



Environmental Pillar
OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP



Environmental Pillar of Social Partnership

Environmental Pillar Proposals for the Programme for Government 2011 onwards

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Introduction

The continuing success of human society and social systems depends fundamentally on the preservation of the overall productivity, health and long term sustainability of the ecosystems and environmental services that underpin and supply many of the most basic components of human welfare such as healthy soils, clean water, clean air and a healthy biodiversity. These are the real assets that we have inherited and that we should hand on in good order to future generations. This is our real wealth and we are destroying so much of it often without even giving it any consideration.

As agreed in 1992 in Rio, the most appropriate way for human society to proceed towards sustainability is through the guidelines laid down in Agenda 21. Ireland was a signatory and yet has done very little since to implement it. The new programme for government must adopt Agenda 21 as an underlying principle for all aspects of its decision-making. Implicit in this is the need to take an 'ecosystems approach' when designing, planning and reviewing all plans and programmes.

To encapsulate these needs the Government must publish a National Sustainable Development Strategy by September 2011, and then ensure its application and implementation at all levels of governance.

What follows is a breakdown of the headline key areas for action by the Government. This document has been kept short for ease of digestion, but details on any of these action areas can be provided on request.

This document has been developed through the Environmental Pillar but does not necessarily represent the views of all its Members.

1. Working to prevent Climate Change

- 1.1.** Scientific evidence published in the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report, and since then, confirms that climate change is proceeding at a rate at or above the fastest rate previously forecast. Events, particularly those impacting poorer desert regions and high latitude glacial systems are arriving sooner, and penetrating deeper, than previously expected. At the same time equity provisions embodied in the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change require that Ireland's exceptionally high levels of per capita emissions, per capita wealth and per capita renewable energy resources demand a high degree of Irish response. The new programme for government should therefore include the following,
- 1.2.** Government to produce a strong and effective Climate Change Act capable of positioning Ireland as a leader in the international fight against climate change before 2012. Such an Act should include as a minimum the following:
- 1.2.1. Legally binding 2020 domestic mitigation target = -30% of 2005 emissions (88% of 1990 emissions);
 - 1.2.2. Legally binding 2050 mitigation target = - 90% of 1990 emissions;
 - 1.2.3. Provision for the setting of 5-year targets (if not three year) by Government. This would be aligned with the electoral cycle of political accountability and would be a spur to timely action;
 - 1.2.4. National Climate Change Commission to supervise and advise a fully coherent and integrated Government response capable of delivering international leadership on climate change by 2012.
- 1.3.** The Climate Change Act should be complimented by:
- 1.3.1. € 420 million annually as fair share of international UN financing for mitigation, adaptation, and forest protection in developing countries;
 - 1.3.2. 1% of GDP set aside annually for national and international decarbonisation and adaptation (additional to achievement of 0.7% ODA objective, with full 0.7% ODA objective to be immediately fully climate proofed);
 - 1.3.3. Immediate introduction of carbon tax of € 30/tonne, escalating by € 5/tonne annually for non-traded sector;
 - 1.3.4. National Decarbonisation Fund to manage carbon tax revenue (as part of 1% GDP set-aside) for decarbonisation, adaptation, and developing country development objectives;

- 1.3.5. Strong domestic compliance regime to include short term, medium term, and longer term mitigation, renewable energy and energy efficiency targets embedded in national legislation;
- 1.3.6. The Irish Government should acknowledge the national importance of peatlands as a major carbon store, the role of pristine and restored peatlands as carbon sinks, and the potential of degraded peatlands to enhance the greenhouse effect. Peatland conservation and restoration should be a priority of Ireland's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

2. Natural Environment

Ireland must adopt an overarching public policy which ensures an eco-system based approach to protecting and managing all natural resources, defending our soil, air and water quality and the life that depends on it. As far as the European Court of Justice is concerned Ireland has effectively shown contempt of court in 14 cases all of which could result in huge fines. Based on the most recent figures, 23% of all the environment cases at this advanced stage in the ECJ are against Ireland, making this country by far the worst offender.

2.1. Agriculture

- 2.1.1. An environmentally sustainable Agriculture sector that ensures delivery of an effective agri-environmental scheme including impact assessments and monitoring of outcomes, in order to demonstrate value for money in delivering the public benefits of clean waters, healthy soils and a stable atmosphere.
- 2.1.2. The encouragement of on-farm waste to energy and fertiliser management including the full implementation of the Nitrates Directive.
- 2.1.3. Introduce a targeted grant aid scheme that rewards practices which reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions on farms.
- 2.1.4. Convene a national debate on food security involving the full range of stakeholders to establish a widely agreed strategy by the spring of 2012.
- 2.1.5. In order for Ireland to maintain its green image as a producer of good quality sustainably produced food, and the jobs that go with that image, a moratorium on the import or cultivation of GM crops should be introduced.
- 2.1.6. The establishment of a number of agro-forestry pilot projects around the country which could become centres of excellence for awareness, education and training, whilst adding to the job creation potential of agroforestry.

2.2. Tree Cover

- 2.2.1. The proposed new Forestry Bill must incorporate a revision of both the Forestry Acts of 1946 and 1988.
- 2.2.2. In Afforestation, semi-natural woodland should be developed as the key option, composed mainly but not exclusively of native species. Clearly defined limits on areas for clear-fell must be agreed.
- 2.2.3. There must be a ban on the sale of public lands if this contributes to deforestation. Where such a sale takes place then the full value of a sale must be reinvested in afforestation only. The administration of public Tree-

Cover must be restructured while maintaining public ownership of Coillte's Forest Assets to incorporate a multi stakeholder leasing model.

- 2.2.4. Stabilise funding and rationalise grant schemes through interdepartmental and international co-operation on RDP.
- 2.2.5. All Forest Service Guidelines need to be revised to ensure protection of biodiversity and water quality as part of all new planting and forest management operations and should be given statutory effect under the New Forestry Bill. Revised guidelines, and a new 'National Forest Standard' need to fully incorporate the requirements of the Birds' and Habitats' Directives and the protection and improvement of the aquatic environment as per the Water Framework Directive.
- 2.2.6. The Inventory and Research branches of the Forest Service must receive sufficient resourcing in order to meet international obligations.
- 2.2.7. Ancient and semi natural woodlands of conservation merit, other than those designated as part of the Natura 2000 network, need to be awarded strong legal protection and managed for their conservation interest and long term protection.
- 2.2.8. All identified old/ancient woodland sites should be reinstated after first rotation.
- 2.2.9. Plantation Forests must be redesigned and restructured to avoid clear-felling.
- 2.2.10. The use of Glyphosate (Roundup) as a management tool for controlling Scrub etc must not be permitted.
- 2.2.11. Cross border co-operation on implementing EU measures to eliminate the import of illegally harvested timber.

2.3. The Marine

- 2.3.1. Implementation and monitoring of legislation under the Fisheries and Foreshores Acts.
- 2.3.2. Focus on the sustainability of fisheries including Irish Sea management and discards programme.
- 2.3.3. Transparency of process in all marine activities including inshore and deep water fisheries and the licensing of off energy projects and plans
- 2.3.4. In order to protect the sustainability of the marine fisheries and to create long term employment in the coastal zones, the designation of 20% of Irish territorial waters as Marine Protected Areas should be a high priority.

2.4. Biodiversity

- 2.4.1. Development and adoption of new and improved domestic wildlife legislation with associated enforcement, particularly for wildlife crime.

- 2.4.2. Development and implementation of a National Biodiversity Action Plan. Public consultation of the draft prior to final adoption.
- 2.4.3. Passage of the Environmental Liability Bill and full implementation of the Environmental Liability Directive.
- 2.4.4. Adoption of overarching public policy which ensures an ecosystem-based approach to protecting and managing our natural resources, and addresses perverse incentives and unnecessary policy conflicts.
- 2.4.5. Support for the development of biodiversity indicators in quality of life and sustainable development indicators and in measures of sustainable growth.
- 2.4.6. Full compliance and implementation of the EU Habitats Directive and EU Birds Directive and the Convention on Biodiversity in order to afford protection to biodiversity of national and European importance.
- 2.4.7. Formal statutory declaration of proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) under the Wildlife Acts (1976 & 2000).
- 2.4.8. Implement and Enforce the Flora Protection Order.
- 2.4.9. Integration of biodiversity policy across all sectors, particularly agriculture, fisheries, energy, marine and transport.
- 2.4.10. Implementation of the cessation of turf cutting scheme on all SAC's and NHA's with the appropriate compensation measures and fuel alternatives. Publication of the Bogland Project – a sustainable management plan for the peatlands of Ireland.

2.5. Water

- 2.5.1. A National Water Authority with regional River Basin District offices should be established and charged with integrated management of all aspects of river basin (catchment) planning, including actively promoting public participation

3. Built Environment

All plans and programmes must be subject to proper Strategic Environmental Assessment including a proper assessment of future carbon emissions and their impact on energy, water and food security. Plans must include effects of Peak Oil.

3.1. Planning

- 3.1.1. The life of planning permissions must not be extended.
- 3.1.2. Projected population figures for planning be updated taking account of emigration.
- 3.1.3. Continuing review of the Planning Acts in-case they prevent sustainable development.
- 3.1.4. Plans must be consistent with each other at all levels.
- 3.1.5. Existing excessive land zoning to be curtailed.
- 3.1.6. Remove planning function from Port companies.

3.2. Transport

- 3.2.1. A Bus Rapid Transport spoke and orbital instead of Metro North should be given serious consideration.
- 3.2.2. Stop using PPPs for borrowings to fund road programme off national balance sheet.
- 3.2.3. No new 'Motorway' standard roads to be started/contracted – 2+ 1 and bypasses where needed.
- 3.2.4. Continued investment in Bus & Rail – with routes to be maintained and/or increased.
- 3.2.5. End Public Service Obligation subsidies to regional airports.
- 3.2.6. Implement Smarter Travel Policy.
- 3.2.7. Second runway at Dublin Airport is unnecessary.
- 3.2.8. No need for new ports – focus capacity on existing ports with Rail links.

3.3. Energy

- 3.3.1. Plan the grid to maximise the penetration of Renewable Energy.
- 3.3.2. Plan properly the required interconnections, storage, gas-fired peaking plants and base load generating stations.

- 3.3.3. Ramp up to an annual programme of 40,000 home insulation retrofits with all the consequent benefits, as well as programmes to increase the efficiency of all heating systems.
- 3.3.4. Introduce a “pay as you save” home insulation and energy efficiency scheme at the earliest opportunity.

3.4. Waste Management

- 3.4.1. Put in place and enact a National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention.
- 3.4.2. Adopt a Zero Waste approach to waste management.
- 3.4.3. Give strong support to the Irish recycling industry.
- 3.4.4. Introduce taxation on all one way packaging, to pay for the direct and lost opportunity costs this imposes on society.

4. The Economy

4.1. Employment.

- 4.1.1. Introduce a "Green Jobs Guarantee Scheme" for anyone who needs work at the minimum wage, to tackle ever increasing need for work to be done to protect and enhance the environment and protect our heritage.
- 4.1.2. Explore the employment opportunities emanating from sustainable peatland management, conservation and restoration.
- 4.1.3. Remove the obstacles that prevent social welfare recipients from volunteering.

4.2. Encourage investment in productive import-substituting activities such as renewable energy and to develop knowledge and expertise in environmental services for export.

- 4.2.1. Undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of options to resolve the banking crisis as required by EU Directives and under UN Conventions.
- 4.2.2. Only the normal profits and added-value created by clever and efficient design and construction of buildings and services should accrue to developers.
- 4.2.3. Announce the phased introduction of an annual site value tax (SVT).
- 4.2.4. Legislation for the abolition of upwards-only clauses in new lease agreements.
- 4.2.5. Amend the privacy regulations to allow for the mandatory publication of all property price data.
- 4.2.6. Create a map-based, searchable register of all property interests in the State.
- 4.2.7. Provide the necessary resources and directions to value all land and publish in a publicly searchable format.
- 4.2.8. Publish all data of properties benefiting from taxpayers bail-outs in map format immediately.

4.3. Taxes should be diverted from income and transactions to the use of the natural and social commons. The resultant receipts, less necessary investment to protect or build commons capital, should be broadly distributed to citizens on an equal per capita basis.

- 4.3.1. Introduce a carbon Cap and Share system.

4.3.2. Introduce water charges over a free per capita quota.

4.4. New non-debt based money and financing systems should be explored and developed to augment bank lending to business; to provide funds for existing and new residential development and, to finance infrastructural projects.

4.5. Government debt levels should be judged relative to economic conditions and how the borrowing is used rather than simplistic percentages.

4.5.1. The stability of the current monetary system requires that government spending/borrowing replaces the precipitous drop in private sector investment/borrowings. This spending should maintain basic levels of social services and economic activities across as wide a sector of the population as possible and maximize investment in building future resilience – in renewable energy, productive environmental services and necessary infrastructure.

4.5.2. Net taxation levels can be increased without affecting economic recovery as long as higher taxes are not imposed on work, enterprise and transactions but are imposed instead on land values and taxation on environmental 'bads'.

5. Governance

In order for society to accept the changes that are necessary to develop a truly sustainable Ireland, there is a need to develop the educational and governance aspects of Agenda 21 in a way that is genuinely participatory, effective and synergistic with the processes of representative democracy. To start this process the following are essential:

- 5.1.** The immediate ratification of the Aarhus Convention, followed by full implementation of both the spirit and the letter of the Convention;
- 5.2.** In the light of Rio+20 in 2012, review the implementation of Agenda 21 in Ireland and put in place measures to fill the gaps;
- 5.3.** Amendment to the Constitution providing for the Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment. This to be the subject of a referendum at the same time as the Referendum on Children's Rights;
- 5.4.** Establish and use a new yardstick by which we measure the success of our society, one which takes account of the quality of the three pillars of sustainability and not just the economy. GDP and GNP measure all economic activity whether it is good and bad for society;
- 5.5.** Legislative protection for all "Whistle-Blowers"
- 5.6.** The creation of an 'Ombudsman for the Future'. Sustainable decision-making requires an advocate for the generations to come and not just for the human species;
- 5.7.** The conversion of all third level campuses into best practice examples of sustainable living, whilst allowing their host communities to engage with them as a problem-solving resource in the form of extended 'science shops';
- 5.8.** Open and free access to Ordnance Survey information;
- 5.9.** An explicit environmental remit for County/City Development Boards;

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