

One Ireland

jobs, reform, fairness




Labour

MANIFESTO
2011

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Foreword

The Irish people have a historic choice before them. Together, on polling day, we can vote to change the direction of our country.

Ireland is a great country, with a great future. It is also a country with grave problems. But nobody, and especially ourselves, should ever doubt what we are capable of. Our abilities are far greater than our problems.

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We can, and we will get through this recession. We can, and we will, get our country on the road to recovery, creating jobs and forging opportunities for our future. We can, and we will, change the way this country is run and fix the system that is broken.

Our country's best days are still to come.

It is not enough to wish for a better future. We have to grasp it and work for it and on polling day we have to come together and decide on change.

That is what this election is all about. Real, transformative change that can bring about the kind of Ireland we want to live in, not just for ourselves, for our children as well.

Change is nothing new for most Irish people today. Most people have already had to change their own lives, out of necessity. They have had to cope with job losses, reduced incomes, and reduced living standards.

Now we have the opportunity to take control of that change, and to take back our future.

For the first time ever in the 90 year history of this State, we can elect a government which is led by neither Fianna Fáil nor Fine Gael. For the first time people have a real alternative – to elect a government led by Labour.

This is not simply a choice of party label. It is a choice about the future direction of our country.

Only Labour can lead that change. A change of government, and a change in the way government works. A change in the way government thinks. A change that brings the real concerns of the people to the heart of government.

Labour will fight this election on three issues that go to the heart of Ireland's challenge: jobs, reform, and fairness.

Throughout this crisis, Labour has insisted that jobs must be at the heart of what government is doing. Labour is the party of work, and a Labour-led government will have jobs at the top of its agenda. We will work to provide skills and work experience opportunities for those without work. We will work to develop new opportunities through trade and innovation, finding new markets, and new goods and services to sell in them. We will work on the basis that every single job counts.

Labour is the party of reform. For generations, in and out of government, Labour has championed progressive change in Ireland. Now, once again, we are determined to lead a new wave of change, to fix a broken system that has failed the Irish people.

Labour is the party to reform politics because we have the best track record on reform. Labour is the Party to reform our public services because we believe in the value of public service, and what its potential is.

Labour is the party of fairness. We have led the way in showing how the two-tier health system is bad for all of us, and how it can be fixed. We have led the way in demanding fair

taxation. Alone among the political parties, we will make literacy, not just a policy objective but a national cause.

Labour's vision is the vision of One Ireland, where we are driven by what unites us, not what divides us. Our country is too small, and our problems are too great, to indulge in divisions, or solo-runs, or sectional interests.

This is not the time for division or for the politics of pitting one group of Irish people against another. This is the moment we must come together, and move forward together – le chéile.

Government is not a hospitality tent, roped off for VIPs. Government is not a Big House shielded from the people by high walls. Government is not the business of the insiders, it is the business of us all. It's time to roll up the tent, and put the concerns of the people at the heart of government. That is the belief that has driven the Labour Party since its foundation, right up to today. Labour is ready to put that belief into action.

One Ireland. Private sector and public sector. Those with jobs and those looking for work. Employers and employees. Rural and urban. Gay and straight. Now is the time to pull down the walls that stand between the people and their government. Now is the time for Labour.

Eamon Gilmore TD

Real, transformative change that can bring about the kind of Ireland we want to live in, not just for ourselves, for our children as well

***Labour's
Action Plan
for Ireland***

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JOBS

Put jobs and growth first. That means renegotiating the EU-IMF deal to include a jobs strategy, to share the debt burden with bondholders, to reduce the interest rate, and to leave room for Ireland's economy to grow.

Build on our strengths. Labour has specific plans for job creation in Ireland's agri-food industry, tourism, renewable energy, creative industries, clean technology, and retail; for turning scientific research into jobs; and for developing new markets for Irish exports.

Invest in jobs and training. Labour's €500 million Jobs Fund will fund new ideas to grow jobs in strategic sectors of the economy, while our plan for a Strategic Investment Bank will provide credit to grow businesses and build vital infrastructure. The Jobs Fund will also provide 60,000 new education and training opportunities to help those out of work to get back into employment.

Make next generation broadband happen. Labour's plan brings together private sector funding in an innovative co-op to build a high-speed, next generation broadband network.

REFORM

Change politics. Labour's job in government is to serve the best interests of the Irish people. Labour will abolish the Seanad, end cronyism on State boards, and make Ministers and public servants accountable for their decisions.

A new Constitution. Labour will ask a people's convention to draw up a new Constitution setting out the aspirations, the values and the rules that Irish people want to live by now.

Open up government. Labour will extend the right to Freedom of Information, require political lobbyists to be publicly registered, and introduce legal protection for whistleblowers.

Reform public service. Labour has a plan to make the public service more flexible, work better, and to get better value for money.

FAIRNESS

Keep taxes fair and balanced. Under Labour in government, no one earning less than €100,000 will pay more income tax. Labour's plan to close the gap in our public finances is split 50:50 between spending cuts and new revenue-raising measures.

A fairer, more affordable health system. Labour will reform the unfair two-tier health system to reduce the cost of delivering care, and use those savings to extend universal access to essential medical care. We will start by making access to primary care, such as GPs, more affordable.

Make literacy a national cause. No child should leave school unable to read and write. Labour has a plan to improve child literacy for the first time in a generation.

Equality is for everyone. Labour will hold a referendum on gay marriage rights.



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JOBS

Jobs

Finance and Banking: A Better Deal for Ireland

TIME FOR CHANGE

Ireland faces a profound economic crisis, but while we have serious problems, we also have major economic advantages. With the right policies the economy can create jobs and return our country to prosperity.

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01



THE FIRST STEPS

- Renegotiate the EU/IMF Deal to re-focus on growth and job creation
- Bank Bondholders should share in bank losses
- Renegotiate the interest rate on the EU loans
- Renegotiate the fiscal strategy to promote growth and fairness
- Ensure an adequate flow of credit to the Irish economy

Labour does not accept that the EU/IMF deal provides a workable basis for restoring the Irish economy. Labour in government will engage with the EU and the IMF to renegotiate the deal, so as to achieve fair and realistic terms for Ireland and for the Irish people.

RESTORE THE BANKING SYSTEM

The EU/IMF deal provides funding to support a process of downsizing and restructuring in the Irish banking system, so as to restore international confidence and ensure that the system can fund itself – i.e. that the banks will be able to function without support from the ECB. Labour will apply the following principles to the restructuring and down-sizing of the banks:

banks will have to provide detailed plans on how this will be achieved, including the number of SME lenders to be involved in achieving the targets, how many new SME clients will a bank achieve, and how much will be focused onto existing clients.

- Labour will seek to agree more effective alternatives to the transfer of further portfolios of smaller property loans to NAMA (NAMA2), given the difficulties this will create in the management of such loan-books.
- Labour is opposed to further fire-sales of bank assets which impose greater losses than necessary. We do not support the NAMA3 asset warehousing proposal as a solution that can be implemented in a timely manner. Labour will explore all options to minimise the cost of re-structuring, including asset insurance models, and to increase the availability of affordable funding to the banking system in the interim period to provide the real economy with credit.
- Labour will seek to dispose of the public stakes in the banks as soon as possible at the best possible return to the taxpayer. Labour believes that a restructured banking system should include a specialist state-owned, but strictly independent, investment bank, focused on funding investment to support the strategic needs of the Irish economy, including project finance for infrastructure and growth capital for firms. Such a bank would be capitalised from the funds remaining in the NPRF and should form an ongoing part of the financial system in Ireland's open and innovative economy.

Labour will insist that an adequate pool of credit is available to fund small and medium-sized businesses

- Labour believes that bank bondholders should share in bank losses. Depositors must be fully protected. Labour will seek to ensure that burden sharing with bondholders is part of a renegotiated deal.
- Labour will insist that an adequate pool of credit is available to fund small and medium-sized businesses in the real economy during the re-structuring and down-sizing programme.
- Labour will ensure that, at the end of the process, a strong and robust banking system exists that will serve the needs of the real Irish economy. The

- Labour will insist on restructuring of bank boards, to ensure replacement of directors who presided over failed lending practices. Labour will ensure that the regulator has sufficient powers of pre-approval of bank directors and senior executives.

STRONG, COHERENT DECISION-MAKING

Effective decision making in this process demands better decision-making structures, in contrast to the fragmented and sometimes contradictory approach that has been in evidence during the crisis to date. Labour will create a strong integrated decision-making structure, which while respecting the statutory roles of the different agencies, will incorporate all relevant agencies, with effective inclusion of appropriate advice, led by senior Ministers.

GETTING VALUE FOR THE TAXPAYER FROM NAMA

Labour has been consistently opposed to the NAMA project, because it presented an unacceptably high and irreversible risk to the taxpayer. Labour in government will seek to curtail any further transfers of assets to NAMA, and will seek alternative solutions to the transfer of large portfolios of smaller property loans.

Effective operations and decision making by NAMA are critical to the future of the Irish economy, in respect both of curtailing losses to the State, and in ensuring that the property market in Ireland functions normally. The prices at which assets are sold by NAMA is critical. Labour will also insist on the highest standards of transparency in the operation of NAMA, and will work to limit the costs associated with the agency

such as in respect of professional fees. Labour will insist on the fullest recovery of losses from the developers whose loans have been transferred to NAMA and who do not meet their obligations.

NEVER AGAIN

Ireland's banking crisis clearly demonstrates how Fianna Fáil's philosophy of free-for-all, light-touch regulation, without proper checks and balances risks social and economic catastrophe.

Labour will restore the soundness and credibility of the Irish banking sector so that it can again play its valuable social and economic role – a safe haven for savings, a facilitator of payments, a responsible lender for productive investment and important family purchases.

In the future, regulation must be based not only on sound principles, but on clear, enforceable rules backed up by stringent oversight and sanctions where necessary. The Central Bank should be charged with monitoring balance sheet growth at financial institutions under its jurisdiction, and in the financial system as a whole, and on the sustainability of the funding mix, reporting annually to the Minister for Finance and recommending remedial action if necessary.

Once the banks are put on a sound footing, efforts should be made to accelerate a move to the Basel III

regime with more onerous capital and reporting requirements.

Long before the most recent banking crisis, Irish banks established a track record on over-charging their customers. Irish consumers need a reinforced watchdog with real teeth and the will to take on the bankers. Fianna Fáil have hived off the consumer protection function of the Financial Regulator to the National Consumer Agency. It is essential that its quasi-judicial role in terms of investigating wrongdoings and imposing sanctions is not watered down.

Enhanced coordination is needed between the Financial Services Ombudsman, the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, the National Consumer Agency, and the Head of Financial Regulation at the Central Bank. There should be a one-stop-shop portal for consumers with issues with financial service providers rather than having to navigate these myriad bodies.

PAYING FOR THE CRISIS

Over time, the banking sector must pay a fair contribution to cleaning up the mess for which it is responsible. When the Irish banking system has been put back on its feet, fully recapitalised, and able to access interbank markets, Labour will introduce a bank levy based on the size of a bank's liabilities (other than shareholders' capital).

Labour will insist on the fullest recovery of losses from the developers whose loans have been transferred to NAMA

SPECIAL RESOLUTION REGIME FOR FAILED BANKS

Because of the important role that banks play in the wider economy, they cannot just be wound up in the same way as other businesses when they are bankrupt. This should not mean, however, that taxpayers are on the hook for banks' debts. Ireland should work with our European Partners to develop a comprehensive new Special Resolution Regime that ensures protection of banks' depositors, but allows for appropriate burden sharing with other creditors.

AN END TO BONUS CULTURE

Bonuses in the financial sector have grown out of all proportion with their social and economic value and have encouraged risk-taking that is ultimately borne by the taxpayer. All remuneration schemes at banks subject to state support should undergo a fundamental review to ensure an alignment of interest between banks, their staff and the taxpayers who have borne such a heavy burden to keep them open.

REGIONAL ENTERPRISE FUNDS

Opportunities should be explored (for instance through JEREMIE, run by the EIF) for the launch of a Regional Investment Fund by re-focusing some of our remaining structural funds which have yet to be drawn down from Brussels. This would be a revolving fund where the money can be re-invested.

GETTING CREDIT FLOWING TO SMALL & FAMILY BUSINESSES

Across Ireland, viable, profitable, well-run businesses are going to the wall because they can't access credit. Labour will introduce an SME Working Capital Guarantee Scheme which would ensure that viable small and family businesses can get the loans they need.

Labour will insist on a full and proper investigation into the blanket bank guarantee

A STRONG MUTUAL AND CREDIT UNION SECTOR

Labour is committed to maintaining a mutual and community component in our financial system. Ireland's credit unions have a rich tradition and a track record of providing loans in communities and workplaces across the country. The credit union movement has an important role to play in Ireland's future financial architecture and the movement deserves support in its endeavours to increasingly modernise and professionalise the sector. This will involve a fair and impartial review of credit union regulation.

INQUIRY INTO THE BLANKET BANK GUARANTEE

The blanket bank guarantee was the most disastrous policy decision in the history of the state. Labour will insist that a full and proper investigation into this decision and the events leading up to it is completed and that there are public hearings by the relevant Oireachtas Committee.

ADDRESSING FINANCIAL EXCLUSION

Labour is committed to tackling the problem of financial exclusion through measures such as the introduction of basic bank accounts. We also believe that a new partnership should be sought to provide banking services through the Post Office Network.

THE FUTURE OF THE IFSC

Labour supports the future development of the IFSC as a source of future growth in high value employment, subject to appropriate regulation, including the development of Green financial services and Islamic banking.

Jobs

Fiscal Stability, Investment And Competitiveness

TIME FOR CHANGE

Labour believes that the growth forecasts in the Four-Year Plan are broadly achievable, provided that the right policies are put in place. Ireland can achieve high export growth, and see a return to growth in the more job-intensive domestic economy.

The Fiscal Strategy set out in the EU/IMF deal, however, involves excessive austerity, which will put growth and job creation at risk. Labour is proposing a strategy that will maximise investment and growth.

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02



THE FIRST STEPS

- Extend the deadline for achieving the 3% of GDP deficit target to 2016
- Implement a net adjustment of €7.1 billion in the period 2012-2014
- A fair and balanced approach to achieving savings
- A new strategic approach to achieve better public spending
- Establish a Strategic Investment Bank to invest in the Irish economy using resources in the National Pension Reserve Fund



ENSURING FISCAL STABILITY AND GROWTH

As a result of the mismanagement of the economy by Fianna Fáil, Ireland is dependent on the IMF/EU loan facility to fund the fiscal deficit. Labour has consistently supported the objective of restoring fiscal stability, in line with our obligations as a member of the Eurozone, and as a necessary requirement for economic stability and long-run growth. Labour does not accept, however, that the fiscal strategy devised by the discredited Fianna Fáil government and included in the EU/IMF deal provides a basis for economic recovery or for maximising long-term growth. In particular, the excessive austerity in the Fianna Fáil plan, endorsed by Fine Gael, poses an unacceptable risk to economic recovery.

therefore seek to renegotiate the fiscal strategy in the IMF/EU deal.

LABOUR'S PRIORITIES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2011

In respect of the fiscal year 2011, Labour will negotiate with the EU and the IMF to ensure that adequate resources are available in 2011 to fund key jobs strategies and reforms in the health sector. We believe these funds should be provided from cash balances, and not through further expenditure cuts.

It is clear that the Universal Social Charge was not properly thought through, and that it is having a dramatic impact on the incomes of many families. The charge has been introduced at a time when other taxes are increasing, as well as household bills like VHI fees. This is causing particular hardship to some families, including working widows and elderly people. Labour will conduct a detailed review of the impact of the USC to identify the families that have been hardest hit, and will reform the tax accordingly. We will fund these changes by extending the 10% rate of USC on incomes over €100,000 to include employees' incomes over €100,000, and by changes to capital taxes.

FISCAL STRATEGY FOR 2012 – 2014

Labour proposes a net fiscal adjustment in 2012-2014 of €7.1 billion, so as to allow adequate room for jobs and recovery. Labour will complete the reduction in the deficit to below 3% of GDP by no later than 2016.

Labour believes that the composition of the adjustment should be fairer and more balanced, including fairer taxation and on-going investment in education and other vital services, which are essential to social solidarity and to long-term economic growth.

Labour does not accept that the fiscal strategy devised by the discredited Fianna Fáil government provides a basis for economic recovery

Labour believes that the average GDP growth rate set out in the four-year plan is achievable, provided that pro-growth policies are adopted. These include action to enhance competitiveness, to ensure adequate flows of credit, to promote investment and an appropriate fiscal strategy. The Fianna Fáil/Fine Gael austerity programme does not allow sufficient room for economic growth and employment creation. The scale and nature of the cuts being proposed also pose risks to medium and long-term economic growth and to social cohesion. Labour will

NEW PRIORITIES IN CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Ireland needs to take a new approach to public and private capital investment that reflects the new realities of the economy and the constraints on public resources, while also incorporating the new funding that will be available through Labour's Strategic Investment Bank.

Labour in government will commission a new study of Ireland's investment needs (similar to the 2006 ESRI study), and draw up a National Development Plan covering the seven-year period 2012-2019.

In the initial years, when resources will be most heavily constrained, Labour will prioritise investment in education, in health, in science and technology and in job-creation.

Labour will insist that major capital projects are subjected to proper cost-benefit analysis and evaluation, improving future productivity and growth prospects, and that the value-for-money obtained is significantly enhanced compared to the most recent period.

Labour's strategy is to support the development of an investment economy, while maximising the return to the public from major programmes of investment.

A COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW AND WASTE AUDIT

Given the need for fiscal consolidation, it will be necessary to curtail current expenditure in the immediate future. While this will involve difficult decisions, it will also afford the opportunity to reform the public service to enhance efficiency and eliminate waste. Rather than adopting a piece-meal, cheese-paring approach Labour will insist on a properly planned multi-annual expenditure strategy.

To this end, Labour will conduct a Comprehensive Spending Review and Waste Audit that will examine all areas of public expenditure. This will be markedly different to the 'Bord Snip' exercise, in its purpose and in the way it is conducted.

The Comprehensive Spending Review and Waste Audit will be a major exercise in strategic budgeting and will involve a fundamental assessment of all spending programmes, examining their objectives and how those objectives are achieved. The purpose of strategic budgeting is to find the most cost effective ways to provide services to the public and to improve future growth and productivity. It will take account of the changing needs of modern Ireland, and will be conducted on a 'whole of government' basis.

Learning from the experience in other countries, the spending review will be led, not by external consultants, but by government Ministers and the Secretary General of each Department, co-ordinated from the centre of government. It will adopt a three-year time horizon, resulting in a plan for public expenditure for the period 2012-2014. This exercise should be an immediate priority for government and will be concluded in time to feed into Budget 2012.

As part of this exercise, Labour will include a 'surrender and re-grant' clause, whereby Departments that propose savings in one programme would be able to propose re-cycling of some of those savings into other priority areas, subject to a 'reducing ceiling' on aggregate budgets. The 'reducing ceiling' means that non-pay budgets will be required to be reduced by at least 2% per annum over three years on an aggregate basis – the percentage savings achieved will vary across departments in line with policy priorities. Labour will also seek to enhance the local flexibility

available to public service managers in how they deploy their budgets to achieve maximum efficiency and service quality.

CULLING QUANGOS

Non-Commercial Semi-State Bodies or quangos have mushroomed in recent years. Labour is concerned about the value-for-money being achieved by these bodies and by the lack of accountability associated with them. The Comprehensive Spending Review and Waste Audit will include a full evaluation of all quangos, with each body being required to justify its continued existence outside of its parent department. Remaining quangos will be required to be properly accountable to the Oireachtas. Labour is proposing a series of amalgamations of quangos relating to utilities regulation, equality, industrial development and broadcasting that will both save money and achieve greater policy coherence.

REFORMING SOCIAL PROTECTION

In order to close the fiscal deficit, it is vital that we reduce the cost of Fianna Fáil's failure to address the problem of unemployment. Labour is proposing a series of strategies to tackle the growing problem of long-term unemployment, and in doing so to reduce the associated expenditures on social welfare. We will also launch an all-out campaign to tackle the problem of welfare fraud.

LEADERSHIP FROM THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

At a time when savings are being sought across the public service, the political system must also show leadership. Labour is proposing a cap on all Ministerial and public sector salaries, corresponding reductions in the salaries of Ministers of State,

Labour will conduct a Comprehensive Spending Review and Waste Audit that will examine all areas of public expenditure

reductions in the number of paid chairs of Oireachtas Committees and abolition of the Oireachtas allowance paid to Ministers who have constituency offices staffed by civil servants. Labour is proposing reform in the transport arrangements for Ministers including a reduction in the number of Garda drivers.

The arrangements for Ministerial pensions and severance packages have rightly been the cause of public outrage. Labour will ensure that in future these arrangements are set by an independent person, such as the Comptroller and Auditor General.

REDUCING THE PUBLIC SERVICE PAY BILL

As part of the process of fiscal consolidation, it is necessary to reduce the public service pay bill. Our proposals are based on a reduction of 18,000 in public service numbers in the period 2011-2014. Public employment ceilings will be re-assessed during the Comprehensive Spending Review and Waste Audit to ensure that the maximum savings are being achieved and that frontline services are being protected.

Labour will work the Croke Park Agreement. It is essential that the agreement should result in savings to the Exchequer and that the pace of implementation of the Agreement be accelerated.

STRATEGIC EXPENDITURE PRIORITIES

In order to achieve recovery and reform, it will be necessary to re-allocate resources to areas of strategic priority. This means achieving more savings in order to re-invest in reform and development. Labour's adjustment proposals provide for resources to fund a €500 million annual jobs package. As part of Labour's health strategy, the cost of providing health care in Ireland will be driven down, with €489 million being provided to ensure a major shift towards primary care. Additional resources will be provided in key areas of education and criminal justice to drive reform.

FAIR TAXATION 2012-2014

Labour has long argued for a fair and balanced tax structure in Ireland and we will seek to renegotiate the EU/IMF deal to achieve this objective. It is an important principle of taxation that those who have the most, must contribute the most, and that revenue-raising must begin with reform, rather than constantly delaying it as Fianna Fáil have done.

Labour does not support further impositions of income tax on people on middle and modest incomes in the period 2012-2014. We propose no increases in income tax for people earning less than €100,000. We will extend the 10% USC rate to employee incomes over €100,000.

Labour will insert a new provision in the tax code to ensure that high earners (tax units with incomes over €250,000) must comply with a Minimum Effective Tax Rate to be set at 30%. This will impose a fair restriction on the capacity of high earners to reduce their tax bills through tax planning.

Labour in government introduced the 12.5% corporation profits tax rate, and we will insist that it remains in place. Reforms to the regime for off-setting corporate losses against Corporation Tax can be adopted to increase the yield from the tax without affecting Ireland's attractiveness as a location for inward investment.

Labour will prioritise the elimination of unnecessary tax expenditures, as we have been proposing for many years. These include the legacy property reliefs, and phasing down of the amount of interest that can be offset against rental income for tax purposes to 25%.

Labour believes that the total quantum of tax relief currently in place for pensions is no longer supportable, and that the distribution of relief at present is not fair or equitable. Labour will target a further reduction of €500 million in the total amount of relief, but rather than simply standardising the rate of relief, Labour favours an approach that retains strong incentives for people to invest in pensions while also making the system fairer. This will include capping the tax relief on pension contributions from both employers and employees, reducing the maximum tax-free lump sum, reducing the maximum pension fund and including pension tax relief in the minimum effective tax rate.

Labour favours the introduction of new progressive structures for Capital Taxes. In respect of Capital Gains Tax and Capital Acquisitions Tax, the first €50,000 over the

threshold will be taxed at 30% and the balance at 35%. These measures will raise €236 million in a full year. The change in Capital Acquisitions Tax will be introduced in 2011 to finance changes in the Universal Social Charge.

Labour believes that appropriate tax rules have a role to play in protecting our environment. Labour will increase the carbon tax to €25 per tonne, with an offset of €40 million to fund fuel poverty measures. Labour supports a broadly based tax on packaging as proposed by Comhar that will raise €60 million.

Labour is proposing a 1% increase in the standard rate of VAT that will raise €310 million in a full year. Labour's proposals include modest increases in excise on wine and cigarettes. Labour will prioritise action to reduce losses to the Exchequer from smuggling through stronger revenue enforcement.

Labour accepts that it will be necessary to introduce a site value charge, in order to prevent higher taxes on work. The Government has not, however, carried out sufficient work to allow such a charge to be introduced in the short-term. Further detailed study will be required to devise a fair basis for such a charge that takes account of the value of property in different regions, the need to exempt some categories of homeowners, and the need to take account of those who have recently paid large sums in stamp duty or who are in negative equity. Any charge of this sort, therefore, cannot be set in place before 2014. Accordingly, Labour will publish a Green Paper by the end of 2012 on how the charge can be structured in a fair and efficient manner. As an interim measure, Labour will increase the second homes levy by €300 to yield €95 million.

Labour will take action to deal with the scandal of tax exiles, and will further strengthen revenue action to reduce tax evasion

Labour will insist on action being taken to deal with the scandal of tax exiles, and we will further strengthen revenue action to reduce tax-evasion.

INVESTING IN JOB CREATION

Throughout the crisis, Labour has been clear that cuts alone will not solve the problem. Ireland needs a strategy for jobs and growth, and the lack of action on jobs has made the crisis in the public finances and in the banks even worse. While difficult decisions are needed, we also need a strategy to grow our way out of our predicament.

Despite the financial crisis at home and abroad, we are living in a period of opportunity for the Irish economy. In the advanced economies, economic growth is now increasingly driven by what is known as the 'knowledge economy', with new technologies driving economic growth both in knowledge-intensive sectors, and more widely across the whole economy. At the same time, the global trading system is expanding, and the emerging economies such as China and India present enormous opportunities for Irish companies. Export growth in Ireland is picking up, and competitiveness has improved. What we need now is a coherent strategy to take advantage of the opportunities that are available to us.

LABOUR'S JOBS FUND

Labour's fiscal strategy provides for a €500 million Jobs Fund to finance a series of pro-jobs initiatives that involve elements of current expenditure. The fund would be administered by a Cabinet sub-committee. Proposals from Departments, agencies and other bodies, including the private sector, would be considered on the basis of their contribution to an overall jobs strategy and would be funded accordingly. The agencies thus funded would not be immune from making efficiencies in their budgets – funding from the Jobs Fund would be dependent on demonstrated additionality to existing operations.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

To achieve growth, the Fianna Fáil casino economy must be replaced with by the investment economy. The Irish banking system has not provided the kind of investment finance that is required to meet Ireland's investment needs. To fill the gap, Labour is proposing the establishment of a Strategic Investment Bank.

The Strategic Investment Bank will be established in two phases. It will be set up initially as a vehicle to invest the remaining funds in the National Pension Reserve Fund in projects that will enhance infrastructure and boost growth in the Irish economy. It will be fully

independent and will invest on a commercial basis.

Over time, and when market conditions normalise, this vehicle will be developed into a functioning bank that takes deposits and raises long term financing. Labour believes that the Strategic Investment Bank should be an essential component of the re-structured banking system. The bank would be set up as an independent commercial operation, using €2 billion of the National Pension Reserve Fund as capital. It would operate on a strict arms-length basis from government. Irish citizens and the Irish Diaspora would be encouraged to make deposits in the bank, and to purchase Citizen's Bonds, which would be a way to invest in the recovery of the Irish economy, and would be of different maturities. The bank would attract funding from a number of sources, including consumer deposits and wholesale markets (once market conditions normalise).

The Strategic Investment Bank would be a key lender to SMEs and innovative firms. The Enterprise Agencies would develop relationships with the Strategic Investment Bank to facilitate introductions of high-potential firms. Investment decisions, however, would remain the exclusive preserve of the bank. The Strategic Investment Bank would also support investment in large infrastructure projects.

IMPROVING COMPETITIVENESS

Competitiveness has improved during the past three years, but we need to ensure that, as growth returns, these gains are not eroded. In particular, it is important that costs in the protected sectors of the economy do not undermine the capacity of the traded sector to compete. To maintain and enhance competitiveness, Labour is proposing the following measures:

Wage Policy

Labour believes that negotiated wage policies can potentially be an important tool of macroeconomic policy in a small open economy. We will explore options for developing such an agreement, which may include national and/or sectoral wage norms. Labour believes that investment and job creation can be enhanced through structured multiannual agreements that incorporate wage restraint.

Wage competitiveness should not be confused with a low wage agenda. Labour is opposed to the reduction in the minimum wage agreed by Fianna Fáil with the European Union and the IMF and we will reverse it. The national minimum wage affects fewer than 3% of the work force, who are on the lowest rung of the labour force ladder. Labour will reform the JLC system, but this cannot be used as the basis to undermine the rights and conditions of employment of vulnerable workers.

Competition Policy

Labour will support robust competition policy and enforcement. We support structural reform in the professions to drive down the cost base for the traded sector.

Utilities Regulation

Labour will enhance the quality and effectiveness of utilities regulation in Ireland. We favour a properly planned consolidation of the number of regulators, to make more effective use of regulatory skills. Labour will retain the Competition Authority as a separate entity.

Labour believes that the Strategic Investment Bank should be an essential component of the re-structured banking system

Jobs

Enterprise and Innovation

TIME FOR CHANGE

To achieve economic growth and job creation, the Irish economy must shift from a property-based economy to a knowledge economy. We need to carve out new markets, and develop new products to sell in them. Ireland has an open and entrepreneurial economy with multiple natural and developed competitive advantages.

We need a government that will help that economy to grow by driving trade, innovation and productivity growth.

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03

THE FIRST STEPS

- Use Labour's €500 million jobs fund to grow employment in sectors where Ireland already has a competitive advantage
- Make the strategic decision to target the development of new markets for Ireland in the emerging economies
- Appoint a trade czar to co-ordinate action across government in opening these fast growing markets
- Plug the gap in our national system of innovation by investing to turn new scientific advances into jobs
- Create innovation centres focused on commercialisation of research



A NEW APPROACH TO ENTERPRISE POLICY

Competitiveness and productivity gains which generated strong export-led growth formed the basis for the Celtic Tiger from 1994 to 2002. We need a renewal of this strategy in order to create the foundations for future economic and employment growth. However the previous blueprint will have to change.

New economic realities, the imperative to decarbonise our economy, and the need to develop a new generation of export champions will require a reset in our trade and enterprise policy. Labour will place a much stronger emphasis on the promotion of services exports, including software, engineering, financial services, education and culture.

Labour will establish a Trade Council to strengthen cooperation and coordination across key departments

To support the development of exporting SMEs, we will seek reform of EU procurement rules so that a greater portion of all public procurement goes to small and medium sized enterprises.

We will promptly implement all the recommendations in the Trading and Investing in the Smart Economy Report. In particular, we will establish a Trade Council to strengthen cooperation and coordination across all of the key departments and State agencies involved in the promotion and development of trade and exports. Membership of the Council

will be divided equally between government and private sector representatives who have experience in establishing and growing export-oriented business both in Ireland and abroad.

We will appoint a high profile Trade and Enterprise czar to work with in tandem with the Trade Council, who will be able to draw on full diplomatic and civil service resources and who will report directly to the Minister for Enterprise and the Taoiseach.

A key pillar of Labour's new enterprise strategy will be to position Ireland to develop better trade relationships with the rising economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.

Labour will establish a local trade and investment team reporting to the local Irish Ambassador or Head of Mission and the Minister for Enterprise in each of the target emerging countries and other priority markets. These teams will execute a detailed local market plan, with progress against targets reviewed annually.

At home, Labour in government will draw on the economic strengths and connections of Ireland's immigrant communities by appointing a representative from each of the BRICS and other strategic markets resident in Ireland as trade champions for their respective countries, reporting to both the Trade Council and the Minister for Enterprise. Trade champions will have a mission of promoting trade to and from Ireland and will be supported by the Department of Enterprise.

Labour will take initiatives to deepen educational cooperation with the emerging economies, financed from Labour's Jobs Fund.

AN INNOVATION STRATEGY AGENCY

Innovation is the single most important factor in the transition to a sustainable investment economy. While Ireland has a number of key strengths in this area, such as high quality scientific research institutions, scientists and engineers, our innovation system has a number of deficiencies. Labour's plan for innovation is directly aimed at addressing these weaknesses, while building on our existing strengths.

Labour will subsume the current activities and functions of Forfas, the Innovation Taskforce, the Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation and the Sustainable Energy Authority into a newly-established Innovation Strategy Agency an independent agency within the IDA / Enterprise Ireland structure, whose role will be to stimulate technology-enabled innovation in the areas which offer the greatest scope for boosting growth and productivity.

Labour's Innovation Strategy Agency will promote and support investment in technology research, development and commercialisation beyond the basic research supported by Science Foundation Ireland, as well as advising government on how to remove barriers to innovation and accelerate the exploitation of new technologies.

The majority of the members of the board of the ISA will be drawn from industry and finance from both Ireland and abroad with experience of technology change and innovation.

The Innovation Strategy Agency will focus its work by targeting key technology areas and sectors where innovation can be applied including but not limited to high value manufacturing, advanced materials, nanotechnology, bioscience, electronics, photonics and electrical systems and information and communication technology.

The ISA will also focus on the application of technological innovation in established sectors of the economy like energy generation and supply, transport, creative industries, high-value services and architecture and construction by identifying challenges, establishing priorities and developing strategies which specify the necessary actions to transition to a more innovative approach.

The ISA will promote Ireland's full engagement with the 'Innovative Union' proposals issued by the European Commission in October 2010 as one of the seven flagship initiatives under the EU2020 Strategy, with the specific aim of refocusing R&D and innovation policy on major challenges and at turning inventions into products.

TURNING RESEARCH INTO JOBS

There is a critical gap between the basic research promoted and funded by Science Foundation Ireland and third level institutions, and its subsequent development into a commercial opportunity for investors. This gap can only be closed by making new technologies investment ready.

The Innovation Strategy Agency will be tasked with closing this gap through the establishment of a network of Technology Research Centres focused on applied technological research in specific areas, to be linked to appropriate higher-education institutions. The centres will accelerate the exploitation of new technologies by providing infrastructure that bridges the gap between research and technology commercialisation.

The establishment of these centres will build on the approach already adopted with the Tyndall Centre on ICT and the International Energy Research Centre (IERC) in UCC where

government, industry and academics partner to focus on applied research that will lead to concrete results and commercial applications.

In order to promote Ireland's strong historical tradition in science and technology for the next generation of scientists, each centre will be named after a renowned Irish scientist such as Robert Boyle, Ernest Walton, Jocelyn Bell Burnell or Kathleen Lonsdale.

Initially these centres will be funded in a three-way split between the ISA, competitive grants, and contracts with private companies. Over time, the centres will be expected to supplement their core funding by gaining further income from public and private sector contract research, and through the commercialisation of intellectual property.

The ISA will initially establish three additional centres building on Tyndall and the IERC focusing on biotechnology, nanotechnology and high value manufacturing. Further centres from a number of other areas will be selected subsequently.

The Innovation Research Centres will also be in a position to play a role as anchor tenants in more broadly-based Science and Technology Parks that will attract private firms in the specific research area.

SECTORAL JOBS STRATEGIES

As well as creating the conditions for innovation and export-led growth, Labour is proposing a number of sectoral strategies, which build on Ireland's existing strengths. Labour's proposals for growing employment in tourism, the green economy, the agri-food sector and in the education sector are outlined elsewhere in this manifesto. Other sectors with specific targets include:

Labour's Innovation Strategy Agency will promote & support investment in technology research, development & commercialisation

Labour's plan for Creative Industries

- Establish common IP agreements across the digital media sector and third level institutions.
- Support the development of an International Content Services Centre to make Ireland a world leader in the management of intellectual property.
- Merge the functions of Culture Ireland and Cultural Projects into the Arts Council, which will be given an expanded mandate to promote Irish arts abroad.
- Extend the R&D tax credit to the games industry in order to attract game developers and grow the game sector in Ireland.
- Ensure Ireland fully engages in the debate arising from the forthcoming (2011) European Commission Communication on Cultural and Creative Industries. This Communication should include proposals to promote creative studies, attract investment and provide funding for artists, and to establish networks with businesses and improve mobility.

Labour's plan for Internet Services & Cloud Computing

- Continue to market Ireland as an EMEA headquarters location for internet services companies.
- Pursue an aggressive policy of attracting international data centres to Ireland, leveraging the appropriateness of our climate and energy and communications infrastructure.
- Establish an expert group to address new security and privacy issues arising from the use of cloud computing and review the adequacy of current legislation and identify what steps need to be taken to ensure a supportive regulatory environment.
- Introduce a policy that all government departments and agencies will adopt cloud based services if they demonstrate value for money and are adequately secure.
- Actively encourage new businesses that are cloud-focused.
- Review broadband pricing and policies of commercial and other providers to ensure that any obstacles to the adoption of cloud computing are removed.

- Innovation Strategy Agency to create and fund a programme to actively encourage the use of cloud computing throughout all sectors.

Labour's plan to sustain the retail sector

- Enact the Labour Party's legislation to abolish upward-only rent reviews for all commercial leases, as a matter of urgent priority for the Dáil.
- In the interim, appoint a Commercial Rents Ombudsman with some powers currently only granted to an Examiner. This Ombudsman would have the power to adjudicate on rents that have the potential to cause a business to fail, without undertaking a costly court process.
- Reform the Joint Labour Committee structure, beginning with the appointment of independent chairpersons to the JLCs.
- Retain the existing Retail Planning Guidelines and maintain the retail planning cap.
- Encourage local authorities to introduce differentiated, time-limited rates to facilitate new business start-ups.

SUPPORT FOR SMES

There are approximately 230,000 SMEs operating in Ireland, representing the backbone of the Irish economy. SMEs are confronted by a series of obstacles, most notably working capital, but also access to venture capital, complicated bureaucracy, and insufficient resourcing of the patent process. Labour's banking policy is focused on ensuring an adequate supply of capital for SMEs, including a working capital guarantee scheme, and greater access to venture capital through Labour's Strategic Investment Bank. The Innovation Strategy Agency will work to up-grade the patent process, while the streamlining of bureaucracy will be addressed on a cross-departmental basis.

CO-OPERATIVES

Co-operatives, friendly societies and mutual companies are a legitimate and valued part of the Labour tradition. In Ireland the co-operative movement has played a hugely important role in key areas of economic, environmental and social development.

However, in comparison to other countries, the role of the co-operative and mutual company in Ireland is limited. In many other countries new co-operative models of enterprise have emerged and are meeting vital social, business and environmental needs and creating worthwhile jobs in important areas such as healthcare, transport, childcare, housing, energy and energy efficiency and environmental protection.

Labour in government will work to promote a greater appreciation of the co-operative model as a distinct form of organisation, ensure a level playing field between co-operatives and the other legal options for structuring enterprise activities, and provide a conducive framework for the full potential of the co-operative

Labour is committed to the concept of public enterprise, and is determined to ensure that semi-state companies play a full role in the recovery of the Irish economy

model to be realised, including in areas such as childcare, education, housing, energy retrofitting, environmental protection, transport and healthcare.

SEMI-STATE COMPANIES

Labour is committed to concept of public enterprise, and is determined to ensure that semi-state companies play a full role in the recovery of the Irish economy. Labour is opposed to short-termist privatisation of key state assets, such as Coillte or the energy networks.

Jobs

A New Deal for Jobseekers

TIME FOR CHANGE

Ireland is facing a jobs crisis, that risks becoming a crisis of long-term unemployment. Labour sees forced emigration as a stark failure of government, not a solution. Business as usual will not be enough to cope with the unemployment challenge ahead.

We need to reform our social protection system so that it is the first step on a path back to work, education or training, not a poverty trap.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- A new National Employment Service to replace FÁS
- A major work experience scheme for 30,000 recent graduates and apprentices
- 30,000 new education and training places for people who are unemployed
- Reduced qualifying periods for Back to Education Allowance and Back to Work Enterprise Allowance for the period of this economic emergency
- An 18 month PRSI holiday for employers hiring new employees off the live register



LABOUR'S PLAN FOR AN INTEGRATED NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Labour will replace FÁS with a new National Employment Service to meet the needs of a 21st century workforce.

All employment and benefit support services for people of working age will be integrated in a single delivery unit, a National Employment Service, managed by the Department of Social Protection.

This new employment and benefit support service would absorb:

This integrated service would provide a 'one stop shop' for people seeking to establish their benefit entitlements; looking for a job; and seeking advice about their training options. It also decentralises the administration of working-age benefits, which will in future be assessed and managed locally.

This service will offer users a higher level of personalised employment counselling, with more frequent face-to-face interviews. Training and deployment of staff will reflect this focus. Those on the live register who are identified as being most at risk of long-term unemployment will receive priority treatment for more intensive support.

As part of these reforms, Labour will also develop a flagship web-based adult career guidance portal, which will provide adults with free advice on how to develop their skills for work. This will be funded through efficiency savings arising from the reform process.

Helping people move into employment, or into training that leads to sustainable employment, will be the primary function of the National Employment Service. Its performance will be measured on this basis, and the results published annually.

Labour will replace FÁS with a new National Employment Service to meet the needs of a 21st century workforce

- The functions of the Department of Social Protection relating to assessment and delivery of benefits for people of working age.
- The functions of the Department of Social Protection relating to Community Employment participants.
- The administration of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance, currently carried out by the HSE.
- The Employment Services unit of FÁS, which provides support to jobseekers.
- The Local Employment Service Network.

This development of a flagship National Employment Service is a key part of Labour's wider reforms of the social protection system, which are grounded in the principle that a person's first day of unemployment should also be a first step on the way back to work, with appropriate training, education or work experience support and other incentives to make that happen. This will also apply to those in receipt of working age benefits who are capable of making a transition to work in the community, education, or training, or employment.

MEETING THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING NEEDS OF JOBSEEKERS

The majority of FÁS funds for direct training, and all of the FÁS training centres, will be transferred to the further education and Institute of Technology sectors, with an explicit mandate to deliver high-quality, flexible vocational education and training and a broader, modern apprenticeship programme that caters to a wider variety of trades, ages and genders. This will be accompanied by a redeployment of qualified training staff from FÁS to Colleges of Further Education and Institutes of Technology, as appropriate.

The transition will be strategically managed by government to ensure that available training and education opportunities meet the current and projected needs of the labour market, and the needs of jobseekers.

In order to retain the element of flexibility in the old FÁS system that allowed it to respond to emerging skills shortages, a proportion of the funding would go to create a fund that all providers (public and private) will be able to tender for in order to deliver training in designated skills shortages. Those skills shortages would be identified in annual labour market surveys.

Labour's Jobs Fund will fund 60,000 new training, education & internship places

60,000 NEW TRAINING, EDUCATION AND INTERNSHIP PLACES

Labour's Jobs Fund will fund 60,000 new training, education and internship places, to help people who are currently unemployed to develop their skills, and position themselves for new job opportunities. Labour's initiatives will include:

- 'Bridge the GAP' – a Graduate and Apprentice Work Placement Scheme. A web-based broker connects recent graduates and apprentices with employers offering six-month internships. Participating interns would be paid at the single person's rate of Jobseeker's Allowance for the duration of the placement, plus a modest cost-of-work allowance.
- An 'Earn and Learn' scheme that enables people on 'short time' to combine a shorter working week with training or education.
- A reduced qualifying period of three months for the Back to Education and Back to Work Enterprise Allowance to make it easier for people to come off the dole and into education, and greater access to postgraduate courses under the Back to Education Allowance, for the period of this economic emergency.
- A tax-back scheme to help people not eligible for other means-tested supports to

claim up to two years of their income tax back to fund full-time study in an authorised institution.

- Literacy and basic workplace skills to be a national priority, with literacy training incorporated into a wider variety of further education and training.
- 'Skills Exchanges' within further education colleges, libraries, Institutes of Technology or training centres, to enable those availing of training in one field to use their previous professional experience to help train other people.
- 30,000 additional training places across the entire education and training system, distributed in line with the recommendations of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs on the skill requirements of the Irish labour force.

ENCOURAGING EMPLOYERS TO TAKE ON NEW EMPLOYEES

Labour will extend the Employer PRSI Incentive Scheme, and extend the exemption period to 18 months, to incentivise employers to employ people who have been on the live register for 6 months or more. We will ensure that employers are made aware of this and other job incentive schemes.

Jobs

Growing the Green Economy

TIME FOR CHANGE

In the 21st century, a sustainable environment is integral to a sustainable economy. Ireland has an obligation to reduce our greenhouse gases, and play our part in tackling climate change. However, this also provides us with an opportunity to create new jobs in sectors such as clean technology, renewable energy, and services that reduce our demand for energy in the first place. The same is true of managing our water supplies, reducing our waste, and enhancing our environment so that it is safe, clean, and a positive resource for tourism.

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- Pass Labour's Climate Change Bill to set legally binding carbon reduction targets in line with EU targets



- Introduce a National Retrofit Scheme to make our housing stock more energy efficient



- Clear obstacles to bringing Ireland's rich renewable energy sources on stream



- Position Ireland as a leading player in the global carbon market, and a centre of excellence in the management of carbon



- Reform how we regulate the waste sector to kick-start investment and innovation, and reduce costs for consumers

COMBATING GLOBAL WARMING

Labour's Climate Change Bill will provide certainty about government policy, and a clear pathway for emissions reduction, in line with negotiated EU targets. Labour will also work at EU level to set up a national programme for forest carbon offsets.

Ireland also needs a coordinated approach to the two-pronged challenge of reducing our carbon output and growing our energy independence, with responsibility at the highest level of government. The Department of the Taoiseach will coordinate both our domestic and international policy on climate change.

We also need to anticipate changes to Ireland's climate that are already inevitable, by urgently developing a national climate change adaptation plan.

Labour will make it easier and affordable for homeowners to upgrade their home's insulation

additional indirect and induced jobs.

Labour will make it easier and affordable for homeowners to upgrade their home's insulation by introducing an Energy Efficiency Obligation on energy suppliers, who would in turn be required to offer 'whole house' energy efficiency upgrades. This would be paid for through a 'pay as you save' mechanism on the household energy bill.

Labour wants to end poor quality housing in Ireland. To address the problem of existing, inefficient building stock, all housing will have to meet a minimum standard of energy efficiency at the point of sale or rent.

Labour will also further improve energy efficiency for new buildings, with a view to moving towards zero carbon homes in the longer term. All new commercial buildings will also be required to significantly reduce their carbon footprint.

In tandem with the development of a smart public transport system, Labour will target having 350,000 electric cars on Irish roads by 2020.

Labour is also committed to an initial target of 50% green public procurement, and will progressively raise energy efficiency and carbon standards for future procurement commitments.

CREATING A LOW CARBON SOCIETY

One of the easiest, fastest and cheapest ways to reduce our carbon emissions is to use less fossil fuels.

Labour will improve the energy efficiency of our existing housing stock by initiating a major National Retrofit Scheme. There are up to 1.2 million dwellings in Ireland in need of an energy efficiency retrofit, creating at least 30,000 direct construction sector jobs with

DELIVERING CLEAN, SECURE ENERGY

Ireland needs to maximise its rich wind and wave energy regime, and position itself to become a net exporter of clean energy. Renewable energy providers need certainty about policy direction to invest and expand their businesses. Labour will legislate to regulate the geothermal energy sector to provide certainty for investors, and to provide for an efficient Foreshore Licensing and Leasing process for marine energy.

To date, the transition to a low-carbon energy future in Ireland has been defined by a lack of policy and institutional coordination. This lack of clarity in the framework that supports the development and deployment of low-carbon technologies has delayed progress in the energy sector.

Labour will create a coordinating policy office, using existing resources, within the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. This would have the benefit of joined up thinking and be in a position to enhance sustainability measures in a coordinated way across a number of sectors.

As part of Labour's enterprise and innovation strategy, Labour will seek to establish Ireland as a renewable manufacturing hub to attract international and domestic investment. Labour will also position Ireland as a leading player in the global carbon market, and a centre of excellence in the management of carbon.

Labour will facilitate the development of energy co-operatives to make it easier for small-scale renewable energy providers to contribute to our renewables target.

Reducing demand for fossil fuels and growing renewable energy supplies are critical to our energy security. However, it is important that our gas and electricity networks are kept in public ownership, so that access to this vital infrastructure is not jeopardised. Labour will also ensure that Ireland's royalty regime extends to the Corrib gas field as part of a wider review of the tax regime and conditions of oil and gas exploration.

Labour will scrap the plan by the Energy Regulator to insist on the unnecessary cost of re-branding of Bord Gáis and ESB.

Labour will take immediate action to alleviate the risk of fuel poverty

Labour will not establish any nuclear facility in the state. We will continue to oppose the Sellafield plant and other installations in the UK which pose a risk to our people.

TACKLING FUEL AND ENERGY POVERTY

In the medium-term, our proposals will result in a cleaner, more secure, more affordable supply of heat and electricity to Irish homes. However, Labour will also take immediate action to alleviate the risk of fuel poverty in the short term by re-investing €40 million from the carbon tax to alleviate fuel poverty, and by developing a national fuel poverty strategy as set out in Labour's Fuel Poverty and Energy Conservation Bill.

Labour will also direct the Commission for Energy Regulation to implement a fairer disconnection policy through the use of pre-payment meters, and to develop a fair policy in relation to disconnection fees.

A SUSTAINABLE WASTE POLICY

Ireland needs a national waste management strategy that is environmentally sustainable, that reduces costs for businesses and consumers, and that creates jobs.

Labour's waste policy will adhere to the EU waste hierarchy. Labour favours a coherent approach to waste management that minimises the waste going to landfill, and that maximises the resources that can be recovered from it.

At national level, Labour will facilitate the coordination of Regional Waste Management Plans in order to ensure households and businesses have a minimum standard of waste services, and also to provide certainty to investors. Labour will also investigate the potential for a virtual waste 'clearing house', where companies involved in the recycling or reuse of waste can bid for material. This measure will also provide clarity for investors as to the potential for new waste-related businesses.

In order to address Ireland's obligations under the EU landfill directive, Labour will explore the introduction of a 'cap and trade' scheme that would phase in the auctioning of permits for landfill.

Labour will also drive a waste reduction programme through the extension of producer responsibility initiatives, and a levy on packaging. Labour will consider placing a product levy on hard-to-recycle objects.

Specific producer responsibility requirements will be introduced for construction and demolition projects over a certain threshold, with recycling and waste management requirements enforced through mandatory compliance bonds that can be refunded at the end of the project.

In order to improve the waste collection service available to householders and businesses nationwide, and to improve the amount and quality of materials available for recycling and re-use, Labour will make local authorities legally responsible for the collection of household waste. Instead of multiple operators competing within local authorities, operators will compete to deliver a service to every household in the local authority area, as recommended by the ESRI. Local authorities can also compete against private operators for this market, in which case the contract would be awarded by an independent assessor.

These contracts would stipulate a minimum service to be offered nationwide, and a public service obligation, including a fee waiver scheme for low-income households. However, licences would be flexible enough to allow for localised waste management needs and opportunities.

ENSURING ACCESS TO SAFE WATER

Security of access to clean drinking water is essential for public health. This has been undermined by recent scandals of polluted water supplies, and drought caused by extreme weather.

Labour does not favour water charges, which do not address the immediate needs of those who currently receive intermittent or poor water supplies. Labour will continue to invest in the water services programme as part of the capital budget, focusing on minimising treated water lost through leakage.

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

Everyone has the right to enjoy a clean, healthy, peaceful environment. Labour will clamp down on environmental crime, such as illegal dumping and graffiti, and strengthen laws against noise pollution to deal with noise from neighbouring residents, allow for on the spot fines, and provide for mediation between neighbours.

Labour will ensure relevant government departments integrate biodiversity into their plans, policy and actions, and legislate to better protect our coastal zones. Our countryside and coastlines are positive amenities for tourism, and Labour will work in partnership with local stakeholders to ensure reasonable and safe access to them.

Labour will continue the implementation of national and European legislation to enhance biodiversity and improve conservation. Labour will also complete the ratification of the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.

Labour will make local authorities legally responsible for the collection of household waste

Jobs

Infrastructure for the 21st Century

TIME FOR CHANGE

Behind Fianna Fáil's rhetoric of the 'Smart Economy' is the reality of Ireland's poor performance in almost every international league table. Labour's broadband strategy will extend next generation broadband speeds across Ireland, allowing us to embrace cloud computing, e-health, e-transport, e-learning, improve on our energy efficiency and position Ireland as a world leader in communications innovation. Together with rebalancing transport policy to favour public transport, Labour will lay the foundations for a greener, more sustainable economy.

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06



THE FIRST STEPS

- Facilitate the establishment of a new company, NetCo, which would begin the roll-out of next generation broadband
- Empower the regulator, ComReg, to ensure all broadband suppliers provide regular data on speeds, and end inaccurate advertising of broadband speeds
- Address the growing problem of digital literacy
- Protect local postal services by legislating for a comprehensive Universal Service Obligation
- Revise the National Development Plan to prioritise public transport projects that deliver the best value for money, reduce road congestion, and reduce greenhouse gases



DELIVERING NEXT GENERATION BROADBAND

Ireland's biggest obstacle to delivering next generation broadband is the prohibitive cost of investing in a new, next generation network. To address that market failure, Labour will facilitate the establishment of a company, NetCo, which will allow investors to share the risk of investing in a new network.

This cooperative company would be a vehicle for the roll-out of next generation broadband, connecting the majority of users to fibre optic cables which will allow speeds 100 Mpb/s and greater. The vast majority of homes would be directly connected to the fibre network, with a wireless solution only being offered in remote areas. This network would replace the aging copper network that is currently in existence.

Labour will facilitate private companies to invest in a next generation network

NetCo would own the passive elements of the infrastructure, but would be barred from simultaneously providing broadband services, so as not to create a monopoly. Telecoms operators and retailers would be charged the same rate to access the network. However, initial investors in the network would be charged a preferential rate in order to incorporate the risk of their initial investment.

This cooperative approach to investing private funds in the fibre network has been successfully exploited in Switzerland, and through a public-private venture in the Netherlands.

BETTER VALUE FIRST GENERATION BROADBAND

ComReg will be mandated to continue to lower the price of Local-Loop Unbundling. To further drive value for consumers, ComReg will require all broadband providers to publish average speeds for each package. We will also introduce a new government rating system so that home owners and tenants can assess broadband facilities easily, and to restrict misleading advertisements relating to monthly caps.

DEVELOPING IRELAND AS AN IP HUB

Labour supports the development of an International Content Services Centre in Ireland, and its potential to make Ireland a European hub for the dissemination of Intellectual Property. We will work at European level to ensure that rights clearance is standardised, to provide for a transparent and competitive market in Intellectual Property across the EU.

Labour will also work towards the development of EU-wide standards for digitisation and archiving, in order to make the EU a world leader in digital content management.

MAINTAINING PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

Labour supports and values public service broadcasting, which has always been a fundamental cornerstone of the Irish broadcasting system. It promotes diversity, social and cultural values that are essential to a properly functioning democracy. Labour will uphold these values as Ireland makes the transition to digital television and radio, ensuring that access to, and the quality of public service broadcasting, are protected.

Labour will examine the role, and the collection of, the TV license fee

in light of existing and projected convergence of broadcasting technologies.

REGULATING FOR THE FUTURE OF BROADCASTING

Telecommunications regulatory and licensing matters are currently handled by ComReg, whereas broadcasting regulation and licenses will be the responsibility of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. Given the convergence of technology in this sector – i.e. video on demand, mobile broadband – we will merge the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and ComReg to form one regulatory body.

This new pan-regulatory body will also have responsibility for protecting consumers from 'rip off' charges and for Quality Assurance.

ENSURING THE SURVIVAL OF PRINT MEDIA IN IRELAND

Given the intense pressures that newspaper and broadcast media currently face, a detailed and informed policy discussion is required to ensure the future survival of a strong indigenous media presence in Ireland.

The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources will engage in a structured dialogue on the future challenges faced by the print and broadcast media in Ireland, with broad input from industry, politics, and consumer and civic groups.

SUSTAINING A UNIVERSAL POSTAL SERVICE

In light of the proposed liberalisation of the postal services, Labour believes that a universal postal service is essential, in particular for rural communities and those disadvantaged communities affected by the digital divide. A commercially viable, profitable and efficient An Post is key to the long-term viability

of the postal market. Labour will ensure that the Postal Services Bill provides for a clear commitment to the universal service obligation.

Labour will implement the recommendations of the all-party agreed Oireachtas Committee Postcodes Report.

MAKING TRANSPORT MORE SUSTAINABLE

Labour's vision for Ireland's travel and transport system is for one that is modern, reliable, integrated, accessible and safe.

All planned transport infrastructure projects, including Public-Private Partnerships, will be subject to a cost benefit analysis. Based on this analysis, investment in transport infrastructure that provides the best value for money, and that reduces carbon emissions from transport, will be prioritised.

In light of the damage caused to roads by recent extreme weather, Labour will allocate, on a once-off basis, a portion of the existing roads budget to prioritise repair of those secondary roads most affected.

Cycling and walking will be at the heart of any future sustainable transport network. Labour will provide for contiguous cycling routes for commuters, and safe school cycle routes. The safety

needs of cyclists will be taken into account in enhanced road junction design, improved signage and road maintenance. Labour will also introduce legislation to strengthen the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport commuters in the planning process and the transport system.

In order to provide for a public transport infrastructure that grows with our population, we will introduce legislation to ensure that all large new residential and commercial developments will have integrated transport services as part of their planning permission.

The Dublin Transport Authority Act and the Public Transport Regulation Act will also be amended to require Development Plans, Local Area Plans and rezoning applications to make provision for public transport services if the population of the areas affected reaches or is planned to reach a specified threshold.

MORE EFFICIENT PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Bus services will continue to be the most cost effective and most flexible way of delivering public transport both in cities and in rural areas. Investment in public transport will focus on the further development of Quality Bus Networks, and Park and Ride facilities. Labour will also explore the development of the Bus

Labour's vision for Ireland's travel and transport system is for one that is modern, reliable, integrated, accessible and safe

Labour will explore the development of the Bus Rapid Transit model in our cities

Rapid Transit model in our cities, which can replicate the speed and comfort of light rail at a fraction of the cost.

Labour will complete the roll-out of the Integrated Ticketing System on all modes of transport. Labour will also complete the planned implementation of Real Time Passenger Information at bus stops in Dublin and Cork, with a view to extending this service to other regions as resources allow.

Rural transport is essential to prevent social exclusion, help rural business and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Labour will seek to maintain the Rural Transport Programme and make integrated rural transport a key responsibility for the National Transport Authority.

Labour supports the development of a revised framework strategy for the taxi industry under the National Transport Authority. Labour will defer the introduction of the Nine Year Rule on compulsory replacement of taxis to 1 January 2012, and end the second-hand market in taxi licences.

KEEPING IRELAND CONNECTED

An island nation that exports 80% of all it produces must have secure shipping lines for international connectivity. Labour will review our seaport operations to ensure that Ireland has adequate shipping capacity in the medium to long-term and that our seaports have management structures and financial stability to carry out their mandate. This review will also take into account

the current and projected needs of ocean energy providers.

Air transport is of vital national strategic importance to Ireland. Maintaining strong competitiveness, and regional connectivity, in the airline market will be a priority.

MAKING OUR ROADS SAFER

Labour will support the Road Safety Authority in the implementation of the Road Safety Strategy 2007-2012. In particular, Labour supports the implementation of the Graduated Driver Licensing System for the training, testing and licensing of new drivers. Labour will introduce the legislation necessary to activate these proposals.

Labour will overhaul and consolidate the Road Traffic Acts to maximise their effectiveness, and carry out an audit of the national road network to ensure that all road surfaces, signage and traffic signals comply with the highest safety standards.

Jobs

Growing Jobs in Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

TIME FOR CHANGE

Ireland has an opportunity to make a quantum leap in food production through the export of food products. Irish agriculture needs to position itself to take advantage of new markets, a growing world population and a move towards more market-driven policies at EU level, which is pushing up demand for quality food products. The agri-food sector is one of Ireland's biggest employers, it is largely Irish-owned, and it is nationwide. Labour's plan is to transform one of our traditional strengths into a 21st century driver of economic growth.

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07



THE FIRST STEPS

- Scale up Ireland's agricultural productivity through the development of the dairy and meat sectors
- Reduce the age profile of the agri-food sector and increase the size and productivity of farms through encouraging farm partnerships
- Implement the recommendations of the Food Harvest 2020 report
- Focus on developing new brands for Irish food, including an eco brand and local brands
- Develop Ireland as a European hub for seafood processing



PREPARING FOR CHANGE

This is a period of radical change in the agriculture sector. The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) poses significant challenges for the Irish agriculture and agri-food sectors, which we must be ready to meet. The overall impact of the CAP proposals will result in a more market-driven industry, with an emphasis on the need for cost competitiveness for those sectors of the food industry focusing on commodity markets.

In government, Labour will work to retain our €1.3 billion CAP funding envelope. Our negotiating position at EU level is predicated on retaining this envelope.

Labour also accepts the need for an extensive bi-lateral exchange with other countries to ensure that any changes in policy at EU level and at the World Trade Organisation must not undermine the principle of direct payments to food producers.

take-up of new technologies and evidence-based practice that result in higher milk yields at lower cost.

Labour also favours more market-based pricing to reflect improved products and innovation in the meat and dairy sectors, and the development of more integrated supply chains.

IMPROVING FARM PRODUCTIVITY

Ireland's scale at producer level lags behind our major competitors, and with an ageing farm population the need for structural change will continue. Labour favours a model of Single Farm Payments that will reward innovation and see further inclusion of younger farmers.

The only way to create scale is to buy or lease, the potential for which is limited by the structure of Ireland's farm holdings. We can give farmers approaching retirement, those who no longer wish to farm, or beneficiaries of farms, the opportunity to retain an income from their land, while also maximising the overall potential productivity of Irish holdings.

Labour will develop mechanisms for farmers, non rural residents with inherited land and older single farmers to vest their holdings in a local co-operative farm partnership where they would retain ownership, share in the profits of such partnerships and are informed regularly of progress and plans.

They would be free at any stage, given adequate notice, to withdraw their holding from the co-op. These farm units could be a powerful source of local employment and could have the scale to develop and produce branded produce.

Such holdings should be supported and included for Direct Payments where possible and especially in cases where Community Supported Agriculture Models are developed.

Labour will focus on developing the full potential of Ireland's dairy sector

GROWING THE DAIRY AND MEAT SECTORS

The anticipated CAP reforms will mean economies of scale will become more important. Facilitating consolidation in the dairy and beef sector will be a high priority. Increasing our focus on scale and competitiveness will further emphasise the need for producers and processors to focus on commodity or mainstream markets.

Labour will focus on developing the full potential of Ireland's dairy sector, by working with the sector to increase

GROWING OUR AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

A growing and more affluent world population is an opportunity for Ireland to expand its food exports.

Labour supports the recommendations of the Harvest Food 2020 Report. In addition to implementing these recommendations, our agri-food policy will focus on the development of the premium artisan food market and of Ireland as a world class food tourism destination.

Branding of Irish food will be developed, such as eco-food labelling, enhanced organic branding, and the development of local brands. New Irish food businesses will be developed through a series of coordinated efforts across the food sector and state agencies. For example, the building of pilot plant kitchens to allow food producers to develop and manufacture products on a small scale; the further development of farmers' markets; and the development by Enterprise Ireland of scaleable manufacturing solutions for food businesses that have the capacity to expand.

Labour will also seek to implement the recommendations of the Eighth Report of the Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Innovation relating to growing employment in the agri-food sector.

Labour will support evidence-based development of the agri-food sector through continued support for R&D, and modernised education and training options for those seeking to work, or to upgrade their skills, in the sector. Labour will also examine how related subjects at second level could be modernised to reflect new demands and opportunities in the agri-food sector.

A FAIR DEAL FOR PRODUCERS

Labour will adopt a joined-up approach to fostering a sustainable agri-food sector in Ireland by examining both the supply of, and demand for, Irish food products. We will work with local

authorities to develop farmers' markets, and favour a sustainable planning model that promotes diversity in the food retail sector. We will also put the current voluntary code providing for greater transparency in the food supply chain on a statutory footing.

OPEN TO NEW IDEAS

Labour will actively welcome constructive engagement by interested stakeholders in growing our indigenous farming, food and biofuel industries. Labour also supports the proposals by Irish Rural Link for the strategic regionalisation of Irish agriculture policy to maximise the development of the sector.

BIOFUELS

The EU Renewable Energy Directive sets out targets to ensure that Ireland's energy is provided from renewables by 2020. Labour wants to see indigenous Irish industry take up production of renewables to ensure those targets are met. We support a land use strategy which would swap a proportion of ruminant grazing to perennial energy crops, which will reduce Ireland's greenhouse gases. However, Ireland is and will continue to be a predominantly food producing and exporting country.

FORESTRY

Labour recognises the importance of forestry as a source of employment, as a source of renewable energy, as a public amenity, and as a means of reducing our national carbon footprint. Labour opposes the privatisation of Coillte and the sale of publicly owned forests.

Labour will set a planting target of 10,000 hectares per annum, and will work with stakeholders to agree a sustainable funding model to achieve this aim.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Labour will ensure that animal welfare is enhanced and protected, and will strengthen legislation on animal cruelty.

COASTAL COMMUNITIES, FISHERIES & MARINE ENVIRONMENT

The marine sector faces major challenges in the years ahead, but it is also an area of major economic potential.

Labour's priority will be to develop Ireland as a European hub for seafood processing, which will create sustainable, value-added jobs in coastal communities.

Labour will also develop an Irish seafood strategy to grow the market profile and demand for Irish seafood products. We will support the development of sustainable aquaculture and fish farms by streamlining the licensing process and reducing, as much as possible, the associated bureaucracy. To further assist the development of the sector, responsibility for maritime policy will, as far as is practicable, be concentrated in one department.

Labour will establish a Sea Fisheries Sustainability Impact Assessment based on consultation with all major stakeholders. This report will be brought before the Dáil on an annual basis before EU fisheries negotiations commence, and will ensure that there is a regular evaluation of Irish fish stocks and the effectiveness of current policy and quotas.

Labour is open to the experience and expertise of those whose livelihoods depend on maritime activity. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will engage in an ongoing structured consultation with industry representatives, the marine scientific community and other stakeholders to enable them to contribute to national maritime policy.

Finally, safety at sea and decent working conditions must underpin the development of the fisheries sector. Labour in government will ensure that the Irish Coast Guard has access to an Emergency Towing Vessel.

Jobs

Growing Jobs in Tourism

TIME FOR CHANGE

Ireland has a strong tourism product, but we have lost our competitive edge in recent years. Tourism is a sustainable industry, capable of providing jobs at every skill level, in every corner of the country.

Labour's plan to grow jobs in tourism takes a fresh approach to providing tourist infrastructure, new ways of using technology to enhance visitors' stay here, and a joined-up approach to finding new markets.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- Grow new markets, including long-haul markets and niche markets, such as activity holidays, eco tourism, food tourism and cultural tourism
- Make regaining market share in Ireland's top overseas markets a priority
- Extend free off-peak travel to all over-66 visitors on all CIE services
- Use the web and smart phone apps to provide innovative products for tourists
- Deal with over-supply in the hotel sector to normalise the market



FOCUS ON GROWING NEW MARKETS

Labour will maintain the Tourism Marketing Fund as an essential pillar of our tourism strategy, and will introduce a systematic auditing system to ensure the best return on Exchequer spending. Revitalising Ireland's brand identity abroad will be a priority for Labour in government.

Growth in global tourism in the 21st century will predominately come from non-traditional markets, especially Asia. Marketing campaigns will be developed in emerging long haul markets such as China, Russia, India, Japan and the Middle East, using the Tourism Marketing Fund. This will be complemented by a broader translation policy and a reformed tourist visa process.

Revitalising Ireland's brand identity abroad will be a priority for Labour in government

Niche markets will be developed, including activity holidays, such as golf and surf tourism; eco tourism; and food tourism. To exploit the potential of business tourism, Tourism Ireland will be mandated to develop a dedicated service organising and promoting sightseeing in and beyond conference locations for conference delegates.

'Event tourism' will also be prioritised, with strategic planning and prioritisation of funding to bring major international fairs and events to Ireland such as the Volvo Ocean Race or the Solheim Cup.

As part of an initiative to encourage domestic event tourism, Labour will make the Culture Night Initiative a twice yearly event, and introduce a National Lottery Funding Anniversary Day, whereby all facilities which have received funding from the National Lottery will open their doors to the public free of charge.

REGAIN MARKET SHARE IN TRADITIONAL MARKETS

70% of Ireland's overseas visitors come from Britain, the US, Germany and France. Recovery of market share in Britain, and increasing penetration in the other three markets will be a key priority in a revamped tourism strategy.

IMPROVE TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE

To encourage tourists to travel around Ireland, a free travel scheme for every visitor over 66 at off peak times will be introduced on all CIE services, from within CIE's existing budget. Coach tourism infrastructure will be further developed to encourage organised tourism. Improved ferry connectivity, with more frequency and additional routes, will be encouraged as an alternative to air travel.

The Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport will be mandated to conduct an assessment of the quality and effectiveness of existing signage, with a view to improving the tourist experience and increasing visits to attractions close to major sites.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE OUR TOURISM PRODUCT

Improving the e-capability of our tourism product will be a priority. This will begin with the upgrading of the Discover Ireland website, to improve online integration between attractions, accommodation,

Improving the e-capability of our tourism product will be a priority

and transport providers, to allow potential customers all the information they require via one site.

Labour will also focus existing expenditure on tourism on other web-based tools which support the tourism industry, and will encourage innovation in this area by digital media companies. This includes developing information platforms on the internet for various niche audiences, such as a Surf Ireland or a Golf Ireland web portal, or new web-based tools such as an interactive Irish tourism application for smart phones.

NORMALISING THE HOTEL SECTOR

The disastrous impact of tax breaks for the hotel sector that served as a tax avoidance mechanism will need to be addressed. Labour will require NAMA to conduct an independent review of the hotel sector, and use this as a basis for decisions on which hotels it should continue to support. Labour will also consider allowing certain hotels that wish to change use to a community facility to exit the hotel capital tax relief scheme and be exempt from the claw-back of the tax relief foregone. The objective will be to achieve, in consultation with the industry, an orderly reduction in the number of hotel beds.

MAKING CHANGE AND JOBS HAPPEN

As part of our wider Comprehensive Spending Review, Labour will conduct a critical assessment of the functions, systems and efficiency of the semi state agencies in the tourism sector with a view to establishing the optimum support required by the tourism industry, which offers the best value for money for the taxpayer.

Labour also supports the establishment of an industry-led tourism recovery taskforce to drive growth in the tourism sector, as recommended by the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation.



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REFORM

Reform

Reforming Politics

TIME FOR CHANGE

Labour's pledge is that Ireland will never again be vulnerable to the kinds of abuses of corporate and political power that have risked our country's sovereignty. To restore confidence at home and abroad in public governance, Ireland must make significant changes in the culture and framework within which business is conducted.

That applies both to the formal rules of corporate governance and to the relationship between money and politics. Labour will rid Ireland of its 'Crony Capitalism' image, and restore trust in our democracy.

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09



THE FIRST STEPS

- End political cronyism by opening up positions on state boards to all qualified candidates, and require appointments to be scrutinised by the Dáil
- Make good corporate governance a legal condition of being listed on the Irish stock exchange
- Significantly reduce political donations and lower the threshold for disclosure of donations
- Regulate political lobbying, including ex-Ministers and senior civil servants working as private lobbyists after leaving public service
- A Whistleblower's Law to protect those in the public and private sector who expose corruption or misconduct



ENDING POLITICAL CRONYISM

Labour will end the system whereby appointments to state boards are used as a form of political patronage and for rewarding insiders. In future, appointment to boards must be based on a demonstrable capacity to do the job.

Labour intends to start this process immediately. To that end, the Labour Party will reserve the right to seek the resignation of all those appointed to State Boards since 22 November 2010. Labour will publicly advertise all vacancies, and invite applications from the public. A database of individuals who are willing to serve, together with their qualifications, will be established.

Oireachtas committees will consider the suitability of nominated candidates, including having candidates appear before the committee, and it will be a condition of appointment that board members appear before committees as required.

Labour will enact legislation to provide for a binding code of practice for corporate governance, which will be obligatory for companies wishing to be listed on the Irish stock exchange.

ENDING THE LINK BETWEEN BIG MONEY AND POLITICS

Labour will end the link between big money and politics. It is not enough to fold up the Galway tent. We have to end the culture that created it: a culture where money can buy access to power. To restore its citizens' faith in democracy, and our country's reputation abroad, we need to send a clear message that influence in Ireland is not for sale.

Labour will introduce spending limits for all elections, including Presidential elections and constitutional referendums and impose spending limits on political parties for a period of six months in advance of scheduled Local, European, General and Presidential Elections.

Labour's legislation will significantly reduce the limit on political donations to political parties and candidates to €2,500 and €1,000 respectively, and require disclosure of all aggregate sums above €1,500 and €600 respectively.

Labour will make good corporate governance the law, not an optional extra

CLEANING UP CORPORATE CRONYISM

Labour will make good corporate governance the law, not an optional extra. Fianna Fáil is happy with voluntary codes of regulation. Labour believes this is a blank cheque for corporate misconduct, and do not now provide sufficient reassurance to investors, who need to be convinced that Ireland is a fair, transparent place to do business.

ENCOURAGING OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is one of the most powerful weapons against corruption. Labour will introduce Whistleblower's Protection legislation that will protect an employee who reports misconduct from losing their job, or being otherwise penalised, to encourage greater transparency, both in the public service and in private institutions such as banks.

It is in the public's interest to know who is paid to seek to influence public policy and decision making, at national and local level. Labour will, for the first time in Ireland, regulate the practice of political lobbying. Labour will introduce a statutory register of lobbyists and a statutory code governing the practice of lobbying. This code will make it illegal for an ex-Minister or senior public servant to lobby in their previous sphere of influence for two years after leaving their post.

Labour will restore the Freedom of Information Act so that it is as comprehensive as was originally intended. The fee structure for Freedom of Information requests will be reformed so that cost does not discourage individuals and organisations from seeking information, and the remit of the Freedom of Information and the Ombudsman Acts will be extended to the Garda Síochána, the Central Bank and other bodies significantly funded from the public purse, that are currently excluded.

The Official Secrets Act will also be repealed, with criminal sanction only retained for breaches which involve a serious threat to the vital interests of the State.

Labour will restore the Freedom of Information Act so that it is as comprehensive as was originally intended

Reform

Reforming government

TIME FOR CHANGE

This is the second time in a generation that Ireland has been confronted by a profound economic crisis, that is a direct result of bad governance. It is not enough to remove Fianna Fáil's grip on government – we have to change government itself.

We need to put power back in the hands of the Irish people, and make practical changes so that our government, at every level, better serves the people's interests.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- A Constitutional Convention to draw up a new Constitution for the Ireland of the 21st century
- Abolish the Seanad, but make the Dáil stronger, with a longer working day, a longer working week, less holidays, and with more powers to hold the Government to account
- Ministers and senior civil servants to be made legally accountable for decisions they make
- An Independent Fiscal Advisory Council to advise government on the economic impact of its policy decisions
- Restore democratic accountability to local government, and devolve more decision-making powers to local communities



10

A FRESH START WITH A NEW CONSTITUTION

It is time for a fundamental review of our Constitution, by the people to whom it belongs. Labour proposes a Constitutional Convention, a coming together of all strands of Irish society to rewrite our Constitution.

The Constitutional Convention would have an open mandate, and comprise 90 members. Thirty of its members would be drawn from the Oireachtas, thirty would be members of civil society organisations and other people with relevant legal or academic expertise, and thirty would be ordinary citizens, chosen by lot. The mandate would be to review the Constitution and draft a reformed one within a year.

MORE EFFICIENT, MORE EFFECTIVE, MORE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

Labour believes that a nation of our size, scale and composition only needs one strong, single-chamber, directly elected parliament with real legislative and oversight powers to effectively do the people's business in the 21st Century. We will be proposing to the Constitutional Convention that the Seanad be abolished.

As part of Labour's Comprehensive Spending Review, all quangos and bodies significantly funded by the taxpayer will have to justify their existence as a separate entity. Any new bodies established will have a sunset clause, that requires them to either justify their continued existence, or be folded up.

Labour will also introduce a package of changes that will bring about a 50 per cent increase in Dáil sitting days. Dáil Éireann will in future meet four days a week. There will be a summer recess of just six weeks and significantly reduced breaks at Christmas and Easter. We will abandon the practice of providing a "mid-term break".

The Dáil will be made more effective and more democratic through reforms that give opposition TDs and backbench government TDs more power to propose and scrutinise laws. Elected representatives will have stronger powers to hold government, and publicly-funded state bodies to account.

Citizens will also be able to petition the Oireachtas to look into issues of national importance, similar to their rights to petition the European Parliament.

Labour proposes a Constitutional Convention, a coming together of all strands of Irish society to rewrite our Constitution

AN INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Labour will establish an independent Electoral and Public Offices Commission that will subsume the Standards in Public Offices Commission; the powers of Referendum and Constituency Commissions; and the responsibilities of local authorities and the Department of the Environment in relation to the electoral register and elections. Labour will also revise the terms of reference for the revision of constituencies to ensure the fairest and most proportionate distribution of seats possible.

HOLDING MINISTERS AND SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS TO ACCOUNT

Labour will introduce new legislation making Ministers and senior civil servants legally accountable for their decisions, and for the management of their departments in the public interest. Where a responsibility is delegated through several civil service grades, each grade will be held accountable for their element of it.

Restrictions on the nature and extent of evidence by civil servants to Oireachtas committees will be scrapped, and replaced with new guidelines for civil servants that reflect the reality of authority delegated to them, and their personal accountability for the way it is exercised. Labour will also publish the Attorney General's advice to government when it is appropriate to do so.

EMBEDDING FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY IN GOVERNMENT

Labour will put an end to the boom and bust economics that defined Fianna Fáil's approach to governance.

Labour will establish an independent Fiscal Advisory Council, separated from fiscal decision-makers in government, that would undertake macroeconomic and fiscal projections and monitoring. The Fiscal Advisory Council functions would include identifying and advising on cyclical and counter-cyclical fiscal policies and structural deficits; the cyclical or temporary nature of particular revenues; and the need to maintain an appropriate and effective tax base. All of its recommendations will be published.

Labour in government will also bring forward and reform the annual Estimates cycle, so that it becomes more timely, transparent and

Labour will introduce new legislation making Ministers and senior civil servants legally accountable for their decisions

relevant. The annual Estimates will in future distinguish between monies being allocated to maintaining the existing level of service for existing programmes and money to support new programmes or policy decisions.

Proposals for new expenditure programmes will be accompanied by a five-year projection of costs and benefits. The Book of Estimates will also be accompanied by a detailed performance report on what the previous year's spending had achieved. It will also give details of the level of performance achieved by agencies under service delivery agreements with government.

DÁIL INVESTIGATIONS INSTEAD OF COSTLY TRIBUNALS

Labour will establish a strong, bi-partisan Investigations, Oversight and Petitions Committee of the Oireachtas with the power to investigate matters of national concern.

The Committee would receive parliamentary petitions from individuals and groups in the community seeking the redress of grievances connected with the public services of the State and with the public administration generally.

Where particular petitions warranted detailed investigation, the Committee would be empowered to order such investigations through a Parliamentary Investigator, who would be appointed from within the public service. Where

the Investigator was unable to establish clear facts, the report of a parliamentary investigator would if necessary be followed by either a formal parliamentary inquiry or other statutory investigation, as appropriate.

REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government needs significant reform. Its approach to delivering services can be fragmented and costly, and it is prevented from adapting to local needs by excessive control from central government.

Labour fundamentally believes in devolving power to local government, and putting local communities in control. That is why Labour is committed to reforming local government to make it more democratic, more effective in responding to local needs, and better value for money.

PUTTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN CONTROL

Labour will return democratic accountability to elected councillors. The position of County Manager will be abolished and replaced with that of Chief Executive, with a limited range of executive functions. The purpose of the Chief Executive will be to facilitate the implementation of democratically decided policy. As resources allow, Labour favours the introduction of democratically elected mayors, beginning with an elected mayor for Dublin.

Labour will give councillors the power to seek reports from, and question in public, the providers of public services in their area

A democratically-decided Regional or City Plan will replace the top-down Strategic Planning Guideline model.

Labour will give councillors the power to seek reports from, and question in public, the providers of public services in their area. Councillors will also be empowered to question private sector service providers, such as internet and digital TV providers, local banks or private schools, on their public service remit.

The voting age in local elections will be reduced to 16, so that teenagers have more of a say in local services.

BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY

The Local Government Director of Audit will be directed to produce an annual report covering all of his functions to the Oireachtas Committee on the Environment. This will determine where local government can produce greater efficiencies.

Labour will also examine what services could be converged between two or more local authorities, such as technology support, human resources and fire services. Labour will also introduce a single national building inspectorate service.

Local authorities that deliver efficiencies, either alone or through sharing services, over and above that which is required will be able to re-

invest a proportion of that saving in local initiatives.

MORE EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF LOCAL SERVICES

In the longer term, Labour favours a fundamental reorganisation of local governance structures that will allow for the devolution of much greater decision-making powers over local services to local people. This restructuring could give local communities more control over transport and traffic, economic development, educational infrastructure, and local responses to crime and local healthcare needs.

Reform

Reforming Public Services

TIME FOR CHANGE

The Labour Party believes that the most important needs of our society should not be left solely to the market to provide. The values that underpin public services are different to those of for-profit private businesses, but that does not mean public services cannot be delivered efficiently, cost-effectively, and when and where users need them.

It is time to reform and modernise our public service so that it is fit for purpose in a fair society, and a rejuvenated economy.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- An Office of Public Sector Reform, headed by a Minister at Cabinet, established for a limited period, to get the job of public service reform done
- A reduction in the number of quangos and duplication of agencies and government departments
- Government departments and agencies accountable for meeting joined-up government objectives
- Fewer management layers in the civil and public service, but more freedom for managers to manage staff and budgets
- One phone number, one website or one public office for multiple public services, to make it easier for customers to find what they need



DRIVING REFORM

Labour will establish an Office of Public Sector Reform with responsibility for all matters in relation to the public service and headed by a Minister who sits at Cabinet. This Office will have particular responsibility for planning and implementing the change agenda and for ensuring that all aspects of that agenda are communicated fully to the public and to public sector staff.

A COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW OF ALL PUBLIC SPENDING

Labour will undertake a Comprehensive Spending Review of all government spending to assess its effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes, and its value for money for the taxpayer.

As part of that review, Labour will examine the number, range and activities of bodies funded significantly from the public purse, including at local government level, and reduce their numbers where appropriate. In future, when proposing a new agency, the relevant government department will have to prove that its functions cannot be carried out within an existing framework.

A MORE STRATEGIC APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT SPENDING.

For ten years in government, Fianna Fáil's first response to any problem was to throw money at it. This lack of clear government priorities meant that public spending was less effective than it could have been.

Labour in government will provide clear and unambiguous long, medium and short term strategic priorities, which will be clearly communicated to the public service and to citizens. Strategic priorities will be translated into high level goals for all relevant Departments, on a 'whole of government' basis, and in consultation with Ministers. Performance indicators will be identified to allow progress on the high level priorities to be monitored.

Each government department and public service agency will be expected to demonstrate how it will deliver on stated strategic government objectives. Annual reports of government departments and state agencies will include output statements and audited financial accounts prepared on generally accepted accounting principles. The performance information provided in output and outcome-focused measurement will feed into the decision making process for future plans at political and senior management level.

DEVOLVING SPENDING WITH GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY

Labour will introduce increased delegation of budgets, subject to detailed plans, relevant performance reporting and audited accounts compiled in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, that will allow managers greater autonomy and increased flexibility, aligned with greater accountability.

Labour will establish an Office of Public Sector Reform to drive change in the public service

Departmental and agency budgets will be prepared for the medium term as well as on an annual basis. Detailed business cases will be required for major projects, with review and reporting requirements built in to the plan. Sanctions will be imposed at an early stage for significant overruns.

In demanding better accountability, Labour will change the current emphasis on performance reporting to performance management. All medium to long-term projects that involve significant public spending will be subject to a cost benefit analysis, and to ongoing evaluation. Results of programme evaluations will be published on a programme evaluation website, and programmes not meeting their objectives will be wound down.

MORE MODERN MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES

The proliferation of management grades in the civil service creates huge gaps between the front line and the decision makers, and creates unnecessary internal bureaucracy. Labour will review the grading structure of civil service departments and in the public service, and reduce the number of management grades, to move away from bureaucratic box-ticking, and towards a management structure that allows for innovation and flexibility.

Public service managers will be given greater autonomy in deciding how they use staffing budgets and resources to achieve agreed outcomes. Labour will remove barriers to mobility across the public service, so that staff can be matched to areas of greatest need and to areas where their skills are most appropriate.

The capacity of managers in the public service will be improved through management skills training

Labour will review the grading structure of civil service departments and in the public service

with particular focus on strategic management and evaluation, project management, resource management and communications. High level strategic goals will be reflected in individual goals in a new performance management and development system for staff.

Staff recognition schemes will be developed and devolved, with particular emphasis on team awards. Staff will also be encouraged to put forward suggestions for improving service delivery and organisation efficiency and effectiveness.

Public and civil service staff will be encouraged to contribute their views and suggestions for reform through channels such as staff forums and blogs. Incentives will be put in place to promote good internal communications and to ensure staff are widely consulted within public sector organisations and given the opportunity to influence their work and working environment.

MORE USER-CENTRED SERVICE DELIVERY

Labour takes a "citizen-centred" approach to public service reform. Government services websites, public offices, telephone services, and helplines will be reconfigured to facilitate access to the broad range of government services through a single point of contact.

The Comprehensive Spending Review will also seek the input of civil and public servants, and the

users of public services, to assess how frontline services could be made better from the point of view of the customer. The success of frontline service delivery from a user's point of view will be central to a department or agency's performance review.

The Office of Public Service Reform will be responsible for developing a whole-of-government approach to electronic service delivery. Websites will be developed to provide maximum information to the public about progress on national and departmental goals and facilitating public comment and suggestions.

Reform

Reforming Social Protection

TIME FOR CHANGE

Labour's plan to radically reform Ireland's fragmented job-seeking, training and welfare supports into a single National Employment Service will put work and training at the heart of social protection.

But we also need to tackle the unemployment traps that keep people in poverty, and ensure that social protection is fair, transparent, and that it works for those who need it most.

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12



THE FIRST STEPS

- Root and branch efficiency reforms to eliminate poverty traps, speed up social protection claims, and save money
- A major crackdown on welfare fraud, so that the social protection system is fair and transparent
- Reduce reliance on Rent Supplement in favour of the Rental Accommodation Scheme, with rents negotiated directly with landlords
- Cut down on bureaucracy by replacing multiple means tests with a single unified means test
- Share the cost of social protection with insurance companies where possible

TACKLING POVERTY

Eliminating poverty from Irish society is one of the core principles of the Labour Party. Labour is committed to tackling Ireland's fiscal crisis fairly, and will endeavour to protect those most at risk of poverty. As a first step, Labour will reverse the cut in the minimum wage implemented by Fianna Fáil and the Green Party in government.

Labour will introduce new anti-poverty targets with a particular emphasis on carers, those living alone and on people with a long-term disability. We will revise how poverty is measured to give greater weight to reasonable household costs as opposed to the current narrow focus on income.

Labour will complete and publish a strategy to tackle fuel-poverty, and a new national anti-poverty strategy.

- Providing for a far more extensive and frequent engagement with jobseekers through interviews and consultations.
- Changing operational guidelines for deciding officers.
- Reforming eligibility for Back to Education Allowance.
- Improving information available to jobseekers
- Promoting existing in-work benefit schemes.

Labour will issue clear new guidelines to ensure the Habitual Residence rule is applied consistently, transparently, and fairly, with specific guidelines to facilitate returning emigrants. The Habitual Residence rule will be abolished in the case of family carers. Labour is also committed to the completion and publication of the Carers Strategy.

This economic crisis has exposed the particular vulnerabilities of people who are self-employed. Labour will review the position of the self-employed in the social protection code.

Labour is committed to replacing the One Parent Family Payment with a parental allowance when resources permit. We will cap the rates at which moneylenders can lend.

Labour will reverse the cut in the minimum wage implemented by Fianna Fáil and the Green Party in government

ELIMINATING POVERTY TRAPS

The Labour Party will tackle poverty and unemployment traps in the social protection system by:

- Amending the 30 hour rule for Rent Supplement and Mortgage Interest Supplement for people moving from welfare to work.
- Activating people on a reduced week who refuse extra day(s) employment

A ZERO TOLERANCE APPROACH TO WELFARE FRAUD

The Labour Party believes that fairness must be at the heart of resolving our financial crisis. Labour is committed to tackling Ireland's financial crisis so that the burden does not, as far as is possible, fall on those who are dependent on social welfare for their income.

However, it is imperative that every cent of our social welfare bill goes to those who need it most.

Labour will implement a zero tolerance policy in relation to welfare fraud, underpinned by a major anti-fraud enforcement drive.

The integration of social welfare supports for people of working age and employment services will be accompanied by more intensive activation of people who are long-term social welfare claimants. As well as more regular interviews with advisors in the National Employment Service, Labour will undertake other anti-fraud measures, including a public services card with photo ID, the automatic registration of fathers on birth certificates, and better sharing of data across government departments and agencies.

GETTING BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY

Labour will introduce efficiencies in the social protection system that will deliver a better service for users, and save the Exchequer money.

Labour will progressively reduce reliance on Rent Supplement, with eligible recipients moving to the Rental Accommodation Scheme. In future, landlords will be paid directly by the state or local authorities, so that rents can be negotiated to achieve the best value for taxpayers, while a new deposit retention scheme will yield further savings. Rent will only be paid to tax-compliant landlords offering decent quality accommodation, to root out fraud.

Labour will divert staff from elsewhere in the public service to clear the social welfare appeals backlog, and introduce a consolidated appeals process, to save on unsuccessful appeals.

The process of multiple means tests for the same individual or household will be replaced with a single, unified means test, with a single 'change of circumstances' adjustment if required.

In future, household benefits packages will be put out to tender, so that the Exchequer benefits from reduced prices.

Labour will raise the issue of the payment of Child Benefit in respect of non-resident children at EU level, and seek to have the entitlement modified to reflect the cost of living where the child is resident. Labour will examine all possible flexibility within existing European legislation to reduce the cost of this payment.

SHARING THE COST OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

Labour will require private institutions, which benefit indirectly from social protection payments to their clients, to cooperate in reducing the total cost of social protection.

Insurance companies will be required to compensate the Department of Social Protection for illness or disability payments arising from

traffic collisions or other such accidents or personal injuries, where an insurance policy exists, and where the value of social welfare entitlements are deducted from the gross claim settlement.

Labour will implement a zero tolerance policy in relation to welfare fraud

Reform

Reforming Policing and Justice

TIME FOR CHANGE

Crime has increased substantially within the last 25 years, serious drug use has spread nationwide, and even though much crime goes unreported, the detection rate is on the decrease. Re-offending rates are high and it is the law-abiding community that suffers as a result. There is no simplistic or quick fix, but there are solutions. Labour will tackle crime focusing on five key areas: protecting victims, strengthened legislation; tackling the drugs crisis; reforming the Gardaí and a more effective sentencing and prisons policy.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- Victims' needs put at the heart of the criminal justice system
- Dealing firmly with offenders through strengthened criminal justice legislation
- Tackling both drugs supply and demand through a revitalised National Drugs Strategy
- Reforming the Gardaí to prioritise community policing
- Ensuring that the punishment fits the crime, and benefits the community where possible



PROTECTING VICTIMS

Delays in the bringing of cases to trial must be tackled. Such delays can mean that opportunities are missed to respond to offending behaviour before it becomes more serious. These delays will be reduced by reform of the court system, a nationwide implementation of a case management system, and the appointment of more criminal judges when resources allow.

Victims of crime are still often treated by the criminal justice system as no more than prosecution witnesses. Labour will ensure that victims and their needs are at the heart of the justice process and that their rights to information, advice and other appropriate assistance are met effectively and efficiently.

New sentencing legislation, which will be introduced by the Labour Party, will make putting the victim in fear of injury a serious aggravating factor in any offence against the person.

Labour will oblige Gardaí to maintain adequate contact, through identified liaison officers, with victims of crime, to report progress to victims on the investigation and the prosecution of their case and to ensure adequate advance notice is given as to the proposed release of offenders.

STRENGTHENING THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Labour's objective is to have a criminal justice system that is fair, efficient, and that puts victims of crime first. Labour will strengthen the armoury of criminal justice legislation in order to ensure that the right balance is arrived at between protecting the community and providing for appropriate safeguards. Stronger legislation is only a part of the solution, but it is a necessary part of the community's response to an increasing crime problem. Labour's legislative programme will include the following:

- A Proceeds of Crime (Amendment) Bill to reduce the time period CAB have to wait before forfeiture of Proceeds of Crime, from seven years to two years.
- A Witness Protection Programme Bill to put the Witness Protection Programme on a statutory basis.
- Measures to halt white collar criminals transferring assets to spouses or others – any such assets will be available for court fines or compensation.
- Civil orders against serious offenders following conviction. This could include, for example, post-conviction restraints on consumption of alcohol, curfews, or restrictions on the use of the Internet by those convicted of child sex offences.
- A register of violent offenders so that post-release supervision and notification requirements are imposed on such offenders, akin to those on sex offenders.

Labour will ensure that victims and their needs are at the heart of the justice process

- Harmonised and extended detention periods for all violent and serious crime to avoid anomalies that now exist.
- Statutory provision to enable the prosecution to make a submission on sentence, which would include drawing attention to non-incarceration options.
- Greater pre trial case management such as U.K. style plea and directions hearing.
- Removal of anomalies in laws, rules and procedure that restrict the due administration of justice.

TACKLING THE DRUGS CRISIS

Drug use is an escalating social problem and is often characterised by multiple drug use, alcohol abuse, violence and gun crime. Labour supports the principles and objectives of the National Drugs Strategy. In government we will give renewed impetus to the fight against drugs and we will ensure that the Strategy once again becomes relevant and effective.

This will include expanding rehabilitation services at local level in line with need and subject to available resources; integrating drug and alcohol abuse strategies at local level; strengthening the supply reduction effort and criminal assets seizures, particularly at local level; expanding the drugs court; developing compulsory as well as voluntary rehabilitation programmes; and reducing the flow of drugs to our prisons.

MAKING COMMUNITY POLICING A PRIORITY

Labour wants to build a modern and effective Garda force, where Gardaí work in communities they know,

Labour will require the Gardaí to give greater priority to community policing

serving people they know. Labour will require the Gardaí to give greater priority to community policing that will see more Gardaí on patrol in the communities worst affected by anti-social behaviour. This will be complemented by Labour's strategy to deal with anti-social behaviour in local authority-funded accommodation, as detailed in our housing policy.

Labour will build on the existing community policing partnerships and forums to enhance trust between local communities and their Gardaí. The community Garda service should also be supported by members of the Garda Reserve drawn from the community.

By building a relationship with the communities they serve, community Gardaí can better tackle the plague of low level crime and anti-social behaviour that is so destructive of community life. Labour's commitment is to ensure that, within available resources, there are more Gardaí on patrol in local neighbourhoods, and to make policing more responsive to those communities' needs.

MAKING THE PUNISHMENT FIT THE CRIME

Labour is committed to ensuring that the punishment fits the crime, and protects and serves the community if at all possible. A key foundation of this approach will be to introduce a Sentencing Bill which will set out aggravating and mitigating circumstances to be taken into account by the Courts, and bring greater consistency.

Information on sentencing practice will be collected and made available on a systematic and timely basis.

A MORE EFFECTIVE PRISONS POLICY

No one could describe Ireland's present penal system as effective, and least of all cost-effective. Ireland's prisons are overcrowded, and our prison system is among the most expensive in the world. As well as the human cost, it is clear that we cannot afford to commit ourselves to spending ever-increasing amounts of public money on a system that has little or no impact on re-offending rates.

The Labour Party will bring in major reforms to ensure that the criminal justice system provides for a safer society at a lower cost to the taxpayer, by switching away from costly prison-based sentences and towards less costly non-custodial options and greater use of open prisons for appropriate prisoners. Labour's proposals to reform penal policy include:

- Reducing the number of prisoners in our jails when alternative sanctions would serve the same corrective purpose by specifying in law a core rule that imprisonment is a penalty of last resort for non-violent offenders.
- Reforming sentencing practice at District Court level to reduce the number of very short prison sentences handed down for minor, non-violent crimes.

- Progressively implementing the Children Act 2001 and the National Youth Justice Strategy to tackle youth crime, and continuing to resource policies which divert young people from criminality, and provide for alternative sanctions.
- Rolling out the Drugs Court initiative.
- Making much more effective use of alternative sanctions, such as the Community Service Order scheme.
- Addressing the issue of major overcrowding in Ireland's prisons.

JUDICIAL REFORM

Labour will legislate to establish a Judicial Council, with lay representation, that will provide an effective mechanism for dealing with complaints against judges.

A FAIR IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

A comprehensive statute to regulate immigration and set out the rights and duties of migrants in Ireland is overdue by almost ten years. Failure to legislate for a fair, transparent immigration process has resulted in an ad hoc system that can be confusing, inconsistent and anomalous. Processing of applications and decision-making is subject to long delays, while the absence of legislation means there is frequent resort to the Courts for judicial review.

Every country has the right to determine who may and who may not come to live within its jurisdiction. Labour in government will enact comprehensive and transparent legislation on immigration within 12 months, setting out the rights and obligations involved. The administrative process will be streamlined and speeded up and, an

Labour will enact comprehensive and transparent legislation on immigration within 12 months

independent appeals mechanism for the review of immigration-related decisions will also be introduced.

The Labour Party will promote policies which integrate minority ethnic groups in Ireland, and which promote social inclusion, equality, diversity, and the participation of immigrants in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities.

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FAIRNESS


Labour

Fairness

Fairness In Education

TIME FOR CHANGE

Labour's ambition is to build not just a knowledge economy, but a knowledge society. Education is at the heart of a more cohesive, more equal and more successful society, and it will be the engine of sustainable economic growth. Labour is committed to protecting children's education, because we believe they deserve the best start their country can give them.

Even in this crisis, we can make progress. Labour will put improving educational outcomes, from literacy to third level, at the heart of our education reforms.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- Improve child literacy standards for the first time in a generation
- Reform how schools are managed to focus on improving educational outcomes
- Transform the second level curriculum to equip young people with skills for the 21st century
- Prioritise school building and refurbishment in Labour's revised National Development Plan
- Put high standards of teaching and learning at the heart of third level reform



LOCAL EDUCATION BOARDS FOR LOCAL EDUCATION NEEDS

Labour will build on existing Vocational Educational Committees, and progressively transform them into Local Education Boards.

Local Education Boards will absorb the existing educational functions of Vocational Educational Committees, including the patronage of their existing schools at primary and secondary level, and in adult education. Their membership will continue to be elected in a manner similar to the present VECs.

New functions for Local Education Boards will include coordinating support services for schools to get better value for money, for example clustered secretarial services, co-ordination of supply teachers and tendering for electricity and heating. The boards will be responsible for repairs and maintenance, and will also act as project manager for all major school building projects and refurbishments within their areas.

Many administrative duties, relating to maintenance, school building projects and human resources, currently carried out by principals could be handed over to Local Education Boards. On top of this, Labour will implement a number of reforms to give principals more freedom and responsibility to raise the educational standards in their schools.

Principals will, with the support of the Inspectorate, draw up five year development plans for their schools and individual teachers. They will be enabled to allocate and manage staff with required flexibility, with management responsibilities delegated to teachers as school priorities require.

All new principal appointments will be for ten years only, and new principals will be required to complete a Master's degree in educational management within an agreed timeframe.

MAKE PRIMARY SCHOOL PATRONAGE FIT FOR PURPOSE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Labour wants to reform our education system so that it is more democratic, and recognises the diversity of ethos within modern Irish society.

Labour will initiate a time-limited Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector. This national Forum would be open to participation from all the stakeholders in the education sector. The Forum will have concise terms of reference and sit for a maximum of 12 months.

The recommendations of the Forum will be drawn up into a White Paper for consideration and implementation by the Government to ensure that our education system can provide a sufficiently diverse number of schools which cater for all religions and none. As part of this process, parents and the local

Labour will give principals more freedom and responsibility to raise the educational standards in their schools

BETTER SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Good schools require one thing in common: good school leadership. Labour will reform school leadership to give principals the skills, support and freedom they need for this increasingly complex job. Principals will be given substantial autonomy to manage their school's resources, including staff, and to enable all schools to reach their potential.

community should also have a say in the patronage of existing and future schools, for example by direct ballot.

Labour in government will ensure Educate Together is recognised as a patron at second level by the Department of Education and Skills.

LEARNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY AND IMPROVING OUTCOMES

Irish second level pupils are learning a 20th century curriculum based on rote learning, while competing in a 21st century labour market that rewards problem solving, flexibility, innovation and creativity.

Labour in government will progressively implement the reform of the Junior and Senior cycle, as envisioned by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. In particular, Labour will prioritise the reform of maths and science teaching at second level, including making science a compulsory Junior Cert subject by 2014.

The costs of expanding the curriculum and offering a wide range of subjects to pupils will be reduced by enabling schools to 'share' teachers via live web casts and other technological innovations.

Labour will progressively upgrade the information communications technology (ICT) infrastructure of schools over the course of new school building and refurbishment. Future investment in ICT will encompass mandatory professional development for teachers to incorporate new technologies into their teaching practice. Labour will also maximise investment through pooling of ICT procurement.

MAKING LITERACY A NATIONAL CAUSE

Literacy is the foundation stone on which all learning is built. Labour

Labour will make literacy a national cause

in government will make literacy a national cause, with a medium-term goal of ensuring that no child leaves an Irish school unable to read and write.

Labour's approach is three-fold: putting literacy policy at the heart of our agenda in government; embedding literacy in our communities; and focusing on the teaching of literacy in our classrooms. Labour will develop a national literacy strategy, with school-level targets. Every school will be required to have a literacy action plan, with demonstrable outcomes.

DEIS primary schools will be mandated to teach literacy for 120 minutes per day; non-DEIS schools will be mandated to teach literacy for 90 minutes per day. This time includes incorporating structured literacy tuition into the teaching of other subjects.

Teachers are our most important resource in tackling poor literacy. Labour will improve pre-service and in-service training in the teaching of literacy for all primary and secondary school teachers, and provide dedicated literacy mentors to work intensively with teachers in the most disadvantaged primary schools.

Labour will also work with local authorities to develop Labour's Right to Read campaign and to develop community supports for literacy, such as more spacious social housing, longer opening hours for libraries, homework clubs and summer camps that improve literacy through sport and games.

Labour's literacy strategy will involve refocusing some existing spending

on literacy goals, and will cost an additional €14 million per annum.

IMPROVING EQUITY IN EDUCATION

As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review, Labour will examine how we can make existing expenditure on educational disadvantage more effective.

Labour will also look at innovative ways in which teenagers at risk of leaving the school system can stay connected, for example through the use of ICT-based distance learning and projects such as iScoil.

Labour is committed to reversing the cut to the number of psychologists in the National Educational Psychological Service in Budget 2011 at a cost of €3 million. Labour will support schools, parents and children with special educational needs by ensuring that necessary supports follow a child from primary to second level, and achieving greater integration of special needs-related services.

PRIORITISE THE SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAMME

Labour will prioritise school building projects in our revised national development plan. In cases where schools spend hundreds of thousands of euro renting prefabs, Labour will enable schools to build permanent school accommodation instead.

School planning, building and maintenance will be managed and delivered much more efficiently and cost-effectively by new Local Educational Boards.

In future, local authorities will be required to complete an Educational Impact Assessment on residential zoning, to identify potential need for schools. The creation of Shared Educational Campuses will be a core principle for future development of our educational infrastructure. Schools of different ethos and patronage could be located on a shared campus and utilise common educational facilities, secretarial supports, playing fields and sports facilities.

New schools will be built to grow with their communities, and to provide for a more interactive, child-friendly model of education. Labour will develop existing standardised designs for new schools, which will be the blueprint for future greenfield developments.

Labour in government will negotiate the transfer of school infrastructure currently owned by the 18 religious orders cited in the Ryan Report, at no extra cost, to the State. The existing patronage and activities of these schools will remain unchanged. We will also ensure that school buildings and land are zoned for educational use, so that they cannot easily be sold and lost to the system.

REFORMING THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

Labour abolished third-level fees in 1995, and we are opposed to their re-introduction. We refuse to go back to the days when only the relatively wealthy could count on going to third level, or when a family could only afford to send one of their children to college.

However, Labour will expect radical reform in third level institutions to maximise their existing funding, in particular the reform of academic contracts.

In government, Labour will review the recommendations of the Hunt report on higher education. Labour supports a vibrant, pluralist third level sector that offers both high quality research and high quality undergraduate teaching. Reform of third level should be driven by the need to improve the learning outcomes of undergraduate degree students, as well as provide high quality research, and it is this principle which will inform Labour's policy on the future of the third level system. Labour will initiate a time-limited audit of level 8 qualifications on offer in Irish third level institutions and the learning outcomes for graduates of these courses.

In order to ensure that students' interests are protected in the delivery of third level education, Labour will extend the remit of the Ombudsman to third level institutions.

To reduce the bureaucracy associated with student support, Labour will transfer responsibility for the administration of student grants to the Department of Social Protection. We will also reform the means test for the student grant to ensure that it is equitable and targeted at those most in need of assistance.

Labour is committed to the relocation of the Dublin Institute of Technology to the new campus in Grangegorman.

DEVELOP IRELAND'S THIRD LEVEL SECTOR AS A CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Labour will devise a National Strategy for International Education which will seek to attract students from a select number of countries to study in Ireland, in line with the employment, academic and skill requirements of our overall economy and education sector.

The strategy will develop an 'Education Ireland' brand, and combine the ambitions and interests of government policy with those of the higher education sector for a five year period. The policy will target in particular students from India, China and the Middle East, with advertising, visa policies and quality assurance managed accordingly. This will form part of wider relationship-building with BRIC countries through developing educational links.

Postgraduate students should be allowed work in Ireland for up to a year after they complete their studies. High-value research students should be allowed bring their families to Ireland if they are staying for more than two years.

Labour will prioritise the development of a one-stop shop website which can enable international students to learn about Ireland, pick a course and apply for their visa.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Labour will transfer responsibility for vocational education and training, including an expanded apprenticeship programme, from FÁS to further education colleges and the Institutes of Technology. To qualify for this transfer of funding from FÁS, further education colleges and Institutes of Technology will be mandated to develop flexible, high-quality vocational training opportunities for jobseekers, in line with the recommendations of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

Fairness

Labour's Plan for Fair Health Care

TIME FOR CHANGE

Ireland's healthcare system is broken, and for thirteen years, Fianna Fáil has chosen not to fix it. Instead, they focused on privatising the health service, giving huge tax-payer funded windfalls to developers building super-private clinics. Labour in government will introduce Universal Health Insurance as a way of delivering better, more effective care for every patient, and reducing the cost of our health system. From our first day in office, Labour will begin the phased introduction of a Universal Health Insurance system, starting with GP care.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- Access to GPs covered by primary care insurance for all by 2014
- Universal Hospital Care Insurance that guarantees every citizen equal access to hospital care when they need it, phased in over six years
- Private hospitals opened to uninsured patients for diagnostic procedures from year one, reducing waiting lists
- Hospitals funded according to the number of patients they treat, so that it pays to treat people efficiently
- A focus on treating mental health in the community, with particular provision for young people



EXTENDING ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE

Meeting more people's healthcare needs through the primary care system is key to reducing the overall cost of the Irish health system. This requires more services to be delivered at local level, instead of in hospitals, and more people being able to afford them.

Under Labour's plan, GP fees will be covered by universal primary care insurance. This universal primary care insurance will be extended to the portion of the population who do not have a medical card on a phased basis, so that by 2014, every person registered with a GP will be insured for primary care. This means patients will no longer pay upfront fees when they visit their GP. Labour will begin this process in our first year in government, by extending primary care insurance for GP visits to people on the Long-term Illness Scheme.

This reform will be paid for out of existing Exchequer funding, and savings in the health budget, which will go into a Primary Care Insurance Fund. From this fund, GPs will be paid a capitation fee per person registered with their practice, similar to the existing medical card system, but at a lower cost to the Exchequer.

By 2014, every person registered with a GP will be insured for primary care

Building up supply

In the short term, the supply of GPs can be increased by deferring the retirement of existing GPs; by recruiting more practice nurses, who could take on up to half the average workload of a GP; and by recruiting doctors from abroad, including Irish doctors who have emigrated. These measures will

ensure that there is enough supply to meet demand in phase one of Labour's healthcare reforms.

In the medium to longer term, the number of GPs being trained in Ireland will need to increase.

Care in the community

In order to free up more acute hospital beds, more step-down beds and home care packages need to be available to people who cannot be discharged without some post-hospital care. To facilitate this, Labour will invest additional funds in community and 'step down' care.

PHASE TWO: UNIVERSAL HOSPITAL CARE INSURANCE

Hospital care reform

Labour will introduce a system of mandatory Universal Hospital Care Insurance. Hospital care will be paid for in much the same way we pay for it now – through Exchequer resources and insurance premiums – except that money will be paid into a Hospital Insurance Fund, which will regulate the flow of funds to hospitals and insurance companies.

Premiums will be subsidised according to income, ranging from a 100 per cent subsidy for people currently eligible for medical cards, to no subsidy for those who can afford to pay for their own premium. Public, not-for-profit, and private insurers will be obliged to offer a guaranteed 'basket' of insured hospital services.

The cost of insurance premiums under a Universal Hospital Care Insurance system should not change from what they are at present. Implementation of these reforms will result in the cost of delivering healthcare being reduced, which means that more people can be treated for a similar level of funding.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) and the purchasing arm of the HSE will come together to

provide a new non-profit insurer, which will automatically enrol people with a medical card and the uninsured. However, like all insurance customers, they will have the choice of whether to switch insurer.

Initially, half of acute hospital budgets will be paid via the Hospital Insurance Fund, which will manage risk equalisation between insurers, and fund A&E services, ambulance services, teaching and certain very expensive and rare procedures, such as transplants. The balance of acute hospital budgets will be paid via insurance payments based on the number of procedures they carry out.

Instead of every patient being a 'drain' on a fixed hospital budget, every patient will represent a 'gain', giving hospitals an incentive to treat as many patients as efficiently as possible. This is the 'money follows the patient' model of hospital funding that is driven by universal health insurance.

Reform in the management of hospitals, establishment of the new public insurer for acute hospital care, and development of systems of regulation and financing will take time, which is why introducing this system will take six years. However, a phased introduction of universal hospital insurance will start from year one with an expansion of the role of the NTPF to purchase certain diagnostic tests for people who do not have insurance.

Costs will be controlled through centralised negotiation of the price of drugs and professional fees by the Hospital Insurance Fund, in consultation with insurance companies. This centralised negotiation of key costs, in tandem with competing insurers, is similar to the German model of health insurance, and is critical to controlling the cost of delivering healthcare.

The role of hospitals

Under Universal Hospital Care Insurance, public hospitals will be given much more independence. They will no longer be managed by the HSE. They will operate as independent, not-for-profit foundations or trusts, with managers accountable to their boards. Boards will include representatives of local communities. For some smaller hospitals it will make sense for them to combine in a local hospital network, with a shared management and board. Hospitals and hospital groups will be able to compete to supply care to private or public insurers.

This freeing of public hospitals will not be a free market in care. A free market is not compatible with social solidarity and good planning for community health care needs. An unregulated market would jeopardise the survival of smaller hospitals in areas where the population is dispersed, and would run counter to the development of centres of excellence for certain kinds of care.

Under Universal Hospital Care Insurance, the Minister for Health answering to the Government and Dáil Eireann will be responsible for health policy, including hospitals policy.

Where a hospital plays an important role in supplying care in an area that cannot be fulfilled by primary care services, it will not be allowed to close. If, under the system of Universal Hospital Care Insurance, that hospital

is failing due to inefficiency, its management will be replaced. If it is failing because it needs to offer a differing package of care, it will be assisted by the Hospital Insurance Fund in achieving that change.

In the present fiscal crisis, Labour in government will prioritise capital spending in health. Even with significant reforms in how we pay for healthcare, Ireland's system needs more acute hospital beds and more step-down beds in the community.

Labour will prioritise investment in new, modern hospitals, including the National Children's Hospital, a new hospital for the North-East, and supports the policy objective of relocating maternity hospitals to acute hospital campuses in Limerick and Dublin. Labour in government will also explore the scope for providing health care facilities through non-traditional financing via the Strategic Investment Bank.

RESTORING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE QUALITY OF IRELAND'S HEALTH SERVICE

The Minister for Health will be clearly in charge of the health care system and answerable to the Government and Dáil Eireann. The Minister will introduce legislation to enact Universal Primary Care Insurance and Universal Hospital Care Insurance.

Labour's plan does not abolish the HSE outright. Instead, Labour's plan transforms what we have already, so that the functions of the HSE are split between purchasing

*Labour in government
will prioritise capital
spending in health*

hospital care on the one hand, and a continuation of its management of mental health, community care and social care on the other.

MENTAL HEALTH

Labour's proposals to reform healthcare and introduce universal health insurance will incorporate mental health care, both through a strengthened role for GPs, and through the ongoing development of Community Mental Health Teams and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams, as resources allow. Given the central role of primary care in our reforms, we will take action to ensure that GPs and other professionals at primary level have the skills and up-to-date knowledge to identify and treat mental health problems, or to refer patients on to the most appropriate care provider.

Labour will work with health providers and charitable organisations to explore how a nationwide early intervention 'walk-in' service for young people experiencing mental health difficulties, based on the 'Jigsaw' service operating in Galway, might be developed from within existing resources. Labour will also endeavour to end the practice of placing children and adolescents in adult psychiatric wards.

Labour will comprehensively review the Mental Health Act (2001) in consultation with service-users, carers and other stakeholders, informed by human rights standards, and introduce a Mental Capacity Bill that accords with Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

To ensure a joined-up approach to mental health in the community, we will establish cross-departmental group to ensure that good mental health is a policy goal across the range of people's life experience including housing, education and employment.

Labour's key reforms of primary care will enable more comprehensive preventative care

Labour will address the high rate of suicide, including a review of the current practice whereby caring family members are frequently given little or no information to assist them in the on-going care of loved-ones who have been discharged from hospital following a suicide attempt, a psychotic episode or other serious mental illness.

PREVENTATIVE CARE AND CARE OF CHRONIC ILLNESSES

Labour's key reforms of primary care will enable more comprehensive preventative care, and the management of chronic conditions in a community setting. We will develop strategies to address common and chronic illnesses including heart and stroke, diabetes, respiratory illnesses, rare diseases and Alzheimer's Disease.

In light of their particular needs, Labour will commit to enter into discussions with survivors of Thalidomide to ensure that they receive fair and equitable compensation and a statutory right to the health care they need for the rest of their lives.

Labour will also maintain progress on the cancer strategy, and progress the recommendations of the Task Force on Obesity. Labour will consider the introduction of 'traffic-light' labelling of food and drink products and, in consultation with stakeholders, a requirement to clearly display the calorie content of food in restaurants and cafés.

Fairness

Making Homes Matter

TIME FOR CHANGE

Fianna Fáil's policy of putting the interests of big developers and the banks ahead of people looking to purchase a modest home was a direct cause of Ireland's disastrous property boom and bust. The Labour Party will reform housing policy in Ireland, so that the housing market is never again treated like a private casino. We are committed to undoing the damage caused by Fianna Fáil's recklessness, beginning with helping homeowners in distress to weather this recession. Labour's vision for housing policy puts people, and liveable communities, first.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- A two year moratorium on house repossessions
- Develop MABS into a personal debt management agency
- Provide distressed mortgage-holders protection from their creditors
- Develop a coherent plan to deal with ghost estates
- Introduce a 'housing first' policy when it comes to accommodating homeless people



HELPING HOMEOWNERS WEATHER THIS RECESSION

Labour believes that the best way to deal with distressed mortgages is to make keeping people in their homes the absolute priority. No repossessions should be permitted for at least two years, where a person makes a genuine attempt to pay their mortgage on a home of modest size.

We will provide stronger support for people in difficulties with their mortgage, by converting the Money Advice and Budgeting Service into a strengthened Personal Debt Management Agency with strong legal powers. The agency will support families who make an honest effort to deal with their debts, including non-mortgage debt, providing protection from their creditors where appropriate, so that they have time to sort out their affairs.

In order to do so, the Personal Debt Management Agency will have quasi-judicial status. Labour will also reform Ireland's penal bankruptcy laws for those who have to take that route.

The best way to deal with distressed mortgages is to make keeping people in their homes the absolute priority

Labour will make greater use of Mortgage Interest Supplement to support families who cannot meet their mortgage payments, which is a better and cheaper option than paying rent supplement after a family loses their home.

In the longer term, Labour will establish a new Sustainable Home-ownership Insurance Programme, which will be aimed at new residential mortgage holders and existing home owners who switch mortgage providers.

NORMALISING THE MARKET FOR HOMES

For the Labour Party a 'normal' home market is one in which mortgage lending practices are prudent, house price inflation does not sky-rocket, and where the vast majority of people can afford a family home. In government, Labour will ensure that the Central Bank and Financial Regulator supervise credit institutions' mortgage lending practices comprehensively and intensively. Where credit institutions fail to adequately control mortgage lending risks, the Central Bank will impose loan-to-value ceilings on mortgages, caps on loan-to-income multiples, limits on the term of new mortgages, and more rigorous procedures for verifying borrowers' incomes.

A well-functioning housing market requires that both buyers and sellers have access to reliable information on price trends in their neighbourhood, and for different dwelling types. Labour will improve the quality of information available on the Irish housing market by requiring that the selling price of all dwellings is recorded in a publicly available, national housing price database.

DEALING WITH GHOST ESTATES

Ghost estates are a bitter reminder of the planning failures of the past. They are a headache for residents of these estates, and for the wider community. The Minister for the Environment will bring forward, as a matter of urgency, a coherent plan to resolve the problems associated with ghost estates. This plan will be developed in cooperation with NAMA and local authorities, and will include, where appropriate, the demolition or completion of part built dwellings; the acquisition of properties by social landlords; or the sale of properties on the open market where this is possible, and where it is not, the disposal of dwellings by innovative means such as rent to buy and co-operative home ownership programmes.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: PLANNING FOR COMMUNITIES

Labour will reform how we plan for residential development, to prioritise liveable communities, and a healthier, safer environment.

Labour will link planning permission for residential developments to the provision of public transport, healthcare, recreational areas, shops and facilities. As part of this, local authorities will be required to carry out an 'Educational Impact Assessment' for all new zonings for residential development to ensure an adequate supply of school places.

To make the planning process more democratic, Labour will amend the recent Planning and Development Act (2010) to allow for detailed public submissions on zoning, and to rebalance power towards elected representatives. Local authorities will be required to carry out a flood risk report in the preparation of their City and County Development Plans, and will also be legally required to manage flood risk through sustainable planning and development.

Labour will reform how we plan for residential development, to prioritise liveable communities, and a healthier, safer environment

Labour will pass legislation to allow local authorities take housing estates 'in charge' after three years, and substantially increase existing penalties for those who break planning laws.

HIGH QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE SOCIAL HOUSING

Working within existing resources, Labour will introduce a staged purchase scheme to increase the stock of social housing, while achieving the best possible value for public investment. Under the terms of this scheme, leased dwellings will revert to the ownership of local authorities and housing associations at the end of the leasehold period.

Labour will also enable larger housing associations and local authorities to access private sector funding for social housing by issuing 'social housing bonds', secured on the value of their existing housing stock when market conditions allow.

We will direct the Housing Finance Agency to design and oversee the implementation of this funding mechanism, drawing on best practice in the many other countries where bonds are used to fund social housing projects.

In government, Labour will extend the remit of the Private Residential Tenancies Board to regulate social tenancies, as well as the private

rented sector. This will bring much needed regulation to social housing tenancies, which currently undermine tenants' rights and force landlords to engage in expensive court procedures if they wish to terminate a tenancy.

In addition, we will amend the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (1992) to require all local authorities and housing associations to register with the Department of the Environment if they wish to access government subsidies or other supports for social housing provision. Social landlords will be required to make annual returns to the Department to demonstrate their compliance with specific financial, housing management and governance standards. Landlords that fail to meet these standards will not be eligible for any Exchequer support.

In recent years the standard of social housing management has improved significantly but unfortunately anti-social behaviour remains a problem for many. In government we will address the issue of anti-social behaviour by introducing a twelve month probationary tenancy for all new tenants in social housing estates. If tenants or members of their households engage in anti-social behaviour during this period the tenancy will be terminated.

SUPPORTING PRIVATE RENTING TENANTS

Labour will establish a tenancy deposit protection scheme to put an end to disputes regarding the return of deposits, and ensure that changes to rent are linked to local market averages.

The number of people in receipt of rent supplement, and its cost, have more than doubled in the past decade.

Labour will reduce expenditure on rent supplement by making recipients' contribution to their rent a proportion of their income rather than a flat amount as is currently the case. This reform will incentivise recipients to negotiate lower rents with participating landlords.

To further reinforce recipients' negotiating power the maximum amounts of rent supplement payable in different localities will no longer be made publicly available on the Health Service Executive website. Labour will also instruct the HSE to deduct withholding tax from all rent supplement payments to promote tax compliance among landlords.

Labour will also reform the Rental Accommodation Scheme so that claimants' pay an increasing proportion of their rent as their income increases, and set the maximum contribution with reference to the total rent paid to the landlord.

HOMELESSNESS

Despite improvements in policy making, service development, and very substantial public investment, the numbers of homeless people remained high throughout the economic boom and have recently begun to rise as the economy has declined.

Labour will establish a tenancy deposit protection scheme to put an end to disputes regarding the return of deposits

In line with our Comprehensive Spending Review, Labour will alleviate the problem of long-term homelessness by introducing a 'housing first' approach to accommodating homeless people. Labour will lease-purchase or enable social landlords to build adequate numbers of long term dwellings for homeless people and fund support staff to enable them to successfully maintain these tenancies over the long term. In this way we will be able to offer homeless people suitable, long term housing in the first instance and radically reduce the use of hostel accommodation and the associated costs for the Exchequer.

Fairness

One Ireland For Children, Families & Older People

TIME FOR CHANGE

Ireland should be the best place in the world to grow up, and to grow old. It is a scandal that, despite a decade of prosperity, vulnerable children have been allowed to die for want of proper care; and that the privileging of profit in healthcare has put older people at risk of abuse by unscrupulous businesses. The Labour Party believes that it is time to put aside the 'me first' philosophy of Fianna Fáil, and to work together to build an Ireland that is a safe place for children, a supportive place for families, and which recognises the value and the potential of our senior citizens.

One Ireland
jobs, reform, fairness

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THE FIRST STEPS

- A constitutional amendment on children's rights
- A radical, area-based approach to tackling child poverty in Ireland's most disadvantaged communities
- New community-based solutions to building age-friendly neighbourhoods and towns
- Remove the barriers to older people who want to remain active in the workforce, and use retirees' expertise to help new start-ups
- Regulation to ensure safe, quality home help services for older people



PROTECTING CHILDREN

The delay in proceeding with the referendum on children's rights is unacceptable. Labour will ensure that a children's rights referendum is urgently progressed.

Labour will legislate, as a priority, to allow for the exchange of 'soft information' on suspected abuse of children, and to significantly raise the level of proof which an accused person must reach when they are claiming 'mistake as to age' in a prosecution for sexual offences against a child.

The Ryan and Murphy reports identified significant inadequacies in how allegations of child abuse are dealt with in Ireland. The Ryan Report Implementation Plan set out 99 actions and policy objectives which if delivered will radically change the child protection service. Labour in government will expedite the implementation programme.

Labour will ensure that a children's rights referendum is urgently progressed

Labour will also update the Children First guidelines to restore the importance of family support, prevention and early intervention as key objectives of child protection; to clarify the 'threshold of concern' requiring a report to be made to the HSE; and to ensure compliance with the HIQA Guidance report of 2010, which deals with crisis intervention for particularly vulnerable children.

Finally, in government we will ensure that the promised 270 new social workers are brought into the system, and that emergency care is consistently available outside

of standard working hours. The particular problems faced by separated children, i.e. children who are outside their country of origin, will be taken into account.

CHILDCARE AND PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

The Labour Party was the first party to propose a free, universal year of pre-school as a vital first step in a child's education. Labour will build on the 2010 Early Childhood Education and Care scheme, when resources permit, to develop a comprehensive, national pre-school service that is focussed on early childhood development.

In the mean time, Labour will focus on the improvement of quality in the early childhood education and care sector through the implementation of Siolta standards; by ensuring the sufficient availability of training options for staff. Labour is also committed to ensuring that all children have the opportunity to avail of a universal pre-school year, wherever their location, and will review the age structure of the scheme to ensure that any rigidities do not work to the disadvantage of families.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF CHILD POVERTY

Child poverty in Ireland has remained stubbornly high, even through the boom years. This shows that simply adding more money is not enough to break the cycle of child poverty where it is most deeply entrenched. Labour will adopt a radical new area-based approach to tackling child poverty, based on the youngballymun project in Dublin, which involves all of the existing state services, such as public health nurses, schools, childcare professionals, and social workers coordinating their efforts, with expert Irish and international support, to tackle every aspect of

child poverty within Ireland's most disadvantaged communities.

Labour will seek philanthropic partners to co-fund and manage the rollout of this model to up to ten of Ireland's most disadvantaged communities, at a cost of up to €15 million.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Labour will take action to tackle the public health time bomb that is childhood obesity. In government, we will publish a National Nutrition Policy, and will bring together government departments, agencies and educators in a major and sustained campaign to address this vital aspect of childhood health and well-being. This will address advertising standards, the nutritional content of food sold in retail outlets and, most importantly of all, a strong educational campaign pitched directly at children and young people themselves.

The huge increase in the number of outlets supplying alcohol was a serious mistake, while the more recent restrictions on opening hours have had little discernible impact on teen drinking. Labour will take action to further restrict sales to under-age persons, notably in off-licence outlets. We will also work at EU level to develop a European-wide agreement to phase out, or substantially reduce, alcohol-related sponsorship of sporting events.

SUPPORTING MODERN IRISH FAMILIES

Irish family life has changed enormously over the past two decades, but changes in employment and legal rights have not kept pace.

Labour will legislate to guarantee that the State respects family life, whether based on marriage or not

Labour favours moving to a paternity leave model, where parents can share paid leave when a new baby is born, as resources allow. More immediately, Labour will introduce a legal right to a career break, subject to reasonable conditions, which would allow parents to take time out of the workplace without risking future benefits or job security. This would have the added benefit of creating mobility in the labour force. We will also explore the option of introducing a right to part-time work, subject also to reasonable conditions.

Labour will legislate to guarantee that the State respects family life, whether based on marriage or not, by passing our Guardianship of Children Bill (2010).

BUILDING AN AGE-FRIENDLY SOCIETY

Ireland needs the experience, the energy and the patriotism of its older citizens, just as older people themselves can benefit from help in their communities.

Labour will establish 'Give n Take', a community response to the everyday needs of people in a local community. In this exchange, people of all ages volunteer their time, which is lodged in a 'time bank'. This exchange, which would be weighted in favour of older people, would be a way of brokering volunteering good will in a community.

This will be a way of connecting people who want to help out in their communities, with those who need that help. It will be a local organisation, administered locally through the network of local development/partnership companies with assistance from Volunteering Ireland and new technologies. It would not require additional resources.

Labour will also initiate a national annual competition – 'A Shining Community' – to find the most age-friendly community in Ireland. Structured along the lines of the Tidy Towns competition, communities would research and develop a blueprint for how their community can become a model, age-friendly community accounting for the health, recreational, educational, participatory, built environment, emotional and security needs of older people.

Labour in government is committed to progressing the implementation of a National Positive Ageing Strategy.

MAKING SURE THE VOICES OF OLDER PEOPLE ARE HEARD

Labour wants older people to be heard in their communities. Local authorities will be required to establish local Older People councils, where members of the community can raise local concerns or issues of importance. These councils will be chaired by a representative of the Local Authority, who will be required

to report to both local elected representatives, and the Office for Older People.

BETTER CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Labour's reform of primary care services, and universal health insurance, will particularly benefit older people, who will be assured of access to care when they need it. Labour's plan to expand the community care sector, to enable older people to be discharged from hospital and cared for in their communities, is detailed in our proposals on Universal Health Insurance.

Labour will review the role and operations of the public network of geriatric hospitals and long term care units as part of a coherent strategy for residential care for older people.

Labour will regulate home help services so that older people and their families can have confidence in them.

Labour is committed to introducing a comprehensive statutory framework on mental capacity, including provision for the appointment of an independent advocate for those who need someone to advocate on their behalf.

HELPING OLDER PEOPLE WHO WANT TO WORK

Older people who wish to remain economically active should be able to do so. Phased retirement from

full-time work will be facilitated for those who wish to continue to work part-time on a contractual basis, underpinned by legislation and subject to commonsense exceptions and conditions.

The experience and skills of older people should not be lost to the economy when they retire. Labour will initiate a campaign, '*Flyin' at 60*', to encourage and support older people finalising one career to make their wisdom available to a new enterprise. Retired people with enterprise development and mentoring skills can also play a voluntary role in the services provided by the Local Development-Partnership or County Enterprise Boards.

County Enterprise Boards will also be mandated to develop a specific support package for 'start-up' Social Entrepreneurs.

BETTER, SAFER COMMUNITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Ireland needs to plan now for homes and communities that make it easier for older people to live independently. Part M of the Building Regulations will be revised and developments complying with Universal Design principles will be favoured in the planning process.

As part of Labour's broader housing policy, we will seek to promote sheltered housing that meets a high standard of design and specification. Simple home maintenance can be one of the biggest challenges for people as they grow older. Through

the Give n' Take a Social Exchange Network, the local development and partnership companies will hold a register of skilled craftspeople willing to volunteer a little of their time, and who can undertake minor alterations and repairs.

Labour will allow for the development of 'No Cold Calling' Zones in areas with high concentrations of older people. This will prohibit the practice of cold calling and selling door to door in those areas.

An opt-in *Older People Community Register* will be established, in cooperation with Community Gardaí, the HSE, and locally-managed social care networks to maximise a community-wide response in the event of natural emergencies.

Labour will allow for the development of 'No Cold Calling' Zones

Fairness

A Fairer and More Equal Ireland

TIME FOR CHANGE

Equality is not a luxury for the good times or a buzzword: it is at the heart of what it means to be a citizen in our democracy, and it is at the heart of the Labour Party's view of the world. Labour believes that everyone has the right to reach their full potential, free from discrimination, and that we all benefit from living in a more equal society. Fianna Fáil presided over a very unequal and divided Ireland. Labour is committed to forging One Ireland, built on fairness and equal citizenship.

One Ireland
jobs, reform, fairness

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THE FIRST STEPS

- Bring more women into politics by tying funding for political parties to the participation of women representatives
- Reform the law on mental capacity
- Stronger laws against unfair discrimination
- A referendum on same-sex marriage
- Legislation to regulate scientific stem cell research



FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

Women continue to be under-represented – if they are there at all – in the decision-making arenas at all levels of politics, and on state boards. Labour will make it a legal requirement that 40 per cent of either gender is represented on state boards and committees, and we will ensure that other nominating bodies are bound by the same target.

Public funding for political parties will be tied to the level of participation by women as public representatives those parties achieve. Demanding targets for all political parties will be set out in legislation.

Labour will make it a legal requirement that 40 per cent of either gender is represented on state boards and committees

Labour is committed to tackling and eradicating domestic violence. We will protect funding for frontline services, such as family refuges, and draw on best international practice to reform the way the courts system deals with domestic abuse cases. Most urgently, we will tackle the delay in hearing domestic abuse cases in the courts, and provide national consistency of access to the courts for urgent applications.

Labour supports updating the Constitution to reflect the role of women in 21st century Ireland, which we will be recommending to our proposed Constitutional Convention.

A FAIR DEAL FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Labour remains committed to an approach to disability in Ireland based on rights, equality and participation. We will continue to work to vindicate the rights of people with disabilities to education, health, housing and work and to participate in an inclusive manner in the economic, social and cultural life of the community, and will work to advance implementation of the National Disability Strategy.

Labour will protect, as a priority, those people with disabilities who are most vulnerable to cuts in public services. However, it is also essential that we get the best possible value for money for the investment we make in services with people for disabilities, and that those services meet the needs of users.

Labour's proposed Comprehensive Expenditure Review will examine all provision for people with disabilities, with a view to determining how users can get the best services, for the public investment made. As part of this review, Labour will consider moving a proportion of public spending on disability services to a personal budgeting model, so that people with disabilities or their families have greater flexibility to make the choices that suit their needs best.

Labour is also committed to reforming the law on mental capacity, so as to ensure the greatest degree of autonomy for people with intellectual disabilities or suffering from a mental illness, and to reduce the need for expensive court proceedings.

LGBT RIGHTS

Labour is committed to holding a referendum to provide for constitutional recognition of same-sex marriage. Labour also supports entitling all parties to a marriage or civil partnership to apply to adopt a child, while ensuring that all adoption decisions must be made in the best long-term interests of the child. In the immediate term, Labour will enact provisions to extend the tax benefits of marriage to same sex couples in civil partnerships.

Labour is committed to ensuring all publicly funded colleges operate in accordance with the constitutional right to Freedom of Conscience. Labour will ensure the five teaching colleges introduce a Freedom of Conscience clause so that trainee teachers no longer are obliged to undergo compulsory religious education.

Labour will amend Section 37 of the Employment Equality Acts (1998) and (2004) to end discrimination against LGBT teachers and trainee teachers, and to ensure that there is no obstacle to schools tackling homophobic bullying.

Labour will continue to fund Gay HIV Strategies.

Labour will advance equality for trans-gender people by enacting gender recognition legislation, and by extending to them protections afforded by existing equality legislation.

FAIR EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

Labour in government will address the fact that some unscrupulous employers have sought to undermine the right to collective bargaining. Labour will introduce legislation to strengthen the rights of workers to engage in collective bargaining, as enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The legislation will also make it illegal

Labour will enact provisions to extend the tax benefits of marriage to same sex couples in civil partnerships

to discriminate in any way against an employee because they are a member of a trade union or involved in trade union activity.

Labour will also amend the Employment Equality Act to combat age discrimination by shifting the burden of proof to the employer as to why an individual must retire on age grounds.

FOSTERING A HEALTHY CIVIL SOCIETY

A robust civil society is essential to building a fair Ireland, where power is shared and dissent and debate are valued.

Labour supports the aims of the Conversation on Democracy in Ireland project.

Labour's Comprehensive Spending Review will examine all areas of government spending, to establish what is the best and most cost-effective way to achieve the positive outcomes we want for our country. This review will provide the basis for a coherent policy framework governing the State's partnership with community and voluntary organisations.

Labour is committed to continuing the work of the Forum on Philanthropy under the chairmanship of the Department of the Taoiseach, and to actively supporting the development of a strategy to promote philanthropy at all levels of society

PUTTING EQUALITY BACK INTO GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING

Fianna Fáil systematically filleted state bodies which criticised its record on equality, human rights and poverty. The Labour Party will put fairness and equality back at the heart of government decision-making. A new Equality and Social Inclusion Authority with a mandate to promote social inclusion and equality, and combat poverty and discrimination, will replace the Equality Authority and the National Disability Authority. It will incorporate the policy and research functions of the Combat Poverty Agency, which was dismantled by Fianna Fáil.

Labour will establish an Oireachtas Committee on Equality, Women and Human Rights, charged with progressing legislation in these areas.

BIOETHICS AND OTHER LAW REFORMS

Labour will legislate in accordance with existing constitutional provisions and court judgements to clarify the law – including the law relating to guardianship responsibilities – surrounding assisted human reproduction. Labour will also legislate to regulate stem cell research, with regard to the recommendations of the Irish Council for Bioethics.

Labour will legislate for post-mortem procedures and organ retention practices as recommended by the Madden report, and change the Organ Donation system to an 'opt out' system for organ transplantation rather than an 'opt in' system, so as to improve the availability of organs for patients in desperate need.

Labour in government will legislate in accordance with the Supreme Court judgment in the X Case, and the recent ruling by the European Court of Human Rights.

Fairness

Culture, Sport and the Arts

TIME FOR CHANGE

Labour believes that every citizen should have the opportunity to enjoy our shared cultural, artistic and sporting life, and to participate in it.

Excellence in the arts and in sport will be supported, but the thrust of Labour's policy will be to widen access to the arts, to grow Irish as a spoken language, and to build participation in sport from the ground up.

One Ireland
jobs, reform, fairness

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THE FIRST STEPS

- Vest overall responsibility for developing the Irish language in the Office of the Taoiseach
- Develop local sports partnerships nationwide using funding from an increased betting levy
- Prioritise multi-use facilities when investing in sports infrastructure
- Establish a National Endowment Fund to leverage private funding for the arts
- Focus public spending on the arts on making the best use of our existing arts venues, and on extending access to the arts



THE IRISH LANGUAGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The Labour Party recognises that the Irish language is an important part of our national and cultural identity. Its standing as one of the oldest spoken and literary languages still in use gives it a wider significance not only in Ireland but across Europe. Its importance goes beyond cultural heritage. Labour believes that the Irish language can and should contribute to our economic recovery through its continued use in tourism, the arts and in broadcasting.

As a foundation for the Labour Party's position on the Irish language, we support the *20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030*. Labour believes that the Office of the Taoiseach should be responsible for coordinating and driving the strategy, and that the Taoiseach should be answerable to the Dáil for its implementation.

Labour supports the longer term goal of introducing a second subject at primary level that is taught through Irish

virtuous circle where teachers and students are improving their spoken Irish on an ongoing basis. This can be done in part by reforming the curriculum so more emphasis is put on oral and aural skills. Our teachers will also need to be supported in this process. Opportunities will be provided, within the existing continuous professional development budget, to primary and secondary school teachers to attend courses in the Gaeltacht during the summer to maintain and improve their Irish throughout their careers.

Labour supports the longer term goal of introducing a second subject at primary level that is taught through Irish. Working in consultation with all stakeholders we will explore how this can best be achieved. The goal of normalising the use of Irish through teaching art, music or drama is one possible way of encouraging the use of spoken Irish.

In government, Labour will implement its strategy for improving literacy in schools. This strategy will include the improvement of Irish language literacy in gaelscoileanna and in Gaeltacht schools, with appropriate adaptations of the strategy developed in consultation with educational stakeholders.

CREATING LIVING GAELTACHTAÍ

The Labour party recognises the important place the Gaeltachtaí have in our country. The survival and enhancement of the Gaeltachtaí depends on people being able to make a living in these communities. Údarás na Gaeltachta, along with other enterprise agencies, will be able to draw down additional funding from Labour's dedicated Jobs Fund, if they can demonstrate that this additional funding will directly contribute to generating additional jobs in strategic areas such as food production, tourism,

REVITALISING THE IRISH LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

Labour will maintain Irish as one of the three core compulsory Leaving Certificate subjects. At the same time, we recognise that the teaching of the Irish language needs significant reform. Irish students should leave school able to hold a conversation in Irish with their peers.

Labour will undertake a thorough reform of the Irish curriculum in keeping with the aims of the 20 Year Strategy. Labour wants to create a

renewable energy, digital media or clean technology.

IRISH LANGUAGE BROADCASTING AND THE ARTS

When last in government, the Labour Party established TG4. We will continue to support the Irish language broadcasting sector. The Irish language is a key part of our artistic tradition, and this will also be supported by Labour in government.

AN GHAELIGE

Aithníonn Páirtí an Lucht Oibre gurb í an Ghaeilge cuid thábhachtach dár bhféiniúlacht náisiúnta agus chultúir. Cuirtear suntas níos leithne ina leith, ní in Éirinn amháin ach ar fud na hEorpa chomh maith, mar gheall ar an stádas atá aici mar cheann de na teangacha labhartha agus liteartha is sine atá in úsáid fós. Tá i bhfad níos mó ná oidhreacht chultúir i gceist leis an tábhacht a bhaineann léi. Creidimid gur féidir leis an nGaeilge agus gur chóir di cur lenár dtéarnamh eacnamaíochta trí úsáid a bhaint aisti go leanúnach sa turasóireacht, sna healaíona agus i gcúrsaí craolacháin.

Leagtar bonn síos i leith staid Pháirtí an Lucht Oibre maidir leis an nGaeilge tríd an tacaíocht a thugaimid don *Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge, 2010-2030*. Creideann Páirtí an Lucht Oibre gur chóir d'Oifig an Taoisigh freagracht a ghlacadh as an straitéis a chomhordú agus a chur chun cinn agus gur chóir don Taoiseach a bheith freagrach don Dáil maidir lena cur i ngníomh.

AN GHAELIGE AGUS OIDEACHAS

Coinneoidh Páirtí an Lucht Oibre an Ghaeilge mar cheann de na trí chroí-ábhar éigeantacha don Ardteistiméireacht. Ag an am céanna aithnímid go bhfuil gá le hathchóiriú suntasach a dhéanamh

ar mhúineadh na Gaeilge. Ba chóir go mbeadh daltaí na hÉireann in ann comhrá a bheith acu as Gaeilge lena gcomhpháirtithe agus iad ag fágáil na scoile.

Tabharfaidh Páirtí an Lucht Oibre faoi athchóiriú críochnúil ar churaclam na hÉireann a thiocfaidh le haidhmeanna na Straitéise 20 Bliain. Táimid ag iarraidh fáinne óir a chruthú ina bhfeabhsóidh múinteoirí agus daltaí a nGaeilge labhartha ar bhonn leanúnach. Is féidir é sin a dhéanamh go páirteach tríd an gcuraclam a athchóiriú ionas go leagfar tuilleadh béime ar scileanna labhartha agus éisteachta. Beidh tacaíocht ag teastáil ó mhúinteoirí chomh maith mar chuid den phróiseas seo. Cuirfear deiseanna ar fáil, laistigh den bhuiséad forbartha gairmiúla leanúnaí reatha, do mhúinteoirí bunscoile agus meánscoile chun freastal a dhéanamh ar chúrsaí sa Ghaeltacht i rith an tsamhraidh ar mhaithe lena nGaeilge a chothabháil agus a fheabhsú le linn a ngairme.

Tacaíonn Páirtí an Lucht Oibre leis an sprioc níos fadtéarmaí maidir le dara hábhar a mhúinfear trí Ghaeilge a thabhairt isteach ag an leibhéal bunscoile. Déanfaimid scrúdú ar conas is fearr is féidir é sin a bhaint amach agus muid ag obair i gcomhairle leis na páirtithe leasmhara go léir. Bealach amháin a d'fheadfaí spreagadh a thabhairt

d'úsáid na Ghaeilge labhartha is ea an sprioc a bhaineann le húsáid a bhaint as an nGaeilge i ngnáthchúinsí trí ealaín, ceol nó drámaíocht a mhúineadh. Cuirfidh Páirtí an Lucht Oibre a straitéis maidir le litearthacht a fheabhsú i scoileanna i ngníomh agus iad sa Rialtas. Áireofar mar chuid den straitéis sin, litearthacht na Gaeilge a fheabhsú i ngaelscoileanna agus i scoileanna na Gaeltachta, agus oiriúnuithe cuí den straitéis á bhforbairt i gcomhairle le páirtithe leasmhara oideachais.

GAELTACHTAÍ BEO A CHRUTHÚ

Aithníonn Páirtí an Lucht Oibre an staid thábhachtach atá ag na Gaeltachtaí sa tír againne. Braitheann maireachtáil agus feabhsú na nGaeltachtaí ar chumas na ndaoine chun slí bheatha a dhéanamh sna pobail sin. Beidh Údarás na Gaeltachta, i dteannta le gníomhaireachtaí fiontraíochta, in ann maoiniú breise a íostarraingt ó Chiste tiomnaithe Fostaíochta Pháirtí an Lucht Oibre, más féidir leo a léiriú go gcabhróidh an maoiniú breise sin go díreach le tuilleadh post a ghiniúint i réimsí straitéiseacha cosúil le táirgeadh bia, turasóireacht, fuinneamh in-athnuaite, na meáin dhigiteacha nó an teicneolaíocht ghlan.

Coinneoidh Páirtí an Lucht Oibre an Ghaeilge mar cheann de na trí chroí-ábhar éigeantacha don Ardteistiméireacht

CRAOLACHÁN GAEILGE AGUS NA HEALAÍONA

Chuir Páirtí an Lucht Oibre an-chuid de na struchtúir agus an reachtaíocht ar bun a raibh cruthú TG4 mar thoradh orthu le linn dóibh a bheith sa Rialtas an uair dheireanach. Leanfaimid ar aghaidh ag tacú le hearnáil an chraolacháin Ghaeilge. Is cuid lárnach dár dtraidisiún ealaíne í an Ghaeilge agus tacóidh Páirtí an Lucht Oibre leis sin freisin agus iad sa Rialtas.

A FRESH DIRECTION FOR ARTS POLICY

In the interests of value for money, achieving greater efficiencies and a more coherent policy, Labour will make strategic policy formulation the primary function of the Department, with its line agencies and bodies being responsible for policy implementation.

Labour in government will initiate a full review of the areas that receive state funding through the Arts Council. Funding will be targeted in areas where it can be most effective in extending the availability of arts and cultural activities, while balancing this against innovation and endeavour. We will also ensure that adequate support is extended to those sectors of the arts that are particularly popular with younger people. In the longer term, Labour favours putting a proportion of Arts Council funding on a multi-annual basis, to allow for longer-term arts planning.

Labour believes that the promotion of Irish arts abroad is important. However, this does not need to be done by a separate agency, with a separate board. Labour will transfer the functions of Culture Ireland to the Arts Council, and give the Arts Council an expanded mandate to promote Irish cultural projects abroad.

Labour will pilot a Local Arts Partnership to increase participation in the arts

Labour will also pilot a Local Arts Partnership, based on the successful local sports partnerships, in order to increase participation in the arts. This will be funded from within the existing departmental budget.

GETTING THE MOST FROM OUR CULTURAL VENUES

Labour will seek to capture some public good from NAMA by identifying buildings that have no commercial potential, and which might be suitable as local facilities for art and culture. We will also undertake a National Audit of Arts and Cultural Facilities to ascertain our current national arts infrastructure. However, Labour's focus of investment in the arts will be on ensuring our existing venues are fully utilised.

Labour will also review the opening times of our national cultural institutions, such as museums, to allow for later opening at least once a week, and make Culture Night a twice-yearly, nationwide event. This can be done from within the existing arts departmental budget.

SUPPORTING ARTISTS AND CULTURAL EMPLOYMENT

Labour will establish a National Endowment Fund for the Arts to leverage private funding to the arts.

We will maintain the Artists Tax Exemption at €40,000 per year, but will permit a facility that enables artists to spread income over a period of years.

There is a wealth of artistic talent in Ireland that must not be allowed to go to waste or be lost to emigration. Labour's Bridge the GAP apprenticeship and work placement scheme can be used to employ recent fine arts graduates in schools to facilitate the teaching of art. The existing apprenticeship scheme could also be expanded to include apprenticeship to artistic and cultural enterprises.

MAKING SPORT ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Everyone, regardless of gender, age or background, should have the opportunity to participate in sport. Labour's sports strategy will build on successful local schemes to develop programmes, facilities and activities, to increase participation for all. Local Sports Partnerships have the potential to build participation from the bottom up. Labour will mainstream successful sports partnership pilot projects that have proven their effectiveness in broadening participation, using funding from a reconstituted betting levy.

Labour will also support the work of Special Olympics Ireland in building a programme of sport and development in local communities for people with special needs.

A COHERENT APPROACH TO DEVELOPING SPORTS FACILITIES

The National Sports Facilities Strategy will become the blueprint for the future development of all sports facilities in the country.

In future, capital investment in multi-use sporting facilities will be prioritised. Overall, Labour believes that funding of Irish sport should be reallocated away from capital projects and moved towards employment and promotion of sport on a local and national level.

Any future grants allocated under the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme will be cognizant of the National Audit of Sports Facilities and the amount of private facilities in the area. It will place most emphasis on the refurbishment of derelict pools; on ensuring provision in areas which have experienced rapid population growth; and areas that demonstrate a clear need.

SUPPORTING OUR ELITE ATHLETES

We will continue to support our elite athletes through the International Carding scheme which we will review after London 2012. Through the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport we will review the current structures and strategic plans of sporting bodies, examining the implementation of High Performance Plans and long-term coaching plans within the bodies.

A MORE JOINED-UP, STRATEGIC APPROACH TO SPORT IN IRELAND

It is in the interests of all stakeholders that national policy for sport should be effective and funding transparent and strategic. Responsibility for policy-making will revert to the department, while agencies will be accountable for implementing policy, assessing outcomes and value for money.

Funding for state agencies and governing bodies will be made more transparent and structured, with the Minister holding ultimate responsibility for funding decisions. However, all state funding will be

Labour will also encourage, where feasible, partnerships between schools and local clubs to build or develop shared sports facilities

subject to the beneficiaries signing up to a dispute resolution services, such as the Just Sport Ireland initiative, and the adherence to new mandatory codes of conduct regarding child protection in sport.

The Irish Sports Council will be renamed Sport and Recreation Ireland, with an expanded remit. Sport and Recreation Ireland will partner local authorities, OPW, Waterways Ireland and Coillte to identify appropriate outdoor facilities such as treks, walks and cycle ways, camping and water sports. It will also work with the local authorities to improve recreation facilities. A number of positions on the Sports Council's governing board will be made directly electable.

Labour will also encourage, where feasible, partnerships between schools and local clubs to build or develop shared sports facilities, which can be self-financing.

CHANGING HOW WE FINANCE THE HORSE AND GREYHOUND FUND

The horse and greyhound racing industries are part of Irish culture, and important employers. Labour will maintain the Horse and Greyhound Fund, though without direct subvention from the Exchequer. Instead, Labour will introduce a betting levy of 1.5%, extended across all media

and on-course transactions. Part of the revenue raised from this levy will go towards the Horse and Greyhound Fund. We also favour the benchmarking of Horse Racing prize money to a level above that of our competitor nations in Europe.

How a reconstituted fund will be raised and administered will be decided in consultation with all stakeholders.

Fairness

Foreign Affairs, the EU and Northern Ireland

TIME FOR CHANGE

Ireland's international reputation has been damaged by the disastrous mishandling of our economy by Fianna Fáil, and by the recklessness of those at the top of the banks. We need to rebuild our relationships and regain our lost influence within the European Union, and reach out to forge new relationships with emerging world powers. Ireland has always wielded influence greater than our size on the international stage.

The Labour Party is committed to restoring Ireland's good name, and to ensuring that Irish solidarity with the world's poorest people is maintained.

One Ireland

jobs, reform, fairness



THE FIRST STEPS

- Make restoring Ireland's international reputation a key objective of every government minister
- Maintain Ireland's overseas development aid budget, and progress to a target of 0.7 per cent of GNP dedicated to ODA by 2015
- Make Ireland an international emergency hub for humanitarian aid and personnel
- Work with our EU partners to reform international financial regulation, and grow the European economy
- Publish a white paper setting out a strategy for the future of our defence forces to 2020



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RESTORING IRELAND'S INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION

Ireland's standing within the European Union and in the wider world has been compromised by the disastrous mishandling of our economy by Fianna Fáil. This loss of reputation is a real threat to Ireland's prospects of recovery.

Labour will make restoring Ireland's international reputation as a good, transparent place to do business, and as a responsible member of the international community, a key policy objective for our diplomatic corps, and for every minister in government.

Labour will ensure that Ireland is fully prepared, with a strategic plan of action, for both its chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2012, and the presidency of the EU Council in 2013.

values and principles underpinning the aid programme, and will provide a framework to enhance the predictability, accountability and impact of Irish Aid.

Labour will undertake a review of the implementation of the 2006 White Paper on Irish Aid, in order to learn from past successes and mistakes, and formulate clear objectives for Ireland's aid programme to 2020.

Labour will work at EU level to ensure that EU aid is transparent and clearly targeted at achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Within the UN, we will press for the establishment of the principle of access to clean water and sanitation as a human right in the upcoming review of the MDGs, and for the establishment of a Rapid Response Agency for natural and human disasters which would work to anticipate, respond and prevent natural and human disasters.

Labour will also back efforts at UN level to establish a form of Tobin Tax at on international financial transactions to help generate funds to meet the MDGs.

MAKING IRELAND A HUB FOR HUMANITARIAN AID

One of the major current weaknesses of the international response to humanitarian crises or conflicts is the absence of a coordinating centre to assemble resources and personnel. In government, Labour will position Ireland to become an international hub for the storage and distribution of emergency humanitarian supplies, and for the assembly of military and civilian personnel for EU or UN peacekeeping missions. The Shannon airport area, with easy access to ports, extensive space, long runways and large depots would be an ideal location for such a hub.

A COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPMENT

Labour is opposed to any further cuts in overseas development aid. Labour is committed to increasing overseas development aid to 0.7% of GNP, which we will seek to achieve by 2015. We will introduce legislation by 2013 to ensure that the ODA budget is provided for from the Central Fund, rather than being at the mercy of the annual estimates process, at which point we will publish a pathway to achieving the goal. The legislation will also give legal expression to the

Labour is committed to increasing overseas development aid to 0.7% of GNP

FAIRER TRADE

International trade relations must be developed on the basis of equity between developed and developing countries. We will support efforts to ensure equity in taxation and trade regimes and in dealing with the burden of international debt.

Labour is also committed to strengthening policy coherence in relation to development issues across a range of other government policy areas, including trade and climate change.

REFORM FOR A MORE ETHICAL FOREIGN POLICY

The protection of human rights must be at the heart of any ethical foreign policy. Through our participation in international institutions, we will work towards the international recognition of the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

Labour strongly supports the United Nations but recognises the need for significant reform. The structure, and procedures, of the Security Council must be adapted to reflect the global politics of the 21st century, including the international standing of the European Union. Changes in the UN related multilateral institutions are needed to favour integrated approaches to aid, trade and debt.

The importance of UN Conventions in a wide range of policy areas must be recognised. Labour will seek to speed up their ratification and implementation, for example of the crucial UN Convention Against Corruption, which is of major importance in the field of development aid and assistance.

Labour in government will pursue a policy of positive neutrality, and we are opposed to Ireland participating in international mutual defence alliances. In line with our policy of positive neutrality, Labour will

Labour is committed to retaining Ireland's 'triple lock'

implement measures to restrict the use of Irish airspace, airports and related facilities for purposes not in line with the dictates of international law, with permission for military use of such facilities allowable only for international missions with explicit UN Security Council approval.

Labour is committed to retaining the 'triple lock', under which Irish defence forces can only participate in missions abroad with government approval, Dáil approval, and under a UN mandate.

Labour will give priority to achieving progress within the UN on the range of treaties and negotiations in the field of weapons of mass destruction, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the efforts to rid the world of landmines, cluster munitions and biological weapons.

SECURITY AND DEFENCE

The Irish Defence Forces have a proud tradition of participating in peacekeeping missions abroad, and are an important pillar of Irish diplomacy.

Labour will ensure that the Defence Forces are appropriately equipped and staffed to meet Ireland's obligations to United Nations and EU peacekeeping missions. In particular, Labour will ensure that the Medical Corps is fit for purpose, and able to attract sufficient personnel, and will develop an appropriate timescale for the renewal of the naval fleet.

The Reserve Defence Force is a valuable resource, which will be optimised in overseas missions

with the Defence Forces. Labour also supports greater coordination between RDF and Civil Defence at home. A stronger role for the RDF will be facilitated by the appointment of a Brigadier General to the RDF.

Labour will reform the governance structures of the Irish Red Cross to enable it to discharge its duties more effectively and transparently.

Acknowledging the current budgetary restraints, Ireland nevertheless needs to plan ahead to ensure that our defence forces are fit for purpose over the coming decade. Labour will publish a White Paper on the Defence Forces setting out our vision for the Defence Forces to 2020. This will include a strategy to restore the strength of the Defence Forces to 10,500 members. Such a paper will also consider what the appropriate role for PDFORRA might be within the wider Trade Union movement. Finally, it should also map out how Ireland will deal with future, unorthodox attacks, such as cyber warfare.

IRELAND IN EUROPE

The Labour Party believes that recovery depends on savings and growth. While the EU has played a crucial role, more must be done to simultaneously reform financial markets, counteract the recession and re-launch the economy to create new growth and jobs. By acting together in Europe and worldwide, we can forge a stronger path to recovery for us all.

JOBS AND GROWTH

The number one priority for Labour in Europe is to safeguard jobs, create new ones and promote smart, environmentally sustainable growth. Europe's strengths are its economic diversity and high skill base. Labour favours a European competitiveness strategy based on high skills, effectiveness, gender equality, productivity and innovation in a knowledge-driven economy.

Labour will continue to support reform of financial markets and banking regulation at a European level.

Labour is committed to maintaining Ireland's 12.5% corporation tax, and will oppose any move toward a mandatory Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base.

Labour will work at European level to progress the development of an EU-wide smart grid that would enable Ireland to scale up its renewable energy production for export.

Labour will also seek to draw down Ireland's entitlement to European Structural Funds and the European Social Fund to promote employment in areas such as research, development and deployment of renewable energies and for retrofitting the housing sector.

Labour supports the EU2020 development strategy, and will work to ensure that it has a stronger emphasis on employment, and a genuine integration of the social dimension into EU strategic thinking.

BUILDING A SOCIAL EUROPE

The European Union is far more than an economic union: it is a political union and community of values. In a Social Europe, the economic, social, cultural and political rights of all citizens will be safeguarded. With our sister parties in every member state and the Party of European Socialists,

Labour will work at EU level to ensure the EU takes a lead in climate change negotiations

Labour will work to make sure these rights are recognised and respected.

Labour will also seek to establish a European Employment and Social Progress Pact guaranteeing a more equal society and life of dignity for all citizens, whether employed or unemployed. This crisis has underlined the importance of strong, sustainable social protection systems. Through the social progress clause agreed in the Lisbon Treaty, we will ensure the real social and environmental cost of EU laws is fully assessed before they are agreed.

FULFILLING THE LISBON PLEDGES

The Lisbon Treaty has strengthened the role of the EU parliament in the EU legislative system. Labour Party MEPs, with their colleagues in the Group of Socialists and Democrats, will work for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty reforms, for the greater transparency and accountability in the work of the EU institutions and for the prioritisation of economic stability, job creation and social development. The Lisbon Treaty also mandates a much greater role for national parliaments in the scrutiny of EU legislation, which Labour will enforce through the Dáil committee system.

Ireland has played a constructive role in the development and operation of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. Labour is committed to continuing this engagement, in the context of our policy of positive neutrality, and the reaffirmation of that neutrality by our EU partners in the Lisbon Treaty.

With our sister parties across Europe and the Socialist International, Labour will work to support gradual and considered further enlargement of the Union to bring peace, high living standards and stable growth across the continent.

COOPERATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Labour supports a meaningful and equitable international agreement to avoid runaway global warming, and will work at European level to ensure that the EU takes a lead in these negotiations. Such an agreement must be implemented and monitored by a democratic supervisory authority.

Labour also supports a more coherent approach to reducing greenhouse gases across the EU, including the introduction of binding energy efficiency targets by 2020, and reform of the Emissions Trading System.

EU REFORM

Labour will demand the highest standards of transparency and accountability from EU institutions such as the Commission and Parliament; including regulation of lobbying.

Labour supports the nomination of candidates for the office of President of the European Commission in advance of the 2014 European elections from the various political groupings in the European Parliament. This step will help give voters real choices in the future direction of Europe.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Labour is proud of our contribution to creating a more peaceful, lawful, and democratic society in Northern Ireland.

We believe that there is considerably more potential for North/South cooperation than has been the case to date, and that this cooperation could be of mutual benefit to all of the people north and south of the border. Through the North/South Ministerial Council, Labour will seek the immediate publication of the Phase One Review of North/South co-operation that was included as part of the St Andrews Agreement of 2006. Labour will also press for the earliest possible completion of the Second Phase, identifying new areas of co-operation and implementation between the two parts of the island.

Labour will commence additional work by the two administrations in identifying potential areas whereby savings and efficiencies could be achieved, services improved and developed, and jobs created through greater North-South co-operation.

We cannot forget that there are elements North and South that wish to destabilise and undermine the progress that has been made. In order to confront this threat, Labour in government will maintain and encourage the clear, close, and successful co-operation between An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland to deal with the threat of all dissident paramilitary groups.

Labour in government will maintain and encourage the clear, close, and successful co-operation between An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland

