



# Environmental Pillar

Working for a sustainable future

December 2018

## National Elections headline manifesto policy proposals

- A. Restore Ireland's reputation on climate action
- B. Kick-start the Circular Economy
- C. Protect and restore nature and wildlife
- D. Reverse the decline of Ireland's freshwater quality
- E. Support vibrant and resilient rural, urban and suburban communities
- F. Transform transport and planning
- G. Resource environmental protection
- H. Don't let Brexit ruin our environment
- I. Protect our rapidly diminishing Marine biodiversity
- J. Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry
- K. Establish One Minister for the Environment

## Proposal Details

### A. Restore Ireland's reputation on climate action

- 1) Put a realistic price on carbon
- 2) End peat-burning for electricity
- 3) Kick-start community energy with a fair payment for solar power

### B. Kick-start the Circular Economy

- 4) Introduce a deposit and return scheme for plastic bottles and cans.
- 5) Introduce a two-tier levy on disposable cups for beverages etc., of €0.15 for non-compostable coffee cups and €0.05 for compostable coffee cups; and a general ban on single-use plastic items such as plastic cutlery, straws, stirrers and other tableware.
- 6) Introduce a ban on micro-plastics in cosmetics and care products.

### **C. Value and protect nature and wildlife**

- 7) Require that each planning authority has full-time qualified ecologists in planning offices that are qualified to review ecological impacts of planning proposals.
- 8) Develop and resource a national hedgerow conservation strategy.
- 9) Tackle illegal dumping especially in important sites for nature, including bogs.

### **D. Reverse the decline of Ireland's freshwater quality**

- 10) Ensure good water quality and healthy rivers, lakes and groundwater by implementing measures to meet the requirements and deadlines of the Water Framework Directive (WFD).
- 11) Cease extensive damage being caused to rivers by poorly regulated and unregulated flood management works by introducing regulations, required since 2012, to control and manage physical alterations to watercourses.
- 12) Guarantee an increased, secure funding stream for Irish Water in order to eliminate sewage as a significant water pollution issue and to achieve compliance with the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and Water Framework Directive by 2021.

### **E. Support vibrant and resilient rural, urban and suburban communities**

- 13) Fully support the PPNs in their development and implementation of their Visions for Community Wellbeing.
- 14) Invest in and support local ecologically sound jobs, including jobs in nature conservation, eco-tourism, repair workshops and other small businesses useful to the community.
- 15) Support circular economy initiatives at community level.

### **F. Transform transport and planning**

- 16) Use site-value tax to reform LPT and penalize land hoarding.
- 17) Reverse the ratio of investment in roads and public transport (with 1/3 going to roads), in line with the recommendation of the Citizens' Assembly.
- 18) Raise investment in cycling and walking to 20% of the transport budget, in the line with the recommendation by UNEP.

### **G. Resource environmental protection**

- 19) Restore the Environment Fund to pre-crash levels [estimated 50% less than pre-crash]
- 20) Give the NPWS the support to do their job [Programme Funding cut by 80% by 2015 with only marginal restoration in 2018]
- 21) Reverse cuts to the Heritage Council [2008 €20m to 2017 €6m =70% cut]
- 22) Secure the long-term future of the National Biodiversity Data Centre with a clear rolling multi-annual budget, and commit to provide long-term funding for the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

#### **H. Don't let Brexit ruin our environment**

- 23) Recognise that the island of Ireland and its marine environment needs protection as a single biogeographic entity
- 24) Maintain a level playing field in terms of environmental legislation, implementation and enforcement
- 25) Promote greater North-South and East-West Cooperation on the environment under the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement

#### **I. Protect our rapidly diminishing marine biodiversity**

- 26) Fully implement the Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- 27) Designate a coherent network of Marine Protected Areas within Ireland's EEZ
- 28) Fully implement the Common Fisheries Policy

#### **J. Make Agriculture and Forestry Truly Sustainable**

- 29) Ring fence fund for biodiversity in future CAP and ensure strong rules and accountability apply to CAP payments.
- 30) Pass legislation requiring that forestry applications undergo ecological assessment, to ensure no negative impacts on birds, pollinators and other wildlife and their habitats, and which ensures the forestry planning process is transparent and facilitates public participation.
- 31) Reform the Forestry Programme to ensure that the number of native trees and broadleaves planted in Ireland is brought in line with the EU average.
- 32) Reform Forest Policy to include national and county forest strategies to avoid the over-concentration of forestry in any one county.

#### **K. Establish One Minister for the Environment**

- 33) At present political responsibility for the environment is spread across three cabinet ministers. Water is with the Department of Housing; waste, environmental awareness and climate are in the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment; and nature and wildlife are with the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht. Ireland needs a unified environment department under one cabinet minister. The most straightforward option is to move water, nature and wildlife to the Department of Climate Action and Environment, with Communications moving out, probably to a revamped Department of Culture and Communications.