



**FINE  
GAEL**

# *Securing your future*

**General Election 2024**  
MANIFESTO





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# Securing **Your** Future

## **Manifesto Introduction by An Taoiseach Simon Harris**

It is the honour of my life to be Taoiseach of this great country.

Over the past seven months, I have travelled the length and breadth of this country and met thousands of you. We have discussed hundreds of issues and I have listened.

Your concerns have become my priorities.

Now I need a mandate from you to deliver for you and your family.

Over the past few weeks, I have worked with my team to ensure your issues are at the heart of this manifesto.

Fine Gael has prepared this plan based on four pillars to secure your future by:

- **Giving our children the best start in life;**
- **Delivering homes and building better communities;**
- **Having a fair but firmer migration and criminal justice system;**
- **Protecting the economy and investing in your future.**

Ireland is a great country. It has the potential to be even better.

We have a strong economy thanks to the hard work of the Irish people.

We have weathered multiple crises, from an economic crash and Brexit to the Covid-19 pandemic, a European conflict, rising migration, and a cost-of-living crisis. Ireland has endured because the resilience of our people was matched with a resilient economy safeguarded by Fine Gael in Government.

Now, I want to see this economic success translate to real and tangible benefits for everyone in Ireland. It's time to raise our ambitions, cut through bureaucracy, and bring a fresh energy to delivery that directly benefits our communities.

This Fine Gael manifesto is an honest commitment to ensure this country reaches its full potential by offering our people secure prosperity. No more boom and bust. No risking our economy for ideology. No more buck passing.

It is time to deliver for you and for your family.

**Fine Gael has the plan to secure your future.**





# Ag Cinntiú do Thodhchaí

## Réamhrá an Fhorógra ón Taoiseach Simon Harris

Is mór an onóir dom a bheith i mo Thaoiseach ar an tír bhreá seo.

Le seacht mí anuas, thaistil mé fud fad na tíre seo agus casadh na mílte daoibh orm. Phléamar na céadta saincheist agus d'éist mé libh.

Tá bhur gcuid ábhar inní mar thosaíochtaí agam anois.

Anois, tá sainordú ag teastáil uaim uaitse chun an beart a dhéanamh duit féin agus do do chlann.

Le cúpla seachtain anuas, d'oibrigh mé le m'fhoireann chun a chinntiú go gcuirfear do chuid ábhar inní ag croilár an tsainordaithe seo.

Tá an plean seo ullmhaithe ag Fine Gael bunaithe ar cheithre philéar chun do thodhchaí a chinntiú tríd an méid seo a leanas a dhéanamh:

- **Cuidiú lenár bpáistí dul i gceann an tsaoil;**
- **Tithe a sholáthar agus pobail níos fearr a chothú;**
- **Córas cóir ach níos déine ó thaobh imirce agus dlí coiriúil a bheith ann;**
- **An geilleagar a chosaint agus infheistíocht a dhéanamh i do thodhchaí.**

Is tír bhreá í Éire. D'fhéadfadh sí a bheith níos fearr fós.

Tá geilleagar láidir againn a bhuí le hobair chrua mhuintir na hÉireann.

Thángamar slán as go leor géarchéimeanna, ó thobchliseadh an gheilleagair agus an Breatimeacht go dtí paindéim COVID-19, coinbhleacht san Eoraip, ardú ar an imirce, agus géarchéim an chostais mhaireachtála. Sheas Éire an fód mar gheall go raibh athléimneacht ár bpobail ar aon dul le geilleagar seasmhach a chosain Fine Gael agus sinn sa Rialtas.

Anois, is mian liom an rath geilleagrach seo a aistriú go fíorthairbhí inláimhsithe do gach uile duine in Éirinn. Tá sé in am ár n-uailmhianta a ardú, an maorlathas a shárú agus fuinneamh nua a thabhairt don seachadadh a rachaidh chun tairbhe dár bpobail.

Is ionann an sainordú seo ó Fhine Gael agus gealltanas macánta chun a chinntiú go mbaineann an tír seo barr a cumais amach trí rath seasmhach a chur ar fáil dár bpobal. Cuirtear deireadh le borradh agus cliseadh. Ná cuirtear ár ngeilleagar i mbaol ar mhaithe le hidé-eolaíocht. Ná leagtar an fhreagracht ar dhream eile a thuilleadh.

Tá sé in am dúinn an beart a dhéanamh duit féin agus do do chlann.

**Tá an plean ag Fine Gael chun do thodhchaí a chinntiú.**









# Giving our children the best start in life

The early years of a child's life have a profound impact on who they become. The first five years are critical, shaping future health, education, and well-being. A happy, nurturing environment during these formative years can set a child up for lifelong success.

Fine Gael believes that every child deserves the best start in life, and supporting families in providing that start is central to our vision for Ireland's future. This is why childcare is a core focus for us. Affordable, accessible, and high-quality childcare is not just about giving children the best opportunities but also empowering parents, grandparents and carers to better balance the demands of modern life.

## Better Early Childhood Education and Care

Every child deserves the best start, and every parent should have real choices to help balance work and childcare. While we've made childcare more affordable, too many families still struggle to find accessible, affordable early learning nearby. Fine Gael has a plan to close this gap, working in partnership with existing providers,

### We will:

- **Cap Childcare Costs:** We'll limit childcare costs to €200 per month per child, or €600 for a family with more than 3 children.
- **Expand Early Learning Places:** We'll create 30,000 new early learning places in public early learning and school aged care services by 2030, offering full-day and school-age care in areas of unmet need to close existing gaps and prepare for future demand. We will include an opt-in for private and community providers where appropriate.
- **Extend Free Preschool Hours:** The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme will provide an extra hour of free care each day in the second year of preschool.
- **Increase Flexibility for ECCE Access:** We'll offer flexible options for parents of children who don't qualify for the full two-year ECCE due to their date of birth.
- **Make ECCE a Legal Entitlement:** All eligible children will have a right to access the ECCE programme.
- **Maximise School Facilities:** We will enable schools to host before and after-school care and plan the development of State-led facilities in tandem with the school building programme.
- **Include Childminders in the National Childcare Scheme:** We'll extend the scheme's benefits to all childminders.
- **Set Fair Wages for Childcare Educators:** We'll review and establish fair, progressive wages for childcare workers in public services and support pay increases across the sector to attract and retain talent.
- **Improve Training Pathways:** We'll remove barriers in education and training for early years educators to

broaden access to the profession.

- **Enhance Core Funding for Providers:** We'll review Core Funding to ensure it meets providers' needs and reduce their administrative workload.
- **Boost Access for Children with Disabilities and Disadvantaged Families:** We'll increase participation in the Access and Inclusion Model and the Equal Start programme.
- **Review Local Authority Provision:** Review the 2001 Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities to ensure childcare spaces are provided and put into use.
- **Consult and Plan for Immediate Action:** We'll start a broad consultation with families, educators, and providers, and within 100 days, release a detailed Action Plan to build an affordable, high-quality, accessible early childhood education and care system with State-led facilities to add capacity.

This plan is designed to work for everyone—families, early years educators, and providers—ensuring accessible, affordable, and high-quality childcare across Ireland.

## Supporting Childminders as Part of Affordable Childcare

Fine Gael is committed to making childminding an affordable and viable choice for parents, even within a public early learning and school aged care system.

- **Expand the Childcare Scheme:** We will extend the National Childcare Scheme to cover childminders working in families' homes, with sensible regulations that fit home-based care.
- **Maintain Childminding Development Grants:** We'll continue funding grants that help childminders improve safety and quality through essential toys, equipment, and technology.
- **Support Registration and Training:** We'll guide childminders through the registration process and expand access to local training opportunities.

Our approach will keep childminding affordable, accessible, and well-supported for families and childminders alike.

## Acorn, a new Child Savings Account: Investing in Every Child's Future



Fine Gael will launch an Acorn savings account for every child from birth, inspired by successful models in the UK. This fund will help families build a financial foundation for each child's future, promoting a lifelong habit of saving and building a nest egg to meet future needs. Lower income families will benefit more from its inception

#### **Fine Gael's Acorn Savings Account will:**

- **Establish a Savings Account for Every Newborn:** The government will establish a managed savings account for each child born each year, starting with an initial contribution of €1,000, accruing via a managed fund at a conservative interest rate of 4% per annum, compounded yearly. Each child gets a gift only once, so the costs to the exchequer are contained. Each child from a family receiving child support payments gets €1500.
- **Contain Costs Responsibly:** The government will contribute €1,000 per child only once, keeping the programme affordable for the Exchequer.
- **Enable Additional Family Savings:** Parents can add up to €2,000 per year to their child's account. With this regular contribution and the government's initial €1,000, the account could reach €53,316 by the time the child turns 18.

This fund will help tackle inequality, support future generations, and promote a culture of saving, while empowering families to invest in a better, more secure future for their children.

## **Reducing Childhood Poverty: A Path to Brighter Futures**

Child poverty is not inevitable. We need a determined focus to lift children out of poverty and give them the futures they deserve. Fine Gael established the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office in the Department of An Taoiseach and we will reatan it to break down silos between departments and drive delivery.

#### **Fine Gael will:**

- **Reduce Child Poverty Rates:** We will set an ambitious child poverty target to ensure a focus on inequality and supporting families.
- **Expand Hot School Meals:** We will offer hot meals in all schools, so no child goes hungry.
- **Provide Holiday Meal Support:** We will ensure children have access to meals during school holidays.

- **Examine a Second-Tier Child Benefit:** We will explore a targeted child benefit payment, and the extent to which the Working Family Payment and Child Support Payment already help to reduce poverty.
- **Extend Free Healthcare for u18s:** We will provide free GP care for all children and young people under 18.
- **Offer Free Travel to Children on Domiciliary Care Allowance:** We will extend the Free Travel Pass to children with disabilities.
- **Promote Uniform Swap Shops in Schools:** We will encourage all primary schools to establish uniform swap shops to cut costs and support sustainability.
- **Expand the School Transport Scheme:** We will broaden access to school transport for more families.
- **Double Child Benefit in August Permanently:** We will provide an additional Child Benefit payment each August to ease back-to-school expenses.
- **Raise Income Support for One-Parent Families:** We will increase income disregards for the One Parent Family Payment in line with National Minimum Wage increases.
- **Jobseeker's Support for Parents:** Seek to extend the Jobseekers Transitional Payment until the youngest child completes full-time education

Fine Gael will ensure that children across Ireland have the resources and support they need to thrive and succeed.

## **Baby Bundles for Every Newborn**

Fine Gael will give every newborn and their parents a Baby Bundle, providing essential items to support them from day one. Each bundle will include blankets, nappies, a digital ear thermometer, clothes, and other necessities, along with a letter introducing the family to their new Acorn savings account, ensuring every child gets an equal start in life. Fine Gael is committed to making this support available to every new family.

## **Building a Stronger Child Health Workforce**

Fine Gael is committed to making it easier for children with additional needs to access essential services by strengthening the child health workforce.

#### **Fine Gael will:**

- **Boost Retention and Recruitment:** Within 100 days undertake a consultation with all relevant

representative bodies to identify practical recruitment and retention initiatives, including sign up and retention payments for staff in child and adolescent mental health and children's disability services to address acute needs and positively impact children's futures. All public sector wage measures will be taken with regard to the current public service wage agreement.

- **Double Therapy Programme Places:** We'll double college places in Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, and Speech and Language Therapy, and engage with third level institutions to make assessed placements in special education and disability courses a key component in therapy and teacher training.
- **Support Therapy Assistants:** We'll help therapy assistants qualify as therapists and encourage retired therapists to return, while increasing the number of Therapy Assistant positions through FETAC programmes to better support therapists.
- **Create New Clinical Support Apprenticeships:** We'll develop apprenticeship programmes to fill critical clinical support roles.
- **Access to Private Assessments:** We will provide funding for private assessments of need for long waiting families and introduce a similar initiative to access therapies and mental health supports, while legislating for the National Treatment Purchase Fund to increase access in the longer term.
- **Expand Public Health Nursing:** We will increase Public Health Nurse numbers through a sponsorship scheme for nurses training in public health.
- **Update the Disability Act:** In collaboration with stakeholders and parents, we'll review the 2005 Disability Act to improve service delivery, support the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and ensure we can deliver assessments of need in a timely way.

These actions will ensure that every child, regardless of their needs, can access the right care and support when they need it most.

## Supporting Families: Accessible Resources, Tax Credits, Family-Friendly Policies, and Alternative Care

Fine Gael is committed to strengthening support

for families with accessible resources, financial relief, family-friendly policies, and a comprehensive approach to alternative care.

- **Expand Family Resource Centres:** We will increase the number of Family Resource Centres, while exploring ways to better support non-profit and social enterprise organisations.
- **Increase Home Carers Tax Credit:** Fine Gael will raise the Home Carers Tax Credit to match the PAYE Tax Credit, recognising the essential role of parents who stay at home to care for their families.
- **Extend Paid Leave and Pay-Related Parents Benefit:** Extend paid family leave and introduce Pay-Related Parents Benefit modelled on the new Pay-Related Benefit, and seek to extend this to other forms of leave over time.
- **Assisted Human Reproduction:** We will drive the early establishment of the Assisted Human Reproduction Regulatory Authority, commit to commencing the Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Act 2024 within the first 100 days, and enact without delay supplementary legislation. We will introduce leave for parents through surrogacy.
- **Strengthen Breastfeeding Support:** We will enhance support for breastfeeding with a government-wide strategy, funding for community initiatives, more lactation consultants in hospitals and communities, and increased support for voluntary breastfeeding groups.
- **Enhance Support for Foster Carers:** Recognising the essential role of foster carers in our care system, we will implement a comprehensive action plan that takes a cross-government approach to foster care.

### This plan will include:

- Increased Foster Care Allowance and increases in the new Initial Placement Payment.
- Exploration of pension provisions for foster carers to acknowledge their long-term commitment and ensure valued support after their fostering years.
- **Recognise Kinship care:** We will improve support for kinship care to enhance outcomes for kinship families.

These initiatives ensure that families, caregivers, and foster carers receive the recognition, support, and resources they need to thrive, strengthening our communities and enhancing the quality of life for all.



## Strengthening Tusla to Protect and Support Children

Fine Gael is dedicated to ensuring Tusla can provide strong, consistent protection and support to vulnerable children across Ireland.

To address increasingly complex cases—like missing children and high-risk situations—

### Fine Gael will:

- **Build a Resilient Agency:** Our goal is to create a well-resourced, robust Tusla capable of safeguarding every child in need.
- **Strengthen Tusla's Powers:** We will strengthen measures aimed at preventing violence against children and ensure prompt access to comprehensive support for children who are victims or witnesses of violence, supported by the expansion of the Barnahus model.
- **Boost Resources and Staffing:** We will ensure Tusla has the funding to recruit and retain vital frontline staff and foster carers. We will also work with third level institutions to increase the supply of social work graduates.
- **Strengthen Interagency Co-operation:** To ensure effective and mandatory co-operation between state agencies we will put the inter-agency committee on vulnerable children on a statutory footing.
- **National Plan on Alternative Care:** We will develop a national plan on alternative care which will include a short-term action plan addressing current issues in accessing appropriate care places. It will also set out a longer-term vision for how the care system will operate into the future examining initiatives to prevent admissions into care, new placement options, recruitment and retention. It will be strongly linked to our action plan for foster carers.
- **Expand Training and Support:** We will increase training opportunities and support programmes for Tusla staff and carers to enhance service quality.
- **National Review Panel:** We will place the National Review Panel on a statutory footing.
- **Ensure a Child-Friendly System:** We will ensure children have access to legal support, and confidential and child-friendly complaints mechanisms, in education and care settings for reporting of violence and abuse.
- **Provide Specialised Legal Support:** We will provide training on children's rights and child-friendly

proceedings for the judiciary, lawyers and law enforcement officials, and consider the introduction of a specialised child justice court model.

- **Enhance Education and Awareness:** We will strengthen public education programmes to increase awareness of child sexual abuse and exploitation, including the need for online safety.

## Realigning the Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth

Fine Gael established the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2011. We will transfer the Migration and Integration functions back to the Department of Justice so that children will be the focus of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth. This will also ensure a more joined-up approach to migration policy.

Fine Gael will also retain the Cabinet Committee on Children, Disability and Education, chaired by Simon Harris.

## Promoting Online Safety for All

Online safety has long been a priority for Fine Gael. Recently, the Taoiseach convened two online safety summits with government departments, agencies, and key stakeholders to focus on:

- Protecting children online
- Combating online threats and crime
- Addressing misinformation and disinformation

These summits underscore Fine Gael's commitment to building a safer digital environment, especially for children and families, and to taking decisive action against online threats.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Enforce the Online Safety Code:** We will support Coimisiún na Meán in enforcing the Online Safety Code, which can fine platforms up to €20 million or 10% of annual revenue.
- **Raise Awareness of Children's Online Rights:** We will work with Coimisiún na Meán to inform children, young people, and their parents about their rights online under the new safety framework.

- **Implement Online Health Recommendations:** We will act on the Online Health Taskforce's recommendations to improve digital well-being.
- **Strengthen Regulatory Support:** We will ensure regulators have the resources to protect citizens and offer certainty for industry.
- **Collaborate with the EU:** We will work closely with the European Commission to create a unified and effective digital regulatory framework.
- **Work on Tougher Rules for Platforms:** We will work on a new EU Child Sexual Abuse Directive which will put an onus on platforms to detect and remove child sexual abuse material and prevent grooming/
- **Increase Public Awareness:** We will launch a campaign, especially for parents, on the risks of excessive screen time and online dangers.
- **Boost School Funding for Online Safety:** We will increase online safety funding for schools, giving them more flexibility in how to use it.

- **Protect Children from Bullying:** We will ensure the effective implementation of the new action plan on bullying and implement measures to tackle cyber bullying.
- **EU Child Sexual Abuse Directive:** We will work to agree a new EU Child Sexual Abuse Directive putting the onus on platforms to detect and remove child sexual abuse material and prevent grooming.
- **Tackle Recommender Algorithms:** We will tackle the use of recommender algorithms protecting children from harmful content.

Fine Gael is committed to building a safe and secure online environment that protects all citizens, especially children.



**Helen McEntee**

Candidate for  
Meath East

**Neale Richmond**

Candidate for  
Dublin Rathdown



## Education and Special Education

Fine Gael is committed to giving our children the best start in life, with a world-class education system that helps every student reach their potential in a fast-changing world.

We believe education should be affordable for families, that every child should receive the support they need to succeed, and that teachers should have the resources to help children thrive.

### Reforming Education: Raising Standards

Fine Gael is committed to enhancing parental choice in education, ensuring that families can access both denominational and faith-based schools.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Modernise the Leaving Cert:** We will continue reform of the Leaving Cert and consider:
  - Introducing open-book exams to promote critical thinking and analysis.
  - Changes to Irish language education to Leaving Cert to enhance reading and speaking skills.
- **Expand Access to Higher Education:** We will increase access to third-level courses outside the points system, supporting students' diverse career paths.
- **Maximise School Facilities:** We will enable schools to host after-school care, community activities, and public access to school sports facilities, creating child-centred campuses offering a range of support services.
- **Streamline School Applications:** We will support the rollout of a Common Application Process in areas with high demand for school places.
- **Address Smartphone Disruption:** We will work with school leaders to manage and limit disruptions from smartphone use in schools.
- **Build Inclusive Education Models:** In partnership with stakeholders and representative groups across Ireland, we will create an inclusive education model that serves students of all abilities.
- **Strengthen Support for Special Educational Needs:** We will implement recommendations

from the review of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act to improve educational access for children with special needs.

- **Secure Funding for School Buildings:** We will increase funding for new school buildings to meet the growing demand for places.
- **Hold a Citizens' Assembly on Education:** We will hold a Citizens Assembly on Education, to consider – among other issues – provision of an inclusive education for children with special educational needs.

Fine Gael's education reforms will create a flexible, inclusive, and high-quality school system that prepares every child for a bright future.

### Making Education More Affordable for Families

Fine Gael understands the financial pressures families face and is committed to easing the cost of education. Building on our work in Government—such as free school meals and free schoolbooks—we'll continue to reduce expenses for families, making education more inclusive and affordable.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Expand Free School Meals and Books:** We will support schools in delivering free hot school meals and extending free books schemes to post-primary students over the next Government term.
- **Encourage Uniform Swap Shops:** We will promote uniform swap shops in all primary schools, making uniforms more affordable and supporting sustainability.
- **Grow the School Transport Scheme:** We will expand the School Transport Scheme, building on successful pilots and maximising Public Service Obligation services like Local Link.
- **Increase Funding for Schools:** We will build on the 12% increase to the capitation rate for schools in Budget 2025 to help with increased day-to-day running costs.
- **Increase School Transport Capacity:** We will work to remove the exclusion of drivers aged over 70 years from the School Transport Scheme, explore flexible work options to attract more drivers, and encourage more women to join, boosting transport availability.

Fine Gael is dedicated to reducing education costs and ensuring every child has access to essential resources, creating a fairer, more affordable education system for all.

## Promoting Inclusion and Access in Education

Fine Gael is committed to creating an inclusive education system that supports every student, with a focus on accessibility, well-being, and practical pathways for success.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Expand the DEIS Programme:** We will provide enhanced supports through a DEIS-plus model to ensure schools in need receive targeted help.
- **Expand Access to Higher and Further Education:** We will boost access programmes for students aiming to continue to higher and further education.
- **Improve Career Pathways for All Students:** We will create better pathways for students who may prefer practical careers after school, ensuring options are available for all abilities.
- **Reduce Transition Year Costs:** We will examine and address cost barriers to the Transition Year Programme, making it affordable and accessible for more students.
- **Strengthen Well-being and Anti-Bullying Supports:** We will increase well-being initiatives in primary and post-primary schools, including supports against bullying, online abuse, and expanded counselling resources.
- **Empower Student Voices:** We will develop student councils in schools to give students a voice in decision-making and help shape policies on inclusion and smartphone use.
- **Address Period Poverty:** We will provide free period products in schools to ensure no student is held back due to period poverty.
- **Support Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Students:** We will ensure every school for the deaf has qualified Irish Sign Language interpreters, enabling full participation in education for deaf and hearing-impaired students.

Fine Gael also aims to strengthen links between mainstream and special schools to better address the specific needs of students with special educational needs. This includes:

- **Data Sharing Between Schools:** We will improve information-sharing between special and post-primary schools to support student transitions.
- **Inclusive Campus Model:** We will continue working on the EU-backed campus inclusion model to develop environments where all students can thrive.

- **New Codes of Conduct:** We will implement guidelines for managing behaviours of concern to ensure that the needs of children with special educational requirements are met.

Fine Gael is committed to an education system that leaves no student behind, creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all.

## Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs

Fine Gael is committed to ensuring that children with special educational needs receive the support and resources they deserve. We will ensure special education continues to have a voice at the cabinet table. We will expand special school places, provide dedicated therapy services, and introduce new measures to improve access, inclusivity, and outcomes. We will create 300 new special school places and 400 new special classes each year, reviewing needs to ensure sufficient capacity. We will also assess the availability and entry criteria of specific classes, such as speech and language, to make sure children have the support they need. We will also provide additional Special Education Teachers (SETs), Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), and other evidence-based supports to improve educational outcomes.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Develop a Dedicated Therapy Service:** We will establish a dedicated therapy service for students in all special schools and extend over time to special classes within mainstream schools.
- **Simplify Applications for Support:** We will introduce a common application process at the primary level for children with additional needs, building on the successful pilot in Dublin 15.
- **Ease Transitions Through School:** Recognising that children with special needs may struggle with the shift from primary to post-primary school, we will review and improve transition supports, including career guidance in special schools.
- **Expand School Facilities:** We will implement a multi-year capital programme to provide early accommodation for special classes and special schools.
- **Create a Parents' Advisory Service:** We will establish a service to help parents navigate admissions policies, processes, and language barriers, ensuring they have access to clear information.
- **Open More Special Classes and Schools:** We will

increase the number of special classes at primary and post-primary levels, adding to the existing 3,300. In 2025, we will open five new special schools to support children with complex needs.

- **Provide Early Intervention Services:** We will work to deliver therapy and other supports to children at the earliest possible stage.
- **Use Data to Improve Services:** We will work with the relevant stakeholder groups to collect data to create more targeted, effective services for children with special needs.
- **Expand Summer Programmes:** We will increase funding to allow more schools to offer Summer Programmes for students with special needs.
- **Support Exceptionally Able Students:** We will introduce specific measures to support students with exceptional abilities.
- **Ensure Fair Exam Access:** We will consider additional time during State exams for students with special educational needs and ensure that those who use assistive technology can do so in exams.
- **Introduce Irish Sign Language Curriculum:** We will develop a curriculum for Irish Sign Language for primary and post-primary students, including a standalone Leaving Cert subject

Fine Gael is committed to building an education system that provides every child with the resources, support, and opportunities they need to succeed.

## Supporting Schools, Teachers, and Education Professionals

Fine Gael is dedicated to providing schools and education professionals with the resources and support they need to focus on quality education and student well-being.

### We will:

- **Expand Teacher Training in Special Education:** We will provide dedicated work placements in special schools and special classes as part of teacher training, with placements subject to assessment.
- **Introduce New Administrative Support:** We will examine how best to create administrative support roles in schools to reduce the non-educational workload of principals, assisting with tasks like managing hot meal programmes and free book schemes.
- **Encourage Returning Teachers:** We will explore ways to recognise teaching experience gained abroad in salary calculations, attracting qualified teachers back to Ireland.
- **Enhance Professional Development:** We will provide teachers and SNAs with better access to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and ensure substitute cover so training can take place before the school year begins.
- **Increase Training in Therapy Supports:** We will expand training for teachers to include essential therapy supports.
- **Strengthen SNA Development:** We will complete the SNA workforce development programme, providing clarity on their role and career paths for supporting vulnerable students.
- **Improve Training for New Special Classes:** We will increase the availability of training for schools opening new special classes, ensuring staff are well-prepared.
- **Support School Leaders:** We will ensure school leaders have the resources they need, including funding and administrative support.
- **Review Pay for Bus Escorts:** Recognising the important role of bus escorts, we will complete and implement the current review of their pay rates.

With rising school operating costs and increased responsibilities on school leaders,

### Fine Gael will also:

- **Support Renewable Energy in Schools:** We will help schools install solar panels and other renewable technology to reduce emissions and heating costs.
- **Introduce Transport Managers:** We will establish Transport Managers to handle transportation for students with special needs, freeing principals from these logistics.

Fine Gael's plan will equip schools, teachers, and education professionals to create a high-quality, well-supported learning environment for all students.

## Fostering Leadership, Innovation, and Best Practice in Schools

Fine Gael is committed to cultivating strong leadership, encouraging innovation, and promoting best practices in our schools. We will:

- **Enhance Leadership Training:** We will offer modern leadership courses to prepare educators before they take on new responsibilities, ensuring they are



equipped to lead effectively.

- **Create an Innovation Fund:** We will establish a fund for schools to support new initiatives and encourage collaboration between clusters of schools, fostering creativity and shared learning.
- **Advance Teaching Methods:** We will work to improve teaching and learning methods, especially as schools adapt to digital learning and the opportunities presented by artificial intelligence.

Fine Gael's vision is to empower schools to lead, innovate, and adopt best practices that prepare students for a dynamic future.

## Promoting Health and Wellness in Schools

Fine Gael is dedicated to promoting the health and wellness of children and young people, equipping them with tools for lifelong well-being.

### We will:

- **Boost Online Safety Education:** We will collaborate with Coimisiún na Meán and other agencies to promote Webwise and other programmes at primary and post-primary levels, ensuring children understand online safety risks.
- **Launch a Youth Wellness Programme:** We will introduce a holistic wellness programme that addresses urgent health and social issues facing young people today.

Prevention programmes are essential to giving every child the best start. Physical activity and sports play a crucial role in preventing obesity, improving mental health, and reducing anti-social behaviour.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Promote a Comprehensive Wellness Approach:** We will focus on physical activity, nutrition, mental well-being, and positive social behaviour in schools, aiming for 60 minutes of daily activity for children of all abilities.
- **Encourage New Activities and Partnerships:** We will promote inter-school competitions, sports festivals, and collaboration with parents, local sports clubs, and national sporting organisations to create a dynamic, inclusive approach to physical activity.
- **Pilot Wellness Initiatives in High-Need Areas:** Starting with a pilot in high-need areas, we will monitor outcomes, gather feedback, and work with school communities to ensure consistency for a wider rollout.



**Emma Blain**  
Candidate for  
Dublin Bay South

Fine Gael's approach to health and wellness in schools will equip our young people to build healthier, happier lives and stronger communities.

## Advancing Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science

Fine Gael established the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, led by Simon Harris TD, to make education and innovation a central part of Government policy. Today, Ireland's third-level education system is world-class, accessible to everyone regardless of background or circumstances.

### Fine Gael has delivered:

- **World-Class Higher Education Facilities:** We have built state-of-the-art institutions across Ireland.
- **Exceptional Learning and Training Programmes:** Our courses prepare students for a fast-changing world and diverse career paths.
- **A Growing Innovation and Research Sector:** Ireland's research and innovation sector is thriving, attracting talent and driving progress.
- **Expanded Apprenticeship Opportunities:** We have increased apprenticeship programmes to give more young people the skills they need for successful careers.

Fine Gael believes the future lies in the strength and potential of our people. We are ready to invest even more in education, research, and training to prepare future generations for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

### Improving Access and Support for Students

Fine Gael is committed to making education and employment accessible and inclusive for all students, particularly those with disabilities.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Introduce a 'Second Chance' initiative:** Ensure students going through a 'repeat year' or changing courses can access the Free Fees Initiative to avoid them being penalised and having to pay higher rates of fees.

- **Build Employment Pathways for Students with disabilities:** We will work across government, civil and public services, private companies, and colleges to ensure students with disabilities have a clear path into employment, avoiding any barriers to entering the workforce.
- **Ensure Safe, Inclusive Campuses:** Universities will adopt trauma-informed practices to handle discrimination and violence, introduce targeted reporting systems, and provide funding to support victims and survivors.
- **Create a Disability Fund for Tertiary Students:** We will establish a dedicated fund to support students with disabilities in higher education, helping them fully participate in their studies and find employment after graduation.
- **Increase Path 4 Courses:** We will expand Path 4 courses across the Further and Higher Education sector, integrating students with intellectual disabilities into the student body, with access to all supports including SUSI.
- **Establish a Consistent System for Personal Assistants:** In partnership with key education bodies, we will deliver a structured, nationwide system for providing Personal Assistants in third-level institutions, replacing the current inconsistent approach.
- **Launch a Centralised Third-Level Information Hub:** We will create a website to provide students across Ireland with comprehensive information on third-level pathways, supporting students from both sides of the border.

Fine Gael is committed to a more inclusive, supportive education system that ensures every student, regardless of ability, has the resources and opportunities to thrive.

### Expanding Access to Further and Higher Education

Fine Gael believes that third-level education, skills development, and ongoing training are vital to building an innovative, creative, and skilled society equipped to tackle future challenges and drive our economy.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Phase out Student Contribution Fees:** We will continue to decrease the Student Contribution Fee over the Government's term, easing the financial burden on students and families at the start of each academic year.

- **Increase Free Part-Time Course Options:** We will expand free part-time courses for carers, lone parents, and those seeking career changes, helping more people gain or enhance their qualifications.
- **Expand Non-Points Pathways:** We will triple the number of third-level pathways outside the Leaving Certificate points system, ensuring students can pursue higher education without limitations from their Leaving Cert points.
- **Broaden Learning Opportunities for Working Adults:** We will increase course options for people at any career stage who want to upskill, supporting lifelong learning across all sectors.
- **Support Postgraduate Students:** We will reduce postgraduate course costs through increased grants and support for student contribution fees.
- **Boost Third-Level Funding:** We are committed to increasing funding for third-level institutions, ensuring they have the resources they need to excel.
- **Expand Student Maintenance Grants:** We will continue raising maintenance grants annually and reform SUSI to better meet the needs of all third-level students.
- **Build Colleges of the Future Locally:** We will implement a Colleges of the Future programme, allowing young people to achieve high-level education close to home rather than having to move to big cities.
- **Enable Technological University Borrowing:** We will establish a legislative framework for technological universities to borrow funds, enabling them to improve facilities, build student housing, restore older buildings, and enhance energy efficiency for climate goals.
- **Invest in Carbon Reduction for Universities:** We will fund universities to meet a 51% carbon reduction target under their Climate Action Plans, supporting sustainable campus development.

Fine Gael's vision is to make further and higher education more accessible, affordable, and adaptable to meet the diverse needs of students and communities across Ireland.

## Unlocking the National Training Fund

In Budget 2025, Fine Gael has committed to unlocking the National Training Fund, introducing a €1.5 billion package to:

- **Fund research, further and higher education, skills development, and decarbonisation:** By committing €525 million into Core Funding for Higher Education we are enhancing Ireland's educational infrastructure and supporting its growth into the future.
- **Increase healthcare and veterinary training places:** By expanding capacity in these critical areas, we address workforce shortages and meet future demands.
- **Support PhD students with stipend increases:** Recognising the importance of research, we are enhancing financial support for doctoral candidates to attract and retain top talent.
- **Expand the apprenticeship system:** Investing in apprenticeships ensures our citizens acquire the skills necessary for future industries, fostering a robust and adaptable workforce.

This comprehensive approach reflects Fine Gael's commitment to building a skilled, innovative, and sustainable future for Ireland.

## Advancing Research, Innovation, and Science

Fine Gael is committed to driving Ireland's global competitiveness, economic growth, and innovation through strategic investment in research, innovation, and science.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Establish a Research Infrastructure & Talent Fund:** This fund will maintain Ireland's global competitiveness and stimulate growth across regions.
- **Invest in Irish Research with Taighde Éireann:** We will promote and fund Taighde Éireann to support outstanding Irish research and innovation at home, in Europe, and globally.
- **Raise Research Investment towards 2.5% of GNI:** Increasing research funding will drive economic growth, create jobs, and strengthen Ireland's competitive edge, focusing on sectors like healthcare, climate, agri-food, digital innovation, and advanced manufacturing.
- **Strengthen Academia-Industry Partnerships:** We will foster closer collaboration between educational institutions and industry, formalising postdoctoral employment structures and funding graduate research programs to sustain economic growth.



- **Promote Diversity in Research:** We will prioritise funding for inclusive research and ensure institutions have the necessary supports for faculty and researchers with disabilities.
- **Fund Interdisciplinary Research:** We will support groundbreaking research that bridges academia, industry, and government, leveraging Ireland's tertiary sector expertise.
- **Create a Pathway for Research Impact:** We will establish a formal pathway for third-level researchers to inform government policy on critical issues based on internationally recognised research.
- **Expand Hubs of Excellence:** We will fund centres of research excellence across Irish universities and promote the Shared Island scheme to boost collaboration.
- **Revise Second-Level STEM Curriculum:** We will encourage greater STEM uptake at third level by enhancing the curriculum at second level to stimulate interest.
- **Support the Office of the Government Science Advisor:** We will continue to back the role of the Government Science Advisor in shaping science policy.
- **Extend Tax Relief for Targeted Skills Courses:** We will provide extended tax relief for short-term skills courses in high-demand areas like green energy, AI, life sciences, and data analytics. This will help workers upskill without changing careers, keeping Ireland competitive in evolving industries.
- **Add Healthcare Apprenticeships:** We will expand apprenticeship options to include more healthcare disciplines, ensuring the healthcare sector has the skilled workers it needs.
- **Modernise Apprenticeship Curriculums:** Working with the National Skills Council, we will update apprenticeship curriculums across all fields, ensuring they meet today's industry standards.
- **Develop Green Skills Courses:** We will fund new courses in Green Skills, including the offshore wind energy sector, to support Ireland's transition to a green economy.

Fine Gael's vision is to build a future-ready workforce, equipping people with the skills and training needed to thrive in a changing economy and support Ireland's growth.

Fine Gael's commitment to research and innovation will fuel Ireland's economic and social progress, supporting jobs, technological advancement, and solutions to future challenges.

## Boosting Skills and Apprenticeships for a Dynamic Economy

Fine Gael is committed to making apprenticeships and skills development accessible, relevant, and responsive to the needs of our economy. We will:

- **Abolish apprenticeship registration fees:** We will abolish any registration fees associated with taking on an apprenticeship to incentivise more people to choose this learning pathway.
- **Increase Apprenticeship Registrations:** We will grow apprenticeship registrations to 12,500 by 2030.
- **Expand and Simplify Apprenticeship Pathways:** We will create clear pathways for those interested in apprenticeships, increasing the number of programmes to meet industry demand, building on the current 77 programmes, including both consortia-led and craft-led options.





# Delivering homes, building better communities

Fine Gael is dedicated to delivering homes and building vibrant, resilient communities across Ireland because we believe that every person deserves a secure and affordable place to live. Housing is at the heart of strong communities and economic growth, providing stability for families, young people, and older citizens alike. We are committed to tackling housing shortages, reducing barriers to homeownership, and ensuring that rental options are fair and sustainable.

Our vision goes beyond just building houses. Fine Gael's goal is to create communities that are well-connected, with accessible amenities like schools, healthcare, public transport, and green spaces. We aim to develop areas where people can thrive, feel secure, and connect with their neighbours.

To achieve this, Fine Gael is investing in infrastructure and reforming planning processes to speed up delivery. We are committed to helping first-time buyers, supporting affordable rental schemes, and enabling local authorities and developers to work together effectively. By effectively doubling housing delivery and prioritising sustainable development, Fine Gael will continue working to make Ireland a place where everyone can find a home in a community that supports a fulfilling, high-quality life.



## Department of Infrastructure, Climate and Transport - Driving Progress, Efficiency, and Sustainability

Fine Gael recognises large-scale infrastructure projects are critical to Ireland's economic growth and resilience; to delivering on our housing targets, and achieving our ambitious climate goals.

These vital projects face delays and escalating costs, arising from fragmented prioritisation, planning, and delivery, hampering Ireland's ability to meet pressing infrastructure needs in energy, transport, water, and climate resilience like flood defences.

Fine Gael will establish a new, consolidated Department of Infrastructure, Climate and Transport to streamline and unify all aspects of infrastructure delivery, from planning to execution, under one dedicated leadership structure supported by relevant expertise within the Department.

This department will merge the Department of Transport and Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), and the infrastructure delivery functions of the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDR) including the Office of Public Works.

Some functions may be transferred to other Departments. For example, the OPW's National Monuments Service would move to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

These changes will drive strategic alignment and efficient project delivery.

In addition to merging departments, we will also require agencies including Eirgrid, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Uisce Éireann to report on their capital investment plans and delivery to the Department of Infrastructure, Climate and Transport, ensuring clear reporting lines and accountability. Agencies will retain their independence but this increased coordination will foster a more strategic approach, reducing inefficiencies and delays that arise from differing investment priorities and communication gaps.

The Minister for Infrastructure, Climate and Transport will oversee the delivery of the national development plan, manage all projects above €100 million or projects of regional significance are delivered on time, on budget, and aligned with national priorities. The

Minister will play a crucial role in project prioritisation and selection.

The Department of Public Expenditure will maintain its role in business case development, supported by a new Public Investment Act that places a revised infrastructure code, reflecting Ireland's climate needs, on a statutory footing. This Act will formalise Ireland's infrastructure planning with a statutory infrastructure code focused on climate action and efficiency. This legislation will standardise and streamline project planning, integrating climate resilience into Ireland's core infrastructure policies to create sustainable, value-driven outcomes

We will ensure relevant experts are brought directly into the Department to guarantee that large projects are completed on time and on budget.

To maximise efficiency in the delivery of projects, the Department will establish dedicated divisions including Transport, Energy and Communications, Water, Climate Resilience, Strategic Planning, and Digital Infrastructure. In addition to staff drawn from existing departments, a recruitment campaign will be undertaken to source and hire specialists in project management, procurement and engineering, amongst other disciplines, ensuring a clear focus on timely and sustainable delivery.

The Department will enhance expertise in engineering, project management, and procurement while streamlining decision-making. This consolidation of accountability aims to significantly reduce inter-departmental and department-to-agency issues while increasing access to relevant expertise and improving overall project delivery.

### The functions of the new Department will be to:

- **Manage mega projects:** For all strategic infrastructure projects and all capital projects above €100 million, the state will establish a team reporting to a cabinet minister with day-to-day accountability and sufficient in-house expertise to manage all aspects of capital project delivery, from development and financing to design and evaluation.
- **Strategically select projects:** The new Department will function as an integrated body, balancing project selection, financing, and delivery mechanisms. It is not an allocative department but a comprehensive, centralised delivery mechanism for infrastructure projects of strategic importance. Planning legislation will remain with the Department of Housing.
- **Speed up delivery:** The new Department will speed up the delivery of key infrastructural elements

required by the state to enhance societal welfare and ensure Ireland meets its climate targets, by applying and refining existing infrastructure guidelines into a new Public Investment Act.

- **Accelerate Project Delivery:** We will expand the Planning and Environment Court to ensure projects move forward without unnecessary setbacks. This will enable housing and other high-priority infrastructure to meet sustainability criteria more effectively.
- **Foster Local and National Collaboration:** The Department of Infrastructure, Climate and Transport will work closely with local authorities to ensure that national infrastructure projects meet local needs. Formal mechanisms will be developed to coordinate planning and implementation between the national department and local agencies, ensuring alignment with both community interests and Ireland's broader infrastructural goals.
- **Provide Supply Chain Certainty:** Stable long term infrastructural investment, which Fine Gael in government have already provided, will allow for a clear strategic direction and prioritisation of projects. This will provide industry with a line of sight on projects, lowering the risk for the supply chain to invest in capital and skills, which means firms can attract talent and supply chains become less fragmented.

## Key Focus Areas and Divisions Within the Department

- **Strategic Planning:** This division will manage long-term planning, project selection, and coordination to align projects with Ireland's economic and environmental goals.
- **Transport:** Responsible for integrating various transport modes, maintaining national planning frameworks for road, rail, aviation, and maritime systems.

- **Energy and Communications:** Focused on the development of renewable energy infrastructure, the energy grid, and broadband networks, supporting Ireland's green transition.
- **Climate Resilience and Adaptation:** This division will oversee climate change adaptation in infrastructure, prioritising sustainable and resilient construction practices.
- **Water and Environmental Infrastructure:** In charge of water supply, wastewater management, flood prevention, and waste management projects.
- **Urban Planning and Development:** This division will handle sustainable urban development, housing infrastructure, and national spatial planning, excluding direct housing policy.
- **Digital Infrastructure:** Tasked with implementing smart city initiatives and ensuring cybersecurity for critical infrastructure.
- **Investment and Development:** This division will develop a pipeline of new projects, attracting both national and international bids for strategic infrastructure initiatives.

## Reducing Bottlenecks and Enhancing Project Delivery

To maintain housing as a top priority, Fine Gael will establish a housing infrastructure division within the Department. This will support the Department of Housing to help fast-track housing projects, particularly those meeting sustainability criteria, and reduce bureaucratic delays.

Additionally, collaboration with other government bodies will be prioritised to ensure that sectoral objectives are met without sacrificing overall strategic alignment.

# Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Fine Gael has a strong record of rebuilding Ireland’s housing sector. We led the revival of homebuilding after the financial crisis, tripling housing output between 2011 and 2020 under the ‘Rebuilding Ireland’ initiative, and have continued this progress with ‘Housing for All’ since 2021.

But we know Ireland needs more homes, and we need them faster. Fine Gael is committed to delivering 300,000 new homes by 2030.

Through the National Planning Framework, we aim to balance growth by targeting 50% of new homes in the five major cities—Limerick, Galway, Waterford, Cork, and Dublin—and 50% in the rest of the country. To achieve this, we’ll ensure there’s enough zoned, serviced land in the right places, speed up planning, and embrace modern construction methods to build more efficiently while growing the construction workforce.

To make housing delivery more transparent and accountable, Fine Gael will require local authorities to publish quarterly updates on their progress and report annually to the Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government, and Heritage.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Deliver 300,000 New Homes:** We will build around 300,000 homes by 2030.
- **Set New Ambitious Targets:** We will introduce a new housing plan to follow ‘Housing for All,’ based on recommendations from the Housing Commission and reflecting more ambitious targets.
- **Invest Significantly in Housing:** We will allocate €40 billion to the housing budget over the next five years, averaging €8 billion annually, to ensure resources meet our ambitious housing goals.

Fine Gael is committed to building homes, supporting communities, and ensuring that every part of Ireland has the housing it needs to thrive.

The below table estimates our breakdown of housing output over the 2026-2030 period, based on a beefed-up National Development Plan to be agreed in 2025. Housing output for 2025 is an estimate based on Budget 2025, already agreed.

## Helping People Buy a Home

Fine Gael is committed to making homeownership more accessible, especially for first-time buyers. Through key initiatives like the Help to Buy Scheme, affordable home schemes, and streamlining the home-buying process, we are dedicated to supporting individuals and families in purchasing their own homes.

### Help to Buy Scheme

Since Fine Gael introduced the Help to Buy Scheme in 2017, it has enabled 50,000 people and couples to buy their first homes by helping them secure a deposit.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Increase Relief for First-Time Buyers:** Raise the relief under Help to Buy to €40,000, a 33% increase since the last adjustment in 2020.
- **Extend the Scheme:** Maintain the Help to Buy initiative until 2030.

## Affordable Home Schemes

We are dedicated to making homes more affordable, with targeted schemes to support people on moderate incomes. We plan to build 9,000 affordable homes for purchase annually by 2030.

### First Home Scheme

The First Home Scheme bridges the affordability gap by providing up to 30% of the home’s cost, with the government or banks taking a stake in the property.

New Homes	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Social	10,000	10,500	11,000	11,500	11,500	12,000
Affordable	4,750	5,250	7,500	9,500	11,500	12,000
Cost Rental	2,750	3,000	3,250	3,500	3,750	4,000
Private	24,500	25,250	27,250	29,500	31,250	32,000
<b>Total homes</b>	<b>41,000</b>	<b>43,000</b>	<b>48,000</b>	<b>53,000</b>	<b>58,000</b>	<b>60,000</b>





**Paschal Donohoe**  
Candidate for  
Dublin Central

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Expand Eligibility:** Extend the scheme to cover first-time buyers of second-hand homes.
- **Extend the Scheme:** Continue the scheme until 2030.

**Local Authority Affordable Purchase Scheme**

This scheme enables moderate-income buyers to purchase new homes at a reduced price, with local authorities holding an equity share.

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Increase the geographic spread of Affordable Purchase schemes:** Collaborate with local authorities to expand affordable purchase options in all counties.
- **Rename and Promote the Scheme:** Rebrand the Affordable Purchase Home Loan as the Starter Home Scheme to increase awareness and uptake.

**Local Authority Home Loan**

This government-backed mortgage helps first-time buyers who are credit-worthy but unable to secure traditional financing.

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Adjust Loan Limits:** Ensure the maximum loan values align with house price inflation, keeping the scheme accessible.

**Making Home Purchases Quicker, Fairer, and More Transparent**

Fine Gael recognises that buying a home can be time-consuming and frustrating. We are committed to reducing delays and improving transparency in the home-buying process.

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Streamline the Purchase Process:** Set a target of an 8-week turnaround from 'sale agreed' to handing over the keys, supported by e-conveyancing and e-probate for faster processing.
- **Enhance the Bidding Process:** Establish an expert group to make the home bidding process clearer and more transparent, drawing on international best practices.
- **Provide Resources for Buyers:** Task the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission with creating

a step-by-step home-buying guide and establishing a dedicated portal for reporting bad practices.

- Fine Gael's vision is to make homeownership a reality for more people across Ireland by increasing affordability, simplifying the process, and building strong support systems for first-time buyers.

## Accelerating Housing Delivery

Fine Gael is dedicated to increasing the supply of homes, from identifying suitable land and streamlining planning to investing in construction methods and workforce growth. Our focus is on building sustainable communities, enabling homeownership, and providing homes that meet Ireland's growing needs.

### Land and Planning

Through the National Planning Framework, Fine Gael will promote balanced development, prioritising homes near public transport and local amenities.

#### We will:

- **Launch a National Land Audit:** Create a regularly updated, public audit of zoned, serviced, and unzoned land to help plan for 250,000 homes over the next five years.
- **Maximise Use of Serviced Sites:** Require local authorities to build homes on serviced land and fund these efforts, rewarding high-performing authorities.
- **Streamline Planning:** Implement the Planning and Development Act to make the planning process clearer, faster, and more predictable.
- **Resource our planning authorities:** Ensure An Coimisiún Pleanála and local authorities are adequately resourced with staff and financial resources to make decisions in a quick and predictable timeframe.

### Utilising Existing Buildings

Fine Gael will make better use of existing properties by:

- **Supporting Conversions and Vacant Properties:** Maintain the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, provide additional Vacant Home Officers, and make it easier for authorities to acquire vacant properties.

- **Retaining the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant:** We will maintain grants worth €50,000 (vacant) and €70,000 (derelict) for a further 5 years.
- **Releasing cashflow for refurbishments:** We will facilitate a mid-project phased payment equal to half of the vacancy grant to assist with cash flow on projects.
- **Speed up applications:** Ensure local authorities are appropriately staffed with Vacant Home Officers to administer the scheme efficiently.
- **Expand the Living City Initiative:** Expand the geographic areas covered under this scheme, which provides tax relief for money spent on refurbishing/ converting residential or commercial properties in Special Regeneration Areas (SRA) in Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick and Waterford.
- **Promoting "Over the Shop" Living:** Fund demonstration projects to showcase successful conversions and extend planning exemptions for commercial-to-residential conversions until 2030.
- **Acquiring derelict sites:** Make it easier for local authorities to CPO properties, using best practice for acquisitions via the Derelict Sites Act, as opposed to the Housing Act.

## Enhancing our Water Infrastructure To support housing development,

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Increase Investment in Water Infrastructure:** Fully commit to Uisce Éireann's capital investment programme to improve water and wastewater services.
- **Fast-Track Water Connections:** Set clear timelines for water connection agreements, ensuring large developments can proceed without delay. Establish a new procedure for large developments above 100 units where a developer can meet local authority planners and Irish Water on site to iron out issues at pre-planning stage.
- **Expand Rural Water Schemes:** Address wastewater needs in villages lacking access to public treatment facilities.

## Empowering the Land Development Agency (LDA)

Fine Gael established the LDA to develop state-owned land for housing. Over the next five years,

**We will:**

- **Deliver 18,000 Homes:** Support the LDA in unlocking state land for housing, including Project Tosaigh, targeting land with unused planning permission.
- **Free Up State-Owned Sites:** Intensify efforts to release state-owned sites with the potential to deliver up to 67,000 homes.

## Croí Cónaithe (Cities) Scheme

To kick-start apartment construction in Ireland's five cities (Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford),

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Activate Apartment Sites:** Enable upfront payments to developers to fast-track the construction of apartment developments for owner-occupiers.

## Supporting One-Off, Rural Housing

Fine Gael supports rural housing by:

- **Taking a practical approach to one-off housing:** We recognise the value of building thriving communities and family support structures, especially in rural Ireland.
- **Continuing to support one-off self-builds:** Through the Help to Buy Scheme, the First Home Scheme and the Local Authority Home Loan.

## Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)

Fine Gael will embrace new construction methods to make building faster and more sustainable.

**We will:**

- **Lead by Example:** Use MMC in public housing projects and expand modular housing options.
- **Reduce Carbon Footprint:** Collaborate with industry to lower embodied carbon in construction and adopt consistent procurement standards.
- **Streamline regulatory standards:** Standardise as much as possible the regulatory certifications required across our 31 local authorities. We will commission an audit and propose recommendations within 100 days of government. We will request the NSAI to harmonise Ireland's regulations with EU regulations insofar as possible to minimise paperwork and open up new market opportunities.

- **Promoting timber:** Update our regulatory system to promote the use of timber in new buildings and ensure that multi-storey timber frame residential units can be built.

## Building a Skilled Construction Workforce

Fine Gael recognises the need for a larger construction workforce to meet housing goals.

**We will:**

- **Grow Apprenticeships:** Target 12,500 new apprentices annually by 2030, with two-thirds of them in craft/construction, and strengthen links between education providers and the sector..
- **Boost Employment Permits:** Increase permits for residential construction workers and actively recruit abroad through state agencies and embassies.

## Financing the Housing Market

Fine Gael will increase private sector involvement in financing to reach €20 billion per year to provide for 60,000 homes by 2030.

**We will:**

- **Introduce Cost Rental Backstops:** Allow local authorities and the LDA to offer financial guarantees to developers for affordable housing units, reducing financial risk.
- **Attract New Private Investment:** Develop new financing sources, especially for brownfield sites and small builders, with support from Home Building Finance Ireland (HBFI).
- **Keep development levy waivers under review:** Incentivise the construction of new homes by keeping under review the time-limited arrangements for the waiving of local authority "Section 48" development contributions and the refunding of Uisce Éireann water and wastewater connection charges.

Fine Gael's comprehensive approach will deliver more homes, make the housing market fairer, and build sustainable, thriving communities across Ireland.



## Expanding Social Housing and Tackling Homelessness

Fine Gael is committed to increasing all types of housing – private, affordable, cost rental, and social – to meet Ireland’s growing needs. We have increased social housing from just over 1,000 homes per year in 2011 to more than 8,000 annually, the highest level since the 1970s. Our goal is to further expand social housing and ensure everyone has a stable, secure place to live.

### Building Social Housing

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Build 12,000 Social Homes per year:** By 2030, we will construct 12,000 new social homes annually.
- **Minimise Bulk Purchases:** Minimise bulk purchases by local authorities or Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) and focus on building developments to meet social housing needs.
- **Develop Housing Delivery Plans:** Set specific social and affordable housing targets for each local authority.
- **Speed Up Social Housing Turnaround:** Improve the turnaround of vacant social housing units and provide tenant names to AHBs before project completion for quicker move-ins.

### Repair and Lease Programme

Fine Gael will continue the Repair and Lease Scheme for five more years, targeting 1,000 additional homes annually to maximise the use of vacant properties for social housing.

### Social Housing Rents

Fine Gael will introduce a national differential rent scheme:

- **Standardised Rent Reviews:** Require local authorities to conduct annual rent reviews for a percentage of all tenants in social housing schemes, ensuring support goes to those who need it most.

### Homelessness

Fine Gael is committed to increasing social housing supply, preventing homelessness, and ensuring Ireland’s housing system meets the needs of all citizens. We believe no one, especially children, should live in emergency accommodation long-term. We

will work to ensure that anyone entering emergency accommodation stays only briefly.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Focus on Preventing Homelessness:** Prioritise securing private tenancies and other accommodation to prevent homelessness.
- **Prioritise families:** Focus social housing allocations on getting families out of long-term homelessness.
- **Reinforce the Social Housing Tenant in Situ Programme:** We will establish the Social Housing Tenant in Situ Programme on a statutory footing, with annual targets for each local authority.
- **Streamline State Assistance:** Ensure all government departments and agencies work together to help individuals exit emergency accommodation as quickly as possible.
- **Ensure Adequate Homeless Budgets:** Maintain a budget that provides a bed for everyone who needs one and minimises rough sleeping.
- **Expand One-Bedroom Units:** Require local authorities to build and lease one-bedroom units with an option to purchase, addressing the needs of single households.
- **Broaden the Housing First Approach:** Expand Housing First, a holistic programme for individuals facing mental health, addiction, and other challenges.

## Supporting a Better System for Renters and Landlords

Fine Gael is committed to a fair and stable rental market that supports both renters and landlords, ensuring long-term housing security and affordability.

#### For Renters

- **Increase Rent Tax Credit:** Raise the Rent Tax Credit to €1,500 per renter, or €3,000 per couple, to alleviate rental costs and support tenants in managing expenses.
- **Retain Rent Pressure Zones:** Maintain the Rent Pressure Zone framework to help keep rent increases under control in high-demand areas.

#### For Landlords

Fine Gael recognises that a thriving rental market needs a balance of support for landlords to keep properties available for long-term tenancies.

#### We will:

- **Extend Landlord Tax Credit:** Continue the Landlord Tax Credit until 2030 for landlords who stay in the rental market.

## Dedicated Accommodation for Public Sector Workers

In collaboration with the Land Development Agency and local authorities,

### Fine Gael will:

- **Explore Cost Rental Housing for Frontline Workers:** Conduct a feasibility study on developing affordable rental accommodation specifically for frontline public sector workers, ensuring key workers can live close to their places of work.

## Increasing and Improving Student Accommodation

Fine Gael is committed to increasing student-specific housing to meet the needs of third-level students across Ireland. We believe the third-level sector should provide more on-campus accommodation to support students throughout their studies.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Launch a National Student Accommodation Building Programme:** Deliver 2,500 new student beds each year through a multi-annual plan to increase availability.
- **Enable Technological Universities to Build Student Housing:** Allow new Technological Universities to borrow funds for student accommodation projects on their campuses, supporting on-site housing growth. We will also ensure the Department of Further and Higher Education directly finances the delivery of purpose-built student accommodation on public or private lands.
- **Develop a Cost-Rental Model for Students:** Implement a cost-rental approach to student accommodation to provide affordable housing options for students.
- **Adapt the Croí Cónaithe Scheme:** Expand this scheme to increase the number of short-term let units specifically for student use, ensuring more housing is available during the academic year.
- **Increase Rent-a-Room Relief:** Raise the tax-free limit for Rent-a-Room to encourage more

homeowners to offer rooms to students.

- **Introduce regulations for digs accommodation:** A balance has to be struck between the rights to privacy and security of the student and the rights of the provider.
- **Standardise Student-Specific Leases:** Ensure student accommodation leases align with the academic year, making it easier for students to secure housing only for the months they need.

Fine Gael's approach will make student accommodation more accessible, affordable, and tailored to the academic needs of students across Ireland.

## Housing Adaptation Grants

Fine Gael understands the vital importance of the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, the Mobility Aids Grant and the Housing Aid for Older People Grant. Last year, over 13,000 people benefitted from the grants.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Increase the value of Housing Adaptation Grants:** Proceed with a 30% increase in the grant limits and a 25% increase in the income thresholds for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability Scheme.

## Practical Housing Options for Positive Ageing

Fine Gael is committed to planning for positive ageing, helping people live independently in their own homes or providing the option to move to more suitable housing nearby. We recognise the shortage of purpose-built housing for older adults and are dedicated to expanding options for right-sizing.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Identify Dedicated Housing Sites:** Mandate local authorities to find suitable sites for housing specifically designed for older adults, ensuring accessible options within local communities.
- **Simplify Conversion Rules:** Make it easier to convert houses into two flats, allowing older adults to continue living in familiar surroundings while adapting to changing needs.
- **Review and Standardise the Older Persons Housing Financial Contribution Scheme:** Examine the

possibility of a national system where local authorities offer smaller, manageable housing options to those who find their current homes too large.

- **Explore Housing Trusts for Older Adult Communities:** Consider creating Housing Trusts to develop and manage senior housing with on-site support services, fostering safe, supportive communities.

Fine Gael's approach will empower older adults with the choice to remain in their communities, access right-sized homes, and live independently in a way that best suits their needs.

## Addressing Legacy Issues in Housing

Fine Gael is committed to supporting homeowners affected by construction issues and improving building standards for future developments.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Review the Defective Concrete Blocks Scheme:** We will conduct a comprehensive review of the Defective Concrete Blocks Scheme within six months, taking into account feedback from all stakeholders.
- **Reinforce the Apartment Defects Scheme:** Put this scheme on a statutory basis to provide support to owners of apartments with structural defects, ensuring assistance is accessible and reliable. We will support the 'pathfinder' approach to identify the most effective process for the funding of eligible works retrospectively.
- **Create an Independent Building Standards Regulator:** Set up an independent regulator to enforce high standards in construction quality and safety, preventing similar issues from arising in the future.

Fine Gael's focus is on addressing past construction issues and building a safer, more reliable housing system for everyone in Ireland.

## Improving Management for Apartment and Duplex Owners

Fine Gael is committed to supporting fair and efficient management for apartment and duplex owners, ensuring they have clear, effective governance of their communities.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Transfer Oversight to the Department of Housing:** Move responsibility for the Multi-Unit Development Acts to the Department of Housing to streamline support for owners' management companies and improve oversight.
- **Conduct a Comprehensive Review:** Complete an in-depth review within nine months to evaluate management practices, including considering a dedicated regulator for owners' management companies to ensure effective governance.

Our aim is to enhance transparency, efficiency, and fairness in the management of apartments and duplexes, creating a better experience for residents and owners.

## Supporting the Traveller Community

Fine Gael is committed to ensuring that the Traveller community has access to safe and appropriate accommodation that meets their needs. With €23 million allocated for Traveller-specific housing in 2025, we will take action to improve access to housing and resources for Travellers across Ireland.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Ensure Local Authorities Utilise Budgets Fully:** Require local authorities to deliver Traveller-specific housing and draw down their full budgets to maximise the impact of allocated funds.
- **Strengthen Support Structures:** Provide the necessary structures and resources to help local authorities deliver suitable and well-maintained accommodation for Travellers.
- **Increase Funding for Site Infrastructure:** Allocate additional capital funding to enhance infrastructure on Traveller accommodation sites, improving quality and accessibility.
- **Maintain the Caravan Loan Scheme:** Continue to support the caravan loan scheme, offering Travellers alternative housing options suited to their lifestyle.
- **Implement the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy Action Plan:** Work to fulfil the objectives of this strategy, promoting equality, inclusion, and better quality of life for the Traveller and Roma communities.

Fine Gael's approach is focused on collaboration with local authorities and community leaders to ensure



that all Travellers have access to safe, high quality accommodation suitable to their needs.

## Protecting Heritage and Nature

Fine Gael is dedicated to conserving Ireland's natural landscapes, biodiversity, and cultural heritage. By working with local communities, farmers, and fishers, we aim to protect and promote Ireland's unique natural and built heritage for future generations.

### Fine Gael will:

- Invest in the National Parks and Wildlife Service to continue its important heritage work and acquire key national assets to create national parks.
- We will promote and encourage an expansion of Dark Sky Ireland national parks and reserves.
- **Collaborate with Key Conservation Bodies:** Partner with organisations like the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Heritage Council, An Taisce the Heritage Trust, and Waterways Ireland to safeguard Ireland's natural and cultural heritage, while enhancing biodiversity.
- **Adopt an All-Island Heritage Approach:** Work with stakeholders across the island to conserve, refurbish, and improve access to built heritage and archaeological sites, promoting cultural unity and heritage appreciation.
- **Seek UNESCO World Heritage Recognition:** Support local authorities and communities in nominating new sites to the UNESCO World Heritage tentative list, showcasing Ireland's heritage on a global stage.
- **Implement a Conservation Plan for the Curragh:** Establish a management plan for the Curragh to ensure its preservation, with careful consideration of which agency is best suited to manage this historic landscape.
- **Continue to invest in tackling invasive species.**
- **Ensure every local authority has a biodiversity officer.**
- **Encourage the donation of heritage items by enhancing tax relief available to donors.**

Fine Gael's commitment to heritage and nature is grounded in partnership and sustainable conservation, ensuring that Ireland's unique environments and cultural landmarks are cherished for years to come.

## Rejuvenating our Capital City Centre and our towns and cities

Fine Gael is committed to transforming Dublin City Centre into a vibrant, safe, and attractive destination for living, working, business, and tourism. To achieve this, we appointed a dedicated taskforce to provide a holistic plan for rejuvenating the city centre, focusing on coordinated efforts between national and local government, businesses, and civic and cultural organisations. We will also apply this taskforce model to other cities, towns and regions in need of revitalisation.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Implement the Dublin City Centre Taskforce Recommendations:** Through the Department of the Taoiseach, we will drive the taskforce's recommendations to bring sustainable change to the heart of Dublin.
- **Enhance Security Measures:** Introduce improved security measures in the city centre with increased CCTV coverage and a targeted response to reduce open drug use, ensuring a safer environment for all.
- **Redevelop the GPO:** Honour the historic significance of the GPO with a redevelopment plan, reinforcing its role as a central landmark in Dublin.
- **Support the National Concert Hall:** Provide funding and resources to enhance this vital cultural institution.
- **Expand Cultural Offerings:** Collaborate with cultural institutions to offer more late-night events and extended opening hours throughout the year.
- **Support the North East Inner City Programme:** Continue backing this independently-led programme to strengthen community safety, boost educational and employment opportunities, improve wellbeing, and enhance the area's physical landscape.
- **Revive the North Georgian Core:** Incentivise conservation-led investment in the North Georgian Core, from Parnell Square to Mountjoy Square, to address neglect, revitalise historic buildings, and improve public spaces.

- **Action Plan for Services for Vulnerable Groups:**

The Department of Housing, and the Department of Health will jointly present a plan to reduce the concentration of services in Dublin City Centre and other urban centres, including considering the distribution of temporary accommodation, drug treatment facilities, and other essential services. We will also ensure the Department of Housing develops and enacts new bye laws to regulate onstreet charitable services.

- **Support Recruitment into An Garda Síochána:**

We will fund 6,000 new Garda recruits over the next five years (see law and order section for more detail).

- **Increase Fines for Littering and Dog Fouling:**

Implement higher fines for littering and dog fouling in city and town centres to keep Dublin clean and welcoming.

- **Re-launch the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF):**

Provide for a new capital injection to regenerate Ireland's five cities and other large towns.

Fine Gael's approach is to breathe new life into Dublin City Centre, creating a more dynamic, clean, and safe urban space that meets the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors alike.



**Catherine Callaghan**

Candidate for  
Carlow-Kilkenny

# Driving Balanced Regional Development & Supporting Rural Communities

Fine Gael is dedicated to balanced growth and vibrant communities in all regions of Ireland, ensuring that rural and urban areas alike thrive. Through policies that prioritise local enterprise, infrastructure, and public services, we aim to bring sustainable development opportunities to every corner of the country.

## Project Ireland 2040

Fine Gael created Project Ireland 2040, a long-term, sustainable growth plan for all regions, and established the Department of Rural and Community Development to make sure rural Ireland is supported.

- **Balanced Population Growth:** We will guide 50% of population growth into the cities of Limerick, Galway, Waterford, Cork, and Dublin, with the remaining 50% directed to rural areas.
- **Re-launch the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF):** Provide a new capital injection to regenerate Ireland's five cities and other large towns.
- **Digital and Green Transitions:** Embrace the opportunities these transitions offer for rural Ireland, equipping communities to benefit from digital connectivity and sustainable infrastructure.

## Expanding Nationwide High-Speed Broadband

Fine Gael was the only political party to support and then establish the groundbreaking National Broadband Plan. Fibre roll-out in the State intervention area has passed over 300,000 premises and over 100,000 homes, farms and businesses have now connected to high-speed fibre broadband under the NBP.

Fine Gael is committed to making high-speed broadband accessible to everyone in Ireland, recognising its importance for work, education,

health, and rural development. With significant progress already achieved, our National Broadband Plan is transforming connectivity across the country, particularly in rural areas.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Complete National Fibre Roll-Out by 2026:** Finish installing high-speed fibre broadband to 1.1 million people, including homes, farms, and businesses nationwide, and strive to complete it ahead of schedule.
- **100 Day Plan for Blackspots:** Within the first 100 days of a new Government, commence discussions with National Broadband Ireland and other operators on broadband blackspots not currently included in the National Broadband Plan Intervention Area and which remain unlikely to be served by commercial operators to assess the number of properties and develop solutions.
- **Back the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce:** Continue to support the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce in eliminating mobile phone and internet black spots, particularly along roads and rail networks, ensuring seamless connectivity in transit areas.
- **Strengthen Digital Public Services:** Leverage digital advancements to improve public services, particularly in health and education, enhancing accessibility and efficiency.
- **High-Speed Internet in Schools:** Equip all schools with high-speed internet, ensuring that students are prepared for a digital future with access to technology resources and adaptive learning methods for diverse abilities and learning styles.

Fine Gael's broadband strategy supports a connected, digitally empowered Ireland, promoting equal access to technology for urban and rural communities alike.

## Connected Hubs

Fine Gael established the national network of 400 Connected Hubs. These hubs are having a positive impact in rural communities and have huge additional potential. We will build on successful models such as the Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen which has not only facilitated remote working but become a hub of community activity in West Cork.

### Fine Gael will:

- Expand the remit of Connected Hubs to unlock new opportunities in rural communities, enabling



remote work, e-health, remote learning and digital engagement.

- Utilise the Connected Hubs network to provide a landing space for entrepreneurs and starts ups;
- **Support Learning and Career Development through Connected Hubs:** Continue rolling out Learning Gates in Connected Hubs to bring third-level education, vocational training, and lifelong learning opportunities to rural locations, supporting career progression and skill development.
- **Develop a virtual Marketplace:** Enable local businesses to reach new customers through a virtual platform.
- **Support Social Enterprise:** Encourage social enterprise to utilise the hubs as a solution for community needs.
- **Connected Hubs Voucher Scheme:** Roll out a further round of the Connected Hubs Voucher Scheme

## Town Centre First

Fine Gael will build on the success of the Town Centre First model which establishes Local Leadership teams to unify county-level leaders from public agencies, local businesses, and community groups.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Town Centre First Plans:** Ensure a comprehensive, locally led Town Centre First Plan is developed for every town
- **Develop Strategic Community Projects:** Work with communities to create key projects in safety, health, connectivity, and town renewal.
- **Solve Local Issues and Share Successful Models:** Address local challenges with an integrated approach and adopt best practices from other regions.

## Tackling Vacant Premises in our rural Towns & Villages

### Fine Gael will:

- **Scale Up Successful Models:** We will scale up successful models such as the Rural Limerick Housing Development scheme as a model for tackling dereliction and bringing vacant properties back into residential use to be sold on the open market. Through an enhanced Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, we will mandate local authorities to adopt similar programmes across the country.

- **Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant:** Continue to roll-out the successful Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant of up to €70,000 to bring derelict properties in rural towns and villages back into use.
- **Introduce a new €100,000 Town Centre Living Grant:** We will introduce a new grant of €100,000 specifically to convert above the shop type premises in rural town centres for residential use in recognition of the additional complexities involved in renovating these properties. We will fund an architectural competition to develop exemplar demonstration projects to encourage take-up of this grant.
- **Expand the Building Acquisition Programme:** Enable communities to repurpose vacant buildings for local use.
- **Establish a Rural Delivery Team in every Local Authority:** Fine Gael will establish a dedicated Rural Delivery Team in every local authority to bring a coordinated and strategic approach to rural development at local level and ensure that Government funding delivers maximum impact in communities.

## Supporting One-Off and Rural Housing

Fine Gael supports rural housing by:

- **Take a practical approach to one-off housing:** Recognise the value of building thriving communities and family support structures, especially in rural Ireland.
- **Continue to support one-off self-builds:** Through the Help to Buy Scheme, the First Home Scheme and the Local Authority Home Loan.
- **Promote more efficient home heating systems:** We will work to promote HVO and BIOLPG as alternative fuels for rural homes
- **Invest in Rural Water Services:** Working with Local Authorities and Group Water Schemes, we will continue to invest in rural water services under the Rural Water Programme.

## Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

Fine Gael established the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund which has invested over €500million in landmark projects in rural communities across the country.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Increase the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund to a total of €2 billion out to 2035:** The Fund will focus on projects which support rural job creation and infrastructure improvements in rural towns.
- **Continue to increase funding for the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.**

## Supporting the North-West Region

We recognise that the North-West region has been identified as requiring additional support.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Run a North-West Development Fund:** Modelled after the successful Border Enterprise Development Fund, this fund will support enterprise and job creation in the North-West, driving regional growth.

## Islands

Fine Gael will provide ringfenced funding for island communities, supporting projects across regeneration funds and programmes. We will implement the "Our Living Islands" national policy, with actions to support sustainable development for island residents.

We will replicate the successful virtual health project implemented on Clare Island and look to roll this out on all islands.

## Investing in Local Amenities

- **Expand the CLÁR Programme:** Extend this programme to more areas, providing resources to address depopulation and rural challenges.
- **Increase funding for the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme:** Continue to progressively increase funding for this scheme which develops natural amenities such as greenway, walkways and forest parks in local communities.

## Community Initiatives

### Fine Gael will:

- **Community Centre Investment Fund:** Fine Gael introduced the new Community Centre Investment Fund. We will make this a permanent rolling fund to upgrade, refurbish and build local community centres. Additional funding will be provided where childcare facilities, which can be leased back to the State are incorporated.
- **Increase Support for Men's Sheds and Launch**

**Women's Sheds:** Provide increased funding for Men's Sheds and establish a Women's Shed movement with similar support.

- **Agriculture Shows:** Fine Gael will continue to support our local Agricultural Shows with funding in recognition of the unique contribution they make to rural communities.
- **Expand Library Access:** Triple the My Open Library facilities and enhance library sensory spaces for inclusive community use.
- **LEADER:** We will engage at EU level to increase funding for the next LEADER Programme and examine how we can reduce bureaucracy and simplify the application process.
- **SICAP:** Progressively increase funding for the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme which is critical to addressing social exclusion and disadvantage in communities.
- **Community Services Programme:** Continue to expand the Community Services Programme to new organisations over the lifetime of the next Government.
- **Community Programmes:** Continue to support and increase the places on successful local programmes such as CE, TÚS and the Rural Social Scheme which do vital work in local communities.

## Supporting and Expanding the Impact of Ireland's Post Office Network

Fine Gael is committed to ensuring Ireland's post office network remains a vital service for local communities, especially in rural areas. Fine Gael in government invested €30 million over three years to support a sustainable, nationwide post office network and we aim to further support post offices, maintaining their role in delivering essential services and exploring new ways to maximise their potential for local communities.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Maintain Financial Support for Post Offices:** Continue to back the nationwide network of post offices with funding to ensure their sustainability and enhance the value they bring to local communities.
- **Expand Social Welfare Services through Post Offices:** Uphold our commitment to delivering DSP payments, like jobseekers allowance, through post offices, ensuring these services remain easily accessible across Ireland.

- **Collaborate on Preserving Heritage Post**

**Office Buildings:** Partner with An Post and local communities to identify and preserve heritage post office buildings that are no longer in operation, respecting their historical value and exploring potential new uses.

Fine Gael's approach aims to keep post offices central to community life, supporting their continued role in delivering services while preserving Ireland's postal heritage.

## Rural Transport

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Increase Funding for Local Improvement**

**Schemes:** Provide additional funding for the Local Improvement Scheme and Community Involvement Schemes (CIS) to improve road safety through enhanced junctions, footpaths, and bends.

- **Separate Budgets for Roads:** Establish distinct budgets for road maintenance and new road construction starting in 2025 to ensure sustained investment.

- **Boost Rural Connectivity through Local Link:** Increase Local Link services in rural areas to better connect villages, towns, and cities.

## Animal Welfare

Fine Gael will strengthen animal welfare protections by:

- **Expanding Dog Warden Roles:** Transition local authority dog wardens into animal welfare officers.
- **Enforce Restricted Breeds Policy:** Maintain the ban on XL Bully dogs and update laws to empower local authorities on dog licensing and welfare.

## Volunteering

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Publish a new National Volunteering Strategy:** Commit to further investment in volunteering and continue the national Community Volunteers Programme.

## Charities

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Promote charity work:** Step up engagement with charitable organisations to make it easier for them to register formally as a charity and continue to update the tax code to promote charitable donations.

## Philanthropy

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Back the new National Philanthropy Policy:** Raise awareness of the positive impact of philanthropy and ensure appropriate fiscal measures are in place to facilitate its growth.

## Social Innovation

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Promote social innovation principles:** Continue to support the work of Rethink Ireland to provide cash grants and business support to non-profit organisations making a difference in communities. We will integrate social innovation principles across government departments.





**John McNulty**  
Candidate for  
Donegal



**Nina Carberry**  
MEP for Midlands  
North West

**John McGahon**  
Candidate for  
Louth



**Vicki Casserly**  
Candidate for  
Dublin Mid West

## Advancing Transport and Tourism

Fine Gael recognises that robust connectivity is essential for Ireland's economy, communities, and tourism industry. By investing in diverse transport options—roads, public transport, active travel, maritime, and aviation—we aim to enhance access across urban and rural areas, giving people more choice and supporting sustainable growth.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Build Major Public Transport Projects:** Prioritise the delivery of Bus Connects, MetroLink, Luas Finglas, the DART+ Programme, and the Cork Commuter Rail Programme to improve urban connectivity and convenience. We will commission an independent feasibility study into continuing MetroLink from the city to South West Dublin.
- **Expand Public Transport Access and Affordability:** Roll out contactless fare payments on all public transport and keep fares low, maintaining the 20% reduction on public service obligation routes, with further reductions as resources allow.
- **Support Road Network Development:** Invest in essential road projects, including the Galway Ring Road and the Cork to Limerick motorway, while maintaining the existing network to support seamless connectivity across regions.
- **Develop Active Travel and Mobility Hubs:** Establish mobility hubs in each local authority area, offering integrated transport services like bike and scooter sharing, EV charging, car sharing, and carpooling. Invest in cycleways, greenways, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to encourage active travel.
- **Enhance EV Charging Infrastructure:** Increase the number of EV chargers, especially in rural areas, to support Ireland's transition to electric vehicles and provide convenient access for all communities.
- **Promote Sustainable Transport in Decarbonising Zones:** Work with local authorities to develop decarbonising zones aimed at a 75% carbon reduction by 2030, focusing on pedestrianisation, cycling facilities, and renewable energy in transport.
- **Introduce a Student Bike Scheme:** Offer a bike scheme specifically for students, mirroring the

bike-to-work scheme, and coordinate bike and e-bike rental programmes across further and higher education campuses.

- **Invest in accessible public and local transport:** Ensuring operators provide safe and accessible access for all passengers.

## Tourism and Transport-Oriented Development

Fine Gael will focus on linking new housing developments to public transport through Transport-Oriented Development, ensuring easy access for residents and visitors alike.

By investing in a range of transport options and maintaining a flexible, community-led approach, Fine Gael will improve connectivity, reduce carbon emissions, and make Ireland's transport network more accessible and efficient for everyone.

## Supporting Electric Vehicles and Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

Fine Gael is dedicated to accelerating the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) across Ireland, expanding the charging network, and investing in essential road and active travel infrastructure to support a more sustainable and accessible future.

### Electric Vehicles

To boost EV uptake,

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Expand Charging Infrastructure:** Increase the number of publicly available EV charging points four-fold to nearly 10,000, ensuring better coverage nationwide.
- **Review EV Purchase Grants:** Examine the current EV grant system, focusing on potential additional support for residents in areas with limited public transport options.
- **Explore the feasibility of a Vehicle Scrappage Scheme:** Mindful of the need to decarbonise our vehicle fleet, we will consider the introduction of a scrappage scheme to replace older, polluting vehicles with electric cars and electric bikes, promoting a cleaner transport system.



- **Assess Customs Duties on Imported EVs:** Review customs duties on second-hand EV imports to make electric vehicles more affordable.
- **Explore Solar Storage Grants:** Consider grants for solar storage batteries to encourage EV ownership and allow users to store energy for charging at optimal times.
- **Develop a Charging App:** Collaborate with commercial operators to create a nationwide app for both public and private charging points, enhancing accessibility and ease of use for EV owners.

## Road Infrastructure

Fine Gael recognises that a robust road network is crucial for connectivity.

### We will:

- **Advance Key Road Projects:** Continue developing essential road projects, including the Galway Outer Ring Road and M20 Cork–Limerick Motorway.
- **Increased funding for new and existing roads:** We will increase funding for new roads and the maintenance of existing roads.
- **Increase Funding for Local Improvement Schemes:** Provide additional funding for the Local Improvement Scheme and Community Involvement Schemes (CIS) to improve road safety through enhanced junctions, footpaths, and bends.

## Active Travel Initiatives

Fine Gael is committed to promoting walking and cycling as safe, accessible travel options. We will:

- **Expand Walking and Cycling Infrastructure:** Invest in dedicated infrastructure for walking and cycling to promote active travel across Ireland for those commuting or enjoying the countryside.
- **Support Greenways and Safe Routes to School:** Continue rolling out the greenways programme and expand the Safe Routes to School initiative, making travel safer for young people.
- **Ensure Universal Accessibility:** Adopt a universal design approach in all active travel projects to ensure accessibility for everyone, including people with disabilities, allowing more community members to participate fully and independently.

Fine Gael's approach aims to enhance sustainable transport options and infrastructure for everyone, building a cleaner, safer, and more accessible Ireland for the future.

## Building a Comprehensive Public Transport Network and Supporting Key Sectors

Fine Gael is dedicated to creating a well-connected, accessible public transport network across Ireland that meets the needs of urban and rural communities alike. By investing in expanded services, infrastructure, and workforce development, we aim to make travel easier, more efficient, and environmentally sustainable.

## Expanding Public Transport Services

### Fine Gael will:

- **Boost Rural Connectivity through Local Link:** Increase Local Link services in rural areas to better connect villages, towns, and cities.
- **Invest in Urban Transport through Bus Connects:** Expand Bus Connects in cities and continue to strengthen local urban transport in towns.
- **Grow and Modernise the Bus Fleet:** Continue upgrading the bus fleet, improving service reliability and comfort.
- **Increase Route Flexibility:** Work with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to allow flexible pick-ups on Local Link routes, enhancing service accessibility.

## Enhancing Rail Infrastructure

Fine Gael recognises the importance of expanding and modernising our rail network. We will:

- **Implement the All-Island Strategic Rail Review:** Work collaboratively to deliver the recommendations from this review for improved connectivity across the island of Ireland.
- **Advance Key Rail Projects:** Prioritise MetroLink, Luas Finglas, the DART+ Programme, and Cork Commuter Rail under the National Development Plan.
- **Modernise the Rail System:** Focus on additional track capacity, electrification, increased service speeds, and new routes to transform rail services.
- **Expand the Western Rail Corridor:** Progress the Western Rail Corridor, starting with reinstating the Claremorris to Athenry line for regional connectivity and freight transport.
- **Support City Transport Strategies:** Ensure each metropolitan area has a tailored transport strategy,



including frequent bus services and light rail where appropriate.

## Supporting Taxis and Local Transport

Taxis play a crucial role in public transport, especially in underserved areas. Fine Gael will:

- **Enhance Support for Local Taxis:** Collaborate with the NTA to improve local taxi service provision.
- **Provide Relief for Taxi Drivers:** Extend the ten-year vehicle limit for taxis registered in 2015, offering another year of service.
- **Encourage Electric Taxis:** Continue the scrappage scheme to help taxi and hackney drivers replace older vehicles with electric models, supporting a greener fleet.

## Aviation

Fine Gael is committed to enhancing Ireland's aviation sector, especially regional airports. We will:

- **Work to remove the passenger cap at Dublin Airport:** As our national airport, we must ensure Dublin Airport is facilitated to grow in line with the needs of our population and economy. We will also deal with genuine issues like noise, sustainability and flight movements at night.
- **Review National Aviation Policy:** Conduct an urgent review to maximise the use of regional airports including Knock, Shannon, Cork, Donegal and Kerry. We will continue to progress Waterford Airport by ensuring matching funding for the proposal to lengthen and widen the runway.
- **Promote Sustainable Aviation:** Develop a National Sustainable Aviation Fuel Policy Roadmap and support Shannon Airport as a hub for testing new aviation technologies.
- **Developing Air Cargo Infrastructure:** Assess the feasibility of an all-island (North-South) approach to strengthening speed to market and competitiveness of indigenous and FDI exporting firms, especially when it comes to the provision of air cargo infrastructure.

## Supporting Ireland's Ports

Ireland's ports are essential for trade, tourism, and energy.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Implement the National Ports Policy:** Complete the review and ensure our ports remain competitive and resilient.
- **Support Offshore Renewable Energy:** Develop port infrastructure to facilitate upcoming offshore renewable energy projects, with a regionally balanced approach.
- Consider the funding model for our ports, while mindful of the commercial mandate of our national ports

## Logistics and Road Haulage

Fine Gael recognises the vital role logistics and haulage play in Ireland's economy and will:

- **Enhance Competitiveness in Haulage:** Support the sector to maintain competitiveness in a challenging market.
- **Promote Decarbonisation in Haulage:** Aid the road haulage sector in its transition to a more sustainable, low-carbon future.
- **Implement the Road Haulage Strategy:** Deliver on the Road Haulage Strategy through 2031 to support a resilient logistics network.

Fine Gael's approach to transport and logistics is focused on building a connected, efficient, and sustainable system that serves people and businesses across Ireland, ensuring balanced growth and modern infrastructure for a dynamic economy.

## Enhancing Road Safety

Fine Gael is committed to reducing road deaths and creating safer roads for everyone in Ireland. We will support the implementation of Ireland's Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030, increase public awareness, and crack down on dangerous driving.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Strengthen Driver Education:** Enhance driver training and introduce re-education courses as a judicial sanction for those who commit road traffic offences.
- **Expand Speed Enforcement:** Increase the number of average speed and static speed cameras to curb speeding and encourage safer driving.
- **Automate Detection of Mobile Phone and Seatbelt Violations:** Introduce new road safety cameras to automatically detect mobile phone use and non-wearing of seat belts.
- **Modernise Garda Roads Policing Fleet:** Invest in

high-powered roads policing vehicles and continue to upgrade the Garda fleet to support effective enforcement.

- **Create a Public Portal for Dashcam Footage:** Allow the public to upload dashcam footage of dangerous driving to a new Garda portal, making it easier to report incidents.
- **Target High-Risk Areas:** Use ongoing data analysis to identify accident-prone areas and focus road safety interventions where they're most needed.
- **Review Road Safety Authority Recommendations:** Consider recommendations from the ongoing review of the Road Safety Authority to strengthen overall road safety measures.

Fine Gael's approach prioritises safety, education, and advanced technology to reduce accidents and make Ireland's roads safer for everyone.

## Strengthening Ireland's Tourism Sector

Fine Gael recognises the essential role tourism plays in Ireland's economy, supporting over 250,000 jobs across the country. We have guided the sector through challenging times after the economic crash and COVID-19 and are committed to growing Ireland's tourism industry. With support for Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland, we aim to showcase Ireland as a high-quality and accessible destination for international visitors and locals alike.

### Improving Access

To ensure easy access to Ireland's tourism destinations,

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Expand Public Transport Links:** Work with local authorities and national bodies to improve public transport options to key tourism spots, making travel more convenient for visitors.
- **Invest in Greenways and Cycle Routes:** Continue developing a connected network of greenways and cycle routes across Ireland, encouraging sustainable travel and expanding scenic options for tourists.
- **Develop Blueways:** Collaborate with partners north and south of the border to expand blueways, enhancing water-based tourism and recreational opportunities.

## 2029 – Year of the Invitation

To drive a major tourism boost,

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Launch the Year of the Invitation:** In 2029, we will extend a global invitation for visitors to reconnect with Ireland, 16 years after the success of The Gathering in 2013, which generated €170 million in revenue. This event will inspire local communities to organise welcoming events, celebrating Irish culture and reconnecting with the global diaspora.

## Expanding our tourism offering around the country

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Enhance our regional tourism brands:** Work with Fáilte Ireland to develop a balanced regional spread of tourism throughout the country, further advancing the experience brands of Hidden Heartlands, Ireland's Ancient East, the Wild Atlantic Way and Dublin. We will invest in regenerative tourism projects in the Midlands with the help of the EU Just Transition Fund. We want to develop the tourism potential of lands in State ownership.
- **Developing tourism careers:** Work to develop long-term, sustainable, well paid careers in the tourism industry, and expand courses in tourism and hospitality.
- **Reduced VAT rate:** Reduce the VAT rate for food, food services, admissions to entertainment, hairdressing and beauticians to 11% while reducing the cost of employment for the hospitality sector through our PRSI rebate scheme.

Fine Gael's plan aims to make Ireland a premier destination through enhanced access, enriched experiences, and community-led tourism initiatives, boosting the local and national economy.

# Environment, Climate, and Communications

Fine Gael is committed to making Ireland resilient to climate change, recognising that achieving our climate goals is essential to our future economic success. Sustainable growth, investment in resilient infrastructure, and strong community involvement will be at the heart of our approach to climate action.

## Achieving Our Climate Goals

Fine Gael's climate strategy includes:

- **Building Resilient Infrastructure:** Invest in infrastructure that can withstand climate impacts, securing Ireland's long-term economic and environmental resilience.
- **Integrating Sustainability and Competitiveness:** Align sustainability goals with economic growth to create opportunities and lasting prosperity.
- **Engaging Communities and Businesses:** Partner with households and businesses to adopt sustainable practices and support them through this transition.

In 2023, we achieved a nearly 7% reduction in emissions, equating to almost one tonne less climate pollution per person. Fine Gael's approach ensures continued climate progress while growing the economy.

## Ireland as a Green Energy Leader

Fine Gael envisions Ireland as energy-independent and a net energy exporter by 2040. Our focus will be on:

- **Investing in Renewable Energy:** Expand Ireland's renewable energy sources, including wind, solar, and emerging technologies, while ensuring security of supply.
- **Creating a Cleaner, Healthier Environment:** Climate action will lead to cleaner air, warmer homes, and green jobs, fostering a healthier and biodiverse environment.

## Community-Led Climate Action

Fine Gael will take a balanced, long-term approach that benefits and involves communities:

- **Support Community Ownership and Local Jobs:** Increase local ownership of renewable projects, and create jobs and opportunities, especially in rural areas.
- **Empower Local Authorities:** Require ambitious local climate action plans from each council to drive meaningful change.
- **Assist Families with Retrofitting:** Make home retrofitting affordable for families, improving energy efficiency and reducing costs.
- **Lead by Example:** Ensure all new public buildings are zero-emission from 2028, setting a standard for sustainability.

Fine Gael's climate strategy prioritises sustainable growth, economic resilience, and community well-being, aiming to secure a cleaner, greener future for Ireland.

## Making Climate Action Accessible

Fine Gael has led on climate and published the first Climate Action Plan in 2019, achieving meaningful emissions reductions over recent years. We are committed to halving emissions by 2030 (from 2018 levels) and reaching climate neutrality by 2050. To reach these goals, we will drive further ambition, streamline communication, and make climate action accessible to all.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Simplify Climate Communication:** Remove jargon and use clear language when discussing climate action. For example, resources like [climatejargonbuster.ie](https://climatejargonbuster.ie) help people better understand key terms and ideas.
- **Launch "Know Your Number":** Develop a tool for individuals and households to see the climate impact of their daily choices, from transport and heating to purchases, helping everyone contribute to a sustainable future.
- **Increase Innovation Funding:** Expand support for Centres of Excellence on college campuses to foster partnerships between academia and industry, developing new solutions to cut emissions.

## Supporting a Just Transition

As Ireland transitions to a low-carbon economy, Fine Gael is committed to ensuring that no one is left behind. We will invest in communities, support job creation in the green economy, and help people gain the skills needed for a sustainable future.

### Fine Gael will:



- **Invest in Transitioning Communities:** Make multi-million, multi-year investments in areas especially impacted by the shift away from fossil fuels.
- **Equitably Allocate Resources:** Ensure balanced funding for regions most affected by job losses as we move to a greener economy.
- **Equip Individuals with New Skills:** Provide training and upskilling opportunities in sustainable industries.
- **Engage with the Just Transition Commission:** Support the Commission's work to listen to communities, address their concerns, and ensure they benefit from the green transition.

Fine Gael's approach aims to make climate action clear, accessible, and beneficial for all communities, paving the way to a resilient and inclusive low-carbon Ireland.

## Advancing Renewable Energy for Ireland's Future

Fine Gael is committed to achieving 80% of Ireland's electricity generation from renewable sources by 2030. To reach this goal, we will establish a clear regulatory pathway, enable network upgrades, improve port facilities, and ensure a dependable schedule of renewable energy auctions. We are focused on ensuring that local communities benefit from Ireland's renewable potential, with job creation, community ownership, and tangible economic returns.

### Empowering Communities in Renewable Energy

Fine Gael believes that communities hosting renewable projects should directly benefit.

#### We will:

- **Promote Community Ownership:** Support communities in funding and securing grid access for local renewable projects.
- **Create Local Jobs in Renewable Sectors:** Facilitate employment opportunities in constructing, maintaining, and servicing renewable infrastructure, integrating local businesses into the supply chain.

### Improving Energy Infrastructure and Export Opportunities

To secure a reliable and competitive energy supply,

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Fast-Track Offshore Wind Development:** Prioritise the publication of Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs) and increase resources for responsible agencies to accelerate offshore wind projects.
- **Publish Wind Energy Development Guidelines:** Ensure communities are consulted on wind capacity projects and benefit directly from them.
- **Enhance Port Infrastructure:** Develop a strategic, regionally balanced approach to port upgrades, preparing for offshore renewable projects.

## Supporting Economic Growth with Renewable Energy

Fine Gael aims to leverage renewable energy to attract new industries and support existing ones:

- **Green Energy Industrial Parks:** Develop Green Energy Industrial Parks to attract large-scale investments in regional locations, co-located with renewable generation, and inspired by successful international models.
- **Support Data Centres as Renewable Catalysts:** Allow data centres that contribute to economic growth and efficient grid usage, prioritising waste heat capture for district heating systems.
- **Implement Shannon Estuary Taskforce Recommendations:** Keep the recommendations of the Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce central to renewable energy planning, recognising the region's potential.

## Driving Innovation and Small-Scale Renewables

Fine Gael is committed to investing in emerging technologies and supporting small-scale renewables:

- **Support Emerging Renewable Technologies:** Back research and development in wave, tidal, and hydrogen energy, utilising test sites in An Spidéal, Belmullet, and Ringaskiddy.
- **Integrate Irish Companies into Offshore Wind Supply Chain:** Help Irish companies participate in the offshore wind supply chain, raising their international profile.
- **Expand Small-Scale Renewable Support:** Promote the Small-Scale Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (SRESS) to simplify market access for community-owned solar and wind projects.

## Reducing Energy Poverty with Surplus Energy

Fine Gael will explore ways to use surplus renewable energy to help reduce energy poverty, drawing on successful models such as EnergyCloud Ireland, ensuring that renewable energy benefits all communities.

Fine Gael's renewable energy strategy supports a cleaner, energy-independent Ireland by prioritising local engagement, innovation, and a robust framework for sustainable economic growth.

## Supporting Industry to Decarbonise

Fine Gael is committed to helping Irish industries reduce emissions through investment in efficient, low-carbon technologies. Our approach prioritises reducing emissions among the highest emitters, while also ensuring small businesses benefit from the climate transition, lower their energy bills, and maintain competitiveness.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Prioritise Decarbonising Large Emitters:** Focus on reducing emissions from Ireland's biggest industrial emitters to achieve the most significant impact first.
- **Launch a Roadmap for Industrial Heat Decarbonisation:** Develop a targeted roadmap to help manufacturers transition to low-carbon heating solutions in their production processes.
- **Promote Energy Efficiency Grants for Small Businesses:** Increase awareness of grants, like the €10,000 Energy Efficiency Grant, to support small businesses in adopting energy-efficient technologies, cutting costs, and reducing their environmental footprint.

Fine Gael's plan supports both large and small businesses in their climate action journey, ensuring a sustainable, resilient future for Irish industry.

## Futureproofing Ireland's Built Environment

Fine Gael is committed to making Ireland's buildings more sustainable and energy-efficient, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and lowering energy costs for households. By promoting retrofitting, renewable heating, and solar energy, we aim to make homes warmer, cheaper to heat, and less dependent on fossil fuels.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Continue Generous Retrofit Grants:** Provide grants of up to 50% for homeowners who wish to retrofit, enhancing energy efficiency and reducing costs. We will ramp up our targets significantly to deliver 75,000 B2-equivalent home retrofits each year from 2026 to 2030, with a focus on lower income households.
- **Promote Group Retrofitting:** Encourage group retrofitting projects, allowing neighbours to upgrade their homes together with guided support, making the process easier and more economical.
- **Promote use of smart meters:** Work with energy companies and relevant agencies to fully utilise the capabilities of smart meters and promote use of cheaper tariffs to reduce household energy bills.
- **Introduce New Support for Low-Income Families:** Offer a grant for low-income families with homes in very poor energy condition who don't qualify for free upgrades, focusing on essential improvements like attic insulation and heating controls, especially in regions with older housing.
- **Enable Retrofits in Mixed Housing Estates:** Ensure private homes in social housing estates can also opt into retrofitting projects at an adjusted cost, creating a fair opportunity for all residents.
- **Support Medically Vulnerable Households:** Extend schemes to help households with chronic health conditions install solar panels and restore the Warmth and Wellbeing scheme for low-income individuals with chronic respiratory conditions.
- **Explore a 'Fair Deal' for Retrofits:** Assess the feasibility of a retrofit financing model for older adults, enabling them to benefit from reduced bills with costs settled by their estate.
- **Promote Solar in Schools and Third Level Institutions:** Drive the installation of solar panels in schools and third level institutions across Ireland, supporting renewable energy uptake in education facilities.
- **Promote the Home Energy Upgrade Loan Scheme:** Highlight the €500 million Home Energy Upgrade Loan Scheme, offering low-interest loans for home energy upgrades, from €5,000 to €75,000.
- **Support Transition from Oil and Fossil Fuels:** Target older homes still using oil to switch to renewable heating systems, lowering carbon footprints and costs. Support the use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) and other biofuels to reduce emissions from existing home

boilers where deep retrofits are not possible in the short term.

- **Encourage District Heating Systems:** Develop district heating systems across Ireland, building on the successful model established in Tallaght.
- **Promote Timber in Construction:** Implement new regulations to encourage the use of timber in new building projects, supporting sustainable building materials.

Fine Gael's approach aims to make Ireland's buildings more energy-efficient, comfortable, and affordable, while significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting a sustainable future.

## Preparing for Climate Adaptation and Extreme Weather

Fine Gael is committed to protecting Ireland's present and future generations by investing in climate adaptation measures to manage the impacts of extreme weather events. We recognise the need to support communities, businesses, and ecosystems as climate risks continue to rise.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Launch an Extreme Weather Event Assistance Scheme:** Establish a new funding scheme for businesses and community organisations that struggle to secure insurance for extreme weather damages. This scheme will unify current fragmented funding approaches, providing a single, accessible support system.
- **Invest in Flood Relief Initiatives:** Continue our multi-billion euro investment in flood relief projects to protect homes, farms, and businesses from the threats posed by river and coastal flooding, safeguarding livelihoods and communities.
- **Accelerate Flooding Projects:** Increase collaboration among local authorities, the Office of Public Works (OPW), and the newly proposed Department of Infrastructure, Climate and Transport to fast-track flood relief schemes currently in design, planning, or construction stages.
- **Develop Nature-Based Flood Management Solutions:** Implement nature-based catchment management solutions, which mitigate flood risk by storing or slowing water flow in the environment, allowing gradual release into rivers, streams, or groundwater. This approach helps control flooding while benefiting biodiversity and water quality.

Fine Gael's climate adaptation strategy aims to build resilient communities by creating proactive, comprehensive solutions that protect Ireland's infrastructure, environment, and people from the increasing impact of extreme weather.

## Driving a Circular Economy

Fine Gael is committed to ending the wasteful cycle of take-make-consume-throw-away, promoting sustainable practices that extend the life of products and reduce waste. Our Circular Economy Framework will set ambitious targets with clear reporting mechanisms and address Ireland's capacity to treat non-hazardous and hazardous waste locally, reducing dependence on external facilities.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Expand Access to Composting:** Ensure all households, including those in apartments, have access to a compost bin, along with simple guidelines on waste minimisation and correct bin usage.
- **Transform Bring Centres into Rediscovery Hubs:** Upgrade existing bring centres to offer services such as equipment repair, exchanges, and advice on reducing waste, making it easier for people to adopt sustainable practices.
- **Pilot Package-Free Zones in Supermarkets:** Launch a pilot for package-free sections in major supermarkets, aiming for a nationwide rollout, and support businesses as we introduce a levy on single-use cups.
- **Revise Public Procurement for Waste Minimisation:** Update procurement rules to ensure government purchasing supports waste reduction and circular economy principles.
- **Expand Producer Responsibility Schemes:** Build on existing schemes for packaging, batteries, and tyres by introducing more Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes, encouraging manufacturers to take accountability for the full lifecycle of their products.

Fine Gael's plan for a circular economy fosters sustainable habits, reduces waste, and builds a more resource-efficient Ireland.



## Public Sector Leading on Climate Action

Fine Gael believes the government, local authorities, and State agencies should lead by example in climate action, integrating sustainability into all aspects of public service. By setting clear targets and policies, we can drive innovation, reduce costs, and support Ireland's climate goals.

### Fine Gael's Commitments for Public Sector Leadership

- **Renewable Energy Plans for Every State Body:** Mandate each government department, local authority, and State agency to publish a renewable energy plan within the first year of government, detailing how they will use renewables in operations.
- **Develop an annual programme of measures for all State bodies to undertake:** Designed to drive innovation and economies of scale, public bodies will be required to implement one specific measure per year such as installing heating controls on all public buildings, or only purchasing zero-emission vehicles.
- **Efficient Heating in Public Buildings:** Ensure public buildings are heated only when necessary, avoiding unnecessary energy use.
- **Set Embodied Carbon Targets for Public Projects:** Require every public project to meet an embodied carbon target, ensuring construction materials and processes are environmentally responsible.
- **Deep Retrofit of Public Sector Buildings:** Undertake deep retrofits of State buildings, such as hospitals and schools, to enhance comfort, improve energy efficiency, and reduce costs.
- **Zero-Emission New Buildings by 2028:** Ensure all new public buildings are zero-emission from 2028 onwards, setting a national standard for sustainable construction.
- **Solar and Renewable Energy for Public Buildings:** Install solar panels, renewable energy sources, or connect to district heating where feasible in all suitable public buildings.
- **Zero-Emission State Fleet:** Transition the State's vehicle fleet to zero-emissions, with exemptions only where absolutely necessary.
- **'Green Audits' for Suppliers:** Require each State body to conduct a Green Audit, assessing suppliers for sustainability, which will encourage businesses to offer more eco-friendly products and services.

## Empowering Local Authorities

Local authorities are central to impactful, community-based climate action. Fine Gael will:

- **Fund Local Climate Action Plans:** Allocate additional resources to local authorities, empowering them to implement tailored local climate action plans that meet the specific needs of their communities.
- **Drive Local Innovation:** Create a fund to support local authorities in developing innovative and exemplar climate projects, inspiring further community action.
- **Develop Circular Economy Strategies:** Require each local authority to create a Circular Strategy focused on waste reduction, with particular emphasis on food and construction waste.
- **Increase Local Biodiversity:** Mandate local authorities to expand green spaces, parks, and pocket parks to promote biodiversity and support urban ecosystems.

Fine Gael's strategy aims to make the public sector a model of climate responsibility, demonstrating how integrated, sustainable practices can benefit the environment, communities, and the economy.

## Carbon Tax for a Sustainable Future

Fine Gael is committed to using carbon tax as a key tool to encourage a shift away from fossil fuels and invest in a sustainable future. This approach ensures those who are most vulnerable receive targeted support, making the transition fair and equitable.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Stay on Track to €100 per Tonne by 2030:** Continue with the planned carbon tax increase to reach €100 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2030, aligning with recommendations from the Climate Change Advisory Council and scientific experts.
- **Reinvest Carbon Tax Revenue in Vulnerable Households:** Use revenue from the carbon tax to fund social welfare measures that support the most vulnerable, helping them manage energy costs and adapt to greener alternatives.
- **Support Fossil Fuel Transition in Key Regions:** Direct carbon tax revenue to regions most in need of support for transitioning away from fossil fuels, ensuring targeted, equitable investment across the country.

Fine Gael's approach to carbon tax combines strong climate action with targeted support, enabling Ireland to reduce emissions responsibly while protecting those most affected by the shift to a low-carbon economy.

## Reducing Litter and Waste

Fine Gael is committed to tackling littering and illegal dumping, creating cleaner cities, towns, and villages across Ireland. Through stronger enforcement, regular clean-ups, and ambitious waste reduction targets, we aim to keep our public spaces beautiful and support a more sustainable approach to waste.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Raise Fines for Littering and Dumping:** Increase penalties to deter littering and illegal dumping, ensuring those who harm our environment face significant consequences.
- **Target Dumping Black Spots:** Use tools like CCTV and drones to monitor dumping hotspots, making it easier to catch and penalise offenders.
- **Boost Litter Inspections:** Increase the number and frequency of litter inspections to keep our communities clean and ensure accountability.
- **Partner with Local Authorities for Cleaner Public Spaces:** Collaborate with local authorities to ensure cities, towns, and villages are cleaned more thoroughly and regularly, improving quality of life and community pride.
- **Set Waste Reduction Targets:** Establish ambitious goals to cut waste in all sectors, with a special emphasis on food waste, supporting the entire supply chain in reducing excess and encouraging sustainable practices.

Fine Gael's plan prioritises clean, waste-free communities while building a culture of responsibility and sustainability across Ireland.

## Protecting Biodiversity and Restoring Nature

Fine Gael is dedicated to preserving Ireland's natural landscapes, restoring biodiversity, and supporting sustainable practices that benefit both the environment and local communities. Through fair implementation of conservation laws, targeted

actions, and community engagement, we aim to protect and enhance Ireland's natural assets.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Implement the Nature Restoration Law with Community Engagement:** Ensure the Nature Restoration Law is fairly applied, with sufficient funding and in consultation with local communities to balance conservation with local needs.
- **Set Geographic Biodiversity Targets:** Commit to clear targets within the National Biodiversity Plan, working closely with local authorities to achieve meaningful progress in each area.
- **Restore National Parks and Natural Assets:** Conduct assessments of biodiversity in national parks, water bodies, bogs, and other natural sites in each county, and commit to actions to restore and protect these critical ecosystems.
- **Improve Urban Air Quality:** Continue efforts to raise air quality standards, especially in urban areas, ensuring healthier environments for all.
- **Support Research on Soil Health:** Invest in research to improve soil productivity, promoting sustainable agricultural practices that enhance biodiversity.
- **Encourage Solar Adoption on Farms:** Maintain the 60% grant aid through the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme to help farmers install solar PV systems, supporting renewable energy on farms and reducing their environmental footprint.

Fine Gael's approach to biodiversity and nature restoration is rooted in community cooperation and sustainable practices, ensuring a resilient and thriving natural environment for future generations.

## Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Fine Gael is committed to accelerating Ireland's progress toward the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, addressing critical areas such as poverty eradication, climate action, and improved living standards for all. These goals represent a global commitment to a better future, and we will adopt a coordinated approach to drive impactful action both at home and abroad.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Implement a Whole-of-Government Strategy:** Take a comprehensive, cross-departmental

approach to fully integrate the SDGs into national policies and initiatives, ensuring that each goal is actively pursued across all levels of government.

- **Strengthen International Collaboration through Development Assistance:** Use our Official Development Assistance programme to support sustainable development initiatives globally, particularly in areas where communities are vulnerable to climate impacts.
- **Advance National and Global Climate Action:** Actively support climate initiatives to address the severe effects of drought, famine, and lack of clean water in collaboration with international partners.
- **Support Young Social Innovators:** Support the work of around 15,000 young people annually to help their communities and promote the Sustainable Development Goals.

Fine Gael's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals is rooted in a holistic approach, leveraging national and international partnerships to create meaningful progress toward a sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all.

## Promoting Digital Inclusion for All

Fine Gael recognises that digital skills are essential for participating in today's world, from accessing public services to pursuing career opportunities. We are committed to increasing digital inclusion across Ireland, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to develop basic digital skills and continue learning throughout life.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Raise Digital Skills Levels:** Work to ensure that 80% of adults have at least basic digital skills by 2030, empowering individuals to engage confidently in the digital world.
- **Partner with Libraries and Education Boards for Lifelong Learning:** Collaborate with libraries and Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to provide accessible digital learning resources, making lifelong learning available to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Fine Gael's approach to digital inclusion supports a digitally connected society where everyone can benefit from the opportunities that digital skills provide.

## Protecting and Enhancing Inland Fisheries

Fine Gael is committed to preserving Ireland's inland fisheries, recognising their importance to the rural economy and their environmental value. We will ensure that our inland waters remain healthy, sustainable, and well-managed to support local communities and ecosystems.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Dedicated Minister:** Establish a dedicated Minister of State for Fisheries.
- **Support Sustainable Fisheries Management:** Develop a comprehensive plan to maintain healthy fish stocks and protect inland fisheries as vital resources for rural communities.
- **Safeguard the Great Western Lakes:** Officially recognise and protect these lakes as salmonoid waters, ensuring they remain pristine habitats for native fish species.
- **Modernise Inland Fisheries Legislation:** Update and consolidate legislation on inland fisheries, clarifying ownership, title, and fishing rights to address longstanding complexities and uncertainties.
- **Conduct a Governance Review of Inland Fisheries Ireland:** Undertake an independent review to strengthen corporate governance and oversight at Inland Fisheries Ireland.
- **Evaluate Inland Fisheries Ireland's Effectiveness:** Assess the agency's performance since its establishment to gather stakeholder feedback and determine if restructuring or a merger with the National Parks and Wildlife Service is merited.
- **Increase Resources and Oversight:** Ensure robust oversight, accountability, and engagement within the inland fisheries sector to enhance protection and sustainable development.

Fine Gael's approach will safeguard Ireland's inland fisheries, ensuring they remain vibrant, well-managed, and beneficial for local economies and biodiversity alike.



# Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

## Supporting Culture, Creativity, and the Arts

Fine Gael believes that culture and the arts are essential to a well-rounded society, providing opportunities for education, expression, and community engagement. We have doubled arts funding from 2018 to 2025, reinforcing our commitment to integrating culture and creativity into every child's education and to supporting artists and cultural spaces. We will create a new Arts and Culture Capital Investment Scheme named 'Spreagadh' (Inspiration), ensuring that we have performance spaces and artist workspaces to help grow this sector and foster new talent.

## Fine Gael's Commitment to Arts in Education

- **Creative Education for All:** Ensure that every child has access to tuition in art, music, drama, or coding through an expanded Creative Schools programme, embedding creativity within the curriculum to develop diverse skills and cultural appreciation.

## Supporting Artists and Expanding Creative Spaces

Fine Gael recognises the challenges faced by artists, particularly in securing affordable spaces to work, exhibit, and perform. To nurture Ireland's creative community,

### Fine Gael will:

- **Increase Artist Workspaces:** Support the redevelopment of sites like Dublin's Odlum's Flour Mills to create shared studios, rehearsal spaces, and performance venues, offering affordable spaces for artists to work and collaborate.
- **Expand Creative Spaces Across Ireland:** Monitor and support local authorities in providing more studios and performance venues through the new pilot scheme, encouraging access to creative spaces nationwide.
- **Use Suitable Unoccupied Spaces for Arts:** Partner with the OPW to make temporary use of

vacant buildings as studios or performance spaces, providing flexible and accessible venues for artists.

- **Simplify Festival Organisation:** Streamline licensing, traffic management, and insurance processes to facilitate festival planning, promoting vibrant, accessible events for communities.
- **Sustain Funding for the Arts:** Maintain and grow funding for the Arts Council, Culture Ireland, and other organisations that support both national and international artistic endeavours.
- **Continue the Basic Income for Artists:** Advance and assess the Basic Income for Artists pilot to maximise its impact, supporting financial stability for artists and fostering a thriving cultural sector.

Fine Gael's vision for culture and the arts aims to foster creative expression at all ages, enhance support for artists and art workers, and ensure everyone can access and contribute to Ireland's rich cultural heritage.

## Fuelling Ireland's Cultural Landscape

Fine Gael believes that culture should be accessible to all, enriching communities and celebrating Ireland's heritage, creativity, and diversity. Our aim is to foster a vibrant cultural environment where everyone, especially young people, can participate and thrive.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Launch a Culture Card for Young People:** Introduce a €300 Culture Card for 16 and 17-year-olds to access theatre, music, and art events, making cultural experiences more accessible for young people.
- **Enhance Access to National Collections:** Work with National Cultural Institutions to improve public access to Ireland's collections through exhibitions, loans, and educational programmes, extending their reach to communities nationwide.
- **Encourage Late-Night Openings:** Promote later opening hours at museums, galleries, and other cultural venues to offer flexible access for visitors.
- **Support Local and National Cultural Institutions:** Continue grants for community-based cultural institutions and support large cultural centres, ensuring vibrant cultural opportunities across Ireland.
- **Redevelop the GPO as a Historic Landmark:** Undertake a major redevelopment of the GPO,

preserving its historic importance and enhancing its role as a key cultural landmark in Dublin.

- **Fund the National Concert Hall:** Provide sustained funding and support to further develop the National Concert Hall as a premier cultural venue.
- **Prioritise the Cork Events Centre:** Drive the completion of the Cork Events Centre to enhance Cork's cultural landscape and boost the city's regeneration.
- **Support Creative Youth and Arts Diversity:** Continue funding Creative Youth, ensuring inclusivity and access for young people of diverse backgrounds interested in the arts.
- **Expand Arts in Early Education:** Introduce and expand arts programming in early childhood education and care settings, nurturing creativity from a young age.

Fine Gael's commitment to culture aims to make the arts accessible, celebrate Ireland's history, and foster a dynamic cultural sector for future generations.

## Supporting a Strong, Independent and Diverse Media

Fine Gael is committed to a strong, independent media sector that provides essential public service broadcasting, supports local journalism, and upholds press freedom. We believe a well-resourced, transparent, and accountable media landscape is fundamental to an informed society and democracy.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Secure Funding for Public Service Broadcasting:** Ensure stable, sufficient funding for RTÉ and other public service broadcasters to maintain quality programming and public trust.
- **Sound and Vision:** We will expand the remit of the Sound and Vision scheme to support broadcasters making high quality programming around Irish culture and heritage.
- **Drive Reforms within RTÉ:** Respect RTÉ's independence while ensuring that necessary reforms are carried out in tandem with funding, securing a sustainable future for public service media.
- **Support Local Journalism:** Provide funding for local media to report on local authority business, ensuring communities are informed about key

decisions affecting their lives.

- We will strengthen the local democracy and court reporting schemes to ensure they are meeting their intended objectives in producing high-quality reports for regional audiences.
- **Enact the Defamation Bill within 100 days:** Pass the Defamation Bill to balance freedom of expression with protections for individuals' good name and reputation. This will include safeguards against SLAPP suits (strategic lawsuits against public participation) to prevent misuse of defamation laws to stifle public interest reporting.

Fine Gael's media strategy supports an open, independent media environment that promotes accountability, transparency, and community engagement across Ireland.

## Promoting Gaeilge and Supporting Gaeltacht Communities

Fine Gael is committed to promoting the Irish language at home, in Europe, and globally. With over 70,000 daily speakers, Irish serves as the community language in Gaeltacht areas and is embraced by growing Irish language networks outside traditional Gaeltacht boundaries. Fine Gael recognises that the needs of Gaeltacht communities are unique and will address them with focused policies.

### Housing in the Gaeltacht

Housing is crucial for sustaining Gaeltacht communities.

#### Fine Gael will:

- Work with Údarás na Gaeltachta, local authorities, language planners, approved housing bodies, and the Department of Housing to secure a sufficient supply of new homes, ensuring the long-term future of Gaeltacht communities.

### Education in Irish

Fine Gael pioneered the Gaeltacht Education Policy and will:

- Strengthen naionraí to ensure early education access in Gaeltacht communities and support naionraí in areas beyond the Gaeltacht.
- Expand immersive Irish education in the early

years of primary school, providing a solid language foundation for Gaeltacht children.

Outside the Gaeltacht,

#### **Fine Gael will:**

- Support parents choosing Irish-medium education for their children.
- Establish gaelscoileanna and gaelcholaistí in areas where demand exists.

Fine Gael introduced the **Seimeastar na Gaeltachta** programme for third-level students to study in Gaeltacht areas. We will expand this, encouraging more students to embrace this unique cultural and educational experience.

## **Irish Language Summer Colleges**

Attending Gaeltacht summer colleges is a significant cultural tradition that benefits students and Gaeltacht communities. Fine Gael will:

- Work with summer colleges to ensure this tradition continues to thrive.
- Increase support for Mná Tí, who play a vital role in hosting students.
- Boost funding for Gaeltacht scholarships, ensuring cost is not a barrier for students wishing to attend summer courses.

## **Official Languages Act**

Fine Gael respects everyone's right to access services through Irish. The revamped Official Languages Act has improved Irish language visibility across public sector communications. Fine Gael will:

- Explore extending language requirements to print and online advertising.
- Ensure all major strategies, action plans, and policy documents are bilingual.
- Work towards making all State websites and online portals available in both Irish and English.

## **Reviewing the Twenty Year Strategy for the Irish Language**

With the Twenty Year Strategy for the Irish Language reaching its final quarter in 2025, Fine Gael will take this opportunity to assess progress, celebrate successes, and address challenges to its effective implementation.

## **Supporting Irish Language Networks**

Beyond the three current networks, Fine Gael will work with Foras na Gaeilge to:

- Support the establishment of new Irish Language Networks in communities outside traditional Gaeltacht areas.
- Provide funding for sustainable support of these networks.

## **Growing Business and Economic Development in the Gaeltacht**

Fine Gael values the role of **Údarás na Gaeltachta** in strengthening Gaeltacht economies. We will ensure it is fully resourced to offer Gaeltacht businesses the same level of support Enterprise Ireland and IDA provide elsewhere. Fine Gael will also work with stakeholders to increase Irish visibility in business, from signage and packaging to advertising and customer service.

## **Promoting Irish in Media**

TG4, Ráidíó na Gaeltachta, and other Irish language media continue to serve the Irish language community well, while Irish film and TV earn acclaim worldwide. Fine Gael will continue to support this sector, ensuring Irish media remains vibrant and widely accessible.

We will provide greater independence for TG4 in their vital remit for the Irish speaking communities, both inside and outside the Gaeltacht.

We will ensure that RTÉ launches a new, updated Irish language strategy that sets out how the organisation will meet its responsibilities to Irish speaking audiences. We will seek an increase in RTÉ's Irish language content, including on the RTÉ Player, the RTÉ News App, as well as encouraging hourly news bulletins in both Irish and English on RTÉ News Now.

Fine Gael's commitment to the Irish language focuses on promoting its everyday use and visibility, while supporting Gaeltacht communities and creating opportunities for Irish speakers across Ireland and beyond.

## Cur Chun Cinn na Gaeilge agus ag Tacú le Pobail Ghaeltachta

Tá Fine Gael tiomanta don Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn sa bhaile, san Eoraip agus ar fud an domhain. Agus os cionn 70,000 cainteoir laethúil ann, tá an Ghaeilge mar theanga an phobail sna ceantair Ghaeltachta agus glactar léi ag líonraí Gaeilge atá ag fás lasmuigh de theorainneacha traidisiúnta na Gaeltachta. Aithníonn Fine Gael go bhfuil riachtanais ar leith ag na pobail Ghaeltachta agus rachaidh Fine Gael i ngleic leo le beartais dhírithe.

### Tithíocht sa Ghaeltacht

Tá na tithíocht ríthábhachtach maidir le pobail Ghaeltachta a choinneáil ag gabháil.

#### Déanfaidh Fine Gael na nithe a leanas:

- Oibreoidh Fine Gael le hÚdarás na Gaeltachta, údarais áitiúla, pleanálaithe teanga, comhlachtaí ceadaithe tithíochta agus an Roinn Tithíochta chun soláthar suntasach tithe nua a fháil, agus todhcháí fhadtéarmach na bpobal Gaeltachta a chinntiú.

### Oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge

Bhí Fine Gael i gceannas ar an bPolasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta agus déanfaimid na nithe a leanas:

- Naíonraí a neartú chun rochtain ar luathoideachas a chinntiú i bpobail Ghaeltachta agus tacú le naíonraí i gceantair lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht.
- Oideachas tumthach trí mheán na Gaeilge a leathnú i luathbhlianta na bunscoile, agus bunús maith a chur ar fáil do leanaí na Gaeltachta.

Lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht,

#### déanfaidh Fine Gael na nithe a leanas:

- Tacú le tuismitheoirí a roghnaíonn oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge dá leanaí.
- Gaelscoileanna agus Gaelcholáistí a bhunú sna ceantair ina bhfuil éileamh ann.

Thug Fine Gael clár **Seimeastar na Gaeltachta** isteach do mhic léin tríú leibhéal chun staidéar a dhéanamh ar an nGaeilge i gceantair Ghaeltachta. Forbróimid an clár seo, ag spreagadh tuilleadh mac léinn an taithí chultúrtha agus oideachais ar leith seo a ghlacadh.

## Coláistí Samhraidh na Gaeilge

Is traidisiún cultúrtha suntasach é freastal ar choláistí samhraidh Gaeltachta agus baineann daltaí agus na pobail Ghaeltachta leas as an traidisiún seo.

#### Déanfaidh Fine Gael na nithe a leanas:

- Oibriú le coláistí samhraidh lena chinntiú go leantar leis an traidisiún seo a bheith faoi bhláth.
- Tacaíocht do Mhná Tí a mhéadú a bhfuil ról ríthábhachtach acu maidir le daltaí a óstáil.
- Borradh a chur faoi mhaoiniú do scoláireachtaí Gaeltachta, ag cinntiú nach mbíonn costas mar bhac do dhaltaí ar mian leo freastal ar chúrsaí samhraidh.

## Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla

Tá meas ag Fine Gael ar cheart gach aon duine rochtain a fháil ar sheirbhísí trí mheán na Gaeilge. Tá feabhas tagtha ar léargas na Gaeilge ar fud chumarsáide na hearnála poiblí mar gheall ar Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla a athchóiríodh. Déanfaidh Fine Gael na nithe a leanas:

- Breathnóimid ar riachtanais teanga a leathnú don chlósriobh agus fógraíocht ar líne.
- Déanfaimid cinnte go bhfuil príomh-straitéisí, pleananna gníomhaithe agus cáipéisí beartais ar fáil trí mheán an Bhéarla agus na Gaeilge.
- Oibreoidh i dtreo suíomhanna gréasáin agus tairseacha ar líne uile de chuid an Stáit a chur ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge.

## Athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an Straitéis Fiche Bliain don Ghaeilge

Agus an Straitéis Fiche Bliain don Ghaeilge ag sroicheadh a ceathrú cuid sa bhliain 2025, glacfaidh Fine Gael an deis seo dul chun cinn a mheas, rath a cheiliúradh agus dul i ngleic le dúshláin go dtí go gcuirtear i bhfeidhm go héifeachtach í.

## Ag Tacú le Líonraí Gaeilge

Lasmuigh de na trí líonra reatha, oibreoidh Fine Gael le Foras na Gaeilge chun na nithe a leanas a dhéanamh:

- Tacú le Líonraí Gaeilge nua a bhunú i bpobail lasmuigh de cheantair Ghaeltachta thraidisiúnta.
- Maoiniú a chur ar fáil do thacaíocht inbhuanaithe na líonraí seo.



## Gnó agus Forbairt Eacnamaíoch a Fhorbairt sa Ghaeltacht

Tá meas ag Fine Gael ar ról **Údarás na Gaeltachta** maidir le geilleagair Ghaeltachta a neartú. Déanfaimid cinnte go bhfuil acmhainní cearta curtha ar fáil dó chun an leibhéal céanna tacaíochta a chur ar fáil do ghnólachtaí Gaeltachta agus a chuireann Fiontraíocht Éireann agus an Ghníomhaireacht Forbartha Tionscail ar fáil in áiteanna eile. Oibreoidh Fine Gael le páirtithe leasmhara chun léargas na Gaeilge a mhéadú sa ghnó, idir chomharthaíocht agus pacáistíocht, agus fógraíocht agus seirbhís do chustaiméirí.

## An Ghaeilge sna Meáin a Chur Chun Cinn

Leanann TG4, Raidió na Gaeltachta agus na meáin Ghaeilge eile ar aghaidh ag freastal ar an bpobal Gaeilge, agus ardmholadh á thabhairt do scannán agus teilifís na Gaeilge ar fud an domhain. Leanfaidh

Fine Gael ar aghaidh ag tacú leis an earnáil seo, ag cinntiú go bhfanann na meáin Ghaeilge bríomhar agus inrochtana go forleathan.

Cuirfimid tuilleadh neamhspleáchais ar fáil do TG4 lena sainchúram rithábachtach do phobail na Gaeilge, laistigh agus lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht.

Déanfaimid cinnte go seolann RTÉ straitéis Gaeilge nua agus nuashonraithe a leagann amach conas a fhreastalóidh an eagraíocht ar a bhfreagrachtaí maidir lena lucht féachana agus éisteachta Gaeilge. Iarrfaimid ar mhéadú ar ábhair Ghaeilge RTÉ, lena n-áirítear ar RTÉ Player, RTÉ News App, chomh maith le feasacháin nuachta gach uair an chloig trí mheán na Gaeilge agus an Bhéarla ar RTÉ News Now a spreagadh.

Díríonn tiomantas Fhine Gael don Ghaeilge ar a húsáid laethúil agus a léargas a chur chun cinn, agus ag tacú le pobail Ghaeltachta agus deiseanna a chruthú do Ghaeilgeoirí ar fud na tíre agus níos faide i gcéin.

**Maeve O'Connell**  
Candidate for  
Dublin Rathdown

**Colm Brophy**  
Candidate for  
Dublin South West

# Building a Healthier, More Active Ireland Through Sport

Fine Gael is committed to investing in sport to strengthen communities, inspire young people, and improve physical and mental health and wellbeing across Ireland.

## Boosting Participation

We will ensure that everyone, regardless of age, ability, or socioeconomic background, has the opportunity to participate in sport and develop a high level of physical literacy.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Increase Participation Above 50%:** Work to improve the participation rate in sport above 50% of the adult population.
- **Support Inclusion for People with Disabilities:** Adopt a cross-government approach to raise sports participation among people with disabilities, closing the current 20% gap with the general population.
- **Promote volunteerism:** Work to attract more coaches, officials and volunteers into the sports sector.
- **Improve vetting:** Improve the vetting process so that volunteers can work with multiple groups.

## Sporting and leisure facilities in all towns

We believe all towns with a population of over 1,500 should have access to a minimum range of sporting and leisure facilities, such as all-weather pitches, tennis courts and skating parks. The Census definition of an urban area is a town with a total population of 1,500 or more. Rural areas should be within a reasonable distance of this standard range.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Audit Facilities Nationwide** Conduct an audit of all sporting and leisure facilities nationally in line with the National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027. This will include publicly accessible facilities at schools and other educational facilities. Request an independent expert group, working with local communities, to recommend which sporting and leisure facilities are

needed in each urban area over 1,500.

- **Fund More Sports Facilities:** Propose a dedicated Project Ireland 2040 fund to help each town meet the minimum standard for sports facilities. Mandate local authorities to develop an amenity plan with the developers of all new major housing developments.
- **Give every child the opportunity to learn how to swim:** Implement the National Swimming Strategy and set an objective so that 95% of children will have access to a pool within a 30-minute journey from home or school. .

## Funding Local Sports and Community Spaces

Fine Gael re-established the Sports Capital Programme and continues to prioritise investment in community sports. Fine Gael will:

- **Ensure Funding:** Maintain strong financial support for Sports Capital schemes.
- **Enhance Accessibility and Design:** Recognise projects that use universal design to foster inclusive participation.
- **Expand Large Scale Sporting Infrastructure Fund:** Support National Governing Bodies with state-led funding for large-scale projects.

## Healthy Starts, Healthy Lives

To give every child the best start in life, we believe in prioritising sport and physical activity for children. We are also living longer and this should be seen as a great success story and one which presents many opportunities to assist our people to live happier, healthier and longer lives.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Encourage Daily Activity for Youth:** Promote at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity for children of all abilities through schools and community initiatives.
- **Expand the Active School Flag Initiative:** Equip schools with resources to better promote physical activity and health.
- **Promote Physical Activity for Older Adults:** Invest in programmes tailored to older citizens, encouraging lifelong activity through sports like walking, swimming, cycling and, critically, resistance training. Expand access to sports and recreational facilities, support local sports partnerships, extend walking trails, and utilise greenways.



- **Devise an 'Exercise is Medicine Programme':** Task the Department of Health and Healthy Ireland to work with the health sector and key stakeholders including local authorities and Local Sports Partnerships, to devise a community based, 'Exercise is Medicine' programme. This would involve developing and rolling out a standardised, high quality and clinically safe exercise and strength programme, in group settings, targeted at people from age 55+ years in their community.
- **Introduce Gym Membership Tax Relief:** Introduce tax relief on gym memberships to make fitness more affordable and accessible.

## Inclusion and equality of access

### Fine Gael will:

- **Access for all:** Expand support for para-sports and special-needs programmes by providing grants to clubs that demonstrate inclusive policies and facilities, ensuring people with disabilities have equal access to participate and excel in sports.
- **One club ethos:** Work with all sporting organisations to promote a 'one club' ethos, encompassing male and female participants and promoting equality of access to sporting facilities.

## Supporting High Performance and Olympic Sports

Our Olympic and Special Olympics athletes have inspired young people across Ireland. We need to create pathways to foster sportspeople of exceptional ability and we will:

- **Back Sport Ireland's High Performance Strategy:** Support long-term success on the global stage.
- **Deliver a New Velodrome:** Build a new velodrome to nurture future cycling and badminton talent.

## Attracting International Sporting Events

- Hosting global sports events boosts tourism and showcases Ireland. We will support Limerick as it prepares to host the Ryder Cup in 2027, and will bid for the AIG Women's Open and Open at Portmarnock Golf Club.
- We will also: **Support UEFA Euro 2028:** Ensure Ireland is fully prepared to host and benefit from this major event.

- **Attract More World Events:** Actively bid to host major international sporting events, including the Rugby World Cup, European Football Championships, NFL games, and major athletics championships. This will drive tourism, stimulate the economy, and raise Ireland's international profile.

## Strengthening All-Island Sporting Activities

Sports like athletics, hockey, and rugby already work well on an all-island basis.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Expand Cross-Border Sport:** Increase cross-border sporting initiatives, including soccer, while protecting the roles of governing bodies.

Fine Gael's sports policy is about building a more active, healthier Ireland where sport is accessible, well-resourced, and inspiring for all.

## Tourism through sport

### Fine Gael will:

- **Back Sports-Related Tourism:** Partner with Tourism Ireland to promote Ireland as a top destination for sports-related tourism, from golf and equestrian events to adventure sports. This will boost rural economies and showcase Ireland's natural landscapes to the world.

## Sustainability in Sport

Ireland will be at the forefront of creating sustainable, environmentally friendly sports facilities and events, aligned with our broader climate action goals.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Promote Green Sports Facility Investment:** Provide incentives for sports facilities to adopt renewable energy, sustainable water use, and eco-friendly design, aiming for carbon-neutral sports venues.
- **Encourage Sustainable Major Sporting Events:** Ensure all major sporting events adhere to a national sustainability charter, reducing waste, promoting public transport use, and sourcing from local suppliers.



## Governance, Integrity, and Equality in Sport: Real Accountability in Sporting Organisations

Fine Gael will ensure that Irish sport is governed with integrity, transparency, and a commitment to gender equality at all levels of administration and competition. We will ensure that sport is represented at Assistant Secretary level in the relevant department.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Promote International Best Practice in Governance:** Mandate all national governing bodies and sports organisations to adhere to international best practices in governance, transparency, and anti-corruption measures.

- **Close the Gender Gap:** Develop a long-term strategy to close the gap on gender inequality when it comes to funding, representation, remuneration, media coverage, sponsorship and participation at grassroots and elite levels.
- **Eliminate Abuse and Misconduct:** Consult with athletes, referees and officials to devise the best way to protect against abuse and misconduct, ensuring all sporting environments are safe and respectful. This should lead to better governance and codes of conduct at club level.



**Barry Ward**  
Candidate for  
Dún Laoghaire

**Aoibhinn Tormey**  
Candidate for  
Dublin Bay South





**Noel Rock**  
Candidate for  
Dublin North West







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Having a fair but firmer  
migration and criminal  
justice system

## Law and Order

Fine Gael is the party of law and order. We are the party that founded An Garda Síochána, that founded the Criminal Assets Bureau.

We are the party that will ensure your family, your community, and our country is secure from crime and external threats.

Fine Gael will prioritise investment in the men and women of An Garda Síochána protecting them on the beat.

We will change how we recruit and train our gardai and ensure they receive better wages when in training.

Fine Gael will speed up the criminal justice process by ramping up resources at every stage, including by recruiting more judges increasing investment in the Director of Public Prosecutions, enacting stronger laws, significantly increasing the number of prison spaces and building a new prison.

Across the country, communities are dealing with the scourge of anti-social behaviour. We will invest strongly in preventive measures, including in youth justice programmes, while strengthening our laws and increasing the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs).

Tackling the epidemic of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence will remain a number one priority for Fine Gael. We will invest in new refuge spaces, update the school curriculum, roll-out training and make the criminal justice system more victim centred, in particular our Courts system.

## Stronger, Safer Communities: Protecting and Investing in An Garda Síochána

Fine Gael is committed to building safer communities by strengthening An Garda Síochána, expanding resources, and modernising support to effectively combat crime.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Better Garda Training Facilities:** Expand Templemore Garda Training College and establish a second Garda training college to ramp up the number of Garda recruits each year. We will explore allowing Garda trainees to undergo the academic parts of the training course in regionally based Universities or Technological Universities, to allow more time closer to home.
- **Double Training Allowance:** Double the Garda training allowance, making the Gardaí more attractive to new recruits and supporting those in training.
- **Fund 6,000 New Garda Recruits:** Provide funding to recruit 6,000 Garda recruits over the next five years.
- **Rewarding Long Service:** Incentivise Gardaí to stay in the force for longer, building on recent increases in the retirement age to 62. All public sector wage measures will be taken with regard to the current public service wage agreement.
- **Civilianisation of Non-Core Tasks:** Reassign at least 500 Gardaí to front-line duties by transferring non-core tasks to civilian staff, allowing Gardaí to focus on community policing.
- **Introduce Garda Deployment Targets:** Introduce deployment targets to ensure there is always a minimum number of Gardaí on patrol to ensure high Garda visibility.
- **Expand the Garda Reserve:** Increase the Garda Reserve to 3,000 members, creating a stronger community policing presence.
- **Upgrade Garda Stations Nationwide:** Implement a new Garda Capital Plan to deliver modern, well-equipped Garda stations across the country.
- **Safety on Public Transport:** Support increased deployment of Gardaí on public transport.
- **Introduce Garda Transport Hubs at Key Stations:** Introduce Garda Transport Hubs based at busy bus and train stations to ensure Gardaí can rapidly

respond to incidents on public transport and to support private security.

- **Strengthen the Garda Dog Unit:** Expand the Garda Dog Unit with at least 200 trained dogs, boosting capabilities in drug detection and other specialised areas.
- **New Search Powers for Digital Devices:** Legislate to give Gardaí the authority to request passwords for electronic devices when serving a search warrant.
- **Strengthen Public Order Acts:** Review and update Public Order Acts to give Gardaí the power they need to manage public order situations effectively.
- **Strengthen the Criminal Assets Bureau:** Expand the powers of the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) and give CAB the power to publish a list of tax defaulters and consider the introduction of unexplained wealth orders
- **Enhanced Protective Equipment:** Invest in body armour, including riot helmets and protective gear, as well as additional vehicles, water cannons, and a helicopter to equip Gardaí for high-risk situations.
- **Ban Intimidating Masks at Protests:** Ban the wearing of masks at protests intended to intimidate others and implement a ban on protests outside private homes.
- **Roll Out Body-Worn Cameras:** Equip every Garda on the beat with body-worn cameras to improve accountability and safety.
- **Introduce Facial Recognition Technology (FRT):** Deploy FRT for serious crimes with a maximum sentence of five years or more and for missing persons cases, with strict safeguards.
- **Introduce Live Facial Recognition for Specific Threats:** introduce the use of live FRT in cases of terrorism, national security, and missing persons, with strict safeguards.

These commitments will ensure our Gardaí are equipped, supported, and empowered to build stronger and safer communities across Ireland.

## Crime in the Community

Fine Gael is dedicated to enhancing community safety by implementing comprehensive measures to address crime and support local policing efforts.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Publish a new Rural Safety Plan:** Focus on Community Safety, Burglary and Theft, Roads Policing, Animal Crime, and Heritage Crime.
- **Establish Community Safety Partnerships:** Create at least one in every Local Authority Area, with a new statutory obligation to deliver community safety, and increase the Community Safety Fund to €12m.
- **Roll out “see something, say something”:** Implement this confidential text alert service nationwide.
- **Expand mobile Garda clinics:** Increase the use of mobile Garda clinics, including additional community engagement vans.
- **Prioritise community policing:** Ensure each community policing area has a dedicated community garda, so everyone knows their local officer and how to contact them, ensuring high visibility.

These commitments will help to build stronger and safer communities across Ireland, enhancing overall community safety and trust.

## Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and Drug use

Fine Gael is committed to tackling anti-social behaviour and drug use to ensure safer communities and public spaces.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Strengthen Anti-Social Behaviour legislation:** Introduce legislation to enhance the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Warnings (ASBWs) and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) to tackle public order offences and anti-social behaviour.
- **Enact a Community Sanctions Bill:** Extend the use of community sanctions, including increasing the use of community service orders (e.g., carrying out unpaid work).
- **Review laws on E-Scooters and scramblers:** Ensure Gardaí have sufficient powers to tackle the misuse of E-scooters and scramblers.
- **Combat the drugs epidemic:** Dismantle criminal gangs and tackle the drugs epidemic.
- **Strengthen vetting requirements:** Expand the list of offences leading to permanent disqualification for transport drivers.
- **Support CCTV in taxis:** Enhance safety by supporting the provision of CCTV in taxis.

These measures will create safer, more secure communities and public spaces across Ireland.

## Delivering Adequate Prison Capacity

Providing adequate prison capacity is essential for ensuring public safety, facilitating rehabilitation, and addressing the needs of individuals within the justice system.

The following measures proposed by

### Fine Gael will achieve these goals:

- **Construct a new prison at Thornton Hall:** Building at least one new prison on the site of Thornton Hall will increase capacity and improve facilities for inmates.
- **Expand existing prison facilities:** Adding 1,500 spaces to current prisons is vital for accommodating the growing inmate population and reducing overcrowding.
- **Recruit additional prison officers:** Hiring more prison officers will enhance security and ensure a supportive environment for both staff and inmates.
- **Implement electronic tagging for monitoring:** Operationalising electronic tagging to monitor sex offenders effectively is crucial for enhancing community safety and preventing reoffending.
- **Introduce minimum tariffs for life sentences:** Enacting legislation to establish minimum tariffs for any crime that carries a life sentence will ensure fairness and consistency in sentencing.
- **Implement an employment strategy for former offenders:** Implement a strategy focusing on education and upskilling opportunities for individuals with criminal convictions during custody, as well as supporting their course completion post-release, is important for equipping former offenders with skills for successful reintegration into the workforce, thereby reducing recidivism and promoting positive contributions to society.
- **Establish a high dependency unit for mental health:** Creating a high dependency unit to address severe mental health and addiction challenges is essential for providing appropriate care and support for vulnerable individuals. This includes hiring more therapeutic and medical staff, including psychiatric nurses.
- **Implement recommendations on mental health and addiction:** Acting on the recommendations from the High Level Task Force regarding mental health and addiction challenges will improve support and treatment for affected individuals, ensuring a more effective and compassionate approach to these critical issues.

These initiatives will create a safer society by reducing crime rates, improving rehabilitation outcomes, and promoting successful reintegration for former offenders.

## A Modern Courts, Legal and Inquest System

Establishing a modern courts and legal system is vital for ensuring fair access to justice, improving efficiencies including digitalisation, and enhancing the overall experience for all users. The following measures will support these goals:

- **Appoint additional judges:** An increase of 20 judges will be made in the first year of office to improve access to justice, with plans for further increases to meet growing demands.
- **Establish an institute of judicial training:** We will create an institute under the Judicial Council to support ongoing training and continuous professional development for judges, ensuring they remain well-equipped to deliver justice effectively.
- **Resourcing the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP):** Continue to increase investment into the DPP to ensure the speedy delivery of justice, building on the 40% increase in recent years.
- **Update the Judicial Council Act:** We will provide a new power to the Minister to ask the Council to draw up sentencing guidelines for a particular crime area within a particular timeframe.
- **Review the Courts Service and the Legal Services Regulatory Authority:** A thorough review will be conducted to ensure that our courts and legal system are modern, cost-effective, and focused on the needs of victims.
- **Implement guidelines for civil litigation fees:** New guidelines will be introduced to set clear rates and scales of fees for all forms of civil litigation, promoting transparency and fairness in legal costs.
- **Create a modern coronial system:** Legislation will be introduced to establish a modern, fit-for-purpose coronial system, improving the processes surrounding inquests and investigations.
- **Reform the criminal legal aid system:** We will reform the operation of the criminal legal aid system and fully restore criminal legal aid fees to ensure that legal representation is accessible to all, regardless of financial circumstances. We will enact legislation to ensure criminal legal aid can be



withdrawn or cut from applicants who already have sufficient means.

- **Publish an Action Plan on criminal justice efficiencies:** We will complete a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system to remove inefficiencies, speed up criminal trials and cut waiting times. We will publish an action plan within nine months.

These initiatives will enhance the effectiveness of the justice system, ensuring timely access to legal support while prioritising the needs of victims and the integrity of the legal process.

## Strengthening National Security

Enhancing national security is essential for protecting citizens, maintaining public order, and ensuring the safety of our communities. The following measures will be implemented to fortify our national security framework:

### Fine Gael will:

- **Establish a Cabinet Committee on National Security:** We will strengthen the co-ordination role played by the Department of An Taoiseach in relation to National Security issues, and establish a Cabinet Committee on National Security to ensure political oversight.
- **Retain the Special Criminal Court:** This court will remain a vital tool in our fight against organised crime, terrorism, and paramilitary activity, ensuring justice can be delivered effectively.
- **Align national security infrastructure:** The National Centre for Cyber Security and the National Security Authority will be brought under the remit of the Department of Justice to streamline coordination and improve response capabilities.
- **Annually renew key legislative provisions:** We will renew the provisions of the Offences Against the State Act 1998 and the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 each year to maintain robust measures against threats to national security.
- **Consider the report on the Offences Against the State Act:** This report will be considered as part of the National Policy Statement on National Security.
- **Enact the Terrorism Offences Bill:** New legislation will be introduced to combat terrorism, including offences related to travelling to commit terrorist

acts, facilitating such travel, and receiving training for terrorism.

- **Establish new Data Retention and Interception laws:** Updated laws for data retention and interception will include provisions for over-the-top and encrypted services to enhance our ability to combat security threats.
- **Publish a National Policy Statement on National Security:** This all-of-government statement, led by the Taoiseach, will provide a clear framework for our national security strategy and priorities.

These initiatives will strengthen our national security framework, ensuring a safer environment for all citizens and enhancing our ability to respond to emerging threats effectively.

## Tackling Retail Crime

Addressing retail crime is crucial for protecting businesses, ensuring consumer safety, and maintaining the integrity of our communities. The following measures will be implemented to combat this issue:

### Fine Gael will:

- **Introduce a specific offence of assaulting a retail worker:** To ensure those who perpetrate these crimes face justice.
- **Increase the use of community sanctions:** We will expand community sanctions, such as unpaid work.
- **Enact legislation to Provide for Exclusion Orders:** We will update the Public Order Acts to allow a prolific offender of retail crime to be excluded from a premises for a certain period of time.
- **Support Garda Operations to tackle retail crime:** Enhanced support for Garda operations will include utilising organised crime and proceeds of crime legislation to disrupt criminal activities.
- **Identify and target prolific offenders:** We will employ facial recognition technology to identify and focus on habitual offenders, improving response and prevention efforts.
- **Introduce a new grant scheme for anti-theft measures:** A grant scheme will be established to help retailers install effective anti-theft measures, safeguarding their businesses and assets.
- **Improve data sharing between retailers and Gardaí:** We will enhance the systems through which retailers provide data, intelligence, and evidence to Gardaí, fostering better collaboration in crime prevention.

- **Enact the Defamation (Amendment) Bill 2024:** This legislation will reform and modernise defamation laws, including a new statutory defence for 'retail defamation' cases to address the rise in claims made against retail businesses.
- **Publish a Retail Crime Strategy:** This comprehensive strategy will outline targeted actions to reduce retail crime and support affected businesses.

These initiatives will create a safer retail environment, protect businesses from crime, and enhance the overall economic health of our communities.

## Zero Tolerance of Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence

Establishing a zero tolerance approach to domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence is vital for safeguarding individuals and promoting a safer society. The following measures will be enacted to combat these issues:

### Fine Gael will:

- **Fully implement the Zero Tolerance Plan 2022–2026:** We will ensure the full implementation of this plan and develop a new plan for 2026–2030 to continue our commitment to addressing violence against women and vulnerable individuals.
- **Increase the number of refuge spaces:** We will provide 280 refuge spaces by 2026, and ensure that there is a refuge in every county along with additional safe homes for those in need. We will set new targets in the successor strategy.
- **Support individuals experiencing violence:** Through the use of removal orders, we will enable individuals experiencing sexual or domestic violence to remain safely in their own homes whenever possible.
- **Amend laws on counselling notes disclosure:** We will revise the law concerning the disclosure of counselling notes to ensure that victims can access therapy without fearing that their private records will be used against them, facilitating better healing outcomes.
- **Review breach of orders laws:** The law regarding breaches of orders will be reviewed to ensure that bail can be limited in cases where there is a history of violence, enhancing victim protection.

- **Strengthen laws against drink spiking:** We will introduce stronger laws to combat the spiking of drinks, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable for this crime.
- **Increase prison sentences for child sexual abuse:** We will increase the maximum sentences available for offences related to child sexual abuse, underscoring our commitment to protecting vulnerable children and ensure the punishment always matches the crime.
- **Create specialised judges for DSGBV cases:** We will establish specialised judges to handle domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence cases and invest in training for Gardaí and the DPP to better support victims. We will work to introduce an online facility for victims to obtain information on the status of their case.
- **Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme:** We will work with An Garda Síochána to ensure a person in an intimate relationship can be informed of a serious risk to them where a new partner has a history of domestic violence
- **Identify and protect victims of human trafficking:** We will implement the Human Trafficking Action Plan to identify and safeguard victims of human trafficking effectively.

These initiatives will create a safer environment for all individuals, ensuring that victims receive the support they need while holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

## Children at the Heart of our Family Law System

Prioritising children in our family law system is essential for ensuring their well-being and safeguarding their rights during legal proceedings. The following measures will be implemented to achieve this goal:

### Fine Gael will:

- **Implement the Family Justice Strategy 2022–2025:** We will fully enact this strategy and publish a successor plan to enhance the family law system in the best interests of children.
- **Commence a new Family Court system:** A new Family Court system will be established to ensure that the best interests of children are at the forefront of all family law proceedings.



### **Helen McEntee**

Candidate for  
Meath East

- **Complete a purpose-built Family Law Court complex:** We will finish constructing a dedicated Family Law Court complex at Hammond Lane in Dublin, providing a suitable environment for family law cases.
- **Strengthen enforcement of Child Maintenance orders:** We will enhance the enforcement mechanisms for Child Maintenance orders to ensure that children receive the financial support they need from both parents.
- **Regulate and fund Voice of the Child and Welfare Reports:** We will ensure proper regulation and funding for Voice of the Child and Welfare Reports,

giving children a voice in legal proceedings that affect them.

These initiatives will create a more child-centred family law system, ensuring that the rights and needs of children are prioritised and protected throughout the legal process.



## Migration - A Fair but Firmer System

Migration is a good thing for Ireland. Thousands of people come to Ireland to work, to study and to fill essential skills deficits, and who make a significant contribution to our society.

We have ramped up processing of applications, introduced accelerated processing of certain countries, and significantly strengthened immigration enforcement. We will now introduce a new International Protection Act to provide for a firmer system, with stronger border security, faster processing of international protection (IP) applications and stricter measures to return unsuccessful IP applicants.

We will move away from the emergency use of hotels for housing asylum seekers and put in place facilities for those seeking protection on state land.

We cannot and should not lose sight of the benefits of migration. Our economy is built on being open: we need workers in all sectors like agriculture, in our multinational sector, in our health service and to build homes.

We will always help those in need and we cannot achieve that without rules-based systems that dismantle the criminal trafficking gangs.

Fine Gael will publish a National Migration and Integration Strategy detailing how we intend to meet the demands and the opportunities facing our society and economy over the next decade.

## A Firmer System

Fine Gael is committed to implementing the new EU Migration and Asylum Pact through a new International Protection Act. This legislation will provide for:

- **Legally binding timeframes for international protection applications:** Establishing clear deadlines will ensure that all applications are processed efficiently.
- **Stronger border security:** Increased collection of fingerprints and photographs from new arrivals will enhance our ability to verify identities and secure our borders.
- **Designated accommodation with restricted freedom of movement:** Applicants will be provided with accommodation that limits their movement to ensure the integrity of the process.
- **Rapid, fast-track processing:** Designated centres will facilitate expedited processing for individuals from safe countries or those arriving with no or false documents, with applications, appeals, and removal decisions completed within 90 days.

In advance of enacting and implementing the new legislation,

### Fine Gael will:

- **Appropriately restructure Government Departments:** Return responsibility for international protection accommodation to the Department of Justice.
- **Hire more staff in the International Protection office:** We will expand the workforce and introduce processing of applications in large centres where people are accommodated to deliver faster decisions.
- **Expand accelerated processing:** We will extend accelerated processing to additional designated safe countries to streamline applications.
- **Establish a dedicated division of the High Court:** A specialised division will be created to handle all immigration cases, ensuring timely legal proceedings.
- **Continue 'doorstop' operations:** We will maintain operations on flights that pose risks of irregular migration to prevent unlawful entry.
- **Expand the number of Garda Airline Liaison Officers:** Increasing the number of officers at international transport hubs will help to prevent irregular migration.
- **Collaborate with the UK Government:** We will

work together to introduce further measures to tackle abuses within the Common Travel Area (CTA) and strengthen the external CTA border.

- **Support the Gardai with necessary resources:** We will provide the Gardai with the laws, technology, and resources needed to dismantle the criminal gangs exploiting the common travel area.
- **Increase Carrier Travel Fines:** We will increase the maximum fine on carriers to €10,000.

These initiatives will create a firmer migration system that enhances border security, streamlines processing, and protects the integrity of our immigration framework while supporting those in need.

## Accommodation

Ireland has received an unprecedented number of International Protection applicants over the past few years. This is based on the fact that there are more people on the move globally than at any point since the end of World War 2. It means the commitment to replace the existing system of Direct Provision, on a not-for-profit basis, cannot realistically be achieved in the short term.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Deliver a contribution model for accommodation:** Asylum seekers will be required to contribute towards their accommodation costs, promoting personal responsibility.
- **Withdraw benefit for breaches of rules:** Withdraw benefit where applicants have failed to comply with the IP process, committed a serious breach of house rules or where they have engaged in violent criminal behaviour.
- **Ensure decisions are acted on:** Ensure applicants who have received a final negative decision are no longer entitled to Material Reception Conditions.
- **End the emergency use of hotels:** We will cease the emergency use of hotels for housing asylum seekers and utilise State lands to develop appropriate facilities.
- **Greater lead-in time:** Give greater lead-in time to the opening of new facilities, allowing for enhanced and effective local communication, and development of integration.
- **Expand the Community Engagement Team:** Expand the Community Engagement Team to provide for detailed discussions with communities.
- **Plan for public services:** Plan more effectively for

delivery of increased public services, where possible.

- **Expand the Community Recognition Fund:** We will introduce a revamped Community Recognition Fund to assist communities facing increased pressure on local services due to the arrival of asylum seekers.

These initiatives will establish a fairer and more sustainable accommodation system for asylum seekers while ensuring that local communities are supported and engaged in the process.

## Legal and Necessary Migration

- Fine Gael is committed to addressing skill shortages and supporting economic growth through a strategic migration approach.

### We will:

- **Prioritise a skills-based migration system:** Our employment permit regime will target sectors facing significant shortages, such as healthcare, technology, engineering, and construction, to ensure that the workforce meets the needs of the economy.
- **Merge the visa and employment permit system:** Expedite the combination of the employment permit system and the visa process into one user-friendly single application procedure.
- **Create fast-track visa options:** We will introduce expedited visa options for high-demand sectors to facilitate quicker entry for skilled professionals.
- **Link migration policy with education:** By integrating migration policy with Ireland's education system, we will allow international students in key disciplines, especially in STEM fields, to transition smoothly from student visas to permanent residency. This approach will help retain the talent that has been trained within Ireland.

These initiatives will create a robust migration framework that addresses skill shortages, supports economic growth, and fosters regional balance across Ireland.

## Effective Integration and Social Cohesion

Ireland needs migration to thrive, and Fine Gael is committed to ensuring successful integration so that newcomers feel welcomed and connected to our society.

### We will:

- **Publish a new national Migration and Integration Strategy:** In the first year of government, we will

introduce a comprehensive strategy that reflects the significant increase in immigration and strong population growth over recent years.

- **Invest in integration programmes:** We will fund programmes that support language learning, cultural exchange, and access to essential public services such as education and healthcare, facilitating smoother transitions for migrants.
- **Promote anti-discrimination campaigns:** We will enforce policies to protect migrants from exploitation and abuse, highlighting the social and economic benefits of migration to counter anti-immigration sentiments.
- **Develop community-led initiatives:** We will foster connections between migrants and local populations, particularly in areas receiving a high number of new arrivals, to build strong community ties.
- **Support researchers and academics:** By creating research fellowships and offering attractive residency terms in collaboration with Irish universities, we will strengthen Ireland's appeal to top-tier academic and research talent.
- **Engage the global Irish diaspora:** We will establish talent networks to connect highly-skilled individuals abroad with opportunities in Ireland, creating a pipeline for skilled Irish emigrants to return and for foreign talent to engage with our economy.
- **Increase the diversity of our workforce:** Task the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF), comprising representatives from the Government, employers, and trade unions, with developing recommendations to enhance the diversity of our workforce, especially in the civil and public service sectors.

These initiatives will promote social cohesion and ensure that migrants are integrated into our society, contributing positively to Ireland's future.

## An Equal Ireland for All

Fine Gael is committed to a strong programme of action that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion across all aspects of life in Ireland. Women and minorities must have a greater voice and representation in Irish society, particularly in decision-making roles, to ensure a fully functional democracy.

### Empowering Women

Fine Gael will support and empower women and minorities by removing structural barriers and creating opportunities in all areas of life—workplace, education, family, public and corporate boards, sports, and the arts. It is essential that disadvantaged women, older women, women with disabilities, Traveller and Roma women, and migrant women can actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Fine Gael will act on the report of the advisory committee tasked with addressing the under-representation of women's contributions to the State's political, scientific, social and cultural history in the National Collection. We will commit to the establishment of a National Women's Museum to celebrate and reflect the contribution of women to the foundation of the State and all aspects of Irish life. It is against this backdrop that Minister Martin has established the committee to recommend actions that showcase the achievements of women within the National Cultural Institutions and the National Collection.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **National Strategy:** Complete, extend, and update the National Strategy for Women and Girls
- **Commit to producing Equality Impact Assessments:** All budgetary processes will include Equality Impact Assessments aimed at advancing gender budgeting and ensuring equitable resource allocation.
- **Advance women's roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding:** As part of Ireland's commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, we will prioritise women's involvement in these critical areas, aligning with UN Resolution 1325.
- **Encourage more women to join our uniformed services:** We will implement initiatives to promote the recruitment and retention of women in the



Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána.

- **Boost funding and visibility for female sports:** Increased funding and support will be directed towards female sports at both national and local levels, including specific programmes for young girls in primary and secondary schools to inspire future generations.
- **Encourage broadcasters to increase the airing of competitive women's events.**

These initiatives will create a more equitable society in Ireland, empowering women and minorities to participate fully in all aspects of life and decision-making.

## Female Entrepreneurship

Fine Gael is dedicated to fostering female entrepreneurship as a vital component of economic growth and innovation. We will:

### Fine Gael will:

- **Back the 'Action Plan for Women in Business':** We will ensure that Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and Enterprise Ireland collaborate effectively to develop and support female entrepreneurship in every county through enhanced one-to-one engagement and mentoring.
- **Implement and fully fund Enterprise Ireland's Action Plan for Women in Business:** We will expand this programme with a specific focus on supporting women in rural areas, ensuring that all regions benefit from these initiatives.
- **Develop women's creativity and entrepreneurial potential:** By leveraging EU programmes and funds, we will facilitate access to loans and equity finance, empowering women to pursue their business ideas.
- **Promote women's professional development:** We will encourage mentorship opportunities in both public and private sectors, aiming for greater gender balance on company boards and enhancing women's leadership roles.

These initiatives will empower women to thrive in the entrepreneurial landscape, contributing to a more diverse and dynamic economy in Ireland.

## Education; Stem, Digital and Artificial Intelligence

We must sustain efforts to improve the gender balance of subjects taken in school, in further and higher education and careers pursued. This requires

action from Government and society as a whole.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Gender balance in subject choice:** Ensure subject choice is gender equal by focusing on teacher training and increased funding for so called non-traditional subjects in all-girl schools. Commit to a campaign in the Department of Education/Further and Higher Education –to boost leadership and IT skills, with a special focus on girls.
- **Advance STEM subjects for all:** Advance education, training and maintenance of new digital skills and capacities, and particularly STEM subjects, with a special focus on girls (universal access to coding, maths and ICT classes), through training and life-long learning, and to prioritise diversity and inclusion in STEM.
- **Gender Equality in Higher Education:** Implement the recommendations of the review of the Gender Equality Action Plan for Higher Education.

## Increasing the Participation of Women and Minorities in Politics

Fine Gael is dedicated to enhancing the representation of women and minorities in political positions across the country. We will:

### Fine Gael will:

- **Champion increased participation and representation:** We will actively promote the inclusion of women and minorities in all political roles, fostering a more diverse political landscape.
- **Introduce maternity and paternity/adoptive leave for TDs, Senators, and MEPs:** We will establish maternity and paternity/adoptive leave policies for all elected representatives, ensuring that family responsibilities are supported within our political system.
- **Establish a mentorship programme:** We will create a mentorship programme for prospective female and minority candidates for general elections and local councillors, providing guidance and support as they pursue political careers.

These initiatives will promote a more inclusive political environment, empowering women and minorities to engage in decision-making processes that shape our society.

## Women's and Girls' Health

Fine Gael is committed to improving the health and well-being of women and girls across Ireland. We will:

### Fine Gael will:

- **Implement the actions of the Women's Health Taskforce:** We will execute the recommendations from the Department of Health's taskforce, with a focus on the health of older women and women's mental health.
- **Increase funding for the National Maternity Strategy:** We will allocate additional resources to support the recruitment and training of midwifery and medical staff, ensuring access to dating and anomaly scans in all maternity units, and implementing the supported care pathway across the maternity network.
- **Promote the 'We're Breastfeeding Friendly' campaign:** We will encourage businesses to adopt this initiative, creating a supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers in the workplace and community.
- **Seek a pooled European approach for the HPV vaccine:** We will advocate for a coordinated effort at the European level to procure the HPV vaccine, ensuring equitable access for both boys and girls across Ireland.
- **Ensure local provision of comprehensive care:** We will provide resources to guarantee that a full range of care is available across the whole island and in all maternity hospitals, promoting equitable healthcare access for all women.

These initiatives will enhance the health services available to women and girls, ensuring they receive the comprehensive care and support they deserve.

## LGBTQI+

Fine Gael is dedicated to advocating for the rights and well-being of the LGBTQI+ community in Ireland and globally. We will:

### Fine Gael will:

- **Speak up for the LGBTQI+ community:** We will actively advocate for the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals both in Ireland and internationally.
- **Utilise our influence in international debates:** We will engage in discussions at key international forums, including the EU and the UN, to uphold

the universal nature of human rights, ensuring that these rights apply equally to all individuals, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic.

- **Support the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy to 2028:** We will back this strategy, which focuses on safety, health and well-being, participation and inclusion, and equality and non-discrimination.
- **Introduce a law to disregard certain historical convictions:** We will implement legislation to disregard specific criminal convictions related to consensual sexual activity, addressing injustices from the past.

These initiatives will strengthen the rights and protections for the LGBTQI+ community, fostering an inclusive and equitable society for all.

## Counteracting Racism

Fine Gael is committed to combating racism, promoting inclusivity, and addressing the rise of far-right ideologies in Ireland. We will:

### Fine Gael will:

- **Support the funding of integration officers in local authorities:** We will ensure that local authorities have dedicated integration officers to facilitate and promote community cohesion, countering divisive narratives.
- **Develop anti-racism and unconscious bias training:** We will continue to implement training programmes within our education system to address racism and unconscious bias, fostering a more inclusive environment for all students and reducing susceptibility to extremist views.
- **Support intercultural events and activities:** We will promote and fund intercultural events and activities nationwide, celebrating diversity and encouraging understanding among different communities, thereby building resilience against far-right rhetoric.
- **Positive, impactful communications campaigns:** We will launch national and local campaigns to highlight the positive impacts of migration and to challenge misinformation, showcasing the contributions of migrants to Irish society and counteracting the narratives propagated by the far right.

These initiatives will work towards creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment, actively countering racism and far-right ideologies while promoting understanding among all communities in Ireland.

## Strengthening Ireland's Security and Defence

The fundamental priority of any state is the protection of its territory and its people. In light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the security landscape for Ireland and Europe has changed significantly and will continue to evolve. Fine Gael recognises the need to strengthen our security and defence capabilities in a world facing increased physical, cyber, and hybrid threats to our people, our territory, and our critical infrastructure.

We will work to ensure that Ireland is prepared to address these challenges independently while also collaborating with our allies to maintain national safety. Fine Gael's ambition for Ireland is to develop the capability and personnel necessary to safeguard against direct, hybrid, and cyber attacks in an increasingly complex global environment.

### Investing in Defence

Fine Gael is committed to strengthening Ireland's defence capabilities while preserving our long-standing policy of active military neutrality. We will:

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Preserve Ireland's policy of active military neutrality:** We recognise that while we maintain military neutrality, we are not politically neutral and will engage with international partners when necessary.
- **Minister for Defence:** We will ensure that the Defence Portfolio continues to be represented by a Senior Minister at Cabinet, highlighting the importance of defence in government.
- **Support active military cooperation:** We will enhance cooperation between our Defence Forces and international partners, including the United Nations, European Union, and NATO, focusing on:

- International security and peacekeeping
- Protection of critical undersea infrastructure
- More efficient procurement of military assets
- Cyber security and countering hybrid threats
- Training, upskilling, and knowledge sharing
- **Continue modernising the Defence Forces:** We will align our modernisation efforts with the recommendations from the report of the Commission on the Defence Forces.
- **Building up our Defence capabilities:** Our goal is to achieve Level of Ambition 2 (LOA2) as a priority, with a vision of progressing to Level of Ambition 3 (LOA3), which entails developing full-spectrum defence capabilities comparable to similar-sized countries in Europe.
- **Increase Defence spending:** We commit to steadily increasing our Defence budget every year, ensuring we maximise our capabilities across land, air, sea, and cyber protection.
- **Equip the Navy appropriately:** We will ensure that the Navy is equipped to map our marine area and seabed, protecting vital marine infrastructures, including fixed and floating wind turbines, telecoms and data cables, and energy pipelines.
- **Provide resources for the new East Coast Naval Base:** We will allocate the necessary funding to deliver a new East Coast Naval Base, enhancing our maritime capabilities.
- **Develop accommodation and facilities at Casement Aerodrome:** We will invest in significant upgrades to the accommodation and facilities at Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel to support our Defence Forces.
- **Resource cyber security defences adequately:** We will ensure that Ireland's cyber security defences receive the appropriate resources to protect our digital infrastructure.

These initiatives will enhance Ireland's defence capabilities and ensure the safety and security of our nation and its people in a changing global landscape.

### Defence Forces Personnel: Retention and Recruitment

Fine Gael is committed to implementing measures that enhance the recruitment and retention of men and women in Óglaigh na hÉireann, reaching the target of 11,500 personnel. We will ensure that those



who protect our people, land, air, and sea are better rewarded and recognised for their vital work.

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Commit to reviewing the 'On Duty' rate of pay:** We will continue to review the 'On Duty' rate of pay in the context of our public pay agreement. This is to ensure we fairly compensate Defence Forces personnel for their dedication and service
- **Rewarding Long Service:** Incentivise members to stay in the Defence Forces for longer. All public sector wage measures will be taken with regard to the current public service wage agreement.
- **Ensure the implementation of the Working Time Directive:** Give members of the Defence Forces and their families to better certainty and security.
- **Strengthen the Personnel Support Service (PSS):** We will enhance the PSS, which provides essential support to the families and partners of Defence Forces members, recognising the importance of their contributions.
- **Consider expanding eligibility criteria for enlistment:** We will explore options to broaden the eligibility criteria for those wishing to enlist in the Defence Forces, making it more accessible to a wider range of candidates.
- **Create a more welcoming environment for female recruits:** We will work towards making the Defence Forces a more inclusive organisation for female recruits and cadets, promoting diversity within our ranks.
- **Cultural change:** Respect the outcome of the Defence Forces tribunal and work to improve cultural change.

These initiatives will foster a supportive environment for Defence Forces personnel, ensuring we attract and retain the talent necessary to safeguard Ireland's security.

## Refreshing Ireland's Reserve Defence Forces

Fine Gael fully supports the Reserve Defence Force (RDF) Regeneration and Development Plan, which aims to create a Reserve that can seamlessly train, operate, and deploy alongside the Permanent Defence Force both nationally and internationally.

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Work to better protect workers serving in the RDF:** We will implement measures that safeguard

the rights and interests of individuals who choose to serve in the Reserve Defence Force.

- **Introduce a Flat Rate Expense for RDF members:** We will establish a Flat Rate Expense to compensate RDF members for expenses incurred while serving.
- **Engage with employers to boost participation:** We will collaborate with employers to encourage greater participation in the RDF by workers possessing critical skills and experience.
- **Support the introduction of a 'cyber reserve':** We will advocate for the creation of a cyber reserve to bolster our capabilities in digital defence.
- **Provide cost supports for SMEs:** We will introduce financial supports for Ireland's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to enable and encourage volunteerism among their employees.
- **Ensure access to necessary equipment for RDF trainees:** We will guarantee that RDF trainees have access to essential equipment, including personal protective gear and health and safety equipment.
- **Utilise Higher and Further Education Institutions:** We will explore the potential of our higher and further education institutions as centres for promoting a geographically dispersed reservist culture across Ireland.
- **Explore the use of public buildings for training:** We will investigate the possibility of using public buildings for training and classes, maximising available resources.
- **Establish new Naval Reserve training bases:** We will work towards the establishment of new Naval Reserve training bases around the island to enhance our maritime capabilities.

These initiatives will revitalise Ireland's Reserve Defence Forces, ensuring they are equipped, supported, and integrated into our national defence strategy.

## Boosted Civil Defence

Fine Gael recognises the vital role of Civil Defence in supporting communities through the dedication of volunteers. It also serves as an important pathway towards careers in the Defence Forces and Emergency Services.

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Implement the 'Civil Defence - Towards 2030' policy:** We will establish a new Civil Defence Volunteer and Equipment Management System to enhance the efficiency of managing approximately

2,500 Civil Defence volunteers, including their training, activities, equipment, and vehicle management.

These initiatives will strengthen Civil Defence, ensuring that volunteers are well-supported and prepared to serve their communities effectively.

## Developing a Comprehensive Veterans' Policy

With approximately 145,000 veterans in Ireland, Fine Gael is committed to providing better support for those who have served in the Defence Forces, as well as for retiring members, their spouses, and families—particularly those facing challenges after service.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Establish an Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA):** This office will act as a one-stop shop for ex-service members and their families, providing information and support services tailored to their needs.
- **Prioritise assistance for transitioning personnel:** We will focus on helping serving personnel as they transition to civilian life, ensuring they have the resources and support necessary for a successful adjustment.
- **Support veterans with housing and specialised services:** We will enhance access to housing, emergency accommodation, and support centres that offer specialised services, including mental health care and assistance for substance misuse and addictions.

These initiatives will create a comprehensive framework to support our veterans, ensuring they receive the care and resources they deserve after their service to Ireland.

## Robust Approach to Ireland's Security Intelligence

The threats to Irish security are complex and diverse, encompassing violent extremism, foreign interference, and espionage. Fine Gael recognises the urgent need to reform and renew Ireland's national intelligence structures and capabilities.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Ensure a whole-of-Government approach to defence and deterrence:** We will implement a coordinated strategy to address future threats from extremists and malicious actors effectively.
- **Commence a structured review of Ireland's Military Intelligence:** This review will be conducted to ensure that our intelligence services are positioned to protect national security while upholding the rights of citizens. We will also assess current oversight mechanisms at operational, judicial, and political levels to confirm they are sufficient for ensuring lawful action by intelligence services and maintaining public confidence.

These initiatives will strengthen Ireland's security intelligence framework, ensuring that it is robust, accountable, and aligned with democratic values.

## Ireland's place in the world

### A more assertive Foreign, Defence and Security Policy

Ireland and Europe must be able to defend itself. Unlike other political parties, we will not shirk our responsibility and leave it to others to defend our citizens. The world is changing rapidly and we must play our part. Over the next five years, Fine Gael will adopt a more assertive foreign, defence and security policy. We will do this in a way that protects our policy of military neutrality.

### Conflict in Gaza

The Irish people have strong views on the conflict in the Middle East, recognising it as a humanitarian catastrophe. Fine Gael is committed to taking meaningful steps to address this situation, calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the release of all remaining hostages.

Fine Gael, while in government, made the historic decision to recognise the State of Palestine alongside Norway and Spain, while unequivocally recognising the State of Israel. We aim to build on this progress to help create a peaceful future. A two-state solution is the only credible path to peace and security for both Israel and Palestine and their peoples.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Enact legislation to prohibit trade in goods from Occupied Palestinian Territories:** We will also continue to advocate for a review of the EU Trade Agreement.
- **Press for an immediate ceasefire:** We will continue to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the release of all hostages.
- **Make the case for human rights obligations:** We will advocate for a meaningful interpretation of Israel's human rights obligations under the EU-Israel association agreement at the Commission level.
- **Work with European colleagues to support UNRWA:** We will collaborate with our European partners to secure multi-million euro funding for

the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

- **Enforce strict controls on dual-use exports:** We will implement a rigorous regime for the control of dual-use items, ensuring that all applications for export licences are thoroughly checked to confirm that they will be used for their stated purposes and not for illicit activities.
- **Ensure enforcement of existing legislation on munitions:** We will uphold the current legislation that prohibits civil aircraft from carrying munitions of war in Irish sovereign territory without an exemption. We will ensure that pilots are aware of their obligations and conduct spot checks if necessary.

These initiatives will reflect Ireland's commitment to humanitarian principles and our dedication to promoting peace and security in the region.

### Conflict in Ukraine

Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine represents an attack on our way of life and our core values—freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. Fine Gael is committed to standing in solidarity with Ukraine during this challenging time.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes:** We will unequivocally support Ukraine, affirming that Russia cannot win this war.
- **Improve the sanctions regime against Russia:** We will work to enhance the existing sanctions against Russia by identifying and closing loopholes to ensure their effectiveness.
- **Support Ukraine's EU membership efforts:** We will actively support Ukraine's aspiration to achieve EU membership as soon as possible, facilitating their integration into the European community.

These initiatives reflect our unwavering commitment to supporting Ukraine and defending the values that unite us.

### Conflict in Sudan

Fine Gael is deeply concerned about the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Sudan, where millions have suffered from violence, hunger, and displacement.

#### Fine Gael will:



- **Use our voice at international fora:** We will advocate for greater attention to the conflict in Sudan, ensuring it is prioritised at the European Council and other international platforms.
- **Ensure development aid reaches those in need:** We will work to facilitate the delivery of development aid to the people who need it most, supporting humanitarian efforts and relief initiatives.

These initiatives reflect our commitment to addressing the crisis in Sudan and supporting those affected by this tragic conflict.

## Fine Gael at the heart of Europe

Fine Gael is the party of Europe, fully involved in the development of the EU and engaged with our EU partners. Ireland's future lies in Europe, a common home we are helping to build.

### A stronger European Union

Fine Gael believes that in dealing with global issues, we can achieve more by cooperating with our European neighbours than by working alone. In an unstable world, it is essential that Ireland is part of a stronger European Union.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Achieve Capital Market Union:** We will support the actions needed to develop and deepen Europe's capital markets so that they can meaningfully contribute to funding Europe's future, not least the green and digital transitions.
- **Prioritise economic competitiveness in the EU:** We will ensure that Europe moves swiftly to keep pace internationally and improve the standard of living for all citizens.
- **Champion the European Green Deal:** We will unlock Europe's untapped renewable energy resources through enhanced EU cooperation and improved energy grid connectivity.

## Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2026

Ireland will have a significant opportunity to shape the EU agenda when it hosts the Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2026. This event will also provide a platform to showcase communities across Ireland, ensuring that meetings extend beyond Dublin. The European Political Community meeting in late 2026

will be the largest international political event ever hosted in Ireland.

- **Work towards balanced online regulation:** Our aim is to hold big tech companies accountable while harnessing the potential of AI.
- **Build on the implementation of the EU Directive:** We will continue efforts to combat Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, striving to make Europe the first continent free of gender-based violence.
- **Ensure regional balance in meetings:** We will bring high-level meetings to cities and counties across Ireland.

## Irish Workers in the EU Institutions

To encourage young Irish people to pursue careers in the EU, we will:

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Collaborate with third-level providers:** We will create a roadmap to equip students with the skills needed for a career in the EU.
- **Develop a communications programme:** This initiative will raise awareness among school-leavers and graduates about career opportunities within the EU.
- **Support the Irish language:** We will work with EU institutions to uphold the Irish language's full status as an official language of the European Union.

## Rule of Law and Democracy

As a member of the European People's Party (EPP), Fine Gael has been a leading defender of the rule of law in the EU, reinforcing our commitment to fundamental EU values of human rights, democracy, freedom of the press, and the rule of law.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Remain the leading defender of the rule of law:** We will ensure that all citizens in all Member States feel equally protected from those who threaten our values, including their own governments.
- **Support the European Commission's efforts:** We will strengthen the application and monitoring of the rule of law across the EU.
- **Ensure the Rule of Law mechanism is applied fairly:** We will advocate for a non-partisan application of this mechanism and refine it to enhance its effectiveness.

## Accession and Enlargement

Fine Gael is pro-European and supports enlargement, believing it has benefitted Europe significantly. We advocate for the next significant enlargement to include the Western Balkans.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Stand by the EU's accession promises:** We will promote a forward-looking enlargement strategy for Ukraine, the Western Balkans, Moldova, and Georgia.
- **Promote closer cooperation with candidate countries:** We will assist these nations in aligning with EU standards, ensuring all candidate countries adhere to the same rules on their path to full membership.

## Global Ireland and Digital Ireland

Fine Gael has established the concept of Global Ireland, a multi-annual, whole-of-government strategy aimed at doubling the scope and impact of Ireland's global engagement by 2025. Since then, we have opened approximately 20 new missions, including embassies in Rabat, Manila, and Kyiv.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Publish a new strategy, Global Ireland 2040:** This strategy will outline how Ireland can enhance our influence in world affairs and better serve our citizens.
- **Maintain emigrant support programme funding:** We will continue to support our emigrant programme and strengthen connections with our diaspora overseas. This includes exploring new pathways for legal migration for Irish citizens to the US.
- **Facilitate the return of emigrants:** We will make it easier for returning emigrants to come back to Ireland by creating a one-stop 'admin' shop to assist with obtaining PPS numbers, driver's licenses, and addressing other administrative issues.
- **Develop the Team Ireland approach:** We will enhance collaboration among the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, and our missions through Team Ireland houses, maximising our impact abroad while ensuring efficient use of resources for the Irish taxpayer at home.
- **Pursue an ambitious digital strategy:** We will work towards implementing digital passports for those interested in accessing better digital public services in the future.

These initiatives will strengthen Ireland's global presence and enhance our digital capabilities, ensuring we are well-equipped to engage effectively on the international stage.

## Official Development Assistance

The Irish people are renowned for their generosity in providing financial assistance to the most vulnerable and deprived individuals worldwide. Through the State, Irish taxpayers contribute approximately €2 billion in Official Development Assistance (ODA) across government.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Work towards the UN target of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) for ODA:** This taxpayers' money will be essential in providing vital support to end poverty, promote peace, and protect communities most affected by climate change.
- **Continue to update Ireland's International Climate Finance Roadmap:** We will progressively increase funding in the coming years to ensure that our commitments are met and effectively address climate challenges.
- **Focus funding on adaptation:** We will prioritise funding for adaptation efforts in countries most vulnerable to climate change, particularly Small Island Developing States, ensuring they receive the necessary support to build resilience.

These initiatives will strengthen Ireland's commitment to global development and climate action, reflecting our dedication to assisting those in need around the world.

## Realising the Reset in Relations with the UK

The relationship between Ireland and the UK is of profound significance for all people across these islands. For too long, this relationship has not reached its full potential. Fine Gael is committed to resetting that partnership with the new administration in the UK, and we view this as an exciting period of renewal. We are determined to make the most of this opportunity.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Establish arrangements to support and strengthen UK-Irish relations:** We will encourage

collaboration across all aspects of our partnership.

- **Hold annual summits between the two heads of government:** These summits will provide a platform to review joint efforts and deepen cooperation, ensuring that both nations remain aligned in their objectives.
- **Work with the UK Government as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement:** We will strive to fulfil the potential of this agreement, strengthening its institutions and fostering further prosperity and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

These initiatives will enhance the relationship between Ireland and the UK, promoting cooperation and shared progress for all communities on these islands.

## Northern Ireland and a Shared Future of Prosperity

The island of Ireland is home to one of the most successful peace processes in the world. When this process came under threat from Brexit, Fine Gael stood firm for Ireland. We must protect and build upon this shared project, as peaceful cooperation on our island is invaluable. Our vision for Ireland embraces all identities, religions, and minorities. Fine Gael is committed to unification as our objective.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Work together on a North-South, East-West basis:** We will strive to improve the lives of everyone across these islands through collaboration and partnership.
- **'Normalise' meetings of the Good Friday structures:** We will ensure that meetings of bodies such as the North-South Ministerial Council occur regularly, reinforcing renewed momentum in cross-border collaboration as a cornerstone of our shared future.
- **Collaborate closely with the UK Government:** We will work to reset UK-Irish relations, recognising that the peace process thrives when both governments act as full partners and co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement.
- **Build a future of economic prosperity through the Shared Island initiative:** We are investing €1 billion in transport, education, and other critical areas to foster mutual respect and growth.
- **Continue support for infrastructure projects:** We will advocate for the A5 road upgrade, the Ulster Canal and the Narrow Water Bridge to enhance

connectivity and economic opportunities.

- **Promote funding for PEACEPLUS and Interreg programmes:** We will ensure continued funding for these initiatives to support communities in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- **Be a voice for Northern Ireland at the EU level:** We will represent the interests of the people of Northern Ireland in European discussions and negotiations.
- **Ensure funding for Northern Ireland students in Erasmus:** We will secure funding for Northern Ireland students to participate in the Erasmus programme in Ireland and across the EU.
- **Support the UK's rejoining of the Erasmus+ programme:** We will advocate for proposals that facilitate the UK's re-entry into the Erasmus+ student exchange system.
- **Integrate startups and businesses across the island:** We will work to foster collaboration between startups and businesses in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, enhancing economic ties.

These initiatives will strengthen our commitment to a peaceful and prosperous future for all communities on the island of Ireland.

## Legacy Issues

With a reset in UK and Irish relations, we have a valuable opportunity to make significant progress on long-standing legacy issues. Fine Gael's approach will prioritise listening and engagement to ensure that the Irish Government actively contributes to resolving these matters.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Work closely with the UK Government as co-guarantors on legacy issues:** We will collaborate effectively to address historical grievances and foster reconciliation.
- **Ensure the Irish Government actively engages:** We will commit to playing our part in legacy discussions, ensuring that Ireland is not found wanting in addressing these important issues.

These initiatives will contribute to healing and reconciliation, reinforcing our commitment to a shared and peaceful future for all communities on the island.





**Jennifer Carroll  
MacNeill**

Candidate for  
Dún Laoghaire





# Protecting the economy and investing in your future

Fine Gael is dedicated to protecting Ireland's economy while investing in the future well-being of our citizens, particularly in key areas such as health, social protection, and enterprise. We will prioritise investment in health services, ensuring that all individuals, especially older people, have access to quality care and new medicines. Mental health support will be enhanced to provide comprehensive services for all age groups.

Our commitment to older citizens includes the Older Person's Guarantee, which will ensure financial security through improved working-age payments and support for carers. We will strengthen community employment initiatives to create job opportunities and foster social enterprises that benefit local communities.

In agriculture and food production, we will focus on farm succession planning, viable farm incomes, and sustainable fishing communities to support rural economies. Our strategy will include initiatives for enterprise and trade, promoting workers' rights and creating a fairer work environment.

Through prudent public expenditure and a robust National Development Plan, we will ensure that investments are made wisely, focusing on areas that drive growth and improve quality of life. By fostering a resilient economy, we are laying the groundwork for a brighter, more secure future for all Irish citizens.

## Investing in Your Health

Fine Gael wants you to live a longer, healthier and happier life. We know that continued improvements to our health services are needed to meet the demand, as Ireland's population continues to grow and age.

Fine Gael is ready to meet this challenge. We will work to ensure quicker access to health care services and better health outcomes for you. We will continue to significantly invest in our health service.

In the first budget of a new government, we will outline our approach to multi-annual funding for our health service, linking it to increased productivity and delivery. This strategy will be a game changer, driving year-on-year improvements that lead to better health outcomes for everyone while providing better value for money.

## Sláintecare

Sláintecare is a comprehensive roadmap designed to strengthen Ireland's health system. Developed through consensus with other parties, and actioned by Simon Harris, it aims to ensure that everyone can access the care they need. Despite global challenges such as the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, significant progress has been made. As we reach the mid-point of this ambitious reform programme, it is essential to continue delivering benefits to our growing and aging population.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Grow our health service and assess infrastructure and capacity needs:** We will evaluate existing and future demands on our health system within the first year of the new government and plan to increase capacity by 5,000 inpatient hospital beds by 2031.
- **Drive down waiting lists, open new surgical hubs and elective hospitals:** We will establish six surgical hubs in Cork, Dublin (two sites), Galway, Limerick, and Waterford and four new elective

hospitals in Cork, Dublin (two sites) and Galway to perform thousands of day case procedures such as cataracts, minor operations, and outpatient appointments each year.

- **Develop a public workforce plan to enhance care delivery:** We will recruit additional doctors, nurses, dentists and health and social care professionals, and create a plan to ensure adequate staffing across acute, primary, and community care, considering population and demographic changes, new clinical programmes and models of care, and reducing our reliance on agency staff and overtime.
- **Double therapy programme places:** We will at least double the number of places in college therapy programmes, such as Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, and Speech and Language Therapy, while expanding training for other allied health professionals.
- **Increase healthcare training places:** We will increase training places for nurses, medicine, dentistry and pharmacy.
- **Continue to reduce healthcare costs:** Building on the abolition of inpatient hospital charges and the extension of free GP care, we will work to further decrease healthcare costs, including capping monthly costs for drugs and medicines. We will undertake a full eligibility review and comparison with European norms to drive down costs for people.
- **Maintain the Savings and Productivity Taskforce:** We will continue to operate this taskforce to improve efficiencies and increase access to healthcare services.
- **Support innovation in healthcare:** We will encourage healthcare professionals to develop better models of care and ways of working by providing funding for testing new approaches and innovations.
- **Retaining healthcare staff:** We will establish a working group to examine the potential for flexible and fair, defined periods of service to the HSE for healthcare graduates.

These initiatives will enhance the efficiency and accessibility of Ireland's health service, ensuring that all citizens receive the care they need now and in the future.

## Preventative Health

Ireland boasts one of the highest life expectancies in Europe, with significant improvements in mortality rates contributing to this achievement. As our



population continues to age and grow, it is crucial to protect these gains by promoting healthy lifestyles, preventing chronic diseases, and reducing the impact of chronic conditions. These efforts will help alleviate pressure on our hospital system.

#### **Fine Gael will:**

- **Appoint a Commissioner for Positive Ageing:** Develop a plan to combat loneliness and isolation among older citizens as first task.
- **Expand screening age ranges:** Broaden eligibility for BreastCheck initially to ages 45-74 and BowelScreen initially to ages 50-74 ensuring it reaches a 60% participation target. We will also keep the further expansion of screening programmes under review, working with affected families and stakeholders to ensure every opportunity to save lives through screening is taken.
- **Invest in awareness campaigns:** Encourage high uptake of screening through targeted communications initiatives.
- **Introduce new cancer screening programmes:** Plan for the implementation of lung, prostate, and gastric cancer screenings.
- **Implement the Roadmap to Cervical Cancer Elimination:** Focus on strategies to reduce cervical cancer rates in Ireland.
- **Expand newborn screening:** Enhance early detection practices in accordance with international best practices.
- **National Brain Health Strategy:** Develop and implement a national strategy to improve brain health and reduce dementia incidence.
- **Publish the National Physical Activity Framework:** Promote active lifestyles through the framework for 2024-2040 and the action plan for 2024-2028.
- **Create a new Obesity Policy and Action Plan:** Address overweight and obesity levels to improve health outcomes.
- **Continue implementing the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018:** Tackle harmful alcohol consumption through effective regulations.
- **Ban disposable vapes and regulate nicotine products:** Protect public health with restrictions on flavours, advertising social media marketing.
- **Close the gap in health services:** Reach underserved communities, including homeless individuals and the Traveller and Roma populations.
- **Develop and support Music Therapy:** We will work

to expand the use of music therapy in a range of health and educational settings and age groups and seek to develop standards for the profession.

- **Examine the national immunisation programme:** Examine the potential of including the shingles and RSV vaccines, initially offering them free to at-risk groups.
- **Ensure adequate vaccination levels:** Develop a comprehensive public health campaign aimed at tackling vaccine hesitancy.
- **Collaborate with community organisations:** Make sunscreen available in public spaces through partnerships with local authorities, and initiate a skin cancer awareness campaign.
- **Address the health effects of social media:** Develop a comprehensive health strategy to combat the harms related to social media.
- **Derma Filler safety:** Limit the administration of dermal fillers to trained healthcare professionals.

These initiatives will enhance preventative health measures, leading to healthier communities, reduced chronic disease rates, and improved overall well-being for all citizens in Ireland.

## Supporting and Expanding GP Services

Secure the future of GP services across the country by agreeing a new contract for GPs providing the supports and additional resources GPs need to thrive, attract new GPs and improve care for patients. As part of this agreement, we will

- **Expand the Structured Chronic Disease Management Programme:** Examine the possibility of expanding this successful programme, which allows patients with chronic conditions to be cared for in GP practices rather than in hospitals, to include more conditions and seek to provide access to all adults with these conditions.
- **Rural GPs:** Provide additional supports for practices in rural areas and areas of increased need.
- **Newly Qualified GPs:** Provide targeted supports aimed at supporting newly qualified GPs to establish themselves in communities across the country, and existing GPs to take on newly qualified GPs.
- **Comprehensive Women's Health Programme:** Provide a comprehensive women's health programme supporting women at each stage of

life, including advice on contraception, sexually transmitted infections, screening, fertility and pre-conception and two free visits for women experiencing menopause.

- **HSE-Employed GPs:** Recruit HSE-employed GPs to assist with GP cover and to maintain essential services in communities.
- **Community Diagnostics:** Grow the General Practitioner Access to Community Diagnostics (GPACD) Scheme, enabling easier and faster access to radiology scans including X-ray, CT and MRI.
- **Strategic Review of General Practice:** Publish the Strategic Review of General Practice, tasked with examining issues such as GP training, capacity, out of hours services, and eHealth.
- **Train more Doctors:** Grow new entrant places on the GP training scheme by a further 80%.
- **Promote and assist Graduate Entry medicine:** Introduce a tuition fee support scheme for Graduate Entry Medicine students to reduce costs and encourage undergraduates to pursue a career in medicine. Provide more graduate entry medicine programmes focused on preparing students for careers in rural and remote medicine, ensuring those in under-served areas have access to skilled healthcare professionals.

These initiatives aim to enhance the capacity and sustainability of GP services, ensuring that all communities have access to quality healthcare.

## Pharmacists

Pharmacists play a crucial role in managing and improving our health, acting as accessible healthcare providers within our communities. To empower pharmacists to deliver more care,

### Fine Gael will:

- **Appoint a Chief Pharmacist:** We will appoint a chief pharmacist within the Department of Health to set a long term and ambitious strategic vision for community pharmacists and enhance community services.
- **Implement Expert Taskforce recommendations:** We will enhance the role of pharmacists by increasing their prescribing authority and introducing a Common Conditions Service to expand the range of care they provide in the community.
- **Update pharmacy fee structure:** Review the pharmacy fee structure and examine the HSE

reimbursement process to reduce administrative burdens.

- **Medicine Shortages:** Support pharmacists to managing medicine shortages.

These initiatives will enable pharmacists to contribute more significantly to community health, ensuring better access to care for all citizens.

## Dentists

To make dental services more accessible for everyone, Fine Gael will work closely with representatives to:

- **Implement Smile agus Sláinte:** We will fully roll out this initiative, which includes preventive dental packages for children and adults, along with workforce planning actions to increase capacity and ensure timely access to local dental services.
- **Reform the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS):** We will place the DTSS on a sustainable footing to improve service delivery and accessibility for patients.
- **Hire more public dentists:** We will target recruitment efforts to provide dental care in schools, ensuring that children receive essential dental services.
- **Update the Dentists Act 1985:** We will revise this legislation to enhance patient protection and ensure safe practices within the profession.
- **Recognise and Regulate more Dental Specialities:** We will work to acknowledge additional dental specialities, improving the breadth of care available to patients.

These initiatives will enhance access to dental care, promote preventive health, and ensure that all citizens receive the quality dental services they deserve.

## Eye care

- **Review National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology:** We will ensure more eye services are provided in the community allowing hospitals and eye clinics to focus on treating more complex conditions.
- **Support Community Ophthalmology:** Review the Community Ophthalmic Services Medical Treatment Scheme (COSMTS) to provide more medical and minor surgical care to medical card patients outside of the acute care setting.

## Primary Care Network

We will increase the number of Primary Care Centres to provide local care, offering an alternative to hospitals for managing many health conditions.

## Enhanced Community Care Programme

- We will ensure a full complement of staff in this programme, which is vital for increasing healthcare services in the community, particularly for older people and those with chronic conditions, thereby reducing hospital pressures.

## Statutory Home Care Scheme

- We will create a regulated home care scheme to ensure fair access to high-quality homecare services.

## Digital Transformation

We are committed to driving the digital transformation of our health service. We will enact the Health Information Bill 2024 and fully fund Digital for Care: A Digital Health Framework for Ireland 2024-2030. This roadmap aims to digitally transform health services in Ireland and improve access for patients by:

- **Launching a National Patient App:** This app will give patients easier access to their health information, empowering them to make more informed decisions about their care.
- **Implementing Shared Care Records:** We will integrate patient records and Electronic Health Records to ensure seamless information sharing among healthcare providers.
- **Expanding virtual care initiatives:** We will promote greater use of remote health monitoring and virtual care solutions, moving more healthcare services into the home and community through local community hubs. We will extend and support the use of Virtual Wards enabling patients who would otherwise be in hospital to receive the care, monitoring and treatment they need in their own homes, and ease hospital pressures.

- **Ensuring national electronic prescribing:** We will establish a national system for electronic prescribing to streamline medication management and improve safety.
- **Support Connected Hubs for telehealth:** We will promote the use of Connected Hubs to provide secure and private access to telehealth and remote health services, bringing healthcare closer to people.

These initiatives will significantly enhance the efficiency and accessibility of healthcare services in Ireland, empowering patients and improving health outcomes.

## Linking communities

- **Connect Local Link routes with health services:** We will work to integrate Local Link transport routes with health services to improve access for individuals seeking care.

## Reducing the Cost of Care

Fine Gael is dedicated to making healthcare more affordable for all citizens.

### We will:

- **Expand free GP care for children and young people:** We will continue to extend free GP services to all individuals under 18 years of age, ensuring that they receive the healthcare they need without financial barriers.
- **Reduce the monthly cost of prescription drugs:** We will lower the maximum monthly cost of prescription drugs and medicines to €50 and abolish prescription charges, making necessary medications more affordable for families.
- **Extend access to free contraception:** We will provide free contraception to all women over the age of 35, promoting reproductive health and wellbeing.
- **Provide free Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT):** We will ensure that HRT is available at no cost to those who need it, supporting women's health during menopause.
- **Increase medical card income limits:** We will implement progressive increases in medical card income limits to ensure that more individuals and families qualify for essential health services.

These initiatives will help to alleviate the financial burden of healthcare, ensuring that all citizens can access the care they need without facing prohibitive costs.



## Better Hospital and Emergency Care

- To enhance the quality of care in our health system and reduce overcrowding, Fine Gael will:
- **Open the National Children's Hospital:** We will complete and open this facility to ensure specialised and integrated care for children.
- **Recruit additional healthcare professionals:** We will hire thousands more public-only consultants, nurses, doctors, dentists and health and social care workers to strengthen our healthcare workforce
- **Increase Sláintecare consultants:** We will increase the number of public only consultants working in our hospital.
- **Expand hospital bed capacity:** We will implement the largest expansion of hospital beds in decades, adding at least 5,000 new acute inpatient beds and replacement beds across the country by 2031.
- **Provide community and critical care beds:** We will create more community beds and additional critical care beds to enhance service availability.
- **Increase capacity in the Mid-West:** We will deliver up to 292 beds at UHL by 2028 through the phased opening of two new bed blocks, a rapid build unit and the Inpatient Bed Capacity Expansion Plan. In the immediate term, we will leverage private capacity to ease pressure in the mid-west.
- **Act on HIQA recommendations:** We will implement the recommendations from the HIQA independent statutory review to improve urgent and emergency care in the Mid-West, including the case for a second emergency department.
- **Implement both the Clarke and Rothwell report recommendations:** We will ensure immediate action on the findings of these reports to enhance care quality.
- **Increase access to diagnostic hours:** We will ensure greater access to diagnostics in the evenings and at weekends.
- **Enhance GP Out of Hours services:** We will maintain and expand access to these services to reduce referrals to emergency departments.
- **Ensure senior decision-makers are on-site in ED:** We will increase the number of ED consultants and ensure more senior staff are rostered in emergency departments during weekends and public holidays for better decision-making.
- **Increase access to emergency care:** We will

expand emergency departments in Mullingar General Hospital, Portlaoise Hospital, Naas General Hospital, Mater Hospital, and Cork University Hospital, and open 12 injury units in various locations including in Cork, Mayo, Westmeath, Waterford, and Galway.

- **Standardise opening hours of Injury Units:** We will ensure a consistent 7-day service from 8 am to 8 pm, including Bank Holidays.
- **Invest in the National Ambulance Service:** We will enhance funding for the service to ensure investment in ambulance stations and the fleet, education and training and ensure ongoing recruitment of frontline staff to improve mobile urgent and emergency care and enable lifesaving work on the scene
- **Empower health and social care professionals:** We will promote advanced practice roles for healthcare professionals to enhance service delivery.
- **Retain staff through improved standards:** We will focus on better working conditions and provide education and training supports to strengthen the public health workforce and reduce reliance on contract and agency workers.
- **Implement recommendations for NCHD workforce:** We will act on the final report of the National Taskforce on the Non-Consultant Hospital Doctor (NCHD) Workforce to make the sector more attractive to medical graduates.

These initiatives will strengthen hospital and emergency care services, ensuring timely and high-quality healthcare for all citizens in Ireland.

## Reducing Waiting Lists

Fine Gael is committed to addressing waiting lists in our healthcare system to ensure timely access to services for all patients.

### We will:

- **Publish multi-annual action plans:** We will develop and publish action plans aimed at driving activity to meet the waiting time targets set by Sláintecare.
- **Deliver additional surgical procedures:** We will provide 24,000 more day cases, over 34,000 more minor operations, and 111,000 more outpatient consultations each year through new surgical hubs in Cork, Dublin (two sites), Galway, Limerick, and Waterford. These hubs, will feature dedicated surgical facilities with operating theatres and

treatment rooms, significantly reducing waiting lists and times in the short term. We will also explore the potential for additional hubs. .

- **Open new larger elective hospitals:** In the longer term, we will establish dedicated capacity in new elective hospitals in Cork, Galway, and Dublin (two sites), enabling the provision of hundreds of thousands of procedures annually. These will be developed in two phases, starting with day cases, diagnostics, and outpatient services, followed by inpatient treatments, ultimately delivering an estimated 977,000 procedures every year.
- **Ensure wide coverage of Elective Hospitals and Surgical Hubs:** We will ensure that both the Elective Hospitals and Surgical Hubs serve as many areas and populations as possible to effectively address waiting lists on a national scale.

These initiatives will enhance access to surgical and outpatient services, significantly reducing waiting times and improving patient outcomes across Ireland.

## Paediatric Spinal Surgery

Fine Gael is committed to maintaining the Paediatric Spinal Surgery Management Unit to improve scoliosis and spina bifida services and other specialties.

### We will:

- **Resource the Paediatric Spinal Surgery Management Unit:** We will ensure continuous funding is allocated to the unit, focusing on reducing waiting lists and enhancing service delivery for paediatric spinal surgery
- **Coordinate spinal services across hospitals:** This dedicated approach will improve coordination of spinal services, driving continuous improvement and effectively addressing challenges throughout the service.
- **Increase staffing and resources:** We are hiring additional consultants, nurses, and health and social care professionals, extending operating theatre days, and providing a ring-fenced theatre to ensure adequate surgical capacity.
- **Utilise private hospital capacity:** While these improvements are implemented, we will also leverage capacity in private hospitals, both domestically and internationally. Families of children requiring surgery will receive comprehensive support, including assistance with flights, accommodation, travel insurance, and other expenses.

- **Commit to publish reviews of paediatric orthopaedic surgeries:** We will publish the reviews of paediatric orthopaedic surgeries and fully implement their recommendations to enhance care quality.

These initiatives will strengthen paediatric spinal services, ensuring timely access to care and improved outcomes for children requiring surgery.

## Our Plan to Beat Cancer

Fine Gael is dedicated to enhancing cancer care to ensure earlier diagnosis, increased treatment access, reduced waiting times, and improved survival rates for patients. We will provide an additional €40 million to fully resource the National Cancer Strategy to support patients and their families while working towards lowering the number of new cancer cases. When the time comes, we will review the outcomes and initiate a successor strategy.

Over the lifetime of the next Government,

### we will focus on the following areas:

## Cancer Prevention

- **Implement public health measures:** We will continue to enforce the Public Health (Alcohol) Act, raise the minimum age for tobacco sales to 21, and collaborate with community organisations to provide free sunscreen.
- **Regulate vaping products:** We will ban disposable vapes and impose restrictions on nicotine inhaling products regarding flavours, and advertising.

## Screening

- **Expand screening age ranges:** We will initially broaden the age for BreastCheck to 45-74 years and BowelScreen to 50-74 years, but keep age ranges under review ensuring a target participation rate of 60% for BowelScreen.
- **Increase awareness and access to screening:** We will invest in campaigns to raise awareness and provide funding to ensure under-served groups, including people with disabilities, participate in screening programmes.
- **Introduce new cancer screening programmes:** We will plan for the rollout of screening for lung, prostate, and gastric cancers and implement Ireland's Roadmap to Cervical Cancer Elimination.

- **Extend the Laura Brennan HPV Catch-Up Vaccination Programme:** We will expand this programme to all individuals under 25 who missed the vaccination at school and raise awareness about its benefits.

## Diagnostic Testing

- **Enhance staffing for diagnostics:** We will train, recruit, and retain sufficient staff for endoscopy, colonoscopy, colposcopy, and radiology to meet diagnostic targets.
- **Protect diagnostic pathways:** We will ensure that individuals scheduled for tests are seen within the recommended timeframe.

## Workforce and Infrastructure

- **Ensure adequate staffing in cancer care:** We will maintain adequate staffing levels and provide training, improve working conditions, and enhance recruitment to address recruitment and retention challenges.
- **Review support professionals' needs:** We will review and ensure the appropriate number of dietitians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and medical social workers in the public health service to support cancer patients and survivors.
- **Invest in infrastructure and equipment:** We will enhance facilities to meet target treatment times outlined in the National Cancer Strategy and increase annual treatment capacity. We will provide capital funding for radiation oncology services and upgrade chemotherapy wards and laboratory facilities.
- **Support cancer treatment trials:** We will provide resources for more cancer treatment trials in Ireland, benefiting patients domestically and internationally.

## New Treatments

- **Promoting innovative cancer treatments:** We will invest and advocate for the development and accessibility of innovative and breakthrough treatments for cancer and other major diseases to improve patient outcomes.

## More Effective Supports for Cancer Patients

- **Support for cancer survivors:** We will ensure access to assessment and treatment for long-term effects such as pain, fatigue, and depression.
- **Implement Psycho-Oncology services:** Implement the Model of Care for Psycho-Oncology for patients aged 0-24, addressing the psychological impact of a cancer diagnosis.
- **Equitable access to support products:** We will fund universal access to hairpieces, post-mastectomy products, and specialised bras.
- **Cancer survivorship programmes:** Provide for programmes that assist cancer patients in transitioning from treatment, ensuring easy access to cancer services if needed.
- **Continue to offer cancer support services:** We will continue to invest in cancer support services across the country to assist patients and their families.

These initiatives will enhance cancer care in Ireland, ensuring better prevention, timely access to treatment, and improved quality of life for patients and survivors.

## Key Healthcare Strategies

Fine Gael is committed to maximising the benefits of our national healthcare strategies, which include the National Trauma Strategy, National Maternity Strategy, National Stroke Strategy, National Rehabilitation Strategy and Sexual Health initiatives. We will ensure renewed focus on their implementation

### Fine Gael will:

- **Enhance existing healthcare strategies:** We will ensure that all national healthcare strategies are fully implemented and updated when necessary to reflect current needs.
- **Publish a new National Rare Disease Plan:** This plan will be resourced to improve the lives of tens of thousands of people living with rare diseases by enhancing diagnosis, coordination, and access to care.
- **Resource the National Strategy for Accelerating Genetic and Genomic Medicine:** We will commit to implementing this strategy along with the National Genetics and Genomics Workforce Plan to advance healthcare in these vital areas.
- **Support the HSE in serving the transgender community:** Ensure a well-governed, patient-



centred clinical model of healthcare for the transgender community.

- **Support Dementia Care:** We will continue to resource the model of care for dementia to improve assessment, treatment, care and support for people with dementia and their families. We will develop a National Dementia Registry to map services, identify need and ensure equitable access.

These initiatives will strengthen our healthcare system, improve patient outcomes, and ensure that all individuals receive the quality care they deserve.

## European Health Union

Fine Gael is committed to strengthening the European Health Union to enhance health outcomes across the continent. We will:

- **Promote a European Health Union:** Building on the successful model of the 'EU Beating Cancer Plan,' we will focus on key areas such as Rare Diseases, Cardiovascular Health, and Mental Health to improve health systems and cooperation among EU member states.

This initiative aims to foster collaboration and share best practices across Europe, ensuring that all citizens benefit from improved health services and outcomes.

## Women's Health

Fine Gael is committed to advancing women's health by opening the new National Maternity Hospital and driving the implementation of the Women's Health Action Plan. We aim to empower women and girls while ensuring that future iterations of this plan sustain progress. To achieve this, we will:

- **Increase the number of 'see and treat' gynaecology clinics:** We will expand access to immediate care for women's gynaecological health needs.
- **Expand endometriosis services:** We will enhance support for women with endometriosis and provide support for those with polycystic ovary syndrome.
- **Ensure free period products availability:** We will develop a plan to make free period products accessible in more locations.
- **Open a public AHR treatment centre:** We will establish our first public Assisted Human Reproduction (AHR) treatment centre and increase access to publicly funded IVF services.

- **Support preconception healthcare:** We will empower individuals with the right knowledge and resources before pregnancy to optimise maternal and infant health outcomes and reduce the risk of preventable health complications.
- **Increase support for families experiencing miscarriage:** We will require hospitals to improve their environments and spaces within maternity services to better assist and support individuals dealing with pregnancy loss.
- **Open a Mother and Baby Unit:** We will open a mother and baby unit for mothers who require inpatient mental health supports.
- **Provide more postnatal hubs:** We will expand the availability of postnatal support hubs for new mothers and families.
- **Perinatal Mental Health support:** We will continue to increase perinatal mental health midwife posts.
- **Expand menopause clinics:** We will increase our network of specialist menopause clinics and extend their operating hours to better serve women's needs.

These initiatives will enhance women's health services in Ireland, ensuring that women receive comprehensive care and support throughout their lives.

## Termination Services

Fine Gael is committed to ensuring that all maternity hospitals provide comprehensive termination of pregnancy services in accordance with the 2018 Act.

### We will:

- **Ensure full compliance with the 2018 Act:** We will work to guarantee that every maternity hospital offers complete termination services, providing women with the care and options they need.

This initiative will enhance access to essential reproductive health services, ensuring that women's rights and choices are respected in Ireland.

## Improving Our Sexual Health

Fine Gael is dedicated to enhancing sexual health services in Ireland. We will:

- **Publish a new National Sexual Health Strategy:** This strategy will support the ongoing delivery and expansion of services for the prevention, detection, and treatment of STIs and HIV, including home testing options.

- **Eradicate new HIV transmissions by 2030:** We will intensify our efforts to eliminate new HIV transmissions in Ireland and ensure adequate resources are provided for peer support networks for individuals living with HIV.
- **Expand capacity for PrEP services:** We will work to increase the availability of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and reduce waiting times for access to this vital preventive treatment.

These initiatives will improve sexual health outcomes, enhance access to essential services, and support the wellbeing of all individuals in Ireland.

## Patient Safety

Patient safety is paramount in the delivery of health services. Fine Gael is committed to ensuring that patient safety legislation is regularly reviewed for its effectiveness.

### We will:

- **Promote a culture of safety and advocacy:** We will provide staff with essential training and support to foster an environment where patients are listened to and recognised as the best advocates for their own care, particularly in maternity hospitals.
- **Put in place Adult Safeguarding Policy:** We will publish a national policy on adult safeguarding for the health and social care sector, strengthening existing protections.
- **Introduce hospital-based patient advocates:** These advocates will assist parents caring for a child with a disability or a new diagnosis, helping them navigate the health service and providing information on accessing social protection income supports.
- **Implement recommendations from health-related claims reports:** We will act on the findings of the Report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on the Rising Cost of Health-Related Claims, focusing on preventing adverse events, promoting research, and ensuring that patients are informed and supported when such events occur. This will include the establishment of a dedicated Court list with judges with specialist knowledge of medical negligence litigation, to ensure the earlier hearing of medical negligence cases.

These initiatives will enhance patient safety, improve the quality of care, and ensure that patients receive

the support they need throughout their healthcare journey.

## Men's Health

Fine Gael is committed to advancing men's health in tandem with the investment and progress seen in women's healthcare. We will:

- **Publish a Men's Health Action Plan:** This plan will promote awareness, encourage early detection and treatment of diseases, and support boys and men in leading healthier and happier lifestyles. Additionally, we will fund research into the gender life expectancy gap and implement strategies to close this gap.

These initiatives aim to improve health outcomes for men, ensuring they receive the support and resources necessary for a better quality of life.

## Protecting Older People

Fine Gael will continue to advocate for the needs of older people, we will appoint a standalone minister of state, to ensure this remain the case. Recognising the desire of families to have choices and feel supported when considering care options for their relatives. Taking account of the work of the Commission on Care, and the ESRI on projecting future demand and delivery, we will publish, resource, and implement a National Action Plan that will:

- **Ensure long-term care is timely, comprehensive, and affordable:** We will guarantee that individuals with long-term care needs have access to a decent standard of living.
- **Increase availability of care services:** We will examine and enhance the mix of professional care options, including home care, community-based care, independent living options and residential care ranging from family-owned and operated care homes to public and private care homes.
- **Enhance access to digital healthcare:** We will promote digital health solutions to avoid unnecessary hospital stays.
- **Increase support for carers:** We will provide training, establish clearer pathways to services, improve access to respite care, and fully fund the Carer's Guarantee.

Many of these actions align with the European Care Strategy, and we will seek EU funding to enhance

our long-term care options. Additionally, we are committed to:

- **Funding meals on wheels services:** We share the National Meals on Wheels Network's belief in a community where no one faces food insecurity, especially our senior citizens, people with disabilities, and others in need. To support this ambition, we will continue to increase funding to the Network and develop a plan to enable supported providers in every town in the country and investment in key equipment such as ovens and delivery vans.
- **Maintaining the Fair Deal Scheme waiting list:** We will keep the waiting list for the Fair Deal Scheme at four weeks.
- **Providing additional home support hours:** We will deliver more home support hours each year, and increase the number of hours for individuals with dementia.
- **Introducing a statutory homecare scheme:** We will ensure that every individual has the right to homecare, regardless of their location.
- **Fully staff the Enhanced Community Care Programme:** We will ensure this programme meets the healthcare needs of older people in the community.
- **Maintain and expand day centres:** We will enhance our network of day centres to provide essential support.
- **Publish and implement the Commission on Care for Older People report:** We will act on the findings of this commission, which examines health and social care services for older individuals, while developing the National Action Plan.

These initiatives aim to improve the quality of life for older people in Ireland, providing them with the care and support they deserve.

## Palliative Care

Fine Gael is dedicated to enhancing palliative care services to provide the best support for patients, families, and carers.

### We will:

- **Support our hospice network:** We will continue to bolster our hospice network and implement the new National Adult Palliative Care Policy to improve services and supports.

- **Increase accessibility of palliative care services:** We will ensure that palliative care services are accessible, making sure that everyone can receive the care they need.
- **Secure funding for LauraLynn:** We will maintain a sustainable level of funding for LauraLynn, the National Children's Hospice, to support its vital services.
- **Develop a national palliative care policy for children:** We will create a new national policy to address the specific needs of children with life-limiting conditions, ensuring they receive appropriate care and support.

These initiatives will enhance palliative care services in Ireland, ensuring that all individuals and families facing serious health challenges receive compassionate and comprehensive support.

## Access to New Medicines and Treatments

Fine Gael is committed to increasing access to new medicines and treatments for all patients.

### We will achieve this by:

- **Implementing the Mazars Review recommendations:** We will ensure that the end-to-end approval process is effectively resourced to support the HSE drug reimbursement process, enabling patients to access cost-effective drugs and treatments regardless of their means or health insurance status.
- **Exploring early reimbursement options:** We will investigate new methods for earlier reimbursement of certain treatments, including early access schemes for rare diseases, similar to practices in other countries.
- **Promoting generic and biosimilar medicines:** We will encourage the use of generic and biosimilar medicines to improve access and reduce costs for patients.
- **Increasing resources for clinical trials:** We will enhance access to and resources for clinical trials, facilitating participation and innovation in treatment options.
- **Ensuring coordinated European collaboration:** We will work towards a more coordinated approach at the European level, akin to the Benelux agreement, to leverage benefits similar to those achieved during the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

These initiatives will enhance the availability of new



medicines and treatments, ensuring that all patients in Ireland receive the best possible care and support.

## Clinical Trials

Fine Gael is committed to maximising our potential in clinical trials to enhance research and improve patient care.

### We will achieve this by:

- **Providing protected time for clinicians and research staff:** We will explore ways to allocate dedicated time for clinicians, researchers, and support staff to focus on clinical trial activities.
- **Investing in clinical trials research and infrastructure:** We will commit to regular investment in the necessary research and infrastructure to support the growth of clinical trials.

These initiatives will strengthen Ireland's capacity for clinical trials, facilitating innovative research and improving health outcomes for patients.

## Disability

Fine Gael is committed to publishing a new National Disability Strategy that adopts a whole-of-government approach and advances the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Our accession to the Optional Protocol will also mean that people with a disability will have their rights more stringently upheld. This strategy will ensure that issues are not addressed in isolation and that actions reflect the experiences and ambitions of individuals with disabilities.

The Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026, informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, focuses on developing supports and services that are built around the person, giving people the choice and control over the way they live their lives. It was developed through consultation and the participation of people with disabilities, their friends, family and carers. We will ensure its implementation and its renewal when the time comes.

### Increases in funding for disability services will:

- **Recruit more therapists:** We will increase the number of Dietitians, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Psychologists, Social Workers, and

Speech & Language Therapists to enhance support for individuals with disabilities.

- **Ensure proper workforce planning:** We will focus on identifying solutions and actions to create both immediate and long-term workforce supply in our disability services.
- **Provide new residential placements:** We will create additional residential places for both adults and children to meet the growing demand for services.
- **Expand day service places:** We will increase the availability of day service places for school leavers and those graduating from Rehabilitative Training.
- **Enhance respite services:** We will increase respite services, including the introduction of alternative respite options to better support families.
- **Increase personal assistant hours:** Increase the number of new personal assistant hours and disability home support hours each year, alongside increasing intensive support packages.
- **Implement the Autism Innovation Strategy:** We will put this strategy on a statutory footing to ensure dedicated resources and support for individuals with autism.
- **Promote Local Support:** Promote the establishment of support groups in cities, towns, and villages for people with disabilities, including those with Autism and their families.
- **Autism-One-Stop-Shops:** Ensure these vital supports in every CHO to provide information and direct support.
- **Prioritise the European Disability Card:** We will focus on delivering this card to ensure the rights of individuals with disabilities are recognised and upheld throughout Europe.
- **Disabled Drivers Scheme:** Examine the criteria for the Primary Medical Certificate, as well as the introduction of a grant scheme for necessary vehicle adaptations.
- **Support the Decision Support Service:** We will support the Decision Support Service and full implementation of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015.
- **Simplify Power of Attorney Applications:** We will work with the Law Society of Ireland to create a solicitor's portal simplifying enduring Power of Attorney applications.
- **Implement Congregated Settings Strategy:** We will drive implementation of the Time to Move on from Congregated Settings Strategy.

- **Implement Ombudsman 'Wasted Lives Report':**

We will continue to support people to move out of nursing homes, through the ongoing implementation of the recommendations in the Ombudsman's 'Wasted Lives' report.

These initiatives will strengthen the support system for individuals with disabilities, promoting their rights and improving their quality of life across Ireland.

## Mental Health

We will prioritise the enactment of the **Mental Health Bill 2004**, which is essential for modernising our mental health services and empowering individuals to take an active role in their care and treatment.

As demand for community based mental health services increases, we will undertake an urgent review to ensure adequate staffing levels, better and supported transition from youth to adult services and better integration with our health service.

Progressive increases in funding for mental health services **will ensure that we:**

- **Recruit mental health care professionals:** We will continue to hire mental health professionals, particularly in community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and expand psychology assistant posts enhancing the capacity of primary care psychology services
- **Fully implement 'Sharing the Vision':** This national mental health policy will enhance access and integration of services, including digital support, psychosocial therapies, and improved primary care mental health services.
- **Provide targeted care programmes:** We will develop early intervention programmes for conditions such as psychosis, eating disorders, ADHD, and dual diagnoses.
- **Create a central referral mechanism:** This will simplify referrals to community paediatric services, including CAMHS, ensuring that no child is placed on the wrong waiting list.
- **Expand eating disorder teams:** We will continue to grow and support teams focused on treating eating disorders.
- **Increase Autism supports:** Examine and implement targeted supports for children with autism experiencing mental health challenges.
- **Support voluntary and community providers:** We will strengthen the contributions of vital voluntary and

community organisations working in mental health.

- **Develop a successor to Connecting for Life:** We will create a new national strategy to reduce suicide rates and enhance our suicide bereavement support services, ensuring individuals feel properly supported.
- **Recruit Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurses:** Continue to expand this support in our communities.
- **Maximise telehealth and virtual health technologies:** We will leverage telehealth, particularly for young people, to improve access to mental health services.
- **Develop a Youth Mental Health app:** We will create an app to support the mental health needs of young people.
- **Ensure a dedicated national lead for mental health:** We will appoint a national lead to oversee mental health initiatives and ensure effective implementation of strategies.
- **Expand mental health service capacity:** Following on from the development of the National Forensic Mental Health Service, we will develop and implement a ten-year mental health refurbishment and investment infrastructure plan.

These initiatives will strengthen mental health services in Ireland, improve access to care, and enhance the overall well-being of individuals and families.

## Drugs

Fine Gael will continue to implement, with An Garda Síochána, a Health-led approach for people in possession of drugs for personal use. We will ensure individuals are diverted to health services.

**In addition, we will:**

- **Increase funding for addiction services:** We will expand drug services in the community, develop new services for young people facing drug dependency and mental health issues, and provide ongoing support for individuals in recovery.
- **Launch a major awareness campaign:** We will initiate the largest campaign to raise awareness about the significant challenges that illicit drugs pose to our society.
- **Strengthen community responses:** We will enhance funding for local drug and alcohol taskforces to improve their effectiveness in addressing substance use issues.

- **Consider mobile medically supervised injecting facilities:** We will explore the establishment of mobile facilities in areas of need, building on the ongoing work at Merchant’s Quay.
- **Enhance preparedness for drug overdoses:** We will increase the availability of naloxone, train individuals on its use, and equip Gardaí with naloxone to carry on the beat.
- **Evaluate the national drugs strategy:** We will assess the outcomes of the national drugs strategy, **Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery 2017-2025**, and publish a successor strategy to guide future efforts.
- **Re-establish the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Drugs Use:** We will finish the work of examining the recommendations of the Citizens’ Assembly on Drug Use and ensure delivery of a final report, the findings and recommendations of which will be fully considered.
- **Increase funding for harm reduction measures:** We will provide additional funding for measures to reduce drug related harm and deaths, including initiatives to provide a rapid response to the threat of synthetic drugs.
- **Increase funding to addiction services:** We will expand drug and alcohol services in the community, develop and expand new services for young people with drug and alcohol dependency and mental health issues, and provide ongoing and increased support for people in recovery.

These initiatives aim to address the challenges of drug use in Ireland, enhance support for those affected, and promote a healthier, safer society for all.

## Cross-Border Healthcare

Fine Gael is committed to enhancing healthcare collaboration across the island of Ireland.

**We will:**

- **Promote greater cross-border cooperation:** We will explore and foster collaboration with Northern Ireland on healthcare, research, training, and education to achieve improved health outcomes for everyone on the island.

These efforts aim to strengthen health services and create a more integrated approach to healthcare across borders, benefiting all communities.



**Niamh Madden**  
Candidate for Galway East

## Voluntary Organisations

Fine Gael acknowledges the vital role that voluntary organisations play in delivering health and social care services.

**We will:**

- **Engage with the voluntary sector through the Dialogue Forum:** We will continue to work constructively with voluntary organisations to ensure effective collaboration and communication.
- **Enhance funding for essential services:** Aim to achieve pay parity for staff in Section 39 organisations with the public sector.

These initiatives aim to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of voluntary organisations, ensuring they can continue to provide critical support and care to communities across Ireland.



## Social Protection

Fine Gael is committed to supporting individuals facing the rising cost of living through targeted supports and general increases. Our policies will prioritise work over welfare, providing a stronger safety net for those unable to work. We will align payments more closely with salaries to ensure that the system rewards contributions to society.

### Rewarding Work

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Introduce Pay Related Benefit:** Starting in March 2025, we will implement a new Pay Related Benefit, linking unemployment payments to previous earnings for those who lose their jobs.
- **Focus on supporting workforce engagement:** During a period of full employment, we will concentrate on helping individuals re-enter the workforce by providing access to a range of Back to Work, Education, and Training Supports. Any increases to jobseekers payments will be contingent on engaging with back to work supports.
- **Ensure the Auto Enrolment My Future Fund commences in September 2025:** This initiative will provide 800,000 workers with greater comfort and security regarding their retirement savings.

These initiatives will enhance the social protection system, promoting employment and ensuring that those in need receive appropriate support.

## End the Welfare Trap by Introducing a New Working Age Payment

Fine Gael believes that work should always pay, and nobody should be better off on social welfare than in a job. The current Jobseeker's Allowance scheme is an outdated means-tested system that pays a flat rate for each day of unemployment but restricts individuals who can only work part-time, disincentivising work and discouraging additional hours at a time when many small businesses are in need of staff.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Publish a strawman proposal for a Working Age Payment:** Within our first 100 days in office, we will consult on a new Working Age Payment aimed at improving the welfare system.
- **Create a stronger link between welfare and earnings:** The Working Age Payment will ensure that individuals always see an increase in income when they take on additional work by removing inconsistencies and anomalies in the current system.
- **Base the Working Age Payment on the Working Family Payment model:** This payment will incentivise and reward work, making it more beneficial for individuals to engage in employment.

Fine Gael has a strong track record in introducing significant social policy reforms, such as the Pay Related Benefit and Auto Enrolment. We will apply the same collaborative approach, involving stakeholders in the final design of the new Working Age Payment.

These initiatives aim to create a fairer social welfare system that encourages employment and supports individuals in achieving financial independence.

## Fairness For Families

Fine Gael is dedicated to supporting families across Ireland with comprehensive policies aimed at improving their quality of life.

#### We will:

- **Introduce Pay Related Parents Benefit:** Fine Gael introduced Parents Benefit and we have extended it to 9 weeks for each parent. We will introduce Pay Related Parents Benefit and explore other payments where a similar model could be applied.
- **Complete the roll-out of Hot School Meals:** We will ensure that all primary schools offer hot meals by 2025, enhancing nutrition for children.
- **Extend Hot School Meals to secondary schools:** Over the lifetime of the next government, we will roll out hot meals to all secondary schools.
- **Implement the Summer 2025 Holiday Hunger pilot project:** We will evaluate this initiative aimed at closing the nutritional gap during school closures.
- **Increase monthly Child Benefit Payments:** We will increase the monthly rate of Child Benefit.
- **Provide a permanent double Child Benefit Payment each August:** This will assist middle-income families with back-to-school expenses.
- **Examine a Second-Tier Child Benefit:** We will explore a targeted child benefit payment, and

the extent to which the Working Family Payment and Child Support Payment already help to reduce poverty. Continue Fine Gael's approach to progressively increasing the Working Family Payment and the Child Support Payment these payments in the meantime.

- **Raise Income Support for One-Parent Families:** We will increase income disregards for the One Parent Family Payment in line with National Minimum Wage increases.
- **Jobseeker's Support for Parents:** Seek to extend the Jobseekers Transitional Payment until the youngest child completes full-time education.
- **Progressively increase core weekly payments in each Budget:** We will commit to enhancing the financial support provided to families in each budget cycle.

These initiatives aim to strengthen support for families, ensuring they have the resources they need to thrive and succeed.

## Our Older Person's Guarantee

Fine Gael is committed to enhancing the support and well-being of older citizens.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Increase the weekly State Pension:** Raise the State Pension to €350 over the lifetime of the next government, ensuring financial security for our seniors.
- **Retain the Benefit Payment for 65-year-olds:** Continue this payment for workers retiring at 65 until they reach pension age at 66, with no requirement to sign on.
- **Enact legislation to remove mandatory retirement age of 65 in employment contracts:** Ensuring that people who want to work past 65 are allowed to do so.
- **Extend the Household Benefits Package:** Lower the eligibility age for this package to include all pensioners aged 66 and over, down from age 70.
- **Expand Fuel Allowance eligibility:** Extend eligibility for the Fuel Allowance to persons aged over 66, as committed in Budget 2025.
- **Provide a universal companion pass for Over 70s:** Offer this pass to all individuals over 70, as committed in Budget 2025, to enhance mobility and

social inclusion.

- **Progressively increase the Living Alone Allowance:** Raise this allowance to €33 over the lifetime of the Government in recognition of the fact that people who live alone face the same costs for heating, electricity and other essentials as a couple.
- **Appoint a Commissioner for Positive Ageing:** This role will advocate for the needs and rights of older citizens.
- **Appoint a standalone Minister of State for Older People:** This minister will focus on addressing issues affecting older individuals and ensuring their voices are heard.

These initiatives will strengthen the safety net for older citizens, improving their quality of life and promoting dignity and independence.

## Caring for our Carers

Fine Gael is deeply committed to supporting Family Carers. In government, we have prioritised:

- **Increases to weekly payments:** We have raised payments for carers by €41/week to provide them with better financial support.
- **Targeted lump sum payments:** We have introduced lump sum payments to further assist carers in their essential roles.
- **Increased Carer's Support Grant:** We have raised the annual Carer's Support Grant to €2,000, its highest level ever, to help support those who dedicate their time to caring for others.
- **Access to a pension:** We have ensured that carers can access a pension, recognising their vital contributions.

These initiatives reflect our commitment to valuing and supporting the important work of family carers in Ireland.

## Carers Allowance Means Test

### Fine Gael will:

- **Reform the Carer's Allowance into a Family Carer Payment:** Over the lifetime of the next government, we will introduce a new Family Carer Payment of €325 per week in recognition of the vital role carers play in our society.
- **Abolish the Means Test:** We will increase the weekly income disregard for Carer's Allowance to

€1,250 for a single Carer and €2,500 for a couple in Budget 2026. We will continue to progressively increase these limits in each Budget with a view to ending the means test and transforming into the Family Carer Payment over the lifetime of the next Government.

- Increase the Annual Carer's Support Grant to €2,500
- **Increase the Half-Rate Carer's Payment:** We will examine enhanced support to Carers over 66 who are currently in receipt of the Half-Rate Carer's Payment in addition to their State Pension
- Remove the current earnings limit of €450 per week for people in receipt of Carer's Benefit and examine the feasibility of a Pay Related Carer's Benefit payment

## Addressing the Cost of Disability

Fine Gael recognises that disabled people face significant additional costs in their daily lives. We are committed to improving supports for individuals with disabilities.

### We will:

- **Introduce a permanent €500 Annual Cost of Disability Support Payment:** We will introduce a permanent Cost of Disability Support Payment of €500 and progressively increase this payment in each budget, similar to the Carer's Support Grant.
- **Reform the Disability Allowance Payment:** We will reform the Disability Allowance Payment and remove anomalies in the current means test for the payment. We will increase the weekly payment by €12 each year bringing it up to at least €300 per week over the lifetime of the next Government.
- **Increase the monthly Domiciliary Care Allowance:** We will enhance this allowance to better support families caring for individuals with disabilities.
- **Extend the Free Travel Pass:** We will make the Free Travel Pass available to all children receiving Domiciliary Care Allowance.
- **Increase and review the Wage Subsidy Scheme rate:** We will raise this rate to 70% of the minimum wage to support employment for individuals with disabilities. To facilitate employment opportunities for people with disabilities, we will review the minimum hours requirement, taking into account the lived experience of people with disabilities who may not be in a position to work a minimum of 15 hours per week.
- **Grow successful programmes:** We will continue to expand programmes like WorkAbility, Employability,

and the new Work and Access Programme.

- **Support disability awareness training:** We will promote training initiatives to raise awareness and understanding of disabilities.
- **Raise Disability Allowance income disregards:** We will ensure that more individuals qualify for support.
- **Increase the Disability Allowance Capital Disregard:** We will adjust this disregard to improve financial security for individuals with disabilities.

## Means Test Review

Fine Gael will address anomalies within the current means testing system to ensure resources are targeted at those most in need.

- **Initiate a comprehensive review of means tests:** We will conduct this review, taking into account the recent Report on Means Testing by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection.

## Community Employment

Fine Gael is committed to supporting community employment initiatives.

### We will:

- **Provide flexibility to Local Employment Schemes:** We will allow schemes to retain participants for longer when it benefits both the individual and the community.
- **Support CE supervisors:** We will continue to ensure that CE supervisors receive the necessary support in their roles.
- **Increase the top-up payment for participants:** We will progressively raise the top-up payment for participants on Community Employment (CE), TÚS, and the Rural Social Scheme.

These initiatives aim to enhance support for carers, individuals with disabilities, and those engaged in community employment, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for all.



# Agriculture and Food

## Respect for Farmers, Food, and the Environment

Fine Gael is dedicated to establishing a renewed partnership with farmers and the agri-food sector, placing them at the heart of decision-making processes. As the party representing farmers and rural Ireland, we recognise their vital role as producers of safe and nutritious food and as custodians of the land. We understand the importance of ensuring they receive a fair return for their hard work.

We promise to listen to the concerns of farmers and to foster an environment free from a culture of lecture and blame. Our commitment is to collaborate with the agricultural community to address challenges, promote sustainability, and ensure the future of farming and food production in Ireland.

## A Fair CAP for Farmers

In the coming years, as the EU agrees on a new seven-year budget and reforms the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP),

### Fine Gael will:

- **Fight for a fair share of the EU budget:** We will fight to increase the CAP budget and advocate for new funding streams to assist farmers in meeting additional requirements..
- **Develop a simpler CAP post-2027:** We will simplify schemes to deliver the best outcomes for farmers, consumers, and the environment and push for a "whole farm" costing approach for environmental and climate schemes.
- **Simplify the administrative burden on farmers:** We will work to reduce red tape through flexible, farmer-friendly schemes that fairly reward actions across all sectors, with stakeholder input in the design.
- **Review payment redistribution measures:** We will assess their impact on farm viability.
- **Provide access to a farm capital investment scheme:** This will include updated reference costs.
- **Introduce a National Framework for Carbon**

**Farming:** We will guide the development of a Carbon Farming Scheme to strengthen farm incomes.

- **Fast-track IT capabilities in the Department of Agriculture:** We will enhance systems to avoid payment delays.

## Farm Succession

To attract the next generation of farmers,

### Fine Gael will:

- **Develop a comprehensive farm succession policy:** Within the first 100 days, this will include:
  - A Farm Mentor Scheme for collaborative farming between young and older farmers.
  - A revamped Farm Succession Partnership tax credit with updated support and eligibility criteria.
  - Increased supports under the Succession Planning Advice Grant to encourage succession planning.
  - Exploration of financing options for young farmers, including targeted installation aid or low-interest loans.
- **Retain key agricultural tax reliefs:** This will ensure farms can be passed on viably and provide certainty for succession planning.
- **Significantly raise the tax-free threshold for Capital Acquisitions Tax:** This will support farm transfers.
- **Invest in agricultural colleges and facilities:** We will ensure Ireland remains a leader in agricultural education.

## Planning for the Future

### Fine Gael will:

- **Review and update the 10-year agri-food strategy, Food Vision:** This review will consider all challenges and opportunities facing the sector and will be done in partnership with farmers and industry.

## Retaining the Nitrates Derogation

Fine Gael is committed to the economic viability of Ireland's grass-based production model and retaining Ireland's nitrates derogation. We will:

- **Work to retain the nitrates derogation post-2025:** We will work with state agencies, local authorities, and industry to develop practical solutions that benefit farmers.
- **Establish a Cabinet Committee on Water Quality:** Chaired by Simon Harris, this committee will coordinate water quality improvements across all sectors.
- **Increase collaboration on water testing:** We will enhance partnerships between farmers, the EPA, and Teagasc to safeguard water quality.
- **Work with European colleagues:** We will advocate for Ireland's unique circumstances through the European People's Party.
- **Support existing water quality improvement measures:** We will continue to invest in initiatives alongside farmers.

## Protecting Farmers at Home and Abroad

### Fine Gael will:

- **Strengthen the powers of the independent Agri-Food Regulator:** An Rialálaí Agraibhia will ensure fairness and transparency in the agricultural and food supply chain.
- **Pursue new market opportunities:** We will continue to seek domestic and international opportunities for the agri-food industry.
- **Support beneficial Free Trade Agreements:** We will ensure free trade agreements serve Irish farmers. The Mercosur Trade Deal as currently drafted is not acceptable.
- **Protect live export markets:** We will commit to the highest animal welfare standards in these markets.
- **Promote the Protected Geographical Indicator for Irish beef:** We will develop new PGI brands to enhance the value of Irish food exports.

## Supporting a Diverse Agriculture Sector

Fine Gael prioritises sustainable farm incomes across all sectors.

### We will:

## Sucklers and Beef

- **Supports for suckler and beef farmers:** We will ensure straight forward measures to support suckler farmers with a payment of €300 per cow. We will support dairy-beef systems through the implementation of the Dairy Calf to Beef action plan and a €100 per calf support.

## Sheep

- **Support the sheep sector:** We will implement practical actions for upland and lowland flocks with support of €30/ewe. We will also explore the feasibility of a scouring plant for wool to assist in the development of an Irish wool brand.

## Dairy

- **Review TAMS investment items:** We will ensure access to technology focused on animal welfare, labour efficiency, and environmental protection.

## Pigs and Poultry

- **Target greater market access:** We will support capital investments in pig and poultry farms to enhance animal health and welfare.

## Horticulture

- **Address sector challenges:** We will tackle issues around labour availability and capital investment.

## Organics

- **Develop markets for organic products:** We will support farmers in achieving better market returns while maintaining the Organic Farming Scheme.

## Tillage

- **Greater certainty for tillage farmers:** We will provide €60m a year in support to the tillage sector through permanent measures.
- **Explore processing facilities for Irish crops:** We will investigate opportunities for oilseed and milling wheat processing.

## Women in Agriculture

Fine Gael will ensure the full implementation of the

National Women in Agriculture Action Plan to enhance gender equality and increase the visibility of women in the agri-food sector.

## Income Volatility Scheme

Fine Gael will advance the introduction of a farm income volatility scheme to help protect farmers from market fluctuations.

## Renewable Energy in the Agricultural Sector

### Fine Gael will:

- **Pursue policies for renewable energy:** We will focus on additional income streams for farmers through community-led ownership models.
- **Provide financial incentives for the National Biomethane Strategy:** We aim to produce up to 5.7 Tera Watt Hour (TWh) of biomethane by 2030.
- **Encourage Solar Adoption on Farms:** Maintain the 60% grant aid through the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme to help farmers install solar PV systems, supporting renewable energy on farms.
- **Develop national planning guidelines for solar farms:** We will assist in the managed development of solar energy in agriculture.

## Veterinary and Farm Contracting Services

Fine Gael has established two new veterinary schools to enhance veterinary education.

### We will:

- **Seek to establish another veterinary college:** A feasibility study will assess the need for a new college in the Mid-West/South West.
- **Ensure a sufficient number of trained veterinary professionals:** We will work with veterinary bodies to meet the demands of rural and large animal practices.
- **Establish a farm contracting working group:** This group will explore support, training, and taxation measures.

## National TB Eradication Strategy

### Fine Gael will:

- **Review the National TB 2030 Eradication**

**Strategy:** We will collaborate with farmers and industry to devise a new shared path forward.

- **Ensure appropriate staffing of the Wildlife**

**Control Programme:** We will fully resource the Irish Deer Management Strategy Group action plan and regional veterinary offices.

## Animal Welfare

Fine Gael acknowledges the high standards of care that farmers provide for animals.

### We will:

- **Introduce tougher sanctions for animal welfare breaches:** Well-resourced inspection teams will enforce these sanctions to protect animal welfare.
- **Improve the horse traceability system:** Reforms will enhance the tracking and welfare of horses.

## Environment and Nature

Fine Gael will work with farmers to improve environmental outcomes:

- **Resolve challenges in the ACRES scheme:** We will ensure that the €1.5 billion agri-environmental scheme benefits both farmers and the environment.
- **Support farmers in reducing emissions:** Recognising the special economic and social role of agriculture and the distinct characteristics of biogenic methane, support the progress made to date by agriculture in reducing emissions.
- **Develop Ireland's Nature Restoration Plan:** We will prioritise restoration actions on State lands and consult with farmers on voluntary measures..
- **Support agriculture on High Nature Value lands:** We will ensure farming remains a viable activity in these areas.
- **Provide practical supports for farmers:** We will allocate funds from the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund to agriculture.

## Farm Safety

### Fine Gael will:

- **Increase supports for farmer health and safety:** We will prioritise initiatives that enhance safety.
- **Address farmer mental well-being:** Recognising the unique challenges in the agriculture sector, we will provide targeted support.





**Hildegarde Naughton**  
Candidate for Galway West

**Emer Higgins**  
Candidate for  
Dublin Mid West

### Equine Industries and Greyhound Racing

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Support the Horse and Greyhound fund:** This support will maximise the potential of these sectors and contribute to economic and social development.
- **Ensure high standards of integrity and welfare:** We will promote a culture of zero tolerance in animal safety and care.
- **Improve breeding and marketing of Irish sport horses:** We will enhance supports in this area.

### Innovation in Agriculture, Food, and the Marine

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Ensure integration between agtech and food tech sectors:** We will collaborate with Irish research and innovation agencies to drive advancements.
- **Explore the One Health initiative:** We will deepen efforts around antimicrobial resistance.

### Forestry

Fine Gael is committed to making Ireland a leader in forestry, recognising its positive environmental impact and the diverse uses of timber. We will support existing landowners in the sector and encourage more landowners to consider forestry as a viable option, offering both personal and societal benefits. Our aim is to provide a better mix of incentives and regulatory certainty to achieve our ambitious forestry plans.

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Reverse the decline in planting:** We will ensure an efficient licensing system and rollout farmer-focused supports as part of Ireland's Forestry Programme.
- **Recognise upfront planting costs:** We will acknowledge the initial investment required for planting and the time it takes to see a return on that investment.
- **Encourage a diverse mix of planting:** We will promote the inclusion of native Irish species alongside more commercially viable crops.
- **Collaborate with sector stakeholders:** We will work with stakeholders to address challenges and remove roadblocks within the forestry programme.
- **Ensure funding for Ash Dieback:** We will secure sufficient funding to combat the impact of Ash Dieback on our forests.

These initiatives aim to enhance forestry in Ireland, ensuring sustainable practices that benefit both the environment and local communities.

## Fisheries and the Marine

Fine Gael recognises the critical importance of the fisheries sector for the 16,500 people in our coastal communities and the businesses dependent on this industry. It is imperative that we adopt an assertive stance to protect our waters and this vital sector.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Establish a dedicated Minister of State for Fisheries**
- **Publish a five-year Fisheries Sector strategy:** Within 100 days of the new government taking office, we will release a dedicated strategy that includes a thorough examination of the processing sector.
- **Sustainably develop the fisheries sector:** We will ensure that fish stocks are protected, allowing future generations to continue their family traditions of earning a livelihood from the sea.
- **Conduct a review of tax allowances:** We will work with the Revenue Commissioners and key stakeholders to assess tax allowances for the fishing sector, ensuring our tax system supports its continued development.
- **Improve communication and engagement:** We will enhance dialogue between fishers, State agencies, the Department, and Brussels to foster better collaboration.
- **Examine fleet adjustment measures:** We will consider the need for new measures in response to changing scientific advice regarding fish stocks.
- **Activate the Seafood/Offshore Renewable Energy Working Group:** We will ensure this group provides regular opportunities for input and communication between the Government, its agencies, and fishers, balancing the needs of both sectors.
- **Review the Common Fisheries Policy:** We will advocate for a review that best serves the interests of Irish fishers.
- **Advance the interests of the Irish Fisheries sector:** We will work to ensure these interests are prioritised ahead of the 2026 review of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement and in discussions on third-country access agreements.
- **Support the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund:** We will advocate for a strong

fund to support our fisheries and marine industries.

These initiatives aim to strengthen the fisheries sector, ensuring its sustainability and prosperity for future generations.

## Enterprise, Trade & Employment

Fine Gael will back businesses by providing more certainty and by reducing costs. Businesses need a government that helps when it is needed and gets out of the way when it is not needed. The State must invest in the necessary infrastructure for businesses to produce and sell their products and services globally.

With approximately 99% of businesses classified as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), we recognise that many smaller businesses are under pressure. These risk-takers are crucial for job creation across the country and are the lifeblood of our local economies.

### We are committed to:

- **Maintaining low, stable taxes:** We will ensure that tax policies are predictable and conducive to business growth.
- **Implementing clear and predictable regulations:** We will ensure regulations align with the needs of both businesses and society.
- **Applying the 'SME test':** Over the next five years, we will require all parts of government to assess the impact of new regulations or laws on SMEs to avoid threatening viable businesses.
- **Prioritising balanced regional development:** We will focus on job creation in rural areas as a key component of our enterprise policy.
- **Fostering entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship:** We will support initiatives that encourage innovation and the growth of indigenous companies.
- **Supporting the multinational and indigenous exporting sector:** We will work to enhance the

contributions of indigenous exporting firms and multinational companies to our economy.

- **Promoting green and digital transformation:** We will assist businesses in adopting sustainable practices and digital technologies.

Since Fine Gael entered government in 2011, nearly 900,000 more people are now at work, representing a 47% increase. We are committed to maintaining full employment, creating an extra 300,000 jobs and ensuring that both workers and companies benefit from economic growth.

## Three-Point Package for Business

Fine Gael will enhance cash flow for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through a targeted three-point package:

1. **Temporary PRSI Rebate:** We will introduce a temporary, three-year PRSI rebate based on the number of lower-earning workers on a company's payroll. This will provide a €12.75 flat subsidy for all workers earning below €592 per week.
2. **Lower VAT Rate:** We will permanently reduce the VAT rate from 13.5% to 11% for food and catering services, as well as all entertainment, hairdressing and beautician services, to support consumer spending and business viability. We will also introduce a tax credit for gym membership worth €50.
3. **Energy Cost Grant Scheme:** We will establish a new grant scheme to help businesses lower their energy costs, enabling them to operate more sustainably.

Electricity and gas are currently on a temporary 9% rate which is due to expire at the end of April and revert to 13.5%. Under our proposal electricity and gas will not revert to 13.5% but instead will go to 11%. This will have no negative impact on the vast majority of Irish businesses because they can claim back all of the VAT on utility bills.

As we abolish the 9% VAT rate, most other items in this category will either go to zero or be compensated for. Our plans include a tax credit for leisure club membership worth €50 and we'll allow employers to offer to contribute €50 tax free towards leisure club membership for their staff.

In a further measure, households will receive a Domestic Energy VAT Rebate of €40 per annum to

insulate them from any additional costs arising from our simplification of the VAT system.

In addition to this three-point package,

### we will:

- **Apply the SME Test:** We will scrutinise every new piece of legislation and regulation for its impact on SMEs, ensuring that any obligations that increase business costs are phased in and consider the broader implications across government.
- **Review Existing Regulations:** We will undertake a look-back exercise to identify redundant regulations and reduce unnecessary red tape, asking each government department and regulatory agency to submit a list of such regulations.
- **Minimise Compliance Costs:** We will restrict reporting requirements to essential data only, providing digital tools for compliance to ease the burden on businesses.
- **Phase in New Requirements:** We will ensure that new requirements from government are implemented in a considered and planned manner.
- **Support Access to Grants:** We will help businesses access available grants to digitise operations and enhance sustainability.
- **Ensure a Skilled Labour Force:** We will provide practical support for on-the-job training and apprenticeship schemes to meet industry needs.
- **Backfill Grants for Staff Training:** We will support SMEs in providing training for their staff by offering grants to cover loss of earnings during training.
- **Financial Assistance for Apprenticeships:** We will reduce the costs associated with taking on apprentices and provide financial aid for businesses investing in employee upskilling and reskilling.
- **Resource Local Enterprise Offices:** We will ensure that Local Enterprise Offices are equipped to profile the SME landscape in their areas and meet industry-specific needs. Additionally, we will adjust Enterprise Ireland's mandate to better support both indigenous exporters and enhance its funding model.

These initiatives aim to strengthen the business environment in Ireland, ensuring that SMEs can thrive and contribute to the economy.



## Supporting the Hospitality and Retail Industries

Fine Gael is acutely aware of the challenges facing small businesses in the hospitality and retail sectors. We are committed to providing support and fostering a thriving environment for these industries.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Conduct a comprehensive review of the cost base:** We will assess the cost structures for small and medium-sized businesses to identify areas for improvement.
- **Address shoplifting and retail crime:** We will ensure a coordinated approach to combat retail crime and support An Garda Síochána's Operation Táirge (see Law and Order section for more detail).
- **Establish a fund for 'over the street' roofs:** We will develop a dedicated fund and standardised guidelines for local authorities to create overhead structures in village and town centres, similar to the initiative in Wexford Town, to encourage footfall during bad weather.
- **Encourage repurposing of over-the-shop premises:** We will introduce new regulations to facilitate the conversion of vacant buildings in towns, villages, and cities for productive use.
- **Explore extending the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant:** We will assess the feasibility of allowing businesses to convert upper-level spaces into residential accommodation, enabling multiple applications for different premises.
- **Modernise licensing laws:** We will enact legislation to update our licensing laws, promoting the development of a modern and diverse night-time economy in harmony with increased town centre living.

These initiatives are aimed at revitalising the hospitality and retail sectors, ensuring they remain vibrant and resilient in the face of challenges.

## 300,000 Extra Jobs

Fine Gael's ambition is to create the conditions necessary to add **300,000 jobs by 2030**, surpassing the milestone of **3 million** people in employment. We recognise that achieving this goal will require strategic investments, supportive policies, and a focus on fostering a vibrant economy.

To reach this target,

### we will:

- **Promote business growth:** Implement initiatives that support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to expand and create new jobs.
- **Invest in infrastructure:** Enhance infrastructure that facilitates business operations and attracts investment, contributing to job creation across various sectors.
- **Support education and training:** Ensure a skilled workforce by investing in education, vocational training, and apprenticeship programs that align with the needs of industries.
- **Encourage innovation:** Foster an environment where innovation can thrive, supporting startups and businesses that drive technological advancements.
- **Attract foreign investment:** Continue to promote Ireland as an attractive destination for multinational companies, creating high-quality jobs and opportunities for local communities.

By focusing on these key areas, Fine Gael aims to build a strong economy that not only meets the needs of today but also secures a prosperous future for all citizens.

## Supporting Workers

Workers are the backbone of successful businesses and organisations. Addressing the needs of workers—such as fair pay, education and upskilling opportunities, and recognition for their contributions—is essential for any thriving enterprise.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Support the Low Pay Commission:** We will ensure that its recommendations are compatible with the SME Test, balancing fair wages with the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises.
- **Retain sick leave at five days per year:** Following the introduction of this benefit in 2023 by Fine Gael, any expansion will depend on further research and must be affordable for businesses.
- **Improve labour market participation for disabled and disadvantaged citizens:** We will collaborate with agencies like Business in the Community and Rehab to create opportunities for migrants and ethnic minorities.
- **Develop a Code of Practice for hiring workers with autism:** This will be accompanied by enhanced

career guidance facilities for students with autism.

- **Update the target for female representation on boards:** We will raise the target from 40% to ensure Ireland remains aligned with international gender balance norms.
- **Embed hybrid and remote working:** We will promote flexible working arrangements that benefit both workers and employers, ensuring a balanced approach.
- **Publish an Action Plan for collective bargaining in 2025:** If necessary, we will bring forward legislation to support this initiative.

These commitments aim to create a supportive environment for workers, enhancing their rights and welfare while fostering a productive and engaged workforce.

## Competitiveness

Fine Gael is committed to enhancing Ireland's competitiveness across various sectors. We will develop and publish an **Action Plan for Competitiveness**, which will integrate wage policy, tax policy, education and training, energy and utility policy, and digitisation. Our goal is to make Ireland the most promising environment for startups, the most supportive environment for existing indigenous industries, and the most attractive location for foreign investment in value-added services, high-tech, and pharmaceuticals.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Review business grants and tax incentives:** We will ensure that the services sector has access to the same types of government supports currently available to the manufacturing and retail sectors.
- **Design regulatory and legal frameworks for data security:** We will position Ireland as the most secure location within the EU for data storage, management, and services.
- **Collaborate on state aid rules:** We will work with other EU member states to ensure the fair application of state aid regulations.
- **Increase participation in Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI):** By engaging in these projects, we aim to boost competitiveness and productivity for Irish companies, stimulating further job creation.
- **Develop a new national Life Sciences Strategy:** We will ensure that this vital sector remains competitive

and that the Government adopts a coherent and ambitious approach to future opportunities.

These initiatives are designed to strengthen Ireland's competitive position globally, fostering growth and innovation across key sectors.

## Social Entrepreneurship

Fine Gael is committed to recognising and enhancing the vital contribution of social enterprises to social and economic development in Ireland.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Ensure social enterprises receive adequate government support:** We will direct Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) to review the support available for social enterprises, ensuring they do not fall through the cracks.
- **Establish new reporting lines for LEOs and County Councils:** This initiative will ensure equal access to business supports nationwide. Enhanced reporting will help develop better services and grants while phasing out obsolete or redundant programs. A new steering group within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will oversee the implementation, accessibility, and uptake of grants and general LEO policy, with ministerial involvement.
- **Create a forum for social entrepreneurs:** We will establish a forum that includes social entrepreneurs, the Department of Rural and Community Development, and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. This will promote a more integrated approach to social entrepreneurship and build on Ireland's first National Social Enterprise Policy.

These initiatives aim to empower social enterprises, ensuring they have the necessary resources and support to thrive and contribute positively to communities across Ireland.

## Supporting Ireland's Entrepreneurs and Start-Ups

Fine Gael is committed to fostering a vibrant environment for entrepreneurs and start-ups, recognising their critical role in driving innovation and economic growth.

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Create a national start-up campus:** This facility will serve as a central hub for entrepreneurs to engage with all government departments and agencies, fast-track the start-up process, and collaborate with fellow entrepreneurs. The concept will draw inspiration from successful models like Station F in Paris and will be supported nationwide through Smart Regions funding.
- **Establish a unitised private venture fund:** We will create an investment vehicle that companies can apply to for scale funding, enabling them to grow and thrive.
- **Encourage venture capital investment:** We will explore ways to incentivise venture capitalists to invest in companies with significant Irish ownership by offering favourable tax treatment in line with state aid rules. This aims to attract more capital into Irish scaling companies, particularly from US and UK funds, positioning Ireland as a prime location for venture capital investment.
- **Develop an all-island innovation ecosystem:** Leveraging the Shared Island Fund, we will invest in initiatives that bridge Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This will involve creating a unified network of innovation hubs, targeted entrepreneurial programs, and continuous AI education and support, with the goal of supporting over 200 ambitious startups annually.
- **Reform Capital Gains Tax rules:** We will provide better incentives to support entrepreneurs and attract risk capital investors through updated tax legislation.
- **Help SMEs with Cyber Security:** We will promote adoption of the new Cyber Security Improvement Grant for SMEs to implement priority recommendations from the Enterprise Ireland Cyber Security Review Grant, which independently reviews a company's cyber security status.
- **Mandate pension fund investment in SMEs:** We will require pension funds to invest a specified percentage of their assets under management into the SME sector, boosting funding for small and medium enterprises.
- **Ensure funding for Microfinance Ireland:** Adequate funding will be provided to this organisation to facilitate seed capital for start-ups that struggle to source capital through traditional means.
- **Support the Irish Stock Exchange:** We will work closely with the Irish Stock Exchange to ensure its continued viability, focusing particularly on small-to-

medium-sized fast-growing companies.

- **Simplify and modernise investment policies:** We will harmonise domestic policies and regulatory frameworks to make Ireland more attractive for investment. This will fuel regional growth, help citizens secure a better financial future, and bolster Ireland's position as a leading hub for funds and asset management.

These initiatives aim to create a dynamic ecosystem for entrepreneurs and start-ups, ensuring they have the necessary resources and support to succeed.

## Helping Irish Companies Scale Globally and Securing FDI

Fine Gael is committed to enhancing the global competitiveness of Irish companies and fostering deeper connections with the multinational sector that plays a crucial role in our economy. We recognise that sustained efforts are necessary to ensure Ireland remains an attractive destination for investment and business growth.

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Boost Enterprise Ireland's initiatives:** We will support efforts to help domestic Irish businesses scale up, enabling more Irish companies to grow internationally while retaining a substantial workforce in Ireland and abroad.
- **Target a 50% increase in large Irish exporters by 2030:** This ambitious goal aims to boost the number of substantial exporting companies operating from Ireland.
- **Aim for 2,500 additional Irish-owned exporters by 2030:** We will focus on expanding the base of exporters to enhance Ireland's presence in global markets.
- **Roll out new rounds of the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF):** We will promote collaboration between Ireland's world-class research base and industry to pioneer new technologies and support the emergence of innovative start-ups.
- **Work with IDA Ireland to spread foreign direct investment across the country:** Our goal is to ensure that at least half of IDA investments are located outside of Dublin, promoting balanced regional development.



- **Expand advanced manufacturing facilities:** We will enhance the availability of these facilities to attract more foreign direct investment to regional locations in Ireland.
- **Develop pathways for knowledge sharing:** We will facilitate collaboration between larger FDI companies and indigenous firms, particularly focusing on digitisation and the green transition.
- **Fund five new cluster organisations:** Under a new National Clustering Programme, we will establish these organisations within one year to facilitate collaboration and collective action among related companies, as well as partnerships with higher education institutions and public sector bodies.

These initiatives aim to strengthen Ireland's economic landscape by empowering domestic companies to thrive globally and ensuring a robust environment for foreign direct investment.

## Powering Enterprise

Fine Gael is committed to enabling businesses to transition to a sustainable and net-zero economy. Our approach focuses on enhancing energy generation, connectivity, and infrastructure to support enterprise growth.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Implement the Business Energy Upgrade Scheme:** This initiative will adapt the successful Warmer Homes Scheme for businesses, providing transformative support for their transition to net-zero operations.
- **Set out an ambitious energy plan for 2030:** We will create a comprehensive plan for energy generation, connectivity, and planning processes, emphasising renewable sources to provide certainty for industries making short- and medium-term investments. This plan will also guide the development of data centre infrastructure in alignment with our decarbonisation objectives and Ireland's knowledge-based economy.
- **Advance plans for a wind generation centre of excellence:** We will establish a floating offshore wind demonstrator site off the West Coast to showcase the feasibility of this technology. We will prioritise the rapid rollout of designated maritime area plans (DMAPs) to expedite offshore wind development, particularly along the Western Seaboard.
- **Enhance port infrastructure:** We will ensure that

our ports are equipped to meet the demands of the offshore renewable energy sector, enabling Irish businesses to benefit from opportunities throughout the supply chain.

- **Develop Green Energy Industrial Parks:** These parks will attract large-scale investments and be co-located with renewable energy generation in regions most affected by the green transition.
- **Explore funding options for the energy grid:** We will pursue a variety of funding sources, both public and private, to develop our energy grid, recognising the significant investment needed in our grid infrastructure.
- **Reduce tax on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO):** We will look to lower taxes on HVO used for commercial freight to support sustainable transport solutions.

These initiatives are designed to power enterprises by fostering a sustainable energy landscape, ensuring businesses can thrive while contributing to Ireland's climate goals.

## A Competitive Europe for the Future

Europe is at a critical economic crossroads. As we fall behind our international peers in competitiveness and innovation, our citizens risk suffering the consequences. Fine Gael is committed to ensuring that Ireland shapes the EU's response to these challenges in a manner that benefits both European and Irish citizens, adhering to our principles of free and open trade, a level playing field, multilateralism, and a rules-based order.

### An Ambitious and Fair EU Economic Policy

In light of increased subsidies in the US and China, there is growing momentum in parts of Europe towards subsidising certain industries, which could undermine the level playing field of the Single Market and create disparities among member states. Fair competition is a core principle of EU membership, and strategic autonomy should not equate to increased tariffs, subsidies, or protectionism. While the State can stimulate investment and growth, true innovation should remain in the hands of our entrepreneurs, researchers, and inventors.

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Promote an open, multilateral, rules-based trade system:** We will advocate for free trade policies that support economic growth.
- **Push for an ambitious and open EU trade agenda:** Our goal is to expand opportunities for Irish businesses in international markets.
- **Work with like-minded countries:** We will safeguard the principles of EU economic policy based on competitiveness, innovation, and a level playing field.
- **Promote new Free Trade Agreements:** Our economy is based on the ability to trade internationally. We will ensure these agreements include proper assurances regarding sustainability, human rights and the protection of our agricultural sector.
- **Deepen the EU Single Market:** We will work to create a genuine digital single market and launch a Competitiveness Strategy for Europe to invigorate entrepreneurship.
- **Reduce red tape for businesses and SMEs:** We will strive to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy in EU Directives and Regulations to facilitate business operations.

These initiatives aim to enhance Ireland’s trade landscape, ensuring that our interests are safeguarded while contributing to a fair and equitable global trading system.

## Protecting Consumers

As the cost of living continues to rise, protecting consumers is more crucial than ever. Fine Gael is committed to ensuring that our laws remain current and that unfair practices are eliminated.

**Fine Gael will:**

- **Empower the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission:** We will enhance the powers of the Commission to better protect consumers and clarify the Central Bank’s role in consumer protection. An independent review, led by an international expert, will be commissioned to assess how State bodies can improve consumer protection, focusing on the roles of the Central Bank and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission.
- **Reform the small claims court:** We will improve the small claims court system to ensure it provides a viable and cost-effective means for consumers to resolve disputes with businesses.

- **Address ticket pricing issues:** We will explore options to address recent consumer dissatisfaction regarding ticket pricing for cultural and sporting events, based on an ongoing examination by the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC). Current laws mandate that traders must act in good faith and not mislead consumers.
- **Review the Sale of Tickets Act 2021:** We will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of this legislation to determine its effectiveness four years after its implementation.
- **Update regulations for online influencers:** We will ensure that legislation and guidelines regarding the disclosure of commercial content by online influencers are current and effective.
- **Combat misleading online retailers:** We will examine measures to prevent websites, especially online retailers, from misrepresenting themselves as Irish or EU companies through .ie domain names. This misrepresentation can result in consumers facing additional taxes and charges, as well as lacking access to EU and Irish consumer law protections. We will collaborate with the CCPC to raise awareness of this issue.
- **Promote consumer rights for online purchases:** We will raise awareness of new laws that grant consumers the same rights for goods and services purchased online as they have for in-store purchases.
- **Increase transparency in pricing:** We will inform consumers about new laws that require advertised price reductions to include the previous price of the product, ensuring that the product was available at that earlier price during the preceding 30 days.

These initiatives aim to enhance consumer protection and ensure that consumers are informed, safeguarded, and treated fairly in the marketplace.



**Peter Burke**  
Candidate for  
Longford-Westmeath



**Martin Heydon**  
Candidate for  
Kildare South



# Finance, Taxation, and Economic Security

Fine Gael is dedicated to managing public finances responsibly and equitably for taxpayers. We have consistently reduced income tax over the last decade. Our commitment remains to lower the tax burden on working families and to ensure that our tax system is progressive, incentivising work and allowing individuals to retain more of their hard-earned income.

## Fine Gael will:

- **Continue to prioritise making work pay in taxation measures:** This commitment will ensure that significant resources are directed toward reducing taxes and enhancing financial relief for families.
- **Commit to progressive budgets:** We will ensure that our budgeting approach throughout the government's term remains progressive, reflecting our commitment to fairness and support for working families.

## Rewarding Work

Fine Gael recognises the important role taxation plays in fuelling our society, boosting our economy and deciding people's standard of living.

We will be guided by three key principles:

- **Everyone should make a contribution.**
- **Those who can contribute the most should contribute the most.**
- **Those on the average wage should not pay at the higher rate.**

## Fine Gael will:

- **Increase the higher tax band threshold:** We will raise the point at which a worker enters the higher tax band by at least €2,000 each year, ensuring that individuals earning €54,000 will not be subject to the higher rate of income tax.
- **Boost main tax credits:** We will increase the Personal, Employee, and Earned Income Credits by €75 annually. This will translate to €750 back in the

pocket of most taxpayers by 2030.

We will also aim to increase the proportion of future income tax measures within overall budgetary spending, reinforcing our commitment to a fair tax system that rewards work.

## Universal Social Charge

Fine Gael is committed to reducing the burden of the Universal Social Charge (USC) to ensure a fairer tax system for all.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Adjust USC thresholds:** We will raise the entry threshold for the 3% USC band from €27,382 to €40,000, and the entry threshold for the 8% USC band from €70,044 to €75,000.

## Equal Treatment for the Self-Employed

Recognising the importance of entrepreneurship, Fine Gael believes that self-employed individuals should not face undue penalties.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Abolish the USC surcharge on self-employed income:** This measure will help support those who take risks to build their businesses.
- **Ensure the self-employed benefit from tax credits:** We will align any increases in personal income tax credits to ensure self-employed individuals receive the same benefits as employees.

## Benefit in Kind

Fine Gael will enhance the use of non-cash payments for employees.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Enhance Benefit in Kind:** We will compile recommendations to promote Benefit in Kind as a method for supporting health and wellbeing activities, such as gym memberships or dental care.

## Inheritance Tax (Capital Acquisitions Tax)

Fine Gael acknowledges the principle of inheritance tax but recognises that the burden of capital taxation has increased significantly over the past 15 years.

Ireland already generates above-average revenue from inheritance and gift taxes, and recent fiscal drag has further cut the thresholds in real terms.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Increase Capital Acquisitions Tax thresholds:** We will raise the Group A threshold (for children) to €500,000, Group B (for siblings) to €75,000, and Group C (for others) to €50,000, building on the progress made in Budget 2025.

## Medium-Term Fiscal and Structural Plan

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Publish a Medium-Term Fiscal and Structural Plan:** We will maintain a responsible approach to the public finances while ensuring continued investment in essential services and capital infrastructure such as housing, schools, and hospitals.
- **Spending Rule:** Our proposed current expenditure adheres to the spending rule of 5%. Capital expenditure will increase by 11%. This will be funded by the addition of funding from the recent decision of the General Court of the European Union to existing capital plans.

## National Development Plan

Fine Gael is committed to unprecedented levels of capital expenditure to advance vital infrastructure projects.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Inject €100 billion in capital projects:** We will increase capital spending by 11% per year, in recognition of the crucial infrastructural investment needed in housing, water, energy and other areas. Boosted by the receipts from the Apple judgement, this will represent by far the highest annual expenditure on capital projects in Ireland's history.
- **Refresh the National Development Plan:** Within the first year, we will reassess National Development Plan allocations based on the updated National Planning Framework and future housing and population demands.
- **Ensure the new Department of Infrastructure, Climate and Transport delivers outcomes:** We will

oversee this record spending to ensure it represents value for money and meets public needs.

## Windfall from Apple Tax Judgment

Fine Gael will utilise the Apple tax windfall to address critical infrastructure needs, allocating over half of the proceeds to housing.

#### We will prioritise funding for:

- **Housing and the Land Development Agency:** This will accelerate housing delivery.
- **Water and sanitation:** Ensuring access to clean water and effective sanitation systems.
- **Energy grid improvements:** Focusing on transmission and renewable energy integration.
- **Transport and road infrastructure:** Through Transport Infrastructure Ireland to enhance connectivity.

We will outline a plan for the allocation of these funds within 100 days of taking office.

## Future Ireland Fund and Infrastructure, Climate, and Nature Fund

Fine Gael established the Future Ireland Fund and the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund to protect public services over the long term and mitigate the pro-cyclicality of capital spending.

#### Fine Gael will:

- **Transfer 0.8% of GDP to the Future Ireland Fund annually:** This translates to approximately €4-5 billion each year, with the fund potentially growing to €100 billion by 2040.
- **Allocate €2 billion each year to the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund:** This fund will focus on initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve water quality, and enhance biodiversity.

## Insurance

Fine Gael has implemented a range of reforms to lower costs and improve the availability of insurance. While progress has been made, particularly with motor





**Nikki Bradley**  
Candidate for  
Donegal

**Mary Seery  
Kearney**  
Candidate for  
Dublin South Central



**Úna McCarthy**  
Candidate for  
Cork South Central



premiums decreasing by around a third since their peak, further reductions are needed, especially for businesses. Encouraging competition and expanding coverage are key priorities.

#### **Fine Gael will:**

- **Retain a dedicated minister for Insurance, Financial Services, and Credit Unions:** This role will ensure focused oversight and advocacy for insurance reform.
- **Maintain the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Insurance Reform:** This committee will ensure that insurance issues receive the attention they require.
- **Collaborate with stakeholders to reduce insurance premiums:** We will work with various parties to drive down costs across all types of insurance.
- **Examine the introduction of guidelines for legal fees:** We will examine the introduction of guidelines or scales for legal fees.
- **Encourage market competition:** We will proactively engage with the international insurance market, including through trade missions, to attract more competition.
- **Expand the Office to Promote Competition in the Insurance Industry:** Working with the IDA, we will enhance this office to ensure Ireland remains an attractive market for insurance and develop a subgroup to assist existing insurers in expanding their offerings.
- **Facilitate faster data release from the National Claims Information Database:** Collaborating with the Central Bank of Ireland, we will ensure that data collected is readily available to support market transparency.
- **Support the Right to be Forgotten initiative:** In partnership with the Irish Cancer Society and Insurance Ireland, we will promote this initiative to provide mortgage insurance for those five years post-cancer diagnosis.
- **Develop a long-term flood insurance strategy:** We will work with the Central Bank of Ireland, Office of Public Works, and the insurance industry to create a sustainable plan for flood insurance in Ireland.
- **Promote the Injuries Resolution Board:** We will advocate for the Board's work and encourage an increase in the number of cases brought to it.
- **Encourage careers in the insurance industry:** We will promote the insurance sector as a career of choice to address talent shortages in this field.

## Financial Services

Fine Gael is committed to strengthening Ireland's position in the international financial services sector, aiming for sustainable growth and increased employment.

#### **Fine Gael will:**

- **Create 9,000 new jobs in international financial services by 2030:** This ambitious target will drive growth and enhance Ireland's reputation in the global market.
- **Develop a National Fintech Hub:** We will collaborate with industry leaders to establish this hub, fostering innovation and supporting fintech initiatives.
- **Simplify and modernise our regulatory framework:** By harmonising domestic policies, we will ensure Ireland remains competitive within the EU and globally, facilitating continued investment.
- **Expand private market investment opportunities:** We will attract investment into the real economy through an enhanced regulatory framework, promoting regional growth and improving financial futures for Irish citizens.
- **Strengthen financial services links with the UK:** We will work to maintain and enhance our relationships, ensuring mutual benefits for both markets.
- **Promote regions as financial services hubs:** Fine Gael will actively encourage the development of regional financial service centres across the country.
- **Support the Women in Finance Charter:** We will advocate for gender diversity and inclusion within the financial services sector.
- **Position Ireland as a leading hub for Sustainable and Green Finance:** Enhance Ireland's funds and asset management offerings by aligning with global trends, we will position Ireland as a leading hub for Sustainable and Green Finance, catering to evolving investor needs.

## Funds and Asset Management sector

Fine Gael recognises the importance of the funds and asset management sector, which employs 20,000 people directly. While the sector has grown strongly in recent years, the recent review of the sector published by the Department of Finance highlights the importance of adapting our offering.

#### **Fine Gael will**

- **Help grow the Funds and Asset Management sector:** We will act on the recommendations of

the recent Department of Finance report on the funds and asset management sector, including streamlining our tax and regulatory framework.

## Financial Literacy

Fine Gael is committed to enhancing financial literacy among the population, empowering individuals to manage their finances effectively and make informed decisions.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Promote financial literacy for better financial management:** We will help people understand how to manage their finances, plan for retirement, and navigate the online financial landscape, recognising both the benefits of saving and investing and the risks, including online fraud.
- **Fund and implement a National Financial Literacy Strategy:** This coherent strategy will aim to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their financial wellbeing.

## Tackling Fraud

As more services move online, the potential for fraudulent activity is increasing. Fine Gael is committed to ensuring that the political and legislative systems keep pace with these challenges.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Enhance efforts through the Nuisance Communication Industry Forum (NCIF):** We will build on existing initiatives to combat the growing issue of scam calls and texts.
- **Explore an SMS scam filter:** We will examine the feasibility of implementing a filter that functions like email spam filters to help reduce scam messages.
- **Establish a shared fraud database:** We will introduce necessary secondary legislation to introduce a database that allows companies to share information about fraud attempts, drawing from successful international examples, which may require changes to data protection legislation.
- **Amend legislation to regulate online advertising of financial products:** We will advocate for national and EU legislation that permits online platforms to only advertise financial products from companies regulated by their competent national authority, helping to eliminate fake endorsements.

## Credit Unions

Fine Gael is committed to strengthening the role of credit unions within our communities, ensuring they thrive as vital community banks.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Retain a dedicated Minister for Credit Unions:** This role will ensure focused support and advocacy for the credit union sector.
- **Position credit unions as community-centric financial institutions:** We will work to ensure credit unions are recognised as integral to their local communities.
- **Collaborate with the Central Bank to review lending limits:** We will support a review of credit unions' lending limits to enhance their ability to serve members.
- **Support digital transition for credit unions:** We will assist credit unions in adopting new technologies and comply with the Digital Operational Resilience Act.
- **Encourage involvement in social and affordable housing:** We will promote credit unions to expand their role in providing housing solutions.
- **Develop a strategy for dormant accounts:** We will work with the Central Bank to create a framework for managing dormant accounts within the credit union sector.
- **Explore the concept of Corporate or Collaborative Credit Unions:** We will work with the sector to develop plans for collaborative models that enhance service offerings.
- **Draft a five-year strategy for credit unions:** We will collaborate with the credit union sector to ensure they can fully leverage new opportunities.

## Capital Markets Union

Fine Gael recognises the need for significant investments to support the green and digital transitions and address the challenges of an aging population. To facilitate this, we must remove barriers to the free flow of capital in the Single Market and create a more efficient system for businesses, investors, and savers.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Advance the Capital Markets Union (CMU):** We will actively promote and implement the CMU to enhance investment opportunities across Europe.

- **Maintain strong relations with capital markets in London:** We will leverage the EU-UK forum to foster discussions on financial services and ensure continued collaboration.
- **Diversify financing options for SMEs:** We will work to secure various funding sources for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to enhance their competitiveness within the EU and globally.
- **Create a safe investment environment:** We will facilitate a framework that encourages individuals to invest and build financial independence, particularly through long-term financial instruments like pensions.
- **Provide access to lower-cost financing for SMEs and start-ups:** We will focus on reducing barriers to financing, enabling growth and innovation in the business sector.
- **Grow the Irish Stock Exchange:** We will explore opportunities to enhance the Irish Stock Exchange as a vital source of equity and growth for indigenous businesses.

## Competitive Banks and Banking Union

A competitive banking sector is crucial to the functioning of our economy and society. Irish consumers currently lack access to some financial products, including loans from European banks. Completing the Banking Union will enhance competition and provide greater choice for Irish businesses and consumers.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Work to complete the Banking Union:** We will advocate for the finalisation of the Banking Union to benefit consumers and businesses alike.
- **Support people in mortgage arrears:** We will continue to support Abhaile, the National Mortgage Arrears Resolution Service, to help people out of mortgage arrears and ensure the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears is enforced.
- **Support mortgage holders:** We will keep Mortgage Interest Tax Relief under review.

## The Future of Cash and Digital Euro

Fine Gael is committed to ensuring that consumers have diverse payment options.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Support the introduction of a digital euro:** We will back plans for a digital euro to enhance consumer choice, ensuring that legitimate concerns, such as privacy, are adequately addressed.
- **Ensure continued acceptance of cash:** We will maintain access to cash and ensure it remains a viable payment option for all consumers.

## Corporation Tax

Ireland's corporate tax regime is essential for attracting foreign direct investment, and Fine Gael is dedicated to defending it vigorously. While we are committed to the OECD global framework for corporate tax, we will uphold our tax sovereignty.

### Fine Gael will:

- **Defend Ireland's Corporate Tax regime:** We will strongly protect our corporate tax framework from attempts at harmonisation or indirect changes.
- **Ensure Irish tax policy remains sovereign:** We will insist that tax policy continues to be determined in Ireland, safeguarding our unique tax landscape.



# Public Expenditure & Reform

Ireland is at a crucial juncture. With a rapidly growing population and a strong economy, we face significant challenges in key areas such as housing, infrastructure, and access to public services. This moment presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fundamentally transform how we plan for our future economic needs and how the State delivers infrastructure and essential public services. We aim to harness the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and our renewable energy resources while maintaining a constant focus on delivering value for money. This is vital for retaining our competitiveness in a fast-changing world.

## Planning Unit for the Future

- **Establish a new Planning Unit for the Future:** This unit will be separate from but report to the Department of An Taoiseach. Its primary responsibility will be to produce regular forecasts and updates on crucial factors such as population growth, immigration trends, changing demographics, and the demand for essential services and employment. This unit will ensure that our planning forecasts are credible and based on reliable data, rather than conservative estimates.

## Reforming Public Services

- **Transform our public services:** Fine Gael will initiate reforms in our public services through a four-part approach:
  - **Reducing costs:** We will work to lower the cost of services for users and for the State itself.
  - **Widening access:** We will ensure that everyone who needs access to services can obtain it easily, including through enhanced digital platforms.
  - **Expanding services:** We will roll out additional services to meet the demands of a rapidly growing population.
  - **Redesigning services:** We will apply the latest technologies and encourage joined-up thinking

to guarantee high-quality service delivery, maximising the potential benefits of AI.

## Ensuring Access to Public Services for All

- **Improve access to a range of public services:** Fine Gael will further develop a “one-stop-shop” approach, allowing people to access a host of public services easily, whether online or in person. We will continue to integrate digital services across government departments and establish a single digital unit to enhance the delivery of public services online.

## Improving Public Procurement

- **Review and enhance the government procurement process:** We will conduct a thorough review to make the procurement process more transparent, accountable, and participative, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ireland. This includes ensuring a consistent approach across all state agencies and departments, implementing a purchasing code of practice, and driving sustainable procurement policies that support local businesses. We will also increase the adoption of new technologies in the procurement process and provide an expected timeframe for decisions on tender requests.

## Value for Money in State Spending

- **Commit to ensuring value for money in public spending:** It is essential that taxpayers receive good value for their contributions. This focus on value for money is even more critical now, especially with record public finances and surpluses. While many projects are completed on time and within budget, we must intensify our efforts to ensure larger projects are similarly managed effectively.
- **Ensure sign-off on significant projects:** We will ensure that any publicly funded project by the Office of Public Works (OPW) costing over €200,000 receives approval at the management board level.
- **Strengthen the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board:** We will bolster this Board which oversees major infrastructure projects, and introduce independent value-for-money audits on key projects to identify efficiencies and best practices for future investments.
- **Expand public engagement on large-scale**

**projects:** This will enhance transparency and build public trust in how funds are allocated.

## Budgetary Reform

- **Revamp the budgetary process:** Fine Gael will introduce a more open and inclusive budgetary process, moving away from the traditional focus on maintaining existing levels of service. Instead, the budget will concentrate on achieving significant public goals and demonstrating proven policy performance. We will continue to evolve the budgetary process to ensure that it aligns with our national well-being, equality, and climate objectives. Additionally, we will explore competitive budget pots that focus on key areas of strategic importance, such as tackling disadvantage and promoting digitalisation. Ministers will be required to bid for funding based on the expected impact of their proposals.

## Staffing a Public Sector for the Future

- **Support the recruitment and development of public sector talent:** We recognise the critical role that public sector workers play in delivering essential services. Successive public pay agreements have acknowledged their contributions and promoted stability in industrial relations. Fine Gael will encourage recruitment practices within the civil and public service that foster talent development by:
  - Collaborating with public service organisations to create structures for talent development and actively recruiting from outside the traditional pool.
  - Continuing to develop an apprenticeship model within the civil service to attract and nurture talent.
  - Offering a paid internship programme targeted at migrant communities and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to provide them with valuable experience in government departments.
  - Negotiating a new public sector pay deal, linked to a reform agenda, to succeed the existing deal.
- **Promote new ways of working:** We will encourage flexible working arrangements to enhance workplace participation, support work-life balance, and facilitate the delivery of improved public services seven days a week when necessary. Fine Gael will review the Civil Service Blended Working Policy Framework and consider how the public sector can adopt a coherent approach to blended working and remote work.
- **Invest in skills development:** To ensure a digitally enabled workforce, we will invest in upskilling public sector workers, equipping them with the tools

to apply digital skills to enhance service delivery, particularly in areas such as data utilisation, AI integration, and user-centric design.

## Artificial Intelligence in the Public Service

- **Enhance the use of AI in public service delivery:** Fine Gael recognises the opportunities that artificial intelligence presents to improve the delivery of public services. We will accelerate the adoption of AI across the public service to create a trusted, human-driven, intuitive, and inclusive digital government service. This includes publishing updated guidelines for the use of AI in the public sector and rolling out pilot programmes to demonstrate its application and benefits.

## Political Reform

- **Reform the Ethics in Public Office Legislation:** Fine Gael will overhaul this legislation within the first year of the new government. This overhaul will introduce new prohibitions on the use of insider information, enhance disclosure requirements to improve transparency, and strengthen the role of the Standards in Public Office (SIPO) in enforcing these standards.
- **Expand the remit of the Public Accounts Committee:** We will extend the committee's oversight to include local authorities to ensure accountability for their delivery on key areas, such as housing and local property tax.
- **Review local government reforms:** Fine Gael will undertake a comprehensive review of the "Putting People First" reforms initiated in 2012, informed by public consultation. This will include evaluating the National Oversight and Audit Commission, the independent body for the local government sector, ten years after its establishment.
- **Support local government reform:** We will adequately resource the newly elected mayoral role in Limerick to drive the published mayoral programme and fully leverage the new governance structures for streamlined decision-making. Furthermore, we will support plebiscites for directly elected mayors in other cities, including Dublin.
- **Modernise electoral registration:** Fine Gael will work with An Coimisiún Toghcháin/The Electoral Commission to update and improve the electoral registration process, making it more efficient and accessible for citizens.

# Fine Gael Manifesto Costings

## Budgetary Package 2026-2030

Budget Package		Total (€bn)
Total Spending Increase (D/Finance)		31.2
__of which current	26.4	
__of which capital	4.8	
Extra capital expenditure (Apple)		14.1
Tax revenue from wage growth (SPU, p.28)		6.0
Revenue raising measures		1.1
<b>Total Budget Package</b>		<b>52.4</b>
<b>Manifesto Proposals</b>		
Current Expenditure		9.3
Capital Expenditure		18.9
Tax Package		7.0
Existing Level of Service (including demographics)		15.5
Contingency		1.7
<b>Total Manifesto Proposals</b>		<b>52.4</b>

## Spending Profile 2026-2030

	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Total voted expenditure	112.8	119.5	126.6	134.2	142.3
% Increase	7.0%	5.9%	6.0%	6.0%	6.1%



<b>Tax Package</b>	<b>€m</b>
<i>Income Tax</i>	
Increased Standard Rate Cut-Off by €2k/year	2530
Increase all main tax credits by €75/year (personal, PAYE, earned income, Home Carer's)	2126
Change 2% USC threshold to €40k	771
Change 3% USC threshold to €75k	230
Abolish USC Surcharge for Self-Employed	81
<i>VAT</i>	
Permanently change 13.5% VAT rate on electricity/gas to 11%	180
<i>Capital Taxes</i>	
Inheritance tax (CAT)	169
<i>Enterprise Taxes</i>	
11% VAT rate for food and catering	407
€50 tax credit for gyms and swimming pools to offset for 11% VAT rate	30
Increase in Small Benefit Exemption by €50 for gym memberships	2
<i>Housing</i>	
Retain the Help to Buy initiative until 2030 & increase the relief under the initiative to €40,000	240
Rent Tax Credit (extra €100 per year)	100
Extend landlord tax relief	160
Expand geographic reach of the Living City Initiative	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7028</b>

<b>Revenue Raising</b>	<b>€m</b>
Increase e-cigarette tax to €3	85
Extra 75c per year on cigarettes	265
Bank Levy	200
Revenue Compliance Activity	450
Increase betting duty from 2% to 3%	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>1050</b>

<b>New Current Spending</b>	<b>€m</b>
<b>Children</b>	
Cap the cost of childcare at €200 per month for a child (National Childcare Scheme)	194
Cap the cost of childcare at €600 for a family (National Childcare Scheme)	7
Create at least 30,000 early learning places in public early learning and care services (500 services)	340
Extend free care and education for pre-school children from 3 to 4 hours/day (ECCE)	90
Extend the National Childcare Scheme to all childminders in the home.	1
Baby bundles	15
Pay for private assessments of need for long waiting families	10
Pay for private therapy for long waiting families	20
Pay for private mental health supports for long waiting families	20
Child Savings Fund (@ €1,000 and €1,500 for children on Child Support Payment)	62
Increased Core Funding (10% increase p.a.)	216
<b>Higher Education</b>	
Phase out the Student Contribution Fee	289
Abolish apprenticeship fees	15
Increase Student Maintenance Grants year-on-year and reform SUSI	13
Increase the number of apprenticeship registrations to 12,500 by 2030.	208
<b>Justice</b>	
Extra 6,000 Gardai over 5 years	61
Double Garda Training Allowance	17
Increase Garda Reserve to 2,000	8
Establish at least one Community Safety Partnership in every Local Authority Area (increase the Community Safety Fund to €12m)	8
Introduce a new grant scheme to enable retailers to install anti-theft measures	50
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
Department set-up costs	8
<b>Housing</b>	
Extend First Home Scheme until 2030 (not in base after 2026)	74
Extend FHS to 2nd hand homes	116
A homeless budget - Extra 10% per year	162
<b>Education</b>	
A dedicated therapy service for students in all special schools	24
20% Increase to the capitation rate for schools	63
Establish an Innovation Fund from which schools can draw for new initiatives	20
Provide period products in all secondary schools	1

<b>Enterprise</b>	
Employers' PRSI scheme to help small business (for 3 years only)	331
Introduce 'energy+' a new grant scheme for businesses to help them reduce their energy costs (in 2025)*	200*
<b>Social Protection</b>	
Increase State Pension by €60, €12 p.w.	2414
Pay Related Parents Benefit	162
Permanent double Child Benefit Payment each August	186
Hot School Meals Secondary School	221
Make the Working Family Payment a qualifying payment for the Fuel Allowance.	22
Extend eligibility for the Household Benefits Package to all pensioners aged 66 and over, down from age 70.	30
Increase the Living Alone Allowance.	143
Move to Abolish income disregard on Carer's Allowance	600
Reform the Carer's Allowance into a new Family Carer Payment of €325 per week.	285
Increase the Annual Carer's Support Grant	85
Remove the current earnings limit of €450 per week for people in receipt of Carer's Benefit	6
Continue to increase weekly Disability Payments to €300	674
Introduce a permanent Annual Cost of Disability Support Payment to be grown progressively in each budget in a similar way to the Carer's Support Grant.	120
Extend the Free Travel Pass to all children in receipt of Domiciliary Care Allowance.	11
Increase the rate of the Wage Subsidy Scheme to 70% of the minimum wage.	10
<b>Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media</b>	
€300 Culture Card for 16 and 17-year olds	41
Increase funding for Gaeltacht scholarships	1
Next phase of Basic Artists Income	139
Next phase of Creative Spaces Pilot	12
<b>Transport</b>	
Maintain 20% reduction in fares	130
Treble the number of publicly available charging points to 10,000	110
<b>Climate</b>	
Boost retrofitting programme by 25% - 13,000 extra home upgrades each year	107
Domestic Energy VAT rebate	98
<b>Defence</b>	
Funding for new policy measures and force expansion	100
<b>Agriculture</b>	
Increased supports for the sheep sector	7



Increased supports for the dairy beef sector	16
Increased supports for suckler Famers	24
Increased supports for Tillage farmers	40
<b>Health</b>	
Free GP care for children	70
Reduce monthly cost of drugs to €50	67
Extend access to free contraception to all women over the age of 35 years	23
Provide for HSE-employed GPs to assist with GP cover and to maintain services in communities.	26
Grow the GP training scheme by 80% over the next five years, providing up to 277 more places.	31
Increase funding to National Cancer Strategy by €40m	40
Tuition support for Graduate entry Medicine	5
Abolish prescription charges	95
Funding for further new policy initiatives in health & disability	700
<b>Total -- New Current Spending</b>	<b>9294</b>

Costings are based on parliamentary questions and the costings service provided by the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery & Reform. Some figures presented may be affected by rounding.

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# **A NEW ENERGY**



## **FUINNEAMH NUA**



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