops in Dublin and Cork in addition to having such information available on SMS and the Internet throughout the country. We will extend this RTPI to bus stops in Limerick, Galway and Waterford in 2011.

As promised in our “Smarter Travel” policy, following the completion of the rapid transport studies in Cork, Galway, Waterford & Limerick cities, we will, starting in 2010 provide a high quality integrated, accessible public transport service to within 800 metres of every home.

Rail

This Government is committed to the provision of a safe and efficient network of rail Services. Construction is nearing completion or well underway on Phase 1 of the Western Rail Corridor, the Kildare Line upgrade, Navan (Phase 1) and the Dublin city centre re-signalling project. Work will continue on the subsequent phases of the Western Rail Corridor and Navan projects for earliest possible delivery.

LUAS

Construction is nearing completion or well underway on the Cherrywood, Citywest and Docklands extensions. Planning and design will continue on Metro West and the Bray, Lucan and Cross-city LUAS lines with a view to earliest possible delivery.

Bus Rapid Transit

Following significant growth and innovation in continental cities, we expect that bus rapid transport will play an increasing role in transport provision. We will fast track and prioritise the Dart interconnector (and its associated electrification and rolling stock projects) and Metro North so that they are completed by 2016.

We will introduce an allowance per tonne for rail freight by rail in line with climate change objectives.

Roads

- We will complete the Major Urban Routes (MIU) in 2010.
- We will review the completion dates and appropriate road standard of the remaining 94 road projects at the design stage or earlier stage of development in light of the economic circumstances, falling road usage and our climate change objectives. We will ensure new design standards for national secondary routes to take account of current economic and environmental circumstances.
- This Government will not advance the Eastern Bypass

- We will continue to invest in enhancement and maintenance of the regional and local road network to protect the existing investment and service new housing, industrial and commercial development and to open up areas for tourism development by improving road access.
- We will introduce preferential parking/charging spaces for electric cars.
- We will investigate the potential for the introduction of a viable road pricing strategy, including overcoming technical and timing difficulties. Revenues should be ring-fenced for the provision of public transport and sustainable transport modes.
- We will complete our investment programme to ensure that non-national roads are properly signposted.
- We will allocate a significant portion of the budget on road improvement projects to the provision of new footpaths to allow pedestrians to walk in greater safety and comfort.

Road Safety

During the term of this Government Ireland has become one of the leading road safety countries in Europe. We will build on the strategies already in place by supporting the work of the Road Safety Authority.

We will implement in full the Government's Road Safety Strategy thus saving over 400 lives during the term of this Government.

Public Transport Reform

We will ensure that the National Transport Authority can fulfil its role as a strategic planning, procurement and regulatory Public Transport Body which will establish the service levels required and procure those services in an open and competitive manner from service providers, both public and private. The role of the directly-elected mayor of Dublin at the National Transport Authority will be central to building strategic support for transport in Dublin.

Integrated Ticketing

This Government will implement an Integrated Ticketing System to cover all modes of transport. We will develop proposals for a zonal fares structure.

A single Smart Card will be rolled out for testing early in 2010. By the end of 2010 an electronic purse "Pay-As-You-Go" will be available to all Dublin Bus and LUAS passengers in the Greater Dublin Area and the Smart Card will extend to all ticketing products by 2011. Iarnród Éireann will join the Dublin Bus-LUAS system by 2011. By the end of 2011 Bus Éireann, LUAS, Bus Átha Cliath, Iarnród Éireann and some private bus operators will be in the system.

Rural Transport

- The Rural Transport Programme has been extended to every county in Ireland. We will explore the provision of a full-scale transport system in rural areas using the network expertise of Bus Éireann, the physical infrastructure and personal

resources of the school transport system and the financial resources currently being spent on transport by the HSE and the Department of Education and Science.

Aviation

- We will ensure maximum aviation connectivity and maximum competition amongst airline operators in the interests of consumers.

Cycling

- We will reverse the CIE policy of excluding and limiting bicycle carrying capacity on interurban trains and buses and ensure all new train units have a more extensive bicycle carrying capacity.
- We will develop a Bray to Balbriggan cycle and pedestrian route, and other similar routes such as Oranmore to Barna, as major tourism and commuter facilities.

Housing

- We will review housing policy to take account of new circumstances in the housing market and public finances, moving to create greater integration of systems for social housing and social welfare.
- We will seek to establish a new “community housing” tenure to cater for a wider range of housing need as well as existing local authority tenants.
- We will develop a long-term strategy of land acquisition in order to meet at a reasonable price the needs of both market and non-market providers and to ensure that the necessary social infrastructure and amenities are made available without delay, given that land is a fundamental requirement in relation to housing provision and co-ordinated planning.
- We will raise awareness of Building Energy Ratings (BER), by making it mandatory to display BERs wherever a property is advertised for sale or to let, including signage and printed/online advertising.
- We will amend the Data Protection Act to allow the publication of the sale price of property and create and maintain a House Price Database in the Department of the Environment where details of residential and commercial property sales will be maintained for statistical purposes.
- We will continue our work to ensure that rented accommodation is a viable and attractive tenure option for new household formations, through completing the review of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 and addressing the wider range of issues impacting on the private rented sector.
- We will end long-term homelessness by the end of 2010 through the implementation of “The Way Home”, Ireland’s strategy on adult homelessness 2008-2013.

7. A Learning Nation

Education is the basis of culture, civilisation and scientific advancement. It is the single most transformative location for public investment as it shapes the future minds and marketplaces for our country.

This Government will prioritise education to the greatest extent possible. Within budgetary constraints we will do all within our power to protect education, at every level, from the ravages of the recession. Those with special needs will be safeguarded.

We will promote increased cooperation in our university sector, rewarding excellence in teaching and research.

Special Needs

We are committed to the implementation of the EPSEN Act. To achieve this we will develop in consultation with stakeholders, a costed multi-annual plan to implement some priority aspects of EPSEN focussing on measurable, practical progress in education and health services for children with special needs.

The Government will immediately provide funding for 28 additional posts to bring the number of NEPS psychologists to 210. This means that every school in the country will have access to the National Educational Psychological Service. This will ensure that children with special needs will get an assessment which will trigger an automatic response to their special educational needs. The Department of Health & Children will continue to develop therapy services for children with special needs attending mainstream schools.

Primary and Second Level

- This Government commits itself to no further increase in the pupil teacher ratio in primary and second level schools for the lifetime of this Government. We will provide 500 teaching posts between primary and second levels over the next three years. We will immediately start the process of providing 200 posts to those schools most seriously affected by the recent increase in the PTR, using objective criteria which will be agreed in advance in consultation with the education partners, with an appeals process. A further 150 posts will be created in each of the following years.
- Standard capitation grants to schools will be maintained in the current deflationary economic environment. An extra allocation is being made available at primary and second levels to allow schools to provide grant assistance for books, as per the situation that existed in September 2008. A further allocation will be made at second level to fund the transition year, leaving cert applied, LCVP, physics, chemistry, home economics, music activities and the junior certificate schools programme, as per the September 2008 allocation under the former amalgamated grants.

- We will examine how best school governance systems can evolve to better include parents and students in decision-making in schools and develop a new regulatory framework for school enrolment.
- We will implement the report of the Travellers Education Strategy.
- We will roll out “Safe Routes to School” nationwide by 2012.
- We will review the allocation of special needs assistants so as to ensure that the policy of allocating special needs assistants to support children with special needs is working and to provide a basis on which more informed policy decisions can be made.
- We will integrate Home School Community Liaison Scheme, the School Completion Programme and the Visiting Teacher for Traveller Service under the National Educational Welfare Board to provide a more effective service for children who may have difficulties fully participating in school.
- We will develop proposals for the reorganisation in the number of Vocational Education Committees
- We will continue to progress the Capital Building Programme, at current levels, to meet infrastructural needs, including the demand for additional school places and continue to reduce the incidence of long-term rental of prefabricated accommodation.
- We will retain current Summer Works Scheme and devolved grants.
- We will maintain current levels of NEPS funding.
- We will maintain Language Support funding to schools and guarantee that extra language support assistants will also be available in schools where more than 50% of pupils do not speak English as a first language.

Higher Education

- Conscious of the economic pressures on parents today, this Government will not proceed with any new scheme of student contribution for Third Level education.
- We will develop Higher Education Strategy to deliver a longer term vision and shorter term policy objectives for the sector.
- Examine the potential for greater co-operation and/or amalgamations between institutions to enhance system-wide performance reflecting the current economic reality
- Establish a new statutory agency to carry out the current functions of NQAI, HETAC and FETAC as well taking on responsibility for the external quality assurance of universities. Related functions of the NUI are also being examined in this regard.

8. Enhancing Our Democracy and Public Services

This programme seeks to start a process of radical reform in our political system. We need to modernise our democratic structures to ensure they operate to the highest standards and are truly representative. We also want to build a more dynamic public service, equipped for the task ahead. Our reform plans will mobilise our public systems, allow for the voice of the people to be heard and make better public servants of us all.

Electoral reform

- Establish an Independent Electoral Commission incorporating the functions of the Standards in Public Office Commission, with enhanced powers of inspection. We will mandate the Commission to:
 - Decide the constituency boundaries.
 - Administer the voting registration process.
 - Run voter education programmes.
 - Advise on mechanisms to increase the participation of women in political life, including the use of additional criteria for public funding which encourages more women and lesser represented groups.
 - Recommend revised guidelines on the declaration of donations for political purposes.
- Within 12 months, the Electoral Commission will also propose reforms to the electoral system, including:
 - Make recommendations on the feasibility of extending the franchise for Presidential Elections to the Irish abroad.
 - Examine and make recommendations for changes to the electoral system for Dáil elections, including the number of deputies and their means of elections.
 - Outline new electoral systems for Seanad Éireann.
 - Advise on the basis for European elections to reflect new realities of the role and influence of the European Parliament, including consideration of moving towards one national constituency and using a list system.
 - Make recommendations on the possibility of extending the franchise for Local Elections to those aged 16 or over.
 - Set minimum standards for the taking and publication of political polls within the state to ensure fairness and accuracy.
- Consider options for the timing of elections for Local Authorities, the Dáil, Seanad and European Parliament. This should include the possibility of ‘mid-term’ elections and running some elections on a ‘staggered or ‘rolled’ basis so that elections do not fall on the same day for every candidate or chamber.
- Put in place the legal mechanisms to restrict direct political donations to political parties or candidates to individual Irish citizens and residents only and facilitate a system where donations from private bodies, including businesses and corporations, can be made to a political fund which will be distributed to political parties in accordance with their electoral performance in the previous Dáil election.
- Further reform the system of expenses for members of the Oireachtas to ensure the system is transparent, vouched and open to scrutiny, including the regular publication of such expenses. This system will be verified and verifiable.

- Introduce a Register of Lobbyists, including professional, corporate and NGO.
- Introduce on a legislative basis a more open and transparent system for appointments to public bodies. The legislation will outline a procedure for the publication of all vacancies likely to occur, invite applications from the general public and from the responses create a panel of suitable persons for consideration of appointment. The legislation will also specify numbers of persons to be appointed by a Minister and will facilitate the appropriate Oireachtas Committees to make nominations to the panel.
- Review the current fee structure for FOI applications and put as much information as possible on appropriate Government websites to inform the public of the workings of Government and State institutions.

Local Government Reform

We will start on a far reaching reform of local government in Ireland which will strengthen the strategic role and function of regional authorities in planning, transport, water and waste management.

The authorities shall be based on areas which reflect the gateways in the National Spatial Strategy, have democratic leadership and take a critical role in establishing and coordinating the new planning regime.

The implementation of this reform will not be possible within the lifetime of this Government, but the process of change will start with the publication of the White Paper on Local Government Reform which will be followed by an extensive consultation process.

Politicians Pay

- Given the need for the entire political system to show leadership in difficult times, we will take further action regarding basic pay rates for all TD, Senators, Ministers and other office holders beginning with the Report of the Review Body on Higher Pay in the Public Sector, which will be submitted to Government shortly.
- Review all travel and expense guidelines for Ministers and other office holders to reduce costs.

Public Service Reform

The public sector reform agenda is set out in two reports on Public Sector transformation, the OECD review of the Irish Public Service – “Towards an Integrated Public Service, April 2008” and the report on the Task Force on the Public Service “Transforming Public Services – citizen centred – performance focused”, November 2008.

The core message of the OECD report was that by working in new ways, The Irish Public Service has the potential to deliver significantly improved services and outcomes. The Task force concludes that better services for the citizen, now more than ever, require prioritization, efficiency and effectiveness measures, the use of technology and an effective mobilisation and application of resources across a more integrated public service.

Specific recommended actions of the task force are:

- Achieving improved performance by organisations and individuals.
- Creating flexibility in deployment of people, assets and other resources.
- Identifying the precise transformation agenda in each sector.
- Achieving greater efficiency, effectiveness and economy.
- Promoting a shared identity, ethos and vision by focusing on the joint achievement of societal goals.
- Developing performance metrics which are meaningful to the citizen.
- Increasing organizational and individual accountability for achieving performance targets.
- Promoting longer term planning.
- Innovation, shared governance, networks and collaborative working.
- Sharing infrastructure and new technologies

The Government will implement the following specific actions in order to implement the findings and recommendation of the OECD report and the Task Force on the Public Service.

Performance Measurement & Reward

- Create a performance culture based on achieving outcomes rather than compliance with processes, including a requirement to measure performance year by year and against international standards.
- Ensure better use of public funds for capital projects by developing an improved capacity within the civil service for performing ex ante Cost Benefit Analyses including environmental impact and valuation
- We will ensure that Value For Money reviews are performed by the C&AG on all large capital projects in a timely fashion
- Require that the results of Value for Money Reviews be explicitly factored into budgetary and resource allocation decisions with an obligation for exceptional cases where this is not done.
- Thoroughly review the current systems for expenses, to achieve significant savings, including a comprehensive vouched basis for all expenses, enforcing the necessity for use of public transport and car pooling.

Performance Related Pay in Public Service

- We will implement an independent review of the current Performance Management & Development System (PMDS) in the public system with a view to allowing for a new system of performance related pay in the public sector.

Integrated Public Sector

- Remove existing demarcations which prevent certain staff applying for internal positions.
- Create an integrated public service workforce where the barriers to mobility between sections of the public service are removed such that all members of the public service are eligible to apply for promotions in all areas of the service. Establish a Senior Public Service open to all sections of the public sector including local authorities, HSE etc
- Make greater use of expert advisory/peer review panels such as the expert advisory panel on climate change (which reports to the Cabinet Committee on

Climate Change and Energy Security) to enhance the technical and specialist knowledge available to Government.

- We will appoint a Chief Information Officer (CIO) (see Enterprise & jobs section)

Hiring & Promotion Criteria

- Ensure current hiring and promotion criteria are reviewed by an independent body so they are not defined by established public service criteria and competences, but extended to include professional and technical qualifications where relevant to particular roles.
- Ensure that all promotions within the Public Service are on the basis of merit, eliminating seniority as a determining factor in any public sector appointment.

Reform of Top Level Appointments Commission

- We will reform the way that the most senior positions in the Civil Service are filled by reconstituting the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) so that in future, it will be chaired by a suitable, independent representative from outside the Civil Service on each occasion that it meets to nominate a candidate for appointment by a Minister or Government.
- TLAC should be constituted equally by civil service members and non-civil service members

Senior Positions

- Open all senior Public Service appointments to public servants from Principal Officer or equivalent grade upwards and applicants from the private and other sectors.

“Cooling Off Period”

- Extend the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Civil Servants in relation to the acceptance of outside appointments and of consultancy engagement following resignation or retirement to ALL Public Servants in designated posts so as to ensure that they shall not, within twelve months of resigning or retiring from the service:
 - (a) accept an offer of appointment from an employer outside the Civil Service where it is deemed to create a conflict of interest;
 - (b) accept an engagement in a particular consultancy project, where the nature and terms of such appointment or engagement could lead to a conflict of interest, without first obtaining approval from the Outside Appointments Board.

Government Agencies

- Ensure a firm basis for the creation and operation of State Agencies. We will develop clear guidelines setting out the criteria which should be used when the possibility of creating a new agency and when the possibility of rationalising agencies are being considered. As part of the current move to rationalise agencies, we will ensure that such moves do not unduly affect services for the most marginalised and vulnerable in society.
- Implement the provisions of the new Code of Practice for state bodies, especially regarding the role of audit committees.

9. A Vibrant Ireland

This Government is committed to strengthening those aspects of our culture which define us as a nation and of which we are rightly proud. The Arts are an integral part of our modern society and we are dedicated to the broadening and deepening of participation in that sector. We will support our national language as a unique part of our identity and heritage. We will continue to invest in sporting facilities and encourage participation among young and old.

Arts

- We will undertake a detailed assessment of the GPO complex with a view to locating the Abbey Theatre there in time for the centenary of 1916 Rising.
- We will aim to host one major international arts, culture or creative industry event in Ireland each year up to 2016, beginning, in 2011, with the Dublin Contemporary 2011.
- We will help the economy realise the full potential of the arts in creating employment and economic growth by expanding community arts schemes, provide free physical space for visual artists and community groups to display their work.
- We will ensure that the supports provided by the Film Board are maintained in order to realise the potential of Irish film-making.
- We will produce a 10-year development strategy for the film, TV and content production sector.

Gaeilge & an Ghaeltacht

- We will publish the Strategic Plan for the Irish Language and the Gaeltacht by the end of 2009, setting out the measures to be implemented to support the Gaeltacht as a viable Irish-speaking community and the growth in the use of Irish and in bilingualism.
- We will ensure that the place of Irish and the Gaeltacht is enhanced through creating greater linkages with other agencies.
- Support the introduction of a Languages Act in Northern Ireland as provided for in the St. Andrew's agreement.
- Protect the current position of our national language in all parts of the school curriculum, particularly in terms of the spoken language.
- Develop a comprehensive plan based on the linguistic study of the Gaeltacht with clear and effective measures for the continued preservation and development of the language in the Gaeltacht.

Sports

- Complete a new Strategy for the provision of sports facilities and its submission to Government for approval.

- Work with the arts, sports, cultural and tourism sectors in the development of initiatives and opportunities for Ireland to capitalise on the proximity of the London 2012 Olympic Games.
- Build the Sports Council's programmes aimed at increasing participation and removing barriers from sport (for example, Women in Sport, Sport for Older People, Youth Sport).
- Continue to build the high performance system (and the Institute of Sport) which has shown it can deliver a return on investment by supporting medal winning performances at international level.

10. Ireland's International Role

Ireland has a proud record of peacekeeping, human rights and development aid.

Through the United Nations and the European Union we have been a strong voice for global justice and greater cooperation among nations.

Our values are replicated with distinction on the world stage and we will continue to be a voice for the poor, the victims of war and abuse and political freedom around the world.

Ireland's Role in Europe

- We will ensure that Ireland's place at the heart of Europe is further enhanced through:
 - Extensive engagement with the EU institutions across all areas of Government and the Oireachtas.
 - Building Alliances with our partners in Europe on matters of mutual interest
 - Ensuring that the Oireachtas more closely engages with European Institutions and Affairs.
 - Encouraging the deepening of engagement by civil society at a European level
- Work with other EU member states to adapt the EU's competition, state aid and public procurement policies to include social and ecological factors.
- Push for the early adoption at EU level of legislation to establish the Citizens' Initiative provided for under the Lisbon Treaty, and take any domestic implementation steps that may be necessary on foot of this.

International Human Rights

- Further develop systems to ensure that the highest international standards are applied to Ireland's approach to human rights issues, working through the Cabinet Sub-Committee on International Human Rights.

Overseas Aid & Development

- We will set out clear targets showing how Ireland will meet its ODA commitments.
- Promote the deployment of Irish peace and reconciliation experts in areas of conflict internationally.

Trade Promotion

- We aim to leverage the support from New York City and State in building a new Irish Arts and Business Centre in New York.

Renditions

We will review and change if necessary the legislation affecting civilian aircraft in the context of the existing and ongoing work of the Cabinet Sub Committee on Human Rights and will, as is appropriate, strengthen the powers of inspection of such aircraft and the collection of flight information

Defence

- The Government will prepare the White Paper on Defence, which will provide the policy framework for defence for the period 2011 – 2020, taking account of the defence and security environment. It will set out the contribution of the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps to defence provision. It will also chart and secure the future of the Reserve Defence Force, drawing on the experiences to date with the Reserve Defence Forces Implementation Plan and the pending Value For Money review.
- The Naval Service Vessel replacement programme will be advanced within the resources made available by Government.
- Develop the role and contribution of the Medical Corps and expand its capacity to deliver a range of medical facilities on UN mandated missions.

Antarctic Treaty

- Join with other nations in giving support to the worldwide effort to protect the Antarctic through ratifying the Antarctic Treaty.

Peace and Unity

The Government will continue to build on the achievements of the peace process and to take the further steps forward for peace and unity in our country.

We will continue to protect and develop all of the institutions and associated reforms that flowed from the Good Friday Agreement, and the St Andrews Agreement, and which have been of such benefit to all of the people of this island, from all traditions. The next step is the completion of the devolution of policing and justice.

We will work with the Northern Ireland Executive to identify and implement innovative approaches to providing fully integrated and seamless co-operation across all areas of public administration, services and investment.

Building on all of our achievements to date, in the remaining term of this Government, we will:

- Establish an independent all-island Consultative Forum and a North/South Parliamentary Forum.
- Complete the review of North/South bodies and areas of co-operation established under the St Andrews Agreement.
- Agree and implement feasibility studies on cross-border cooperation in health and education.
- Establish a new cross-border higher education alliance in the North West.

- Conduct a feasibility study on how a future high-speed rail system could link Dublin and Belfast to the emerging UK and European high speed rail network.
- Complete the new inter-urban route between Dublin and Belfast and commence construction on the new inter-urban route between Dublin and Derry/Donegal.
- Complete the Project Kelvin broadband project.
- Continue to develop the all-island and regional energy market, with a particular emphasis on renewable energy.
- Continue to roll out the North West Gateway Initiative.
- Progress the restoration of the Ulster Canal.
- Implement an all-island spatial planning framework, including formal designation of the twin cities of Newry-Dundalk as a joint gateway alongside the existing joint gateway of Derry-Letterkenny.

All of these initiatives will be progressed by agreement with the British Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and other administrations as appropriate

Diaspora

- We will strengthen our relationship with the global Irish diaspora to ensure those with a strong interest in Ireland can work together and contribute to our overall efforts at economic recovery.
- We will continue to press strongly for comprehensive immigration reform which would address the status of the undocumented Irish in the United States.